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Communication characterizing successful long distance marriages

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COMMUNICATION CHARACTERIZING SUCCESSFUL
LONG DISTANCE MARRIAGES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Speech Communication

by

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Abstract

The current study seeks to explore the communication in successful career-induced long distance marriages. Elements examined are relational dialectics, relationship satisfaction, communication satisfaction, feelings of (mis)understanding, couple types, relationship sustenance, imagined interactions, and social support. The current study has three primary contributions: 1) the quantitative exploration of a communication in a growing marital framework, 2) the successful quantification of dialectics, and 3) the overall support for studying long distance marriages.

The current study reports data collected from 92 individuals in non-military career-induced long distance marriages. All participants completed an 18-page questionnaire consisting of quantitative measures for the variables listed above, followed by four open-ended questions designed to elicit respondents' feelings about the living-apart experience.

Findings reflect four primary variables: relationship sustenance, feelings of understanding/misunderstanding, communication satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction. Shared tasks as a relationship sustenance strategy successfully predicted feelings of connection, whereas the shared networks sustenance strategy successfully predicted feelings of inclusion and revelation.

Feelings of understanding/misunderstanding were significantly related to relationship satisfaction. Seclusion and autonomy-connection were also significantly related to relationship satisfaction, when also considering the frequency of visits during the separation.

Communication satisfaction was significantly related to feelings of understanding/misunderstanding, while also significantly related to openness and closedness. Feelings of understanding/misunderstanding were significantly related to openness, closedness,

and pre-separation marital length. In addition, relationship sustenance was successfully predicted by feelings of understanding/misunderstanding.

These results indicate success of the dialectic measurement beyond reliability. These findings indicate that dialectics do play a role in the relationship satisfaction, communication satisfaction, and feelings of understanding of long distance married couples. Furthermore, the feelings of understanding/misunderstanding scale performed well both as a predictor and outcome variable, indicating a potentially important communication-related variable at work in long distance marriages. Finally, sustenance strategies at work in long distance marriages are significantly related to dialectics and feelings of understanding/misunderstanding. These findings offer a more complete and potentially predictive view of long distance marriages than was previously available.

Literature Review and Rationale

Introduction

Whereas the importance of communication in maintaining marriage is generally accepted (Canary & Stafford, 1992, 1993; Dainton & Kilmer, 1999; Ragsdale, 1996), there are some instances in which the role of communication takes on added significance. One instance is marriages in which spouses do not live in the same household. For some couples the marital partners have their own residences in different cities, often in different states. Because in these long distance marriages (LDMs) the married partners do not see each other daily, the only means of sustaining the relationship is through various communication activities, particularly verbal communication. Communication is the link tying the long distance partners together. Without communicating in some form (i.e., telephone, instant messaging, e-mail, letters, visits) the partners risk losing their intimate connection and becoming strangers to each other.

Verbal communication is comprised of the content message of a given utterance (Watzlawick, Bavelas, & Jackson, 1967). For every content message there are corresponding relational messages that are communicated nonverbally (Watzlawick et al., 1967). The relational messages indicate how the receiver should interpret the content, or spoken, message. Relational messages must be inferred from contextual factors including the relational definition, relationship goals, relationship expectations, and the situational context (Grove, 1991). With little time together, couples may experience a decrease in accuracy interpreting relational messages. Thus, proximal couples have greater exposure to both the content and relational messages. Whereas LDM couples do experience relational messages, the degree of nonverbal availability is different given the lack of co-presence. In addition to possible relational message breakdown, decreased proximity can pose other challenges.

Several researchers report that propinquity is a strong determining factor in developing intimacy and ensuing marriage (Bossard, 1932; Kennedy, 1940; Knapp & Vangelisti, 2000). Once married, it is generally accepted that couples will live together, if they have not already done so prior to marriage. Whereas spouses who live in the same household (representing proximal marriages or PMs) also rely on communication to sustain their relationship, the dynamic of their relationship is vastly different from LDMs given that PMs see each other on a daily basis. This co-presence allows for a greater reliance on nonverbal channels of communication so that the verbal channels of communication can be relaxed to some degree (Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983, 1984; Winfield, 1985). When the couple lives together, they can sit in companionate silence, taking pleasure and reassurance in the other's simply 'being there' (Gerstel & Gross, 1984). When one is not living with his/her spouse, verbal communication in some form is essential to maintaining the relationship. Therefore, the continuance and success of the LDM is inherently a communicative phenomenon.

Continuing the relationship falls under the general topic of 'relational maintenance.' Dindia and Canary (1993) reported four of the most frequently used meanings of relational maintenance: to keep a relationship in existence, in a specified state or condition, in satisfactory condition, and in repair. Traditional definitions assert that maintenance begins after the relationship starts (is established to be a 'relationship'), and ends before the relationship disintegrates (Montgomery, 1993). Various researchers have uncovered several dimensions of maintenance. The most comprehensive list includes advice, assurances, conflict management, shared tasks, networks, openness, and positivity (Stafford, Dainton, & Haas, 1998).

In addition, Baxter and Simon (1993) found that contact, romance, and avoidance strategies were often used to mediate dialectical tensions experienced by marital partners.

Similarly, Baxter and Dindia (1990) discovered that maintenance strategies used by married couples conform to the dialectical contradictions experienced in the relationship (see chapter 2 for a more detailed discussion of relational dialectics). Dindia and Baxter (1987) found that partners married longer used fewer maintenance strategies and rely on communication or activity-oriented strategies for relationship maintenance. Wives' maintenance behaviors are consistently found to contribute to both partners' relational perceptions, whereas the husbands' are not (Gilbertson, Dindia, & Allen, 1997; Ragsdale, 1996; Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999). Of the wives' behaviors, positivity, openness, reaffirmation of the importance of the relationship, and shared activities are important maintenance strategies (Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999).

In a study of long distance dating relationships, Carpenter and Knox (1982) found that males are more likely to sustain a relationship if they visit their partner frequently, if the visits are initiated by the female, and if the male dates other people during the separation. Only two factors influenced females' relationship maintenance, however: emotional involvement and commitment to the future of the relationship.

Similar to maintenance strategies are Relational Continuity Constructional Units (RCCUs) (Gilbertson et al., 1997). Essentially RCCUs are behaviors or thoughts directed at maintaining a connection with one's partner. Examples include kissing one's partner good-bye, e-mailing when apart, talking about one's partner when apart, buying flowers, and asking how the other's day was. Co-presence with one's partner and prospective RCCUs (i.e. making plans for when the pair will be back together, kissing good-bye, etc.) are both positively related to relationship satisfaction, whereas retrospective RCCUs (i.e. kissing/hugging hello, asking/discussing how the day was) are not (Gilbertson et al., 1997). Finally, couples with higher levels of relationship satisfaction are also more likely to spend time together, and more likely to

engage in RCCUs (Gilbertson et al., 1997). This connection of RCCUs to relationship satisfaction may be an important one for relationship maintenance studies.

Baxter and Montgomery (1996) discussed the use of the term “maintenance” and asserted that

[r]elationships are not homoeostatically organized around a stable fulcrum point of ‘equilibrium,’ nor are they developmental organisms whose evolution is marked by progressive ‘moreness.’ Thus, the very concept of ‘maintenance’ is seen to privilege one pole of the ongoing and ever present dialectic between stability and change (p. 7).

Relationships, therefore, are much more dynamic than simply attempting to stay at some balance point. Conceptualizing relationships through a maintenance framework assumes a very linear model of thinking that does not do justice to the intricacies of relationships (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Montgomery, 1993). Thus Baxter and Montgomery (1996) prefer the word “sustaining” to “maintenance.” “Sustaining” allows dialogic complexity to exist in a relationship whereas “maintenance” stifles that dialogic complexity (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996).

Recognizing dialogic complexity becomes important in the analysis of LDMs. Due to the importance of dialogic complexity in the LDM relationship, the word “sustaining” will be used in the present discussion. Before understanding the importance of sustenance, however, the prevalence of LDMs must be discussed.

Popular press articles focusing on long distance and commuter marriages (CMs) have increased over the years (see Armour, 1998). Scholarly articles written about commuter marriages began appearing in the mid-seventies (cited in Gerstel & Gross, 1984) and have continued through the present (e.g., Armour, 1998; Justice, 1999). This increase may be due to burgeoning interest, but may also be a product of increased numbers of individuals in this type of marriage. The increase in popular press articles indicates a growing public awareness of this

marital form. In addition, there must be some concern or interest in this relationship or there would not be the degree of popular press coverage.

Rindfuss and Stephen (1990) examined census data and reported percentages of married individuals not living with their spouse for reasons other than marital discord. In the 1960 census, 42% of men and 33% of women fit the criteria. In the 1970 census, 39% of men and 34% of women fit the criteria. Finally, in the 1980 census, 41% of men and 28% of women fit the criteria. Admittedly, these figures only represent marital non-cohabitation for reasons other than marital discord. This type of non-cohabitation may include separation due to unemployment, military service, or incarceration. Without another measure for ascertaining specific figures of CMs and LDMs, however, these provide the clearest example of LDM and CM prevalence. Though a bit dated, no more recent statistics of LDM prevalence could be located.

Winfield (1985) reported that a 1982 Time magazine article estimated the number of commuting couples to be 700,000. Further, “everything suggests that the number of such marriages is increasing as women climb the job ladder and cast aside the ‘whither thou goest, I will go’ philosophy” (Winfield, 1985, p. 146). In 1998, Armour reported that “[a]cademic experts have conservatively put the numbers of commuter couples at 700,000, whereas others think there are more than 1 million such relationships today” (p. B1). These figures do indicate a rise in the number (or at least the visibility) of commuter/long distance marriages.

As LDMs ostensibly become more prevalent (Winfield, 1985), the public perception remains that this type of relationship is largely unstable (i.e., unsuccessful, divorce- and infidelity-ridden, and abnormal) (Gerstel & Gross, 1982; 1984). In fact, this perception of infidelity is not confirmed by research (Gerstel & Gross, 1982; 1984) and the incidence of

divorce is lower among geographically separated couples than those in PMs (Gerstel & Gross, 1984; Guldner & Swensen, 1995; Stephen, 1984).

Hence, it is important to study LDMs for two reasons. First, by studying marital couples who are (or have already) successfully navigated the challenge of a geographic separation, researchers can better understand the inner workings of this type of relationship and the integral role that communication plays in sustaining this relationship through a difficult relational experience. Second, researchers and practitioners, through a better understanding of the inner workings of this type of relationship, can help couples such as these more easily manage this experience in part by emphasizing the integral role of communication.

Because proximal and long distance couples experience different strains due to the very nature of their different living arrangements, several elements may affect both the communication and the success of LDM couples. Although several factors may be important to the success of LDMs, the consistent overarching theme implicitly raised is that of dialectical tensions in the LDM relationship (Douvan & Pleck, 1978; Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983, 1984; Winfield, 1985). According to Baxter and Montgomery (1996), dialectics are contradictions or a “*ceaseless interplay* between contrary or opposing tendencies” (p.3, emphasis in original). The notion of dialectics is in direct opposition to that of viewing relationships as linear progress. Rather, dialectics allow researchers to view relationships in a state of flux and dynamism rather than a straight path from stranger to marriage. The dialectical contradictions occur both between relational partners (internal) and between the partners and the outside world (external). The dialectical perspective serves as a theoretical framework through which to view the phenomenon of communication in LDMs (see Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion of dialectics and their relationship to LDMs).

Researchers have examined married couples and how they communicate (e.g., Fitzpatrick, 1988), strains they experience (e.g., Coleman, 1984), and how they manage stressors (e.g., Hill, 1949; Pratt, 1976; Sarason, 1980). Whereas that body of literature is by no means complete, all married couples are not alike, and those who choose to live apart for career reasons are no different. Through research, scholars and practitioners can better understand the inner workings of this increasingly common type of relationship and contribute to greater numbers of success for those couples choosing this lifestyle. By understanding factors contributing to LDM success, couples choosing this type of marriage may receive help from practitioners and friends/family if the knowledge is shared. Gottman (1999) asserted that it is through studying successful relationships that scholars and practitioners can better aid the success of marriages. In other words, successful marriages are not simply the flip side of unsuccessful marriages. The study of unsuccessful marriages and 'not doing that' is not the means by which successful marriages are made. Rather, according to Gottman, researchers should be studying what couples should do. This knowledge of what makes this particular marriage work may be of use for a great many people.

Therefore, this study seeks to understand how married couples in a long distance relationship communicatively manage various relational strains. To that end, the purpose of this study is to explore the communication that characterizes successful long distance marriages. Success, for purposes of this study, refers to couples either still living apart, or re-integrated couples, who consider themselves to be 'happy' and successful in their marriage. Thus, "whether or not a marriage is intact" is a measure of marital success (Fitzpatrick, 1988, p. 32). This attempt to explore the factors contributing to the success of an LDM is the first of its kind,

moving away from largely qualitative descriptive studies of ‘the experience’ itself (Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983, 1984; Gross, 1980, 1981; Winfield, 1985).

In accomplishing that task, the nature of and research on LDMs will be reviewed in some detail, including defining characteristics of various types of long distance marriages; reasons for this lifestyle; advantages, disadvantages, and problems faced by couples in LDMs; managing the distance; perceptions of those in this type of relationship; and means of communication for those in an LDM. A discussion follows of dialectics as well as the criterion variables to be explored. Hypotheses and research questions will then be proposed, followed by the details of the study in the form of methods, results, and discussion. Before focusing on the details of this study, however, the relationship itself, that of long distance marriages, needs to be addressed.

Long Distance Marriages

Defining LDMs

Historically not all families have shared a living space. Very often, a husband’s occupation takes him out of the family home. Gerstel and Gross (1983) and Rindfuss and Stephen (1990) identify several involuntary reasons for a husband to be apart from his wife/children. During pre-industrialization, husbands took their wares to other towns for commerce, many were called to war, some were imprisoned, and severe illness forced others into hospital confinement. These involuntary activities still force marital separation today.

In addition, advances in technology and education have prompted voluntary marital separation as specialized jobs become more scarce and individuals become more in demand by employers; for example merchant marines and engineers (Groves & Horm-Wingerd, 1991). In addition, specialized skills prompt separation for people such as professional athletes, politicians,

entertainers, and traveling sales representatives (Gerstel & Gross, 1983). Hence, reasons for living apart persist through time.

Currently, another condition has emerged that contributes to marital separation: that of the dual-career marriage. The major difference with today's dual-career couples lies in the dual nature of the separation (Gerstel & Gross, 1983; Rindfuss & Stephen, 1990). Instead of the husband's career taking him away from his home, leaving his wife to tend the homefront, today's long distance marriages are often characterized by the wife leaving, or staying behind for her own career (Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983, 1984; Rindfuss & Stephen, 1990; Winfield, 1985). Therefore, at least theoretically, and with this one marital form, society is moving from a more patriarchal family system to a more egalitarian system. Marital separation due to a dual-career marriage is not so pervasive that every family is affected, though as several researchers report, this family form is becoming more common (Armour, 1998; Justice; 1999; Winfield, 1985).

The particular type of long distance marriage of interest in this study is the dual-career long distance marriage versus dual-earner long distance marriage. Dual-career couples are identified as those in which both heads of household, the wife and husband, pursue active careers that require a high degree of commitment, specialized training, and responsibility while also actively pursuing a family life (Anderson & Spruill, 1993; Pepitone-Rockwell, 1980; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1969, 1976; Reynolds & Bennett, 1991). Dual-earner couples, on the other hand, tend to have one spouse with a blue-collar job that requires little training or commitment of time and who may hold several different jobs over the course of the marriage (Anderson & Spruill, 1993). This type of arrangement usually follows the format of a husband with a 'career' and a wife with a 'job' that may not be permanent and is often for the purpose of obtaining extra income for the family (Pepitone-Rockwell, 1980). Marital separation occurs in both types of marriage, but may

be more prevalent in dual-career marriages, though additional figures are needed to verify this prediction (Gerstel & Gross, 1984; Winfield, 1985).

Whereas marital separation thus occurs across the population of working (and married) adults, one cannot assume that all separations are identical in cause and experience. Researchers have explored the assumption or question that all commuter marriages are the same (Gerstel and Gross, 1984; Rapoport, Rapoport, and Bumstead, 1978; Winfield, 1985). Not only did the authors discover that not all commuter marriages are the same, but there are difficulties associated with assuming they are all the same. For instance, the reason for the geographic separation (i.e., husband is merchant marine, one spouse is called to military service, dual careers that precipitate such separation) as well as the presence of children and length of marriage may all influence the experience of the CM and in turn affect its success (Gerstel & Gross, 1983).

Various terms exist for career-induced marital separation including married singles (Gross, 1980, 1981; Groves & Horm-Wingerd, 1991, Kirschner & Walum, 1978), geographically separated married couples (Rohlfing, 1995; Stephen, 1986), marital non-cohabitation (Rindfuss & Stephen, 1990), separated dual-career couples (Douvan & Pleck, 1978), two/dual location marriages (Gerstel & Gross, 1982; Groves & Horm-Wingerd, 1991; Kirschner & Walum, 1978; Taylor & Lounsbury, 1988), commuter marriages (Anderson & Spruill, 1993; Farris, 1978; Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1984; Gross, 1980, 1981; Groves & Horm-Wingerd, 1991; Guldner & Swensen, 1995; Taylor & Lounsbury, 1988; Winfield, 1985), and long distance marriages (Dainton & Kilmer, 1999; Dellmann-Jenkins, 1991; Bernard-Paolucci, & Rushing, 1992; Gerstel & Gross, 1982; Gross, 1980, 1981; Groves & Horm-Wingerd, 1991; Guldner & Swensen, 1995; Stafford & Reske, 1990; Stephen, 1986; Taylor & Lounsbury, 1988). Though not referenced, one

can also call these relationships married separates, geographically distant marriages, two/dual city marriages, dual residence marriages, or bi-coastal marriages.

The two terms most frequently used by researchers are commuter marriages and long distance marriages (LDMs). The former tends to refer to couples who see each other on a more frequent basis, such as every weekend or several nights per week (Anderson & Spruill, 1993; Gerstel & Gross, 1982), and thus ‘commute’ to and from their job. Couples in an LDM, however, tend to see each other less frequently due to a greater geographic separation. The time lapse between visits may range from once every two weeks to once every several months.

The vast majority of research has focused on commuter marriages and shown that this marriage type is generally more successful than ‘normal,’ proximal marriages (Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983, 1984). Research has shown that traditional-style living arrangements result in very little discussion between marital partners in the evenings (Huston, McHale, & Crouter, 1986; Sillars & Wilmot, 1989). In addition, these discussions tend to focus on decision-making and conflict resolution (Sillars & Wilmot, 1989). On weekends, time is spent performing household duties such as lawn mowing, bill paying, house cleaning, and car maintenance. These chores take additional time away from the relational couple who assumes there is always time to work on the marriage ‘later’ (Dainton & Stafford, 1999).

Couples in a commuter marriage, however, talk most nights on the phone during the week, and on weekend visits they spend a great deal of time focusing on their relationship exclusively (Gerstel & Gross, 1983). Therefore, these couples appear to be spending a great deal more time sustaining and strengthening their marital relationship via both daily (distal) verbal and weekly (proximal) nonverbal communication. This leaves little room for wonder about their

overall success in relation to proximal couples. No numbers exist, however, comparing the exact percentages of time spent on relationship building activities for both LDM and PM couples.

The existing research on LDMs also makes clearer the distinction between commuter marriages and long distance marriages. Implicit in the telephone medium is its impersonal nature, forcing partners to rely on nonverbal communication for relationship sustenance (Canary & Stafford, 1992, 1993; Rabby, 1997). If this is true, couples who see each other infrequently have a greater challenge ahead of them with the primary source of contact being the telephone or other mediated forms of communication that provide little nonverbal immediacy (Harwood, 1998).

From this discussion the distinction between proximal, commuter, and long distance marriages becomes more obvious. If viewed as a continuum, proximal couples reside at the far left with daily interaction and opportunity for both verbal and nonverbal communication at their highest levels. Commuter marriages would fall in the middle with weekly proximal and daily verbal contact. Long distance couples, on the other hand, would fall to the far right indicating the lack of opportunity for nonverbal communication due to decreased visits, while still having the opportunity for daily verbal contact. Heretofore research has not specifically studied LDMs as distinct from CMs. From the above discussion, however, it is obvious that there are discrete differences between the two. Therefore, simply from the definitions of commuter and long distance marriages, it is obvious there are qualitative differences between the two. Assuming all geographically separated couples experience separation the same can be problematic both practically and empirically.

For purposes of this study, the term long distance marriage (LDM) will be used to identify dual-career couples who live in geographically separated locations and see each other

approximately once every two weeks or less frequently. Because couples in a commuter marriage are proximal more often than those in an LDM, they would experience more direct communication including some of the benefits that proximal couples experience such as those discussed above resulting from co-presence. Therefore, to truly understand one facet of the geographically separated marriage from both a qualitative and quantitative perspective, it is best to begin with a more extreme case than one closer to the norm, such as commuter marriages.

Demographics and Characteristics

In their descriptive study, Gerstel and Gross (1982) reported that marital separation is generally a 'middle-class phenomenon' characterized by median incomes between \$30,000 - \$40,000, with no one in their sample making less than \$18,000. The vast majority (83% of women and 89% of men) had graduate/professional degrees (Gerstel & Gross, 1982). Farris (1978) and Winfield (1985) reported similar demographics in their samples. About half the couples studied had children, though the age of children and parent with whom the child(ren) resided affected the experience and implications of geographic separation. Although LDMs are typified as middle-class, technically all couples of all ages, lengths of marriage, parental status, education, income, and careers choose this lifestyle. From preliminary qualitative studies (Farris, 1978; Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983, 1984; Winfield, 1985), however, it can be presumed that education and income are more likely to influence the decision to have an LDM.

Individuals choosing this type of lifestyle report that they consider both their career and their marriage to be top priority (Gerstel & Gross, 1983; Winfield, 1985). The question becomes how to maintain both priorities. Many of the couples interviewed by Gerstel and Gross (1983) explicitly stated that they chose this lifestyle because in doing so they could focus exclusively on each priority in its own time. While away from each other, they focus on furthering their careers.

During visits, they focus on strengthening their relationship. In between visits, various media such as e-mail and the telephone are used to sustain the relationship.

The general living arrangement of an LDM is for both partners to have separate dwellings in different locations and visit each other when schedules permit (Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983, 1984; Rapoport, Rapoport & Bumstead, 1978; Rindfuss & Stephen, 1990; Winfield, 1985). Some couples, however, have a 'home base' in which one partner remains in the family home, while the other partner obtains a separate residence (usually an apartment, perceived as 'temporary') and travels back to the family home. For financial reasons, it may be necessary for each to move into a smaller dwelling in their respective cities and travel to the other when possible.

The feeling that the arrangement is temporary is an important theme in CMs/LDMs (Douvan & Pleck, 1978; Gerstel & Gross, 1983, 1984). That is, the securing of a 'temporary' home is based on the notion that this lifestyle is not permanent. Despite the fact that many LDM couples report their separation is of indeterminate duration, the separation is still considered temporary (Douvan & Pleck, 1978; Gerstel & Gross, 1983, 1984).

This feeling of temporariness, though not explored extensively by research, may very well aid the couple in coping with the separation. By telling themselves that it is only for the short term, LDM couples accomplish two goals. First, the couple wards off concerns by 'society' that they are separated as a precursor to divorce. Second, they allow themselves to continue viewing their marriage and careers as equally important. Perhaps if the time apart were conceived as permanent or simply indefinite, the relational partners would begin to doubt their relational commitment. Therefore, viewing the separation as temporary may influence the

marriage's success, the separation success and satisfaction, and the way in which they manage the relational dialectics.

Researchers report that there are various factors that affect the way in which different couples experience separation (Farris, 1978; Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1984; Gross, 1980, 1981; Stephen, 1986). For instance, after a rather detailed interview with couples in CM/LDMs, Gerstel and Gross (1981, 1982, 1984) reported that the number of years a couple is married, the presence of children, and the duration of separation between visits all have a great impact on the couple's experience of the separation.

Research by Gerstel and Gross indicates that couples who have been married for only a few years (no specific figures were provided), couples with children, and couples who visit less than twice a month experience much more difficulty managing the separation (Gerstel & Gross, 1981, 1982, 1984; Gross, 1980, 1981). This is not to say those conditions lead to divorce; they simply make the separation more difficult to manage. Though Gerstel and Gross (1982, 1983, 1984; Gross, 1980, 1981) do not indicate the specific length of time a couple should be married prior to separating, the authors emphasize that "the longer they have been married, the greater their ability to withstand the ravages of missed time together" (Gross, 1981, p. 78). One limitation to Gerstel and Gross's work (1981, 1982, 1983, 1984) is the lack of statistical analysis. All of the research reported uses interview data, with the exception of demographic information presented. Whereas interview data provides a great deal of rich information about the relationship in question, it does not allow for generalization or an evaluation of how factors influence the experience of the LDM experience.

When speaking to the uniqueness of the LDM situation, Gerstel and Gross (1984) asserted that couples "do not face an unusual dilemma, they make an unusual choice" (p. 200).

Douvan and Pleck (1978) reported that those in LDMs simply have different strains than those in standard dual-career marriages alone. This notion of different strains ties back to the couples' reporting that both their careers and marriages are top priorities. The connection lies in a variation of the 'traditional' marital form. Life is filled with choices including whether to marry, to work, to have children. These couples make a unique choice, although one that is becoming less unique as more couples see it as a viable choice.

The choice to live this lifestyle is one made with eyes open, to some extent. On the other hand, Farris (1978) and Gerstel and Gross (1984) discuss how this situation often 'just happens.' In other words, couples report they felt they had no choice given their dual priorities. A long distance marriage was the only way to give full attention to both career and marriage. Just because they felt they had no choice does not mean they made no choice. Indeed, they faced a very big decision, especially given the lack of support perceived for this type of lifestyle (Groves & Horm-Wingerd, 1991). In addition, whereas the couple may have felt they knew what they were getting into, most report different strains than anticipated including a lack of support (Groves & Horm-Wingerd, 1991), role strain (Anderson & Spruill, 1993, Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983, 1984; Winfield, 1985), work interfering with time together (Gerstel & Gross, 1984; Winfield, 1985), duration of separation (Gerstel & Gross, 1984), a lack of we-ness (Winfield, 1985), lack of ego strength (Winfield, 1985), and decreased professional competence (Gerstel & Gross, 1984; Winfield, 1985). These strains, however, will be discussed in greater detail in the 'problems with the long distance marriage lifestyle' section. Before the problems can be fully understood, one must understand the reasons couples choose this living situation.

Reasons for Choosing the LDM Lifestyle

One of the first questions, after learning who chooses this lifestyle, is why one would live like this. One reason has already been discussed, that of joint emphasis on work and family. A second reason includes the scarcity of specialized employment or education (Farris, 1978; Gerstel & Gross, 1984). In some cases, the job offer precipitating the separation is unique in itself. The new job may be significantly different or better than the existing job. In specialized areas of employment and in higher levels of education, the perfect fit with close to ideal circumstances is rare. Thus, when the occasion arises, those choosing an LDM lifestyle believe a prudent person with high career aspirations takes advantage of such an opportunity (Farris, 1978; Gerstel & Gross, 1984).

For women, geographic separation is essential to keep her from being ‘left behind,’ representing the third reason for choosing an LDM lifestyle (Farris, 1978; Gerstel & Gross, 1984). As above, this third item centers on opportunity. If a woman is in a good job furthering her career, and moving would not put her in a comparable position, she and her husband may decide it is best for her to stay in her present employment, either indefinitely or until she finds a lateral or better job in the city with her husband. In this way, the couple is furthering her career as well as his.

Winfield (1985) reported a study of female clerical workers who choose this lifestyle. She emphasized that the importance of the work was what mattered to the women, not the job title. Thus, they gained something from their employment that they were not confident could be attained in another position. They chose to stay at their jobs while their husbands moved for their own careers. Whereas these choices occur less frequently than among those in more permanent careers, they do exist.

A fourth reason exists for longer-married couples. These couples report choosing this lifestyle because they feel it gives the wife 'her turn' (Farris, 1978; Gerstel & Gross, 1984). The husbands in these marriages report their wives put their lives on hold in the early years to further the husbands' careers, so they agreed now is the time for her to pursue her career. Therefore, the decision is made more consciously to create balance in the marriage.

Finally, a great deal of research has examined the commuter dating experience and various communicative elements therein (i.e., Allen, 1994; Carpenter & Knox, 1982; Dellmann-Jenkns, Bernard-Paolucci, & Rushing, 1991; Guldner & Swensen, 1995; Holt & Stone, 1988; Rohlfig, 1995; Stafford & Reske, 1990; Stephen, 1986). These studies indicate that long distance dating relationships can be successfully navigated through to reunion and beyond (a continued relationship, living together, marriage, etc.). Therefore, whereas research has not explicated the relationship between long distance dating experiences and LDM experiences, it stands to reason that if one has successfully dated long distance, partners may believe they are also equipped to separate during marriage. Therefore, a commuter/long distance dating relationship may launch a 'long distance schema' whereupon individuals view distance as simply one factor of relationships.

Advantages and Disadvantages

The reasons for the decision to live in separate locations speak to some of the advantages of long distance marriages. The first refers to having the ability to have both a career and marriage as well as equality in marriage. As discussed above, these couples believe they can place joint emphasis on both career and family (Farris, 1978; Gerstel & Gross, 1983)

A second advantage is a strengthened marriage. Discussed by Rapoport, Rapoport, and Bumstead (1978) and Gross (1980, 1981), couples believe the separation strengthens their

marriage in part due to the joint sense of accomplishment at succeeding. Research by Gottman (1994), although focused on proximal couples, supports this notion of shared success as a marital strengthener. Gottman (1994) asserted this sense of shared relational accomplishment is crucial to relationship success in the long run, giving further validation through empirical research to the LDM couples' feelings.

In addition to a stronger relationship, the ability to have both career and family, and a sense of success, Farris (1978) and Gerstel and Gross (Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983, 1984) reported that the flexibility of schedules when the couple is not together is perceived as an advantage. That is, when the spouses are apart, they can adapt their schedules to their needs. If one wants to work late, there is no one there to be disappointed, or ask when dinner will be served; one can work as much or as little as s/he wants.

Inherent in this flexibility is the ability to devote longer hours to work (Farris, 1978; Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983, 1984; Jackson, Brown, & Patterson-Stewart, 2000), the fourth advantage to this lifestyle. Gerstel and Gross (1984) reported, however, that it is primarily women who utilize this advantage. Men in their study report working fewer hours because there was more to be done around the house without their wives doing/sharing housework. Both report the ability to work longer hours, though. These longer hours are important to the very reason for many separations: career advancement as a personal priority.

The fifth advantage appears counterintuitive at first glance: the geographic separation may facilitate the balance between work and family life (Douvan & Pleck, 1978). This balance occurs by the living arrangement allowing each to focus 100% of their efforts on work and family separately (Farris, 1978; Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983, 1984). In other words, while at work, one can focus on furthering one's career. During visits, each can focus on strengthening

the relationship. During the separation, ‘dates’ can be made for phone calls or instant messaging on-line to sustain the relationship. This advantage is the driving force behind the decision for couples with the dual career-family priority. That is, couples can focus exclusively on each priority in its own time and succeed at both.

The final advantage identified by research is that of learning new skills and gaining confidence about individual ability (Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983, 1984; Jackson et al., 2000; Winfield, 1985). As each individual must rely on him/herself for everything, skills are honed. Women report learning to change tires, fix leaky faucets, and perform household maintenance. Men, on the other hand, report learning such skills as cooking, sewing buttons, and doing laundry. From the skills learned, it is easy to see that this advantage tends to favor women (Gerstel & Gross, 1984). In other words, women gain a sense of individuality and strength from developing these abilities. They begin to see they can live on their own and do not need another person. Instead they realize they choose to have another person in their lives. Men, on the other hand, learn skills that are not highly valued by society. Whereas they report being happy they can do these things themselves, they do not experience the same degree of strength and independence as the women. Regardless, both see the gaining of skills as a strength of this marital form.

Long distance marriages are not all positive, however. One of the most pervasive drawbacks to an LDM is hectic schedules (Farris, 1978). While each person can focus on work and family in its own time, visits are made whenever schedules allow and that makes for a hectic life. In addition, couples do their best to call frequently, and those calls tend to last a considerable amount of time so each can catch up on the other’s life. Combined with the longer hours and the household maintenance required by each, the time needed to sustain connection leads to a more hectic schedule.

The hectic schedule means that one has to attend to all work or home activities in a relatively short amount of time (Farris, 1978), fitting everything into visits (Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983, 1984). In other words, each tries to get work done so they do not have to do so during a visit, making work more hectic. During visits, however, there is a great deal of catching up to be done. In addition, anything that the one spouse cannot do around the house, the other needs to do. Husbands report when they visit their wives they spend time mowing the lawn and changing the oil in the car. Women, on the other hand, report vacuuming and dusting on their visits. So, whereas each learns new skills and performs them, there are certain jobs 'saved' for the spouse, or those that the spouse believes are his/her obligation to fulfill during visits (Gerstel & Gross, 1983). This hectic schedule may contribute to lower levels of satisfaction with the relationship and family life, in general, however (Bunker, Zubek, Vanderslice, & Rice, 1992; Govaerts & Dixon, 1988).

In addition to hectic schedules and trying to fit everything into one visit, there are economic costs to this lifestyle (Farris, 1978; Gerstel & Gross, 1984). Whereas the participants in LDMs may have two incomes, it is costly to maintain two households. There are two homes to maintain, phone bills to pay, and costly visits. These items add up quickly. Couples report that this lifestyle is financially draining.

Farris (1978) emphasized the risk to intimacy this lifestyle creates. The lack of co-presence, inhibiting nonverbal contact, challenges intimacy in these relationships. Duncan, Schuman, and Duncan (1973) reported that a majority of wives feel companionship with their husband is the most valued aspect of marriage, more important than love, understanding, standard of living, and opportunity to have children. This very valuable component of marriage, companionship, is largely missing in an LDM. Its absence may challenge the opportunity for

intimacy. One can only say so much on the phone, and visits are often awkward, at least initially (Farris, 1978; Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983, 1984; Winfield, 1985). This awkwardness speaks to the decreased intimacy felt by the LDM couples. Lack of daily contact and sustenance of the relationship may lead to decreased intimacy.

The last two disadvantages are related. Farris (1978) and Jackson et al. (2000) reported that LDM couples often experience emotional costs. The strongest costs come from simply not spending time with one's family. In addition, Farris (1978) noted that concerns and anxiety exist including fears about growing apart, divorce, and sexual infidelity. These concerns are particularly salient for younger couples. Gerstel and Gross (1984) reported that older, more established couples experience the fear of growing apart, but worry much less about divorce and sexual infidelity. The feeling is they have successfully weathered many storms over the years so living apart would not be enough to prompt those problems.

Going hand-in-hand with emotional costs due to separation is that of being excluded socially for choosing an 'abnormal' and different lifestyle. Groves and Horm-Wingerd (1991) examined LDM participants' perceptions of others' support and acceptance. Despite finding that 51% receive support from family and 66% receive support from friends, the study also revealed that 77% of LDM couples receive negative reactions from others, with 49% of participants reporting negative attitudes from family, and 63% reporting perceived negative social attitudes.

This lack of perceived support, along with couples not being invited to parties and get-togethers (Gerstel & Gross, 1983, 1984; Winfield, 1985) by both married and single friends, contributes to an overall feeling of exclusion and 'abnormality.' In a study of the societal views of LDMs, Towers and Pecchioni (2000) found acceptability varied based on the wife's occupation and age of respondent. Overall, more professional occupations for the wife (such as

being a professor) were more acceptable than jobs (such as being a secretary) as a reason for choosing an LDM. In addition, as respondents' age increased, acceptability decreased. This finding indicates that at least some of the perception of little support felt by LDM participants may be true.

Disadvantages are drawbacks to the choice made; they are the downside to any given decision or event. There exists a separate, more qualitative realm that goes beyond disadvantage. The couples must manage marital problems and difficulties along with the role of communication in the process of adjusting and adapting to the LDM lifestyle. Family and work interference in marriages is common, but the LDM component of the relationship adds an additional layer of complication. In this case, there are problems couples face in LDMs that are more than economic costs and hectic schedules. The problems facing these couples are those that threaten to damage the relationship or one's sense of self.

Problems with the LDM Lifestyle

Lack of support from friends and family who view their lifestyle as non-normal results in negative pressure for the LDM couple (Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983, 1984; Winfield, 1985). When making decisions, many people want support from family and friends to reinforce the decision. When that support is not given, people may begin to question their decisions and begin to wonder if what they are doing is wrong in some way. In this way, the lack of support is both a disadvantage and a problem in the relationship.

Role strain, a fairly common experience particularly for dual-career couples (Bridge & Baxter, 1992; Kopelman, Greenhaus, & Connolly, 1983; Macewen & Barling, 1988; Marks & MacDermid, 1996; Roberts & Price, 1989; Staines & Libby, 1986; Stamp, 1994) also affects couples in LDMs (Anderson & Spruill, 1993; Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983, 1984; Jackson et al.,

2000; Winfield, 1985). Alluded to earlier, role strain occurs when each individual lives an independent life and does everything for him/herself. During visits, however, the tendency is to revert to the 'old' roles and behave in ways not always consonant with the way one behaves when alone. For instance, a man may iron his shirts every day when he is alone, yet expect his wife to perform these tasks during her visits. Similarly, a wife may expect the man to cut the lawn during his visits, even though when she is alone it gets done without him. These struggles between the way one acts when alone and when visiting are linked to spousal expectations and can cause difficulties for the marriage (Anderson & Spruill, 1993; Gerstel & Gross, 1984; Winfield, 1985).

Another factor associated with visits is that of readjustment (Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983, 1984; Gross, 1980, 1981; Winfield, 1985). Many couples report that they experience a shift that requires readjustment to both their partner and the relationship. This need for readjustment also causes relationship difficulties because the partner needing the most adjusting time is often perceived as being distant (Gerstel & Gross, 1984). One may assume that because the partners missed each other, coming together would be easy. On the contrary, coming back together for visits is fraught with difficulties. Time and effort are needed to shift from one role to another and that adjustment period can be disturbing to the relationship (Winfield, 1985).

If this readjustment takes longer than expected, one may begin to experience a 'lack of we-ness' and ego strength that in turn depletes the relationship (Winfield, 1985; see also Honeycutt, 1999, for a discussion of 'we-ness'). This lack of confidence in one's relationship can in turn affect one's career performance as one begins to doubt that the separation is healthy. This pattern of decreased confidence and doubt about the separation can become a negative cycle in which both career and relationship are affected.

Other difficulties arise from work strain. One study reported that PM couples and LDM couples experience similar stress levels (Bunker et al., 1992). There are times, however, when despite stress levels, work interferes with the time the couple can spend together (Gerstel & Gross, 1984; Winfield, 1985). If projects are due, travel required, or one simply has too much work, phone dates may be canceled, visits postponed, and relationship sustenance sacrificed. Thus, though one advantage of an LDM is spending time away on work and time together on the relationship, time together is sometimes neglected or postponed due to work responsibilities (Gerstel & Gross, 1984; Winfield, 1985).

This fact ties directly to the issue of time between visits. The longer the duration between visits, the more difficult the separation and the more strain on the marriage (Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983, 1984; Rindfuss & Stephen, 1990; Winfield, 1985). Gerstel and Gross (1984) reported that couples who visit less than once per month feel "their marriage begins to resemble a non-marriage" (p. 140). Relationships with less frequent visits lack structure, time and place circumstances that provide daily connection, and lack of daily routine that in some ways contribute to the foundation of marriage (Gerstel & Gross, 1984). Thus, extended periods of time apart can weaken the marital relationship, despite frequent phone conversations.

Finally, the presence of children is a variable that dramatically changes the experience of an LDM. Gerstel and Gross (1982) reported that parents of small children experience the most difficulty because the children are too young to understand the living situation, and the non-home parent believes s/he is not contributing to the development of their child, while the custodial parent experiences burn-out from the lack of spousal parenting assistance. As children grow, the problems change. Whereas there are still concerns about contributing to development, these parents are dealing with comments from their children in the struggle to understand why

one parent does not live at home. Gerstel and Gross (1982) reported that these children expect divorce, in part because their friends have told them separation is the first step to divorce.

One risk to the families with children is that of childcare. Farris (1978) discussed the occurrence of concerns similar to single-parent families in finding quality childcare. With only one parent present, if there are problems at the day care, if the child or baby-sitter is ill, or something else unexpected occurs, there is only one parent to accommodate. Thus, "the non-commuting spouse has to cope with work commitments and family demands at the same time" (Farris, 1978, p. 104).

Arrangements in which the children stay with the husband while the wife moves for her career also prompt changes and challenges for the couple (Gerstel & Gross, 1983, 1984; Winfield, 1985). First, the women are approached by co-workers and 'friends' wondering how they can 'do that' to their child(ren), further reinforcing any feelings of concern about not being with their child(ren) every day. In addition, many women report feeling guilty that they do not experience more guilt about leaving. In other words, they are comfortable with their decision, believe their child(ren) know their mother loves them, believe they will see her again, and are receiving adequate care. This guilt about lack of guilt is reinforced by others' inquiries about how she can possibly leave her child(ren).

Husbands, too, experience difficulties when the children are left with them. They have to deal with much more in their day-to-day lives than before, and are thus inconvenienced to a greater extent. The added burden of child rearing on top of increased household duties can be a source of resentment for some husbands (Gerstel & Gross, 1984).

When husbands/fathers move for a job, they experience feelings of not being connected with their child(ren) and of not being involved in the raising and development of their child(ren).

Husbands report feeling left out of their child's life and have difficulty with this feeling stemming from guilt of leaving (Gerstel & Gross, 1984). Though research has not yet explored this further, they may experience less guilt because it may be more acceptable for the man to leave for a job than a woman.

Finally, the woman who remains with her child(ren) experiences the least adjustment. For many women, the pattern of life is the same, though without a helpmate. The husband leaving for his job, with the wife remaining at the family home with the children is probably the least disruptive of the options, for both the wife and the child(ren) (Gerstel & Gross, 1984).

Research begins to clarify, therefore, that one's own experience, societal pressures, and concerns about the child(ren) exponentially complicate the LDM marriage. Research indicates that when there are children present, the traditional family form is preferred by society (Towers & Pecchioni, 2000). In addition, when there are children, women prefer a more traditional family than men, who appear to be more accepting of alternative forms such as LDMs (Towers & Pecchioni, 2000). The reports from couples in LDMs as well as the data from the societal perception study indicate clearly that children play a significant role in defining the LDM experience (Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983, 1984; Towers & Pecchioni, 2000; Winfield, 1985).

Managing the Distance

One lacuna in research is how LDM couples manage the distance. None of the research uncovered discussed specifically how the relationships are sustained. Most sought only to understand the relationship format. Couples do mention visits and phone conversations (Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983, 1984). For instance, 42% of couples studied report talking with their partner on the telephone at least once per day, 30% speak every other day, 17% once per week, and 11% less than once per week (Gerstel & Gross, 1984). Despite differences in frequency, all

couples note the importance of the telephone in maintaining connection. Thus, of the couples that use the phone for contact, many (72%) talk every night or every other night. Therefore, this near-daily contact appears to solidify the bond of being married.

The timing of most studies of LDMs is prior to the explosion in availability of e-mail, but many couples may include e-mail as one of their contact tools (Parks & Floyd, 1996). Media richness theory holds that certain media are more rich (comprising the most social presence) with face-to-face communication being the most rich (Daft & Lengel, 1984; Harwood, 1999).

Perceived media richness influences individuals' assessment of the media and their likelihood of using that medium (Schmitz & Fulk, 1991). Furthermore, Harwood (1999) reports that "dialectical issues of balancing approach-avoidance or connectedness-separateness may play a role in the choice of a low-richness medium for such correspondence" (p. 8) and that individuals can learn to compensate for the low richness of the computer medium and over time be able to still achieve high levels of intimacy through this rather low-richness medium. Harwood (1999) and Rabby's (1997) research lead to further questions of the purposes of e-mail and instant messaging in the connection experience. In other words, perhaps e-mail is used for flirting or jokes, whereas instant messaging is used for immediate work concerns or small talk about one's day. Research has yet to explore these functions of electronic connection, and their connection to geographically separated spouses.

Rabby (1997) reported that geographically separated dating couples do use e-mail as one method of maintaining contact. In addition, those who use e-mail to sustain their connection tend to emphasize positive strategies such as assurance and positivity, rather than conflict engagement, avoidance, and anti-social behavior (Rabby, 1997). These findings may hold true

for LDM couples, as well. Research is needed to determine the role of technology in sustaining the LDM relationship.

Allen (1994) reported finding that couples in long distance dating relationships experience an increase in the number of imagined interactions (IIs) with their partner during the time apart. Imagined interactions occur when an individual imagines him/herself interacting with another person. The interaction may be one that has already occurred, and thus the person is recalling (retroactive), or has yet to occur, and thus the person is anticipating and planning (proactive). Imagined interactions occur most frequently with romantic partners (Honeycutt, 1999; Honeycutt, Zagacki, & Edwards, 1988). Thus, Allen (1994) showed that geographically separated couples use IIs to aid in coping with separation and participants may gain understanding about their relationship from these IIs. Though not reported directly by Allen (1994) or Honeycutt (1999), the use of IIs may also aid in maintaining a sense of ‘we-ness.’ While applied by Allen (1994) to geographically separated dating couples, these findings may be true of LDM couples as well.

LDM Participants’ Perceptions of Societal Opinions of the LDM Lifestyle

Geographically separated couples report perceiving a lack of support (Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983, 1984; Gross, 1980, 1981; Groves & Horm-Wingerd, 1991; Farris, 1978; Winfield, 1985). In addition, those in LDMs compare their relationship to the model of traditional marriage (Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983, 1984; Gross, 1980, 1981; Orton & Crossman, 1983; Winfield, 1985). That is, the traditional model of husband and wife living in one home, possibly with children, and all the connotations of that lifestyle is the model to which LDM couples compare themselves. The comparison to traditional marriages could contribute to LDM couples believing their relationship is out of the ordinary as that model does not account for their lifestyle

(Anderson & Spruill, 1993; Gerstel & Gross, 1983, 1984; Orton & Crossman, 1983; Winfield, 1985). Indeed, the very nature of living apart while happily married does not conform to the traditional marriage model. In a subsequent study, however, Govearts and Dixon (1988) report that “commuters appeared to hold increasingly non-conventional views of their marital and parental roles” (p. 275). Whereas more study on this variable is obviously needed, perhaps the marital model for CMs and LDMs is changing as the relationships become more prevalent. Furthermore, though existing research does not explore this idea, perhaps through witnessing other LDM couples’ success, couples will not only see LDMs as an option, but shape their marital schema for navigating this type of relationship.

As the number of LDM couples increases and other marital forms become prevalent, the question arises whether those forms will come to act as marital models. In addition to having concerns about their marriage conforming to a societal ‘marital norm’ of the traditional marriage, some couples may experience conflict with society’s views of relational contracts in marriage.

Gowler and Leggee (1978) reported that marriages have hidden contracts that govern how they are enacted. The authors articulated that

for [long distance married] couples, the basic ingredient of the hidden contract in conventional marriage can no longer be assumed. The husband cannot assume his wife’s automatic commitment to providing domestic back-up support for his career, any more than the wife can make this assumption about her husband (p. 56).

Clearly, while relying on the traditional model, the contracts implicit in that model are no longer valid for the couple. Choosing this lifestyle may indicate that these couples are breaking down or restructuring not only their own contracts for what marriage is and how it should be ‘done,’ but those of society, as well.

LDMs as a Communication Event

Communication is crucial to the formation, sustenance, and growth of any relationship (Burgoon & Hale, 1984). The importance of communication is no less true for LDMs. In any relationship, negotiation must take place. Negotiation enables participants to agree on appropriate behaviors as well as to contribute to the formation of a shared worldview, contributing to the intimacy of the couple (Stephen, 1986). This negotiation is often a challenge because participants enter relationships as unique individuals, who may not initially see the world in the same way. Mastering this challenge and managing the negotiation successfully then strengthens and in turn informs the relationship. Therefore, communication is crucial to defining any relationship, including marriage.

Couples in an LDM cannot perform routine living behaviors such as shared meals, accompanied by the sustenance that takes place in such activities, so how do they compensate? How do they sustain their connection? How do they continue to sustain a relationship without co-presence? How do they make their marriage successful? Do they experience dissatisfaction with the new style of communicating required by the new marital living situation? In part, these questions can only be understood by comparing the LDM to a proximal marriage.

When in a dual-career proximal marriage, each partner comes home at the end of the work day, dinner is fixed or bought, they sometimes discuss their day, and eventually sit together and enjoy simply being together (Bavelas & Coates, 1992; Sillars & Wilmot, 1989). Whereas this may not be true for all couples, or a nightly occurrence, it is a primary component of the marriage experience. For many couples, these day-to-day activities can be taken for granted, and are often mindless.

Langer, Blank, and Chanowitz (1978) discuss the difference between mindfulness and mindlessness. Mindfulness occurs when "people attend to their world and derive behavioral strategies based on current incoming information" (p. 635) and mindlessness exists when "new information actually is not being processed. Instead, prior scripts, written when similar information was once new, are stereotypically reenacted" (p. 636) can clearly be seen in the life of marriage. Husbands and wives not only come to expect the mindless, mundane activities, they are part and parcel of daily living. Duck (1988) reported that these trivial realities can be just as important to the relationship as more strategic interactions that are traditionally studied as 'important' in the relational work of married couples.

Mundane activities contribute to overall relationship sustenance (Duck, 1988, 1994). Indeed, "social structures are constituted in the mundane 'stuff' [sic (in original)] of everyday interaction" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 27). As Baxter and Montgomery (1996) discussed, relationships are dynamic, complex entities that are continually plagued by contradiction. As previously discussed, these qualities preclude using the phrase 'relational maintenance,' and instead sustenance is preferable. In addition, mundane activities fall under the dialectic of predictability, to be discussed later. Thus, the routine behaviors that many may view as mundane or mindless are crucial to both sustaining the relationship and anchoring one pole of a relational dialectic (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Gerstel & Gross, 1984).

For couples in an LDM, companionate silence is not possible on a regular basis. Simply sitting together reinforces being together and the relationship in general (Gerstel & Gross, 1983, 1984). While in the presence of another, both verbal and nonverbal communication are important. Communication is crucial to the success of any marriage, long distance or proximal (Gerstel & Gross, 1980, 1981; Gottman, 1994, 1999). In many ways, the vast majority of

interactions in PMs are mundane and scripted. While the partners may not be satisfied with the mundane, scripted nature of marriage, with such constant potential for interaction, the mundane, scripted conversations can be corrected quite easily, contributing to a reinforced sense of 'we-ness.' Sheer proximity has the potential to reinforce the marital ritual and the desired relationship. Gerstel and Gross (1984) reported that in LDMs "the participants are not only unable to see each other, but they cannot touch each other, which is one of the aspects of emotional support commuters miss most" (p. 59).

Due in part to costs of connection, such as phone calls and visits, LDM couples believe their communication should be more lively and engaging (Gerstel & Gross, 1984). This belief that communication should be 'different' than before the separation may indicate a struggle to maintain the 'old' nature and notion of the relationship while coming to terms with the relational limitations of their situation. The amount of time available for communication is so much more limited that each communication event is more crucial. Research has demonstrated that for healthy relationships both 'heavy discussions' (i.e., the relationship, goals, and the separation) and small talk (i.e., the weather, work, and daily events) are important (Duck, 1988; Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1984; Gross, 1980, 1981; Stephen, 1986). Long distance married couples report missing the small talk, the everyday conversations, during the separation. Too often, they report, the 'important' conversations dominate, neglecting such topics as what they wore to work, what they ate for lunch, and other day-to-day events of life that proximal couples do not need to ask about because they witness them. With the rise of availability and the decreased cost of various electronic media, it may be possible to overcome the distance through increased use of various electronic technologies. While the use of technology certainly will not approximate a PM, it may increase connection among LDM couples.

For couples in LDMs, pressure exists between the expense of spending time on the phone to sustain the relationship and the lack of nonverbal communication afforded to them (Gerstel & Gross, 1984). While vocal qualities are nonverbal cues, there are far more nonverbal cues missing than present. The lack of nonverbal cues coupled with the inability to ‘enjoy’ silence on the phone contributes to making the LDM difficult to manage. Technology, however, may bring surprising changes. Newer technology allows individuals to talk via the Internet for very little money (often even free). Newer technology also includes videophones whereby couples could actually see each other, thus enriching a currently limited medium. Whereas the implications of these technological advances have yet to be completely uncovered, LDM couples may be the impetus for making such connection more mainstream, and may help to sustain the LDM relationship better than more traditional mediums.

Kirchler (1988) found that for proximal couples, tension between focusing on ‘big’ issues versus ‘little’ issues was perceived to be both good and bad. The more frequently couples discussed personal issues (17% of talk time, on average), the happier the couple was. The amount of time LDM couples spend working on their relationship and discussing their situation and their future (examples of personal issues), may contribute to their success. Kirchler’s study, however, focused on PM couples, so one cannot be sure if the same finding would hold for LDM couples, though it appears it may. Perhaps because LDM couples spend so much time on their relationship and do things together during visits compared to PMs in which the couple can spend time together with little activity, marital satisfaction is higher among geographically separated couples.

Couples indicate these mundane details are important to them in sustaining connection (Gerstel & Gross, 1984). Thus, couples report there should be a balance between the mundane

topics and the serious topics. This balance, however, is often lost somewhere between acknowledging that small talk is important and not wanting to ‘waste time’ on the little things (Gerstel & Gross, 1984). Duck (1994) reported that these mundane details of life may be just as or more important to sustenance than strategic messages. Research may discover, therefore, that there is a tension in maintaining the right balance in conversational topic to remain satisfied with the relationship, the communication, and the separation.

Likewise, LDM couples report that in the separation information often gets lost (Gerstel & Gross, 1984). That is, if the couple were living together they could tell stories about work or thoughts they had on a daily basis. Thus, each day builds on the previous one. In a long distance marriage, however, each day does not necessarily build on the one before. Couples report that some information does not seem pertinent or important enough to share in the nightly phone call, so they hold it until a visit. By that time, however, the news or funny story has passed and the context is no longer right. Therefore, the story is no longer funny, the thoughts no longer relevant. This time/space dimension of lives can often lead to a distance between the partners because information that comprises life’s experiences is not being shared with each other (Gerstel & Gross, 1984).

Due to the assumption that many LDM participants are believed to be in academia and other professional occupations (Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983, 1984), it could be this population has greater access to the Internet (Rabby, 1997). At the time that many studies of geographically separated couples were conducted, e-mail and Internet access were not widespread. Today, however, that is not the case, particularly for the LDM population. Therefore, it may be that small, impersonal topics are communicated via e-mail or instant messages (IMs). The desire to communicate only small, impersonal topics via e-mail or IM can be explained by Media

Richness Theory. Media Richness Theory's premise that certain media (like e-mail or IM) are less rich; they have less social presence. Therefore the feeling that these less rich media are more suitable for small talk or impersonal topics makes sense. Rabby (1997) discovered that most e-mails of geographically separated friends and dating couples tend to be positive in nature. Whereas Rabby's (1997) study focused on friends, his findings may be true for LDM couples as well. The satisfaction level of LDMs with this form of communication is yet to be reported, however.

Verbal channels of communication thus become the cornerstone of the relationship, in a magnitude greater than in PMs. Because the LDM couple does not have daily opportunity for shared co-presence and the nonverbal cues associated with that shared space, they rely almost solely on verbal communication to sustain the relationship. Gerstel and Gross (1984) interviewed LDM couples who report that silence on the phone does not work as silence in person does. While silence in person can be companionate, silence on the phone is not. Furthermore, Ball (1968) discussed the immediacy and urgency created by a ringing telephone that prompts individuals to answer the phone regardless of mood. LDM partners may spend time on the phone when they would rather not.

In addition, feeling understood by one's spouse positively contributes to overall relationship happiness (Burggraf & Pavitt, 1991; Cahn, 1983, 1990; Sillars, Pike, Jones & Murphy, 1984). Cahn (1990) defined feeling understood as "an individual's assessment of his or her success when attempting to communicate" (p. 231). Thus, a person's perception of communicative success with his/her spouse, rather than actual communicative success, may contribute to his/her overall relationship satisfaction. Whereas Cahn's (1990) study focused on

PM couples, the findings may hold true for LDM couples, as well. Feeling misunderstood and contending with the telephone are not the only communicative challenges in this relationship.

When couples reunite for visits, there are often awkward silences and questions designed to get to know each other again (Gerstel & Gross, 1984). This awkwardness and thought that one's spouse is someone s/he does not know very well can cause conflict as a problem unique to LDMs. The awkwardness felt is atypical for people who know each other well. The historical pressure of 'how married people should act' conflicts with personal experience in this case. One knows his/her spouse from years of being married and from talking (nearly) every night. Yet awkwardness exists. Couples must then uncover a method for overcoming the initially cumbersome event of visiting.

Gerstel and Gross (1983) reported that not all spouses experience this awkwardness to the same degree. In other words, one spouse may feel awkward and uncomfortable initially during visits while the other does not have those feelings. This difference may cause conflict if the other spouse does not understand the origins of the discomfort (Gerstel & Gross, 1983). The way in which couples manage the separation, reintegration during visits, and potentially concurrent conflict may be indicative of several variables including their couple type.

Fitzpatrick (1988) identified three primary couple types designated primarily by communication style, means of handling conflict and decision-making, and time management. The three types are traditional, separate, and independent. Traditional and separate couples hold a conventional ideology about marriage, with traditional couples exhibiting high interdependence and separates preferring low interdependence. Conventional orientation refers to stressing traditional community customs, such as a wife taking her husband's name and the belief that infidelity is always inexcusable. The third type, independents, are characterized by an

unconventional ideology and high interdependence. Because certain couple types communicate in a particular way, and define their relationship in a particular way, they are more likely to choose a particular style and thus handle the conflict and separation in different ways than other couples.

In a traditional marriage, high levels of sharing and companionship, regular time schedules, and low levels of support for autonomous physical space characterize high interdependence. These couples neither seek nor avoid conflict in their relationship. Separates publicly share the conventional ideology of marriage and family as traditional couples do, but in private tend to support individual freedom over relational connectedness. These couples tend to retain psychological distance and maintain high levels of autonomy. Separates' attempts at interdependence are enacted through adhering to a regular daily time schedule. These couples prefer to avoid marital conflict. The third group, independents, "hold fairly nonconventional values about relational and family life" (Fitzpatrick, 1988, p. 76). Couples holding an independent ideology believe relationships should not constrain an individual's freedom. This couple type is also characterized by experiencing high levels of companionship and sharing. Independent couples attempt to stay psychologically close to each other, while also maintaining separate physical spaces. These couples have difficulty managing daily time schedules and do not hesitate to engage in conflict when necessary.

Pure types are marriages in which both partners agree on a definition of the relationship. Mixed couples, on the other hand, refers to couples in which the husband and wife define the relationship differently. The major mixed type found by Fitzpatrick (1988) is that of husband as separate and wife as traditional. In her research, Fitzpatrick (1988) found that 60% of couples surveyed were a pure type. Couple type research includes connections to marital happiness

(Honeycutt, 1999), family interaction and schemata (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994), and relational expectations (Kelley, 1999; Kelley & Burgoon, 1991).

Based on the descriptions of the couple types, it is easy to see that some couple types may be more amenable to the idea of living separately due to careers. In addition, because each type handles conflict differently, once in an LDM, certain couple types may handle the separation more easily than others. Relational definitions, the way in which couples perceive their relationship, come about and are shared through communication. Couple types are a reflection of relational definitions. Conflict is inherently a communication phenomenon, and the way in which a couple enacts their marriage as either conventional or unconventional is communicative in nature.

Despite the communication difficulties, commuter/long distance couples often have higher success rates than PM couples (Gerstel & Gross, 1984). Long distance marital couples may rely on certain ‘truths’ about their situation that make it somewhat easier to cope. Because these couples know they only have verbal communication to sustain their marriage on a daily basis, they may be more cognizant of what they say and what needs to be said. Perhaps time apart from one’s spouse, longer than that of a workday, is helpful to some extent. With the greater amount of time spent discussing big issues, these couples take more time to work on their relationship than PM couples do. Perhaps the ‘work hard, play hard’ ethic that places equal priority on work and family of the LDM couples studied contributes to their success.

As has been noted, LDMs have survived through time. Though it is nearly impossible to know exact numbers because the census polls require families to live in one household, anecdotal evidence such as the rise in popular press coverage of such relationships suggests these types of marriages are on the rise. In addition, not every researcher is in agreement about the

definition of a long distance marriage. Some use the terms commuter marriage and long distance marriage interchangeably. These discrepancies in conceptualizing the population may lead to disparate findings, and speak to the necessity of studies that make the distinction more clear as each may have different characteristics and experiences. In addition, little data analysis has taken place beyond that of descriptive endeavors. Further, whereas long distance dating couples have been studied more extensively due to ease of sampling, the phenomenon of long distance heterosexual married couples has yet to move beyond descriptive analysis. With restriction to communication-based research, one finds even less. Clearly, explanatory communication-based studies are needed at this time. Though little research in communication has been conducted, communication theories exist that may predict and explain the LDM relationship.

Theoretical Foundation and Related Hypotheses: Dialectics

Introduction and History

The recently emerging paradigm that relationships are not static, but dynamic, non-linear, and transactional is directly related to dialectics (Brown, Werner & Altman, 1998; Sahlstein & Baxter, 2000; Werner & Baxter, 1994), and can be used to examine the long distance marriage phenomenon. Baxter (1990) introduced this ‘theory’ as contributing to the understanding of communication and relationships. Originally her ideas were not intended as a theory but a framework with which to view relationships (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). With roots dating back to Socrates’ and Plato’s dialogic method of inquiry, dialectics is a long-standing framework for understanding both communication and relationships. Heraclitus, as well, believed that “reality was a process of ongoing flux and change in which everything is both in a condition of coming to be and ceasing to be” (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 20). Not only have the classical Greek rhetoricians and philosophers employed the dialogic approach, but Taoist philosophers have as well, thus contributing to today’s understanding of dialectics. Baxter and Montgomery (1996) trace dialectical influence through Augustine, Aquinas, Bakhtin, Descartes, Hegel, Kant, Marx, Mircovic, Ramus, Rousseau, and Spinoza.

Plato’s view of dialectic was rather nebulous, though touted by him to be ‘the ideal method’ (Robinson, 1953). Plato intended dialectic to be the search for “what each thing is” (Robinson, 1953, p. 70) and the essence of coming to an understanding (Gadamer, 1991). The dialectician “would achieve certainty” (p. 72). This certainty would be one of intuition; a certainty not able to be communicated to any other man, but only a pure and perfect dialectician (Robinson, 1953). Simply put, in ancient Greek times “dialectic was understood as the criticism of beliefs in order to discern any possible contradictions” (Dunning, 1997, p. 11). Furthermore,

dialectic was a method to be used in social situations, not for an individual do to alone, and was applicable to human, social, and biological sciences alike. Thus, during Plato's time dialectic was a means to discover truth and all its inherent contradictions (dialectic-as-epistemology).

Moving ahead by millennia, Hegel also contributed a great deal to modern day understandings of dialectic. Hegel criticized Plato's perception of dialectic asserting that Plato's view of dialectics is not pure (as Plato asserted) because he proceeds from assumed propositions (Gadamer, 1976). Hegel proceeds from Plato's view of dialectic as a verb – a methodology for discovering some element or essence of truth. Whereas Hegel does not disagree that dialectic can be a method for discovering truth, he recognizes that truth is imprecise. Furthermore, it is with Hegel that the 'both/and' component of dialectic is firmly established (and the view of dialectic-as-ontology). Hegel's dialectical perspective clearly delineates that one cannot understand one element, or pole, of a dialectic without fully explicating and understanding the other. Thus it becomes clear that understanding a dialectical contradiction will be no easy task. Each pole needs to be understood not only for its own merits, but also its relationship to its counterpart.

Extending the work of Hegel, Mikhail Bakhtin views dialogue as "simultaneous differentiation from yet fusion with another" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 24). In Bakhtin's work the connection to relationships is more clearly revealed. Bakhtin's view that one cannot know one's self until one reveals one's self to another person, cuts one's self off from others, immerses one's self in contemplation, and again begins the process of revealing one's self clearly depicts the dialectics of interpersonal relationships (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Bakhtin, 1952/1986).

Baxter and Montgomery (1996) apply the dialogical approach constructed through the ages to romantic relationships. The authors propose that in romantic relationships there exist,

both between the relational partners and between the couple and society, persistent contradictions that the couple must somehow resolve. Moving from Plato's assertion that dialectic can be a method for discovering truth, Baxter and Montgomery (1996) assert that dialectics are basic elements of life, ever-present, and not related to truth. In this view, the only 'truth' is that dialectics will exist. One cannot seek to uncover the 'truth' of relationships by understanding the dialectics. Indeed, the contradictions can never be truly resolved; rather they can only be experienced and managed.

Dialectics can be rather simply defined as polarities. That is, oppositional pulls exert pressure on relational partners. One side of the polarity cannot be understood without understanding the other side. Thus, both forces are needed to fully understand their impact and influence on the relationship. Three other factors are essential to the understanding of dialectics. The first is change, an inevitable and inherent component of the dynamic nature of relationships. As relationships ebb and flow, the force of each pole of the dialectics changes. The second factor is that of praxis. This term indicates that

people function as proactive actors who make communicative choices in how to function in their social world. Simultaneously, however, they become reactive objects, because their actions become reified in a variety of normative and institutionalized practices that establish the boundaries of subsequent communicative moves (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 13).

Thus, humans in relationships both act and react to stimuli and their environment in a bi-directional manner. Altman (1993) proposed that the physical environment in which a couple enacts the relationship would influence the experience and communication of the dialectics. In other words, praxis is not just a background tent of dialectics, but an active component that can be studied.

The third factor of dialectics is totality. By totality the Baxter and Montgomery (1996) specified that a phenomenon such as a relationship can only be understood in relation to other phenomena. Totality, for these authors, indicates the need to view the world as a "process of relations or interdependencies" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 15), but does not represent aspects of other holistic theories (Werner & Baxter, 1994). In other words, totality is a component of holism, but not equivalent because of its focus on contradictions.

Werner and Baxter (1994) reviewed eight primary research programs of dialectics: the study of couples, families, and communities; the dialogic approach applied to friendships, romantic relationships, and marital relationships; a family dialectics approach; second-order relational transitions; the dialectics of "ex's"; social contextual dialectics; individual-communal tension in cultural communication; and dialectics of friendship. Though researchers agree on the primary tenets of the dialectical construct discussed here, there are varying applications and methods of studying this element of relationships. Some consider dialectics primarily accessible through interviews (i.e. Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, 1998; Conville, 1998; Rawlins, 1998, 1992), while others assert that dialectics can be numerically modeled (i.e. VanLear, 1998). Likewise, various applications of dialectics have been made to such relationships and phenomena as dialectical tensions in abusive and non-abusive families (Sabourin & Stamp, 1995); the dialectical composition of the marriage vow renewal ritual (Braithwaite & Baxter, 1995); the dialectics of being a parent and a partner in a step-family system (Cissna, Cox, & Bochner, 1990); understanding the changing nature of commitment in romantic relationships (Sahlstein & Baxter, 2000); and the dialectical nature of turning points in romantic relationships (Altman, 1993; Baxter & Erbert, 1999).

Internal and External Dialectics

According to Altman (1993) the experience of dialectics can be within the individual (intra-individual dialectical processes), between the relational partners (interpersonal dialectical processes, a.k.a. internal dialectics) and between the couple and society (intergroup dialectical processes, a.k.a. external dialectics). The vast majority of relationship research focuses on the internal and external dialectics, and will be the focus of the present study. Though similar, each dialectic type or location has its own framework and influences the relationship differently.

Internal Dialectics

For purposes of this study, the dialectics of romantic partners are reviewed and studied. Other researchers, most notably Rawlins (1992) use the same core understanding of dialectics and apply it to various other relationship types (friendship, for Rawlins).

The internal dialectics are autonomy-connection, openness-closedness, and predictability-novelty. The external dialectics are termed inclusion-seclusion, revelation-concealment, and conventionality-uniqueness. Baxter and Montgomery (1996) acknowledged that though all three internal and all three external dialectics are experienced at all times, the salience, or importance, for each of the internal and external dialectics may vary by circumstance. Thus, there may be times in which the autonomy-connection internal dialectic is more prominent in the marriage than the other two dialectics. The notion of salience as importance or prominence is central to the current study. The predominant tenet of the current study is that one will experience dominance of a single pole, whereas still experiencing its counterpart, though to a lesser degree. Furthermore, whereas one experiences all of the dialectics simultaneously, circumstances will make one or two dialectical pairs more prominent than the others; a change in circumstance may prompt a change in dialectical salience (within each dialectic and across dialectics).

The remainder of this section will present explanations of the dialectics before discussing their influence on long distance marriages. Altman (1993) discusses the importance of location or physical environment to all of the dialectics to be addressed below. His work is hypothetical and theoretical, thus no conclusions were drawn – only questions posed. Given Altman's considerations, it seems prudent to keep this notion of location or physical environment, in the fore while reviewing the dialectics.

At the heart of the internal dialectics is that of autonomy-connection (Baxter, 1990; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). This tension centers on the dualistic nature of togetherness. Individuals expressing to their partner the need for time alone, space, or personal distance are probably referring to the autonomy pull. On the other hand, those individuals wanting to spend more time together, do more with each other, or see each other more often are probably feeling the pull of connection.

Baxter (1990) asserted that this dialectic is particularly important because "no relationship can exist unless the parties forsake individual autonomy" (p. 70). At the same time, too much togetherness eclipses one's individuality and destroys the relationship. Too much autonomy, however, can also destroy one's individuality because identities are formed and maintained through interaction with other people (Baxter, 1990).

Research by Goldsmith (1990) of proximal couples found evidence supporting these ideas that individuals in romantic relationships experience the autonomy-connection contradiction. Her findings revealed that all participants felt some degree of contradiction about 'being with' versus 'time apart'. She identifies five types of autonomy-connection experience: getting involved and getting to know the other (i.e., exhibited in the difference between simply learning about someone while remaining distant versus getting involved with the person), dating

other people (i.e., the other person being the ‘primary person’ versus being able to freely date others), relational trade-offs (i.e., doing things with friends versus with one’s partner), fairness and tolerance (i.e., described as extending the same courtesy or understanding the other’s experiences), and commitment (i.e., long term versus a rather temporary relationship).

Examined from a different perspective, autonomy-connection may also be seen as a version of approach-avoidance. Mottet and Richmond (1998) report that when one wants to ‘deepen’ the relationship, one would engage in approach (or togetherness) behaviors. On the other hand, during times of distance, one would decrease immediacy through the use of avoidance (or autonomy) behaviors.

The second internal dialectic, that of openness-closedness, refers to self-disclosure. Whereas disclosure is essential for intimacy, it also leaves vulnerable the person who discloses. By its very nature, telling information about one’s self is risky. One does not know how the other person will respond: if they will take it seriously, laugh, or react with disbelief, for instance. At the same time, one is not always confident the disclosure will be kept in confidence. All of these concerns lead to the desire for closedness, or a lack of disclosure. Relationships will not progress or grow, on the other hand, without some level of disclosure (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). If someone does not know anything about the other person, they cannot be ‘best friends’ as that term implies a shared knowledge base and history. Likewise, the ‘total honesty’ policy, whereby individuals agree to tell everything they feel, can be hurtful to the recipient of such honesty. Therefore, there are times an individual wants to tell the other person information and times the individual wants to keep things to him/herself.

Research exploring the ideas of self-disclosure indicate that far too often self-disclosure is viewed as a stagnant, static event rather than an ongoing process (Dindia, 2000). Consistent

with a dialectical framework, self-disclosure is often viewed as a non-linear process (Altman, 1993; Dindia, 2000). Self-disclosure may occur in fits and starts, over a long period of time. In other words, self-disclosure does not occur in one instance, or begin at time A and end at time B. Dindia (2000) argues that if self-disclosure is indeed an ongoing process then dialectical contradictions will be prevalent in relationships throughout the entire relationship life. Furthermore, self-disclosure and the experience of the openness-closedness dialectics reflect and influence one's sense of self (Dindia, 2000). Furthermore when one must disclose a stigmatized identity (i.e., homosexuality, abuse, abortion, HIV/AIDS, STDs) there are several strategies from which to choose, all of which relate to openness-closedness (Dindia, 1998, 2000). Strategies for self-disclosure include selecting a particular target, testing the waters with smaller disclosures or similar types of information, and indirect disclosure. Given all of this information, Altman (1993) also ponders the role of physical environment in one's likelihood and level of self-disclosure (openness-closedness), a point implicitly acknowledged by Dindia (1998).

The third and final internal dialectic revolves around spontaneity. The desire for predictability is that of routine, knowing, and stability. On the other hand, the desire for novelty is for spontaneity, excitement, and change. Every relationship, according to Baxter and Montgomery (1996), feels this polarity. Too much predictability is boring, whereas too much novelty is unsettling. Therefore, a balance is sought between the two. Comments such as "I wish you would surprise me more" are indicative of a desired shift in this dialectic, as is the statement "I wish we could devise a plan for nights we will stay home and not accept plans elsewhere."

External Dialectics

The first external dialectic, inclusion-seclusion, concerns polarities between the couple and society. This dialectic is the counter-part to the internal dialectic, autonomy-connection.

Inclusion refers to the desire to spend time with other people, whereas seclusion refers to the desire to spend time alone as a couple. Too much inclusion too soon can prevent the couple from defining and negotiating their relationship (Griffin, 1997). In other words, couples need time alone to get to know each other and develop the rules and norms for their relationship. On the other hand, too much time alone can be stifling for the couple. Therefore, many couples strive to have a balance between outside stimulation from others (i.e., social acknowledgment of the relationship) and time alone to cultivate the relationship.

The second external dialectic is the counterpart to the internal dialectic of openness-closedness. As an external dialectic it is termed revelation-concealment. When dealing with society, couples must determine how much information to share with others. This form of public disclosure refers to any information about the couple and their relationship. If too much information is shared, the relationship may be sacrificed by too much input from outsiders knowing ‘personal’ information about the relationship. On the other hand, as with the internal dialectic, disclosure and the sharing of information is essential to intimacy. Therefore, close friends and family expect a certain degree of information about the couple’s relationship.

The final external dialectic is that of conventionality and uniqueness, parallel to the predictability-novelty internal dialectic. Griffin (1997) stated that

excessive uniqueness makes others feel uncomfortable. But pressure to conform is only one force a couple feels. Since a carbon copy relationship does not provide the sense of uniqueness necessary for intimacy, a close pair also experiences a pressure to be different (p. 186).

Thus, couples try to maintain a balance between not violating society’s relational norms and still maintaining that “something” that makes them unique.

Baxter and Montgomery (Baxter, 1990; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996) reported that these dialectics are present in romantic relationships. Rawlins (1995) developed a set of dialectics

particular to friendships throughout the lifespan. While similar, the two typologies of dialectics do have differences based on the different nature of the relationships. Empirical research has begun to confirm the existence of both types of relational dialectics (Baxter, 1990; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Montgomery & Baxter, 1998; Rawlins, 1995, 1998). The Baxter and Montgomery (Baxter, 1990; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996) dialectics discussed above, therefore, may be applicable to long distance marriages. Before addressing long distance marriages, however, the dialectics evidenced in proximal romantic relationships and marriages will be reviewed.

Romance, Marriage, and Dialectics

Baxter and Montgomery (2000) report that “relationship change is conceived as dialogically complex, that is, simultaneously characterized as both independent and interdependent, both intimate and non-intimate, both open and closed, both certain and uncertain, both separated from the social order and integrated with the social order, and so forth” (p. 46). According to this perspective, relationships ‘begin’ when, by virtue of two people being together, contradiction is felt. Likewise the relationship ‘ends’ when contradictions cease to exist. Thus, relationships are contradictions; if no contradiction is felt, no relationship exists. Similarly, Dindia (2000) asserts that self-disclosure does not begin after meeting a person and end before relationship dissolution. Rather, self-disclosure is cyclical, transactional, ongoing, open-ended, and spans both the individual and the relationship. Thus, the ongoing conversations that contribute to the enactment of a relationship all characterize this notion of self-disclosure being an ever-present dialectic in one’s life (Dindia, 2000).

Similarly, Goldsmith (1990) discovered that the autonomy-connection dialectic is ever present in the development of pre-marital relationships. Participants in her study were asked to

reconstruct their relationship focusing on times when they felt conflicting desires for both autonomy and connection. Data analysis revealed five primary times of tension: whether or not to become involved; whether or not the relationship was exclusive; time spent with one's partner versus time spent with one's friends; the role of fairness, equality, and obligation in the relationship; and the level of emotional commitment in the relationship.

Stemming from Goldsmith's (1990) work with commitment, Baxter and Erbert (1999) examined the role of both internal and external dialectics in the various turning points of heterosexual, romantic relationships. Overwhelmingly, internal contradictions were attributed greater importance than external contradictions by both males and females (Baxter & Erbert, 1999). Of the external contradictions, conventionality-uniqueness was experienced least. Of the internal contradictions, autonomy-connection and openness-closedness were reported to be the most significant by both males and females. Perhaps the most telling finding of the Baxter and Erbert (1999) study was that no single dialectic characterized a single turning point. In other words, contradictions run throughout the relationship, as do turning points, with no one-to-one correspondence between them.

Finally, Sahlstein and Baxter (2000) built upon both the Goldsmith (1990) and Baxter and Erbert (1999) studies to examine the role of dialectics in romantic commitment. Sahlstein and Baxter (2000) propose that the three types of commitment explicated by Quinn (1985) (commitment-as-attachment, commitment-as-promise, and commitment-as-dedication) are each dialectical in nature and can vary within the same relationship. In other words, an individual may feel high levels of one type of commitment, and simultaneously low levels of another type of commitment, all in the same relationship. All three internal dialectics can be seen in commitment. Autonomy-connection can be seen in one's 'commitment' or attachment to the

other person, while acknowledging each is also an individual. Similarly, one may feel stability in the other's level of commitment, amidst the chaos (novelty) of day-to-day life. Finally, at times discussing one's feelings about the relationship is appropriate, expected, or comfortable, whereas at other times closedness is appropriate, expected, or comfortable. In this way, as a relationship changes and grows, commitment is inherently a dialectical phenomenon of a dialectical relationship (Baxter & Montgomery, 2000; Dindia, 2000).

As relationships move from 'merely romantic' to married (conceptualized by some as the 'ultimate' level of commitment) (Baxter & Erbert, 1999; Sahlstein & Baxter, 2000), dialectics continue to act upon the relationship of the couple and the family as a whole. For instance, Pawlowski (1998) explored the type and frequency of dialectical occurrences in various turning points in marriage. Her study found that, similar to Baxter and Erbert's (1999) study, multiple contradictions exist during and throughout any given turning point. In this study, however, external contradictions were ranked as both more frequent and important than internal contradictions in marital turning points than they were in previous, non-marriage studies (Pawlowski, 1998). Furthermore, gender differences were explored and husbands, more than wives, were worried about sharing information about the relationship with other people; whereas wives were more concerned about conventionality and uniqueness than husbands were.

When examining stepfamily systems, Cissna, Cox, and Bochner (1990) discovered that tensions exist between the roles of parents and marital partners. Thus in stepfamily systems dialectics occur on multiple levels: individual (what Altman, 1993, referred to as intra-personal dialectics), marital (internal dialectics, or interpersonal dialectics), parental (could be both internal and external/inter-group), and family with society (external). The degree of complication

of this many levels of dialectics speaks to the degree of complication in a stepfamily system (Cissna et al., 1990).

Erbert (2000) interviewed 25 married couples to determine the role of dialectics during marital conflict. Couples charted their conflict over the previous 12 months, then applied the level of each dialectical contradiction to each conflict event. Similar to the Baxter and Erbert (1999) study, internal contradictions were more important than external contradictions, and autonomy-connection and openness-closedness were most important across all conflict issue types. Erbert (2000) concluded that conflict and dialectics are intricately intertwined in that conflicts stem from dialectical contradictions, and dialectical contradictions are inherent in many conflict episodes for married couples.

Taking conflict further, Sabourin and Stamp (1995) used in-depth interviews to examine the role of dialectics in abusive and non-abusive families. Participants were asked to talk about their day. Such a seemingly innocuous topic provided much fodder for the dialectical mill. While abusive couples were less balanced in their management of both predictability-novelty and autonomy-togetherness, the authors do acknowledge that a truly balanced family must be willing to be imbalanced at times (Sabourin & Stamp, 1995). While this need for imbalance may be true, the significance of their study indicates that the abusive couples were much more uncomfortable with the imbalance than were the nonabusive couples.

Regarding predictability and novelty, abusive couples indicated they have no control over events, whereas non-abusive couples felt they did have control over what happened to them and what behaviors were enacted (Sabourin & Stamp, 1995). Regarding autonomy-connection, abusive couples were more interfering with the other's behavior through complaining and disapproving comments, and provided more opposition to the partner's comments and behaviors.

On the other hand, non-abusive couples were more likely to facilitate interdependence and collaborate toward a (seemingly) common goal of the marriage and relationship thus expressing more approval of behavior. Finally, when examining the openness-closedness dialectic, Sabourin and Stamp (1995) found that the abusive couples were more likely to complain, express despair, make content-level messages, engage in conflict, and use language vaguely. Again, non-abusive couples expressed a different experience of this dialectic in being more complimentary, optimistic, cooperative, and were more likely to use precise language and relational messages. Therefore, clear distinctions can be seen in the expression and experience of dialectics based on whether one is in an abusive or non-abusive relationship.

Finally, Braithwaite and Baxter (1995) examined the dialectical ritual of marriage vow renewal ceremonies. The authors report that the decision to renew marriage vows often stems from a response to a crisis or transformation (novelty), while the ceremony also provides continuity with the past through the inclusion of family and friends important to the relationship in a socially-accepted format (stability). In addition, the ceremony often has private meaning for the couple (seclusion), while being a very public event (inclusion). The third dialectic uncovered in Braithwaite and Baxter's (1995) study was that of reaffirming the societal institution of marriage (conventionality), while also including individual and relational signatures at the vow renewal ceremony (uniqueness). Thus, the act of reaffirming love for each other is yet another venue of dialectical experience.

Dialectics and LDMs

Baxter and Montgomery (1996) discussed the evolution of dialectical experience by applying it to long distance marriages. The authors asserted that while together a couple may

perceive a given dialectic one way and reconceive it through the enactment of the long distance marriage. Thus, dialectics have been conceptually linked to the LDM experience.

Previous research by scholars studying LDMs has implicitly explored relational dialectics, though not explicitly. The phenomenon the researchers described was a dialectical phenomenon, indicating that couples feel torn by opposing forces. This section will explore each internal dialectic by tying it to existing research with LDM couples, followed by a similar analysis of the external dialectics.

Internal Dialectics

Autonomy-Connection

The first dialectic, that of autonomy and connection, refers to the dualistic nature of togetherness; the desire to have time to one's self while still valuing the company of his/her romantic partner. The connection of this dialectic to LDMs is clear. Several researchers discussed the problem LDM couples report in wanting to spend more time with their spouse, yet acknowledging the advantages of living alone while being married (Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983, 1984; Douvan & Pleck, 1978). By its very nature, a long distance marriage attests to the autonomy-connection dialectic. The period of reintegration at each visit also speaks to the difficulty in shifting gears from autonomy to connection, no matter how much one desires the connection and time together.

Openness-Closedness

The openness-closedness dialectic refers to the dualistic nature of self-disclosure. Should a person share information or keep it to one's self? In long distance marriages, there is a concern about how much information to tell, particularly given the constraints of time and cost to talk via the telephone (Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1984; Winfield, 1985). Long distance married couples are

plagued by concerns about whether to share their anxieties and worries about their marriage because to tell is to open the door for the partner's concerns, but not to tell is not being quite open with each other. With the distance and time between visits, there is no guarantee the feelings will be addressed if they are not discussed during the intervening sustaining conversations. As mentioned above, some partners hold information such as thoughts or stories until the visit only to find that the context is no longer appropriate. Will keeping this information to one's self hurt the relationship further? Will sharing hurt the relationship? These are examples of questions that LDM individuals ask themselves (Gerstel & Gross, 1984; Winfield, 1985). This dialectic is directly related to the experience of LDM couples.

Predictability-Novelty

The predictability-novelty dialectic centers on stability versus excitement. Winfield (1985) reported that novelty still occurs in LDMs: husbands send wives singing telegrams and spouses plan unexpected visits. In addition, respondents in Winfield's (1985) study assert that simply being together during visits was exciting after any given period of separation. Likewise, many couples try to plan fun activities for their visits to keep things exciting (Gerstel & Gross, 1984; Winfield, 1985). On the other hand, some couples seem to feel the nature of their marriage is exciting enough and those couples choose to quietly stay home during their visits to regain a sense of predictability and routine in their lives (Gerstel & Gross, 1984; Winfield, 1985). Gerstel and Gross (1984) reported that because of the limited time available during visits, activities tend to be planned in advance, sacrificing much of the spontaneity potentially available in a proximal marriage.

External Dialectics

Inclusion-Seclusion

The external dialectic of inclusion and seclusion points to whether or not the couple wants to spend time with other people while the couple is together. In long distance marriages, this dialectic becomes key when determining how much time to spend with other people during visits. Gerstel and Gross (1984) reported that many couples prefer to keep to themselves when they are visiting each other, maximizing time actually spent in the presence of the other. When the partners are alone again, however, visits from supportive family members are welcome. Thus, one can see how the couple would be torn between wanting to spend time alone enjoying each other's company, yet also have the desire to spend time with couple-friends and family members, both of whom miss the couple undergoing the separation.

Revelation-Concealment

Revelation and concealment concern how much information about their relationship the couple shares with outsiders. When couples decide to live separately, new questions arise about the level of information to tell family and friends. Because the perception is that others find this lifestyle abnormal (Groves & Horm-Wingerd, 1991), some couples are reluctant to tell very much (Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1984). These couples may simply assert that careers are taking them to different cities, yet the living arrangement is temporary pending a particular event such as a job relocation for the remaining spouse. Inevitably, however, families, friends, and co-workers will ask about the progress of the separation. Here, again, the couple must decide how much to tell. Do they share their fears and concerns? How will that affect others' perceptions of the marriage? This dialectic may become a concern as the couple adapts to and copes with this lifestyle.

Conventionality-Uniqueness

The conventionality-uniqueness dialectic refers to the pressure a couple feels to conform to expectations of ‘normal’ relationships or be innovative and unique from the norm. One can immediately see that LDM couples have a degree of uniqueness inherent in their relationship. Their very marital form is not that of the majority of society. As reported, Groves and Horm-Wingerd (1991) found that LDM couples perceived a lack of support and a feeling that they were ‘different.’ Likewise, Gerstel and Gross (1984) observed that couples felt others saw them as not normal because they chose to live apart from their spouses. Towers and Pecchioni (2000) verified that, indeed, certain LDM situations were rated to be unacceptable, indicating there may be an element of the relationship that is too unique for comfort.

Perhaps LDM couples feel they are acting outside the norm and react by attempting to be conventional in other areas. For instance, couples may tell others about the mundane activities or discussions the couple has to reinforce the conventional pole of this dialectic. Winfield (1985) noted that women in LDMs spend a great deal of time reassuring others that their relationship is the same as others’ with one twist: the couple lives in separate locations. This “same but different” notion may be one of the largest hurdles for couples in LDMs, though research has yet to bear this out.

Critique of Dialectics

While appropriate for the current exploration, the dialectical approach is not without fault. Its weaknesses lie primarily in two areas. First, Baxter and Montgomery (1996) contend the most appropriate methods for testing the existence and influence of dialectics on relationships are qualitative: examination of diaries, ethnography, historical narratives, everyday conversations, and stories people tell themselves in novels and movies. Whereas these are

acceptable methods of inquiry, social scientists prefer a more quantitative model of inquiry that allows for generalizability of findings. According to Baxter and Montgomery (1996), quantitative inquiry is far removed from the 'real' experience and thus may not be enough in exploring dialectical influence.

The second major weakness resides with the complexity of a dialectical approach. There are a total of six dialectics discussed by Baxter and Montgomery (1996). If each dialectic affects each of the other five, there is potential for a morass of influence. Whereas social scientists may see this mass of interrelated ideas as a weakness, Baxter and Montgomery (1996) posit that the inherent messiness of relationships is what the dialectical approach seeks to understand. These weaknesses are not insurmountable, however. Through a system of methodological triangulation and systematic inquiry, both qualitative and quantitative scholars can employ this complex framework for understanding similarly complex interpersonal relationships.

Synthesis of Theory and Variables: Hypotheses

Throughout the discussion of long distance marriages, several variables were identified that may influence the communication and the successful navigation of a difficult marital form. Variables identified that may be important are relationship and separation satisfaction (Gerstel & Gross, 1980, 1981), feelings of understanding/ misunderstanding (Cahn, 1984, 1990), relationship sustenance (Duck, 1994; Stafford & Canary, 1991), social support (Groves & Horn-Wingerd, 1991; Winfield, 1985), IIs (Honeycutt, Zagacki, & Edwards, 1988), and couple type (Fitzpatrick 1977, 1988; Fitzpatrick & Best, 1979; Fitzpatrick & Indvick, 1982). Each of these variables has a potential connection to LDMs and can be conceptually linked to dialectics. The remainder of this section will explore that relationship, paving the way for a discussion of hypotheses and research questions.

Saliency of Dialectics

As Baxter and Montgomery (1990, 1996) discussed, dialectics are oppositions in relationships that diametrically pull at each participant. These theorists identified both internal and external dialectics that have the potential to affect the couple's experience of the relationship. Both the internal and external dialectics are an ever-present facet of any relationship and govern much of the interaction and experience of the LDM relationship separation.

Baxter and Montgomery (1996) asserted that the saliency of the dialectics may change by circumstance. Being in LDMs, therefore, may pose such a situation that would make certain dialectics more pressing than others. Couples in LDMs experience limitations on interaction time, whether via phone conversations or visits. Because couples make the choice to live this lifestyle, balancing communication during the separation is most likely a major concern. The concern of second-most importance is planning visits, followed by the inherent novelty of the relationship. Thus the first hypothesis is:

H1: Openness-closedness will be ranked as the most salient internal dialectic concern, autonomy-connection as the second-most salient concern and predictability-novelty as the least salient concern for LDM couples.

Due in part to the uniqueness of the relationship and comparing this relationship to the traditional model (Gerstel & Gross, 1983; Winfield, 1985) and the perception that everyone else is also comparing them to 'traditional' marriage (Groves & Horm-Wingerd, 1991), it is proposed that couples will be very careful about what they tell others about their relationship. Because long distance couples spend little time together, they see the time they do get as precious personal time (Gerstel & Gross, 1983, 1984). Finally, couples in an LDM know they are living a unique lifestyle, despite comparison to a societal 'norm' (Gerstel & Gross, 1983). However, as

long as these couples continue to live apart, they are inherently choosing a solution for the unique-conventional dialectic. In other words, these couples may not perceive that uniqueness to be overly problematic. In light of Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) report that different circumstances can influence the salience of given dialectics, the following hypothesis is made:

H2: Revelation-concealment will be ranked the most salient external dialectic, followed by inclusion-seclusion, with uniqueness-conventionality ranked the least salient external dialectic.

Relationship Satisfaction

Because dialectics play an integral role in romantic relationships (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996), the presence of particular dialectics may affect the partners' relationship satisfaction. Relationship satisfaction in this study refers to marital success and quality. In other words, satisfaction may be a function of successfully negotiating the dialectics inherent in any relationship (Dainton & Kilmer, 1999; Dainton & Stafford, 1999). While the resolution of the dialectics is not a factor of this study, the successful negotiation of dialectics is. If relational parties are dissatisfied with the balance of contradictions, their ensuing relational quality will reflect the former dissatisfaction. Specifically, Baxter and Montgomery (1996) reported that LDM couples may experience a shift of their autonomy-connection definition based on their separation experience. A positive relationship, therefore, is predicted between their experience and their relationship satisfaction such that as one feels higher levels of connection one would also experience higher levels of relationship satisfaction.

H3: There will be a positive relationship between autonomy-connection salience and relationship satisfaction.

In addition, the external dialectic of inclusion-seclusion may be a factor in separation satisfaction because it, too, concerns the separation. If an individual is concerned with time spent with outsiders when together (consequently experiencing high levels of inclusion), the relationship may be seen as troubled and thus rated lower on scores of relationship satisfaction.

Thus:

H4: There will be a negative relationship between the inclusion-seclusion dialectic and relationship satisfaction.

Communication Satisfaction

Communication satisfaction (Hecht, 1978a, 1978b), distinct from relationship satisfaction in focus, refers to overall satisfaction with communicative interactions with one's partner and is also directly related to the dialectics. Though no empirical research was located that links the variable with dialectics, one can speculate that communication satisfaction is directly related to the internal dialectic of openness-closedness. In addition, because the dialectics are communicatively negotiated (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996), communication satisfaction can also be peripherally related to the successful negotiation of all the dialectics. If partners are communicating well, one can predict they will be satisfied with their communication. As has been demonstrated, however, there are many factors that may influence an LDM couples' perception of communication satisfaction (Gerstel & Gross, 1981, 1982) because communication can be much more difficult in this marital form. For instance, if a dialectic were salient for an individual, that dialectic may pose particular problems during the marital separation. Because all dialectics are based in communication (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996), and particularly the openness-closedness dialectic, it is predicted that:

H5: A positive relationship will exist between openness-closedness salience and communication satisfaction.

Feelings of Understanding/Misunderstanding

Cahn (1990) reported that feeling understood by one's spouse positively contributes to overall relationship happiness. Feelings of understanding/misunderstanding (FUM) can also be tied to relational dialectics. Grounded in action and rules theory, FUM concerns the perception of being understood by one's relational partner (Cahn, 1983, 1990). This perception clearly relates to both openness-closedness and autonomy-connection. If a person believes his/her partner understands what s/he is saying, s/he may be more likely to continue sharing information. Likewise, feelings of understanding may promote psychological feelings of connection, which may be important in LDMs.

H6: Openness-closedness salience will be positively related to feeling understood.

H7: Autonomy-connection salience will be positively related to feeling understood.

In addition, feeling understood takes time to learn the other's style. If couples have been married longer before the separation, they have had more time to learn each other's style and thus have higher levels of feeling understood. Likewise, if the dialectic of openness-closedness is not particularly salient, indicating adjustment to that dialectic, it is predicted couples will also feel understood. Thus:

H8: Pre-separation marital length will be positively related to feeling understood.

Imagined Interactions

Imagined interactions (IIs), grounded in symbolic interactionism and cognitive script theory (Honeycutt, et al., 1988), have been discussed by Baxter and Montgomery (1996) in conceptual terms. Honeycutt et al. (1988) asserted that some individuals have "imagined

conversations” in which they recall past conversations in preparation for new ones to determine what to say. Imagined interactions appear most applicable with the internal dialectics of autonomy-connection and openness-closedness.

Imagined interactions (IIs) are cognitive efforts spent on reviewing past (retroactive) or preparing (proactive) conversations with significant others (Honeycutt et al., 1988). Allen (1994) reported increased use of IIs among those in long distance relationships. If individuals are very satisfied or very dissatisfied with the autonomy-connection and openness-closedness dialectics in their relationship, they will experience more IIs than if the dialectics are of moderate salience. If those factors of the relationship are going very well, it is predicted individuals will think about the progress frequently. Likewise, if there are problems with the relationship, individuals will spend a great deal of time reflecting on the relationship. Thus:

H9: There will be an inverted curvilinear relationship between autonomy-connection salience and global II use.

H10: There will be an inverted curvilinear relationship between openness-closedness salience and global II use.

Social Support

Social support has been conceptualized in many different ways, and for purposes of this study is defined as appropriate and effective communication by outsiders of an emotional nature with those in an LDM (Groves & Horm-Wingerd, 1991). In other words, social support is the communication to an LDM participant, thereby implying some level of dialogue about the relationship. Therefore social support appears to be directly related to revelation-concealment. If outsiders make inappropriate comments, it is likely the couple will share less with those people. The social support perceived from family and friends may positively affect how much couples

tell others about their relationship. In other words, if friends and family appear to be supportive, couples may have no second thoughts about telling them additional information about the relationship. If outsiders are judgmental or insensitive, the couple may experience more caution when sharing information.

H11: There will be a positive relationship between the revelation-concealment dialectic and social support.

Relationship Sustenance

Relationship sustenance refers to "specific behaviors oriented towards sustaining the relationship" (Dainton & Kilmer, 1999, p. 4). This variable is comprised of such factors as offering advice, assurances, conflict management, openness, positivity, shared tasks, and shared social networks. Dainton and Kilmer (1999) discovered that couples in long distance relationships (LDRs) have their expectations for sustenance behaviors met to a greater degree than geographically close relationships. This finding that LDR expectations for sustenance behaviors are met to a higher degree indicates that those in LDRs may be putting more effort into sustaining their relationship. The above conclusion makes sense as Gerstel and Gross (1984) reported LDM couples spend a great deal of time working on their relationship.

By logically extending the theoretical presuppositions one might expect that several of the sustenance factors readily refer to dialectical contradictions. For instance, openness as a sustenance strategy appears to refer to self-disclosure, as does the openness-closedness dialectic. Offering advice may be one way to increase connection, as would offering one's assurances. Meanwhile, shared tasks refer to autonomy-connection and shared social networks may be related to two external dialectics: inclusion-seclusion and revelation-concealment. The relationship between shared social networks and inclusion-seclusion and revelation-concealment

may arise due to conflicts in time spent with those in the shared social network and the degree of information shared with outside individuals. Therefore, the following predictions can be made:

H12: There will be a positive relationship between:

- a. openness salience (versus the closed end of the internal dialectic) and openness as a sustenance strategy.
- b. connection salience (versus the autonomy end of the internal dialectic) and offering advice and assurances.
- c. connection salience (versus the autonomy end of the internal dialectic) and shared tasks.
- d. inclusion salience (versus the exclusion end of the external dialectic) and shared social networks.
- e. revelation salience (versus the concealment end of the external dialectic) and shared social networks.

Indirect Theory-Related Hypotheses and Research Questions

Introduction

Dialectics are not the only concept of interest in the study and understanding of LDMs. The previous chapter addressed the dialectics and proposed hypotheses between the theoretical construct and the marital form addressed in this study. Furthermore, all theoretical connections are not clear due to the lack of research about LDMs. This chapter, therefore, addresses additional relationships that may exist in understanding the LDM experience. To that end, variables will be discussed, and accompanying hypotheses and research questions posed.

In addition to each variable having a potential link to the dialectics, some variables may be related to each other. While there is not room in this study to test all possible relationships between the variables and the theory and inter-relationships among the variables all in an LDM context, the connections thought to be critical to the success of LDMs will be considered and discussed next. The variables of interest in this section are relationship satisfaction, communication satisfaction, feelings of understanding/misunderstanding, relationship sustenance, and couple type.

Relationship Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction is of concern for married couples in general (Gottman, 1994), and long-distance couples are no exception (Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983). Though relevant in the above hypotheses in relation to dialectics, relationship satisfaction may also play a role in LDMs as a result of several other phenomena. For instance, II use, separation length, and feeling understood may all influence one's level of relationship satisfaction in LDMs.

Honeycutt (1999) reported that II use predicts marital happiness in certain couples, whereas Allen (1994) reported that geographically separated dating couples use IIs to aid in

coping with the separation. In addition, these dating couples experienced an increase in the number of IIs when separated. Thus, increased II use during separation may be related to better coping and ensuing relationship satisfaction. Therefore:

H 13: There will be a positive relationship between global II use and relationship satisfaction.

Interviews with geographically separated couples reveal that these couples have a lower rate of divorce than the general public does (Gerstel & Gross, 1983, 1984; Winfield, 1985). In addition, interviews revealed these couples perceive themselves as satisfied, overall, with their marriage. Many of these couples, however, were commuter couples who saw each other every weekend. Couples who see each other less frequently and are apart longer may acknowledge the benefits of the separation favoring their dual priorities for a time. Given the lack of support for this relationship however, one cannot be certain. To aid in uncovering this relationship, the following research question is posed:

RQ1: What is the relationship between length of separation and relationship satisfaction?

In relationships, individuals like to be understood (Cahn, 1983). Cahn (1990) also reported that feeling understood by one's spouse positively contributes to overall relationship happiness. Feeling understood by one's spouse, particularly when separated by a great distance, may in some way contribute to overall relationship satisfaction.

RQ2: What is the relationship between feeling understood and relationship satisfaction?

Communication Satisfaction

Further, couples married longer before the separation have had more time to adjust and form their own rules for communicating (Gerstel & Gross, 1984). These rules for communicating are sometimes referred to as a form of relational culture (Wood, 2002). Relational culture refers

to the “private world of rules, understandings, meanings, and patterns of acting and interpreting that partners create for their relationship” (Wood, 2002, p. 386). Clearly a relational culture develops over time; time spent communicating and interacting with one’s spouse. Therefore couples married longer will be more satisfied with their communication during the separation than couples married less time.

H14: There will be a positive relationship between pre-separation marriage length and communication satisfaction.

Studies have shown that feeling understood is often as or more important than actually being understood (Cahn, 1990). Gerstel and Gross (1984) report that LDM couples often feel uncertain about sharing various events of the day, due to a concern that the spouse may not understand due to the distance. Therefore:

RQ3: What is the relationship between feeling understood and communication satisfaction?

Relationship Sustenance

In addition, feelings of understanding may be related to one’s overall use of sustenance behaviors. If one feels understood, for instance, one may use particular sustenance behaviors, rather than others. This relationship, however, has not been empirically explored. Feeling understood is therefore thought to relate in some way to communication satisfaction and global sustenance use:

RQ4: What is the relationship between feeling understood and global sustenance use?

In addition, Gerstel and Gross (1984) reported that more established couples feel more at ease performing relationship sustenance activities because they have done so for a longer period

of time. In light of no quantitative evidence supporting their notion, the following research question is asked:

RQ5: What is the relationship between pre-separation marriage length and global relationship sustenance use?

Allen's (1994) discussion of proactive IIs (the person is anticipating and planning an interaction yet to occur) increasing during separation, coupled with the function of IIs (i.e., to maintain connection with another during the separation, extend an existing conflict, or make a person feel better about a given situation) indicate a potential relationship between proactive IIs and sustaining one's relationship.

RQ6: What is the relationship between proactive IIs and global relationship sustenance behavior use?

Couple Type

In 1984, Fitzpatrick identified three primary couple types based on communication and conflict style, time management, and level of interdependence. Because of the demands and dual-priority nature of an LDM lifestyle, not all dual-career couples choose this path. Indeed, some may specifically choose not to because they feel they would not be able to 'handle it.' Fitzpatrick (1988) reported that independent couples by nature could tolerate greater uncertainty and unpredictability than traditional couples. In addition, while separates put a 'traditional' face to the world, they privately prefer much more independence. Thus, perhaps certain couple types are more likely to choose this lifestyle than others are.

RQ7: What is the relationship between couple type and likelihood of choosing an LDM lifestyle?

In light of the separate couples' dualism between private and public presentation, the following research question is proposed:

RQ8: Will separates choose and sustain an LDM lifestyle but experience marital difficulty when reunited (for the applicable sub-sample)?

Methods and Procedures

In this chapter the methods for the current study will be described. The sampling technique and sample characteristics will be discussed. The survey instrument will be described and reliabilities reported, and the measurement of all variables will be discussed in detail.

Sample

Recruitment

Snowball/network sampling was used to recruit participants. Participants eligible for the current study were those in a non-military, career-induced long distance marriage. Further, couples had to have no small children (school age) during the separation, and see each other no more than twice per month. All couples had to have lived with each other after marriage and before the career-induced separation for approximately one year. The initial recruitment plan was to include only couples that had been separated for a minimum of approximately one year and reunited for a minimum of approximately one year (thus accounting for a total marital length of approximately three years). After limited success finding eligible and willing participants for one year, the criteria were expanded to include those still living apart.

As couples were identified, they were asked to refer others who also met the criteria. The on-line long-distance relationship coordinating group, Rainbow Connection, was contacted for listserv posting rights. After rights were received, a general 'call for participants' was posted. In addition, the national Graduate Student Association was contacted for names as Gerstel and Gross (1984) report many couples in LDMs are in graduate/professional school. The GSA did not respond to repeated requests for assistance. Students in introductory communication classes at Louisiana State University and the State University of New York, College at Potsdam were asked to refer anyone who met the criteria. Acquaintances in large organizations (i.e., IBM and

Anderson Consulting/Accenture) were asked to distribute information and refer anyone meeting the criteria. Colleagues at the University of Tennessee and Mississippi State University were also asked to contact their faculty for eligible participants. An associate working in a large, state-wide hospital also distributed recruitment forms and questionnaire packets to qualified individuals. Finally, the Commuter Couple Association of America was contacted for information and assistance, though the author received no response.

Because there is yet to be an effective means of determining the number of couples experiencing a career-induced LDM, an unbiased sample is much more difficult to determine. Therefore, the generalizability of findings is limited. By maintaining consistency of the current sample, generalizations can be made to a similar population. As Gerstel and Gross (1983, 1984) and Winfield (1985) discussed, the presence of children changes not only the dynamics of the marriage, it also changes the LDM experience. Furthermore, military involvement tends to evoke different responses than other types of career-induced separation. In addition to varying responses, the military has built-in support systems for spouses who stay behind, whether by choice or military demands. All of these factors contribute to the exclusion of military involvement as a factor in LDM separation.

The total number of participants included in this study is 92 individuals. This number was chosen after examining the sample sizes for the scales used, as well as the descriptive LDM studies. The chosen figure thus represents similar sample sizes of measures and methodology chosen for this study. Whereas both partners' responses may be illuminating, including the couple in the aggregate sample violates the independence of response assumption inherent in inferential statistics. In other words, researchers must be able to assume that "the choice of one individual [has] no bearing on the choice of another individual to be included in the sample"

(Blalock, 1979, p. 139). Therefore, including both the husband and the wife, who know each other quite well, may violate the independence of response assumption. For purposes of this study, if both partners were interested in participating, one was randomly chosen, and the other spouse's responses held aside. There were only three cases of both partners responding.

Demographics and Characteristics

Of the 92 participants, 36.7% are male and 60.0% female (3.3% provided no response), with a mean age of 45.82 years (range 24.00 – 69.00, SD = 9.65), and 82.2% white or Anglo (see Appendices E & F for descriptive and frequency charts, respectively). The majority are still separated (n = 55; 61.1%), though 1/3 of the sample are now back together in one household (n = 30; 33.3%). Fifty participants (55.6%) have completed graduate or professional school, and an additional 14.4% (n = 13) have completed college. The remainder has varying levels of education ranging from some high school to some college.

Of the sample, 39 individuals (43.3%) are faculty or staff at a college or university, 11 (12.2%) are in management, 8 (8.9%) are in health services, and 19 (21.1%) report an occupation of 'other'. Further, 52 individuals (57.8%) report an annual income above \$60,001, with another 26 (28.9%) earning between \$30,001 and \$60,000, and 8.9% earned less than \$30,000. This relatively high income of the sample appears to be consistent with Gerstel and Gross's work (1982, 1983, 1984) that indicated the preponderance of LDM couples were upper-middle class professionals.

Distance-related characteristics are fairly evenly distributed (see Appendix N). Given the distribution of numbers, it appears that couples were more likely to choose a career separation when married less than one year, between two and five years, or when married for 10 to 20 years. The 'in-between' years were less frequently reported. Almost one-third of the sample were

200-500 miles apart during the separation, whereas 52.2% of the sample was separated under 500 miles. Over half the sample (52.9%) visited every 10 days to two weeks, 23% visited once per month, 9.6% visited every 6 – 8 weeks, and 13.8% reported visiting less frequently than every eight weeks. These numbers indicated the vast majority of the sample visited fairly regularly, certainly within the ‘acceptable’ bounds asserted by Gerstel and Gross (1982, 1983, 1984). Of those respondents who were reunited at the time of the study, one-third had been reunited for two to five years, with (approximately) one third less than two years and the other third reunited for more than five years.

When the variables used in the current study were tested for correlations between each other (see Appendix M), the highest correlation was between relationship satisfaction and feeling understood. In addition, visit frequency and separation distance were rather highly correlated. Intuitively, these findings make sense. Statistical tools were used to determine if these moderately high correlations would create a co-variate effect. Results indicate no inter-correlation problems (see Results – Preliminary Analyses).

Because either first-hand LDM experience (via a commuter dating relationship), or second-hand experience (via association with someone in an LDM) may influence one’s perception of the likelihood of success in a LDM, respondents were asked about each type of relevant experience (commuter dating or association with someone in an LDM). Given the nominal means of determining either first- or second-hand experience with LDMs (Appendix A, Section II), aggregate results will be presented.

Findings indicate some experience at both the first-hand and second-hand level (Appendix G). The majority of respondents did not have a commuter dating relationship ($\underline{n} = 58$; 64.4%). Of those who did have a commuter dating relationship ($\underline{n} = 29$; 32.2%), the mean length

of time was 2.35 years (range = 2 months – 5 years; SD = 1.58 years) and a mean distance of 1268.15 miles (range = 25 – 7000 miles; SD = 1693.97).

Finally, whereas 47 participants (52.2%) did not know any LDM couples prior to their own, 40 respondents (44.4%) did. Of those with knowledge of an LDM experience, the relationship to the LDM couple is: friend, n = 14, 15.6%; parent, n = 4, 4.4%; co-worker, n = 7, 7.8%; acquaintance, n = 7, 7.8%; and other, n = 7, 7.8%. Of those with knowledge of another's LDM, four respondents (4.4%) perceived the LDM to be not very happy, 13 respondents (14.4%) perceived the LDM to be moderately happy, and 17 respondents (18.9%) perceived the LDM to be very happy. These figures, demonstrating previous long distance dating experience and knowledge of LDMs perceived to be happy (33.3% of the sample) indicate that these factors may contribute to one's own LDM experience.

Method

General Procedures

Following recruitment, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire (Appendix A). If the participants had e-mail capabilities, the questionnaire was e-mailed to both spouses. This procedure saved postage and expedited the process. With the increase of professionals having access to the Internet and e-mail accounts (Rabby, 1997), this option was available in most cases. A cover letter accompanied the questionnaire (Appendix B). When e-mail was not an option, two copies of the questionnaire were mailed to the participants' home(s) with a cover letter and two postage-paid return envelopes to increase compliance. This procedure enabled each spouse's responses to remain confidential, while also increasing the potential of receiving at least one questionnaire returned. Instructions, whether e-mailed or conventionally mailed,

requested that participants not discuss their answers until after completion and mailing of the survey by both partners.

Seventy-seven questionnaires were distributed electronically following listserve postings on the following sites: National Communication Association, Communication Research and Theory Network (CRTNET); the American Psychological Association national listserve; the Anderson Consulting staff distribution; the women's general interest forum at 'www.women.com', and electronic faculty newsletters at Louisiana State University, the State University of New York, College at Potsdam. The return rate from the electronic postings was 41.6% (n=32). Students at Louisiana State University, the State University of New York, College at Potsdam, and Mississippi State University referred 83 qualified individuals, with 67.2% (n = 47) returning a completed questionnaire. A colleague at a large, statewide hospital in Pennsylvania distributed 20 questionnaires, with 50% returning the completed questionnaires. Finally, through word of mouth and family/friends networking, 15 questionnaires were distributed with a 73% return rate (n = 11). In sum, 195 questionnaires were distributed with a composite return rate of 41.8% (n = 92). From the above return rates, individuals who knew someone connected to the study (friends, family, researcher, students receiving extra credit, etc.) were more likely to return a completed questionnaire.

All participants were sent a questionnaire with open-ended questions to determine a more interpretive experience of the LDM. All participants were asked if they could be contacted for follow-up study. Asking about future contact ensured the ability to clarify any points raised in the open-ended/interview portion, as well as possibly provide longitudinal data.

Survey Instrument

Design

All participants received a 17-page questionnaire designed to examine the living-apart portion of their marriage (Appendix A). Part one consisted of 10 scales designed to tap each of the variables, asking participants to reflect on the time spent apart. Part two collected demographic information. Part three asked several open-ended questions designed to provide a more interpretive understanding of the LDM experience. The questionnaire given to the still-apart and the reunited couple was essentially the same, with the exception of phrasing in the present or past tense.

The larger part of the sample (61.1%) the questions tapped current experiences, while for 33.3% of the sample the questions referred to past experiences. All participants were asked to respond based on the living-apart 'phase' of their marriage, whether currently apart or reunited. Due in part to the already lengthy study design, and the desire to determine the impact of the separation on their current relationship success, the author decided that the most crucial time frame in understanding the separation was that of during the separation, rather than studying before, during, and after (if applicable) the separation.

Kirk (1995) who noted two primary uses for this design has discussed this type of retrospective design (historical cohort study). First, the retrospective study is useful for variables that occur infrequently. Second, the retrospective study is useful when there is a long interval between the cause and the effect. The second use noted by Kirk (1995) is most pertinent to the reunited participants in this study. Because the separation experience is thought to relate to an LDM couple's success, the separation and the ensuing success, must be studied after the fact and thus calls for a retrospective design. In other words, Kirk's (1995) 'cause' is the separation itself

and the 'effect' is the success. Several researchers studying dialectics have used the Retrospective Interviewing Technique with high degrees of success (Baxter & Erbert, 1999; Erbert, 2000; Goldsmith, 1990).

Measurement of Variables

There are eight variables of focus in this study, including the theoretical foundation. Three of the variables (dialectics, feelings of understanding, and IIs) act as both predictor and criterion variables. The remaining five act solely as predictor (couple type, social support) or criterion (relationship sustenance, relationship satisfaction, communication satisfaction) variables. In addition, demographic data was collected including: sex, age, current marital status, level of education, socio-economic status, ethnic origin, occupation, length of time spent dating the person prior to marriage, existence of a commuter dating relationship prior to marriage, second-hand experience with LDMs (knew someone prior to their own experience), years married prior to their own LDM, length of time separated, separation distance, frequency of visits during separation, length of time reunited, and parental status both at the time of the separation and currently.

Dialectics

The first measurement is that of dialectical salience. Although Baxter and Montgomery (1996) caution against only using quantitative measures for these constructs, it was deemed necessary for the current study. Due to the intimacy of the topic and the difficulty of obtaining the sample, a qualitative, in-depth exploration was not feasible for the purpose of the current study. Furthermore, whereas Baxter & Montgomery, 1996 originally indicated an exclusive reliance on qualitative measures, subsequent work has indicated an openness to using various methods of measurement. For example, Baxter and colleagues have used quantitative methods

when exploring dialectics (Baxter & Erbert, 1999; Baxter & Montgomery, 2000; Baxter & Simon, 1993; Braithwaite & Baxter, 1995; Bridge & Baxter, 1992; Erbert, 2000; Goldsmith, 1990; Pawlowski, 1998), though not in the same format as the current study. To fully capture the integrated and dialogic nature of the dialectics, and to ensure enough data for calculating Cronbach's alpha, questions were devised that tested each of the six dialectics (three internal and three external) in at least three different ways. Each dialectic was tested in this way for magnitude of salience (Appendix A, Part I, Section A), and designed to be a single factor.

The author and a colleague at Louisiana State University (LSU) constructed the five items designed to measure salience or importance of each individual dialectic. The entire scale was then distributed to 150 undergraduate students at LSU to determine if the wording and format were usable. This procedure was designed to determine face validity. After responses were gathered, items were modified accordingly and the final result was included in the questionnaire.

The mere existence of a dialectic alone does not indicate salience in this study. If a dialectic is felt strongly by a person, s/he will most likely spend time thinking about the issue, and thus the issue has gained salience in the person's life. Items were based on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from never to all the time. Because each pole of the dialectic was tested separately, for analysis one pole was recoded to enable a true dialectic with opposing poles. While each half of every dialectic could be integrated into hypotheses and tested individually, this is in opposition to the original framework of dialectics. Baxter and Montgomery (1996) asserted that the dialectics exist in tandem and can not (should not) be separated and studied individually as each exists in only relation to the other. Therefore, dialectical salience has been operationalized as a polarity of varying levels of importance for the respondent.

The data measuring dialectics were transformed prior to analysis. In other words, each of the five items designed to measure salience for the twelve poles of dialectics (three internal and three external sets of dialectics) were averaged for a total salience score. Thus, twelve salience scores were derived representing each pole of every internal and external dialectic. After obtaining the salience scores, a reliability score was calculated for each of the twelve dialectical poles.

Results of the reliability test are as follows: autonomy $\alpha = .87$, connection $\alpha = .41$, openness $\alpha = .71$, closedness $\alpha = .59$, predictability $\alpha = .75$, novelty $\alpha = .61$, seclusion $\alpha = .45$, inclusion $\alpha = .62$, revelation $\alpha = .57$, concealment $\alpha = .60$, conventionality $\alpha = .34$, and uniqueness $\alpha = .52$ (Appendix C). Thus, overall the scale did not demonstrate high levels of internal reliability. To account for the low reliability a factor analysis was run. While designed to be a single-factor scale, the low reliabilities indicated there might be another element at work.

Factor analysis results indicated that for every dialectical pole except autonomy, there were two factors present. Furthermore, for every two-factor dialectic except closedness the same two categorizations emerged. The first, comfort, was represented by the following items “I am very comfortable with this aspect of my marriage,” “I am rather dissatisfied with this aspect of my marriage,” and “This is a problem for me in my marriage.” Because the items that loaded on this factor are evaluative, tapping a measure of positivity or negativity, salience is no longer an appropriate designation. Rather, it appears the three items are more appropriately termed comfort.

The second factor, salience, was represented by the following items “This describes one component of how I feel” and “This is very important to my marriage.” For the closedness question, the item “I am very comfortable with this aspect of my marriage” loaded on the

saliency factor instead of the comfort factor. This factor does appear to reflect the above-defined saliency representing importance or prominence of the dialectic.

The low reliability scores may be explained by the multiple factors associated with each pole. The notable exception is the autonomy variable that loaded on a single factor. This finding will be discussed in further detail in the discussion section below.

Because reliability analyses need a minimum of three items for calculation, the saliency items were dropped from subsequent analyses. Due to the available three-item factor (comfort) discussed above, reliabilities were also run for each dialectical pole with only the three items included. Results indicated the following reliabilities: autonomy $\alpha = .89$, connection $\alpha = .73$, openness $\alpha = .85$, closedness $\alpha = .67$, predictability $\alpha = .92$, novelty $\alpha = .74$, seclusion $\alpha = .84$, inclusion $\alpha = .82$, revelation $\alpha = .69$, concealment $\alpha = .58$, conventionality $\alpha = .75$, and uniqueness $\alpha = .66$ (Appendix C). Given an acceptable reliability of .70 (Nunnally, 1967), 67% of the dialectics are in the acceptable range. Furthermore, given the nearly acceptable scores of revelation (.6878), closedness (.6670), and uniqueness (.6560), particularly for an initial scale, these three will also be included in analyses. Because of the low reliability for concealment (.5824) it was not included in subsequent analyses. In designing the current study, saliency was of primary interest. However, because saliency was represented by only two items, and the comfort factor yielded acceptable reliabilities, subsequent references to what would originally have been called saliency will now be referenced as comfort.

Baxter and Montgomery (1996) adhere to the historical origins of dialectics when asserting that dialectics can only in tandem; what we experience is the joint influences of both poles. Therefore, one cannot understand autonomy without its counterpart, togetherness. To that end, the dialectic variable needed to be statistically coupled to determine the joint influence each

pole as a single construct. A simple summative score (merely adding the autonomy mean with the togetherness mean, for example) does indicate the overall magnitude of both poles, but does not indicate the degree of comfort of each pole in relation to the other. For instance, if a person scored a 6 on autonomy and a 3 on togetherness, a summative calculation would produce a score of 9. However, if the person scored the exact opposite (a 3 on autonomy and a 6 on togetherness), a score of 9 would also be obtained. With a summative calculation, one does not know the dialectic of most comfort for the respondent. Therefore, whereas a summative score is appropriate for calculating overall magnitude where polar dominance is not a concern (H1 and H2), it is not appropriate for determining the dualistic role of dialectics.

To transform the variable to reflect the dualistic, dialectical nature of the construct, several procedures were performed. First, a mean score for each pole of each dialectic was calculated based on the three comfort items (b, c, & e), as discussed above. Then, to reflect the nature of dialectics as opposite ends of the same continuum, whereby an individual can feel both ends simultaneously, one pole was randomly multiplied by negative one (-1). The poles undergoing this transformation were autonomy, novelty, closedness, concealment, seclusion, and conventionality. This calculation turned each pole listed above into its negative mean, producing a score ranging from -1 to -7. After creating a 'negative' counterpart to the existing 'positive' dialectics, all dialectical pairs were summed (the 'negative' score for autonomy was added to the 'positive' score for togetherness). This conversion yielded numbers on a continuum ranging from -7 to +7. Because negative numbers would produce flawed statistical analyses, the continuum needed to be converted to positive numbers. Therefore positive seven (+7) was added to all dialectical poles, creating a number ranging from 0 – 14. Establishing a number in this range indicates the dialectical pole of most comfort for each person. Numbers closer to zero reflect

higher levels of comfort with autonomy, novelty, closedness, concealment, seclusion, and conventionality; whereas numbers closer to 14 reflect higher levels of comfort with togetherness, predictability, openness, revelation, inclusion, and uniqueness. In other words, for the autonomy-togetherness dialectic, a score of 5.35 indicates more autonomy comfort than togetherness.

Mean scores, standard deviations, and ranges of dialectics for the current sample are (see Appendix K): autonomy-connection \underline{M} = 10.03, \underline{SD} = 3.01, range = 1.00 – 14.00; openness-closedness \underline{M} = 10.61, \underline{SD} = 2.60, range = 3.00 – 14.00; predictability-novelty \underline{M} = 10.33, \underline{SD} = 2.78, range = 1.00 – 14.00; inclusion-seclusion \underline{M} = 9.92, \underline{SD} = 2.81, range = 3.67 – 14.00; revelation-concealment \underline{M} = 10.63, \underline{SD} = 2.08, range = 5.00 – 14.0; conventionality-uniqueness \underline{M} = 11.01, \underline{SD} = 2.65, range = 1.00 – 14.00.

Feelings of Understanding/Misunderstanding

The second variable of feeling understood is a 24-item measure based on five points ranging from very little to very great (the extent that each of the 24 terms describes how the person felt after a conversation with partner in question) (Cahn & Shulman, 1984). After recoding and computing the FUM score, the total possible scores range from –32 to +32, with higher numbers indicating higher levels of feeling understood. This single-factor scale is designed to measure one's assessment of success or failure when attempting to communicate with another person. Cahn and Shulman (1984) reported a test-retest reliability of .90 and a Cronbach alpha of .89 indicating this scale is reliable. Cahn and Shulman (1984) and Grice (1997) reported concurrent validity, while Cahn (1984a, 1984b) reported evidence of criterion-related validity. In the current study, the Feelings of Understanding/Misunderstanding (FUM) scale is a single factor scale (α = .7709) from which a global rating of feeling understood was calculated (\underline{M} = 13.98, \underline{SD} = 10.53, range = -15.00 – 32.00).

Imagined Interactions

The third variable, that of II use, was measured using an adapted version of II use developed by Honeycutt et al. (1992). For purposes of this study, four factors (activity, proactivity, valence, and specificity) are included for measurement in the current study. For this study the proactivity and global II use were both analyzed. Reliabilities of the scale when used with long distance dating couples were reported by Allen (1994), ranging from .81 - .92. Eight factors (discrepancy, activity, retroactivity, proactivity, valence, variety, specificity, and self-dominance) comprise the measure for imagined interactions. In the current study proactivity, activity, valence, and specificity were measured using a total of 13 items to combine for a global measure of II use ($\alpha = .85$; $M = 4.50$, $SD = .97$; range = 1.00 – 6.54), and a proactivity score calculated ($\alpha = .95$; $M = 4.45$, $SD = 1.50$, range = 1.00 – 7.00).

Couple Type

The fourth variable, couple type, is measured using the Relational Dimensions Instrument (RDI). This scale was developed by Fitzpatrick (1988) based on empirical research of factors influencing couple type. Eight factors (sharing, autonomy, traditionalism, uncertainty, conflict avoidance, space, temporal regularity, and assertiveness) contribute to determining a respondent's couple type. Fitzpatrick and Indvik (1982) reported alphas ranging from .46 to .88 for various dimensions of the scale. Construct validity has been reported by Fitzpatrick (1977); Sillars, Pike, Jones, and Redmon (1983); Williamson and Fitzpatrick (1985); Witteman and Fitzpatrick (1986) while criterion validity has been reported by Fitzpatrick and Best (1979); Guerrero and Eloy (1992); Sillars, Burggraf, Yost, and Zietlow (1992); and Sillars, Weisberg, Burggraf, and Wilson (1987).

The newer, nine-item version used by Honeycutt (1999) and Fitzpatrick and Ritchie (1994) exhibits reliability scores, respectively, as follows: sharing $\alpha = .71$ and $.74$, conflict avoidance $\alpha = .71$ and $.65$, and traditionalism $\alpha = .64$ and $.54$. Fitzpatrick's (1977) revised nine-item Relational Dimensions Instrument was analyzed as a global measure of couple type. To determine the couple type, the three factors (sharing, traditionalism, and conflict avoidance) were first analyzed for reliability. The alpha reliabilities were too low for subsequent use in this study: sharing: $\alpha = .39$, conflict avoidance $\alpha = .56$, and traditionalism $\alpha = .30$.

Social Support

The fifth variable of social support, was measured using a scale created by the author and several colleagues at LSU. Because no scale exists to measure social support in this particular type of situation, and given the uniqueness of the situation, the development of a new scale was deemed appropriate. The scale consists of 13 items (Appendix A, Section I, Part I) on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. A principal component factor analysis using a Varimax rotation produced two factors termed positive and negative social support (Appendix D). Cronbach's alpha reliabilities are adequate for subsequent inclusion in testing: positivity $\alpha = .84$ and negativity $\alpha = .93$. Because positive support, only is of interest in the current study, only those figures will be reported ($\underline{M} = 5.22$, $\underline{SD} = 1.31$, range 1.00 – 7.00).

Relationship Sustenance

The sixth variable, relationship sustenance, was measured using Canary and Stafford's (1992) 29-item scale measuring five strategies/dimensions of sustenance in romantic relationships. Each item is measured using a seven-point Likert-type scale anchored by strongly disagree and strongly agree. Reliabilities for the five factors are: positivity $\alpha = .89$, openness $\alpha = .86$, assurances $\alpha = .76$, networks $\alpha = .82$, and tasks $\alpha = .87$. The following alpha reliabilities

have been reported for various iterations of the same scale: .82-.89 (Canary & Stafford, 1993), .77 - .90 (Dainton & Stafford, 1999), and .78 - .87 (Dainton & Kilmer, 1999). For the current study, a global score of relationship sustenance, taking all items for all factors into consideration, ($M = 5.54$, $SD = .74$, range = 3.59 – 6.83) yielded a high reliability score of $\alpha = .9141$. Cronbach's alpha reliabilities for each of the pre-existing factors were positivity $\alpha = .85$, openness $\alpha = .89$, assurances $\alpha = .61$, networks $\alpha = .74$, and tasks $\alpha = .87$. The current reliabilities indicate sufficient support for using the predetermined factors for the study, with the exception of assurances (omitted from subsequent analyses).

Relationship Satisfaction

The seventh variable, relationship satisfaction, was measured using Norton's (1983) Quality of Marriage Index representing a single factor. Designed to be a parsimonious, global rating of marital satisfaction, this measure has only six items. Baxter (1990) reported a Cronbach alpha of .95, Baxter and Bullis (1986) and VanLear (1991) reported Cronbach alphas of .88 and .93, respectively, whereas Perse, Pavitt, and Burggraf (1990) reported a Cronbach alpha of .96. These results indicate the scale has internal consistency. Construct validity has been reported by Norton (1983) and criterion validity by Baxter and Bullis (1986). Based on an adequate reliability for the current sample ($\alpha = .8879$) from the Quality of Marriage Index (Norton, 1983) a composite score of relationship satisfaction was calculated for all respondents ($M = 6.13$, $SD = 1.21$, range = 1.5 – 7.00).

Communication Satisfaction

The eighth variable, communication satisfaction, was measured using Hecht's (1978a) revised Interpersonal Communication Satisfaction Inventory (Com-Sat). This scale is comprised of 11 items on a seven-point Likert-type scale anchored by strongly disagree and strongly agree,

all representing a single factor. Hecht (1978a) reported split-half reliability coefficients of .90 for recalled conversations and .93 for satisfaction in friendship interaction. In addition, content, convergent, and concurrent validity were reported for the inventory (Hecht, 1978b). To calculate a communication satisfaction score, 11 items identified by Hecht (1978a) were recoded. This recoding transformed the items into agreement and provided for analysis of communication satisfaction as a single construct. Reliability scores were adequate ($\alpha = .86$) to calculate a communication satisfaction composite score ($\underline{M} = 4.90$, $\underline{SD} = 1.22$, range = 2.00 – 7.00).

Results

This chapter provides the formal analyses of hypotheses, as well as planned preliminary and post-hoc analyses. Overall results indicate moderate support for the hypotheses and research questions. For a chart of all hypotheses, significance levels, R^2 values, and power scores, please see Appendix L.

Preliminary Analyses

Prior to testing hypotheses, the data were examined for accuracy and completeness by the researcher. The significance level (alpha) would traditionally be set at .05. Because there are so many comparisons in the current study, however, a Bonferroni correction (Maxwell & Delaney, 1990) was made to determine the appropriate level of significance, $\alpha = 0.0019$ (rounded to 0.002). The test is relatively conservative (Maxwell & Delaney, 1990), thus reducing the number of Type I errors.

Multicollinearity is “a condition of high or near perfect regression analysis among the [predictor] variables” (Bohrnstedt & Knoke, 1994, p. 301). In other words, several predictor variables may be so highly related that it makes analysis difficult to determine their separate effects on the outcome variable (Vogt, 1993). Due to the high number of variables and calculations in the current study and the risk of multicollinearity muddying the waters of interpretation, pre-tests were conducted to account for multicollinearity in the current study.

Testing for the existence of multicollinearity can be performed using several informal and formal diagnostics (Neter, Kutner, Nachtsheim, & Wasserman, 1996). Informal diagnostics include large changes in the estimated regression coefficients when a predictor variable is added or deleted, when estimated regression coefficients have a sign (positive or negative) that is opposite of that expected based on experience and theoretical support, and wide confidence

intervals for regression coefficients (Neter et al., 1996). Formal multicollinearity diagnostics include regression analysis equal to or above a 0.80 between any two given predictor variables, observed from a regression analysis matrix (Bohrnstedt & Knoke, 1994). A second formal diagnostic is variance inflation factor (VIF)/tolerance (Neter et al., 1996; Norusis, 1997). Variance inflation factors greater than or equal to 4.0 indicate multicollinearity problems. Tolerance, the inverse of VIF, refers to the strength of the linear relationship among predictor variables (Norusis, 1997). Tolerance scores of 0.25 or less indicate there may be multicollinearity problems in the data.

Based on the formal diagnostic of tolerance and VIF, the following predictor variables were analyzed: positive and negative social support, length of separation, pre-separation marital length, feelings of understanding/misunderstanding, global II use, and proactive II use. Results indicate no multicollinearity concerns (Appendix E). The lack of multicollinearity eliminates it as a statistical explanation for nonsignificant results (Neter et al., 1996).

Because the multicollinearity calculations indicate no concerns, only two more calculations were necessary. Experience with a long distance dating relationship (with one's spouse prior to marriage) and knowing an LDM couple may influence scores on outcome variables. To determine if such a relationship exists, t-tests (comparison of means tests) were calculated to determine if there was a significant difference between those with long distance dating experience and those without on measures of relationship satisfaction, communication satisfaction, FUM, sustenance, and the internal dialectics. Likewise, t-tests were run to determine if there was a significant difference between those who knew others in LDMs and those who did not on scores of relationship satisfaction, communication satisfaction, FUM, sustenance, and the internal dialectics. The only statistically significant relationship was having a long distance

dating relationship and communication satisfaction ($t = -2.007, p = .05$). Therefore, on analyses of communication satisfaction, scores were separated based on long distance dating experience.

In addition, a preliminary t-test was run to determine if scores on the following variables were different for the reunited respondents versus the still apart respondents: visit frequency, communication satisfaction, feelings of understanding/misunderstanding, relationship sustenance, II use, relationship satisfaction, and social support. No statistically significant differences were found. Thus, both sub-samples were combined and the aggregate data used for analysis. Furthermore, for all hypotheses and research questions, distance variables (pre-separation marital length, separation distance, separation length, and visit frequency) were all tested for interaction effects. Only those statistically significant interactions will be reported.

Direct Theory-Related Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis one predicted that the order of internal dialectical comfort (in decreasing order) would be: openness-closedness, autonomy-connection, and predictability-novelty. Using a summative score for each dialectical pole (simply adding the autonomy pole score and the togetherness pole score, rather than using the transformed score), a mean was calculated for each dialectic [openness-closedness (OC) = $M = 10.61, SD = 2.60$; predictability-novelty (PN) = $M = 10.33, SD = 2.78$; autonomy-connection (AC) = $M = 10.03, SD = 3.01$]. A GLM repeated measures ANOVA revealed significant differences among the three dialectics [$F(86, 1) = 2198.78, p = .000$]. Using a critical t value (3.4) determined by using the Ryan multiple comparison procedure (Toothaker, 1993) the most different means (openness-closedness and autonomy-connection) were compared as the first procedure in a step-wise comparison. No statistically significant results were found (Appendix I). Therefore, the overall model appears to

be statistically significant at the traditional level, though stepwise comparisons do not indicate any statistical significance. Furthermore, the dialectic of highest comfort was accurately predicted.

Hypothesis 2

Hypotheses two predicted that the order of external dialectical comfort (in decreasing order) would be: revelation-concealment, inclusion-seclusion, and uniqueness-conventionality. Using a summative score for each dialectical pole (i.e., simply adding the inclusion pole score and the seclusion pole score, rather than using the transformed score), a mean was calculated for each dialectic [conventionality-uniqueness (CU) \underline{M} = 11.01, \underline{SD} = 2.65; revelation-concealment (RC) \underline{M} = 10.63, \underline{SD} = 2.08; inclusion-seclusion (IS) \underline{M} = 9.92, \underline{SD} = 2.81]. A GLM repeated measures ANOVA revealed significant differences between the three dialectics [$F(86, 1) = 2662.88$, $p = .000$]. Using a critical t value (3.4) determined by using the Ryan multiple comparison procedure (Toothaker, 1993) the most different means (conventionality-uniqueness and inclusion-seclusion) were compared as the first procedure in a step-wise comparison. This relationship was statistically significant at the traditional level of significance [$t(86) = 3.36$, $p = .05$]. A second comparison was made between the next-most different means (inclusion-seclusion and revelation-concealment), with no statistically significant results (Appendix I). Therefore, overall model was statistically significant at the traditional level, as was the first stepwise comparison, though the comfort of dialectics was not at all in the order predicted.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis three predicted that there would be a significant, positive relationship between autonomy-connection comfort and relationship satisfaction. Using the comfort score for autonomy connection, no statistically significant relationship was uncovered [$F(85, 1) = .04$, $p =$

.42, $R^2 = .000$] via a regression analysis. The nonsignificant finding is not surprising, however, given a power value of .002.

In a post-hoc regression analysis, however, an interaction effect was detected between visit frequency and the autonomy-connection comfort score and the outcome variable, relationship satisfaction [$F(83, 1) = 3.87$, $p = .053$, $R^2 = .045$]. Using the Bonferonni adjustment for significance value, this interaction effect was not statistically significant, though under normative circumstances this relationship would be significant. Therefore, while this hypothesis was not completely supported, a potentially significant interaction effect was found.

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis four predicted a significant, negative relationship between the inclusion-seclusion dialectic and relationship satisfaction. In a regression model, the comfort score for inclusion-seclusion was used and no statistically significant relationship was found [$F(85, 1) = 2.31$, $p = .066$, $R^2 = .026$, power = .091] at the Bonferonni adjusted significance value, though it does begin to approach the traditional significance value. Therefore, this hypothesis was not supported.

Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis five predicted a significant, positive relationship between openness-closedness comfort and communication satisfaction. Using a regression analysis and the openness-closedness comfort score, and separating results based on long distance dating experience (as discussed in the preliminary analysis section above), no statistically significant results were found [no experience: $F(56, 1) = .011$, $p = .458$, $R^2 = .000$, power = .000; with experience: $F(25, 1) = .208$, $p = .326$, $R^2 = .008$, power = .002]. Therefore, this hypothesis was not supported.

Hypothesis 6

Hypothesis six predicted that openness-closedness is significantly, positively related to feeling understood. Using the comfort score for openness-closedness, no statistically significant relationship was uncovered [$F(85, 1) = 2.272$, $p = .675$, $R^2 = .026$, power = .0034] via regression analysis. Therefore, this hypothesis was not supported.

Hypothesis 7

Hypothesis seven predicted that autonomy-connection comfort is significantly, positively related to feeling understood. Using the comfort score for autonomy-connection and a regression analysis, no statistically significant relationship was found [$F(85, 1) = .042$, $p = .419$, $R^2 = .000$, power = .002]. Therefore, this hypothesis was not supported.

Hypothesis 8

Hypothesis eight predicted that pre-separation marital length is significantly, positively related to feeling understood. Using a regression analysis, this relationship was not statistically significant [$F(80, 1) = 3.183$, $p = .078$, $R^2 = .038$, power = .0042]. Therefore this hypothesis was not supported, given the Bonferonni adjustment for significance value, yet approached significance at the traditional level.

Hypothesis 9

Hypothesis nine predicted a significant, inverted curvilinear relationship between autonomy-connection and global II use. To calculate a curvilinear relationship via regression analysis, both the predictor variable and its squared value are entered into the regression model. If the relationship is curvilinear, one will result in a negative relationship, and one a positive relationship. Whereas this relationship did occur, the result was not statistically significant [$F(83, 2) = .786$, $p = .230$, $R^2 = .019$, power = .0029]. Therefore, this hypothesis was not supported.

Hypothesis 10

Hypothesis ten predicted a significant, inverted curvilinear relationship between openness-closedness and global II use. Calculated the same as Hypothesis nine, while a curve was detected, it was not statistically significant [$F(83, 2) = .087$, $p = .459$, $R^2 = .002$, power = .0029]. Therefore, this hypothesis was not supported.

Hypothesis 11

Hypothesis eleven predicted a significant, positive relationship between social support and the revelation-concealment dialectic. This relationship could not be tested due to the poor reliability of the concealment measure. A post-hoc measure, however, of social support and several outcome variables indicate a relationship to relationship satisfaction [$F(84, 1) = 6.163$, $p = .015$, $R^2 = .261$], feelings of understanding/misunderstanding [$F(84, 1) = 7.431$, $p = .008$, $R^2 = .285$], and global sustenance use [$F(84, 1) = 21.452$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .451$]. Therefore, whereas the hypothesis could not be measured, analyses of social support do yield statistically significant relationships.

Hypothesis 12

Hypothesis 12 predicted a significant, positive relationships between various sustenance strategies and dialectical comfort scores, all calculated using regression analyses. Hypothesis 12a predicted a relationship between openness as a sustenance strategy and concern for openness comfort (versus the closedness end of the dialectic). This item was not supported [$F(85, 1) = .162$, $p = .344$, $R^2 = .002$, power = .0030]. Hypothesis 12b predicted a relationship between the assurances sustenance strategy and connection comfort. Due to the low reliability of the assurances sustenance strategy, this item could not be analyzed. Hypothesis 12c predicted a relationship between shared tasks and connection comfort. Using the autonomy-connection

comfort score and a mean score of items measuring shared tasks, no statistically significant relationship was uncovered [$F(85, 1) = .036$, $p = .424$, $R^2 = .000$, power = .002]. Hypothesis 12d predicted a significant, positive relationship between social networks and inclusion comfort. Using the inclusion-seclusion comfort score and a mean score of items measuring shared networks, no statistically significant relationship was uncovered [$F(85, 1) = .112$, $p = .368$, $R^2 = .001$, power = .002]. Hypothesis 21e predicted a significant, positive relationship between social networks and revelation comfort. Due to the low reliability of the concealment measure, this item could not be analyzed. Therefore, this hypothesis was not supported. In conclusion, of those hypotheses that could be analyzed, none yielded statistically significant findings.

Indirect Theory-Related Hypotheses and Research Questions

Hypothesis 13

Hypothesis 13 predicted a significant, positive relationship between global II use and relationship satisfaction. Using the mean global II score in a regression model, no statistically significant relationship was found [$F(85, 1) = .021$, $p = .442$, $R^2 = .000$, power = .002].

Therefore, this hypothesis was not supported.

Hypothesis 14

Hypothesis 14 predicted a significant, positive relationship between pre-separation marital length and communication satisfaction. Using a regression model, no statistically significant relationship was uncovered [$F(80, 1) = 3.203$, $p = .038$, $R^2 = .038$, power = .004].

Therefore, this hypothesis was not supported under the Bonferonni adjusted significance value.

Research Question 1

Research question one investigated the relationship between the length of separation and relationship satisfaction. Using a regression analysis to test this question, no statistically

significant relationship was found [$F(83, 1) = .374, p = .271, R^2 = .004, \text{power} = .000$]. This relationship was not statistically significant.

Research Question 2

Research question two investigated the relationship between feeling understood and relationship satisfaction. Using a regression model, a statistically significant, positive relationship was found [$F(87, 1) = 70.165, p < .001, R^2 = .446$]. Therefore, a significant relationship was detected.

Research Question 3

Research question three probed the relationship between feeling understood and communication satisfaction. Using a regression analysis a significant, positive relationship was uncovered [$F(87, 1) = 59.586, p < .001, R^2 = .406$]. Therefore, a statistically significant relationship was found.

Research Question 4

Research question four examined the relationship between feeling understood and global sustenance use. A regression analysis yielded a significant relationship [$F(86, 1) = 25.100, p < .001, R^2 = .226$]. Therefore, this item was statistically supported.

Research Question 5

Research question five investigated the relationship between pre-separation marital length and global relationship sustenance use. Using a regression model, no statistically significant relationship was uncovered [$F(80, 1) = 1.429, p = .117, R^2 = .018, \text{power} = .0029$]. In a post-hoc analysis of pre-separation marital length and each individual sustenance strategy, only one statistically significant relationship was revealed. Pre-separation marital length was significantly positively related to the openness sustenance strategy [$F(80, 1) = 4.146, p = .045,$

$R^2 = .049$]. Therefore, whereas no relationship for the primary research question was found to be statistically significant, there is a relationship between pre-separation marital length and openness as a sustenance strategy.

Research Question 6

Research question six considered the relationship between proactive II use and global sustenance behaviors. Again using a regression analysis, no statistically significant relationship was uncovered [$F(86, 1) = .311$, $p = .289$, $R^2 = .004$, power = .000]. This relationship was not statistically significant.

Research Question 7

Research question seven probed the relationship between couple type (independent, separate, and traditional) and likelihood of choosing an LDM lifestyle. Due to the poor reliabilities of the couple type scale, this research question cannot be analyzed.

Research Question 8

Research question eight probed the relationship between individuals scoring ‘separate’ for couple type and marital difficulties when reunited. Due to the poor reliabilities of the couple type scale, this research question cannot be analyzed.

Post-Hoc Analyses

Given the theoretical evidence supporting the above dialectic-related hypotheses, and the resulting non-significant findings, one further type of analysis was conducted. Each dialectic-related hypothesis was re-evaluated with each individual dialectical pole. For instance, when autonomy-connection are predicted to influence relationship satisfaction (H3), originally the autonomy-connection pole was used for analysis. In the post-hoc analyses, autonomy’s influence on relationship satisfaction was tested, as was connection’s influence on relationship satisfaction.

For each pole, the mean score was utilized. Evaluating each pole separately eliminates the diluting effect of the other pole, and thus reduces sensitivity of each pole, caused by the other. Rather than reiterate every single hypothesis, including nonsignificant post-hoc results, only the statistically significant results (based upon a significance value of .05 or less) will be reported.

When evaluating the influence of inclusion and seclusion on relationship satisfaction (Hypothesis 4), inclusion approached significance whereas seclusion was distinctly statistically significant [inclusion: $F(82, 1) = 3.567$, $p = .062$, $R^2 = .042$; seclusion: $F(85, 1) = 7.096$, $p = .009$, $R^2 = .077$].

When communication satisfaction was assessed in light of openness-closedness (Hypothesis 5), several significant results emerged. Recall that experience with a long distance dating also influences communication satisfaction. Therefore, when controlling for LDD experience, both openness and closedness were statistically significant predictors of communication satisfaction for those participants with LDD experience [openness: $F(25, 1) = 6.188$, $p = .020$, $R^2 = .198$; closedness: $F(25, 1) = 5.675$, $p = .025$, $R^2 = .185$]. For those participants without LDD experience, only openness was a significant predictor of communication satisfaction [$F(55, 1) = 9.310$, $p = .004$, $R^2 = .145$].

When examining the influence of openness and closedness on FUM (Hypothesis 6), statistically significant findings were revealed. Both dialectics significantly influence FUM: [openness: $F(84, 1) = 15.524$, $p = .000$, $R^2 = .156$; closedness $F(84, 1) = 4.4241$, $p = .043$, $R^2 = .048$].

When investigating the relationship between relationship sustenance behaviors and dialectics (Hypothesis 12), several statistically significant results emerged. Results indicate that shared tasks significantly influence comfort with togetherness [$F(84, 1) = 4.841$, $p = .031$, $R^2 =$

.054], whereas shared social networks significantly influence comfort with both inclusion [$F(82, 1) = 10.344, p = .002, R^2 = .122$], and revelation [$F(84, 1) = 8.738, p = .004, R^2 = .094$].

Summary

Of all the calculations made for this research, four primary outcome variables were of interest: relationship sustenance, feelings of understanding/misunderstanding, communication satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction. Relationship sustenance was the only predictor variable tested for the experience of dialectics. Shared tasks successfully predicted feelings of connection, whereas shared networks successfully predicted feelings of inclusion and revelation.

Feelings of understanding/misunderstanding were significantly related to relationship satisfaction at the Bonferroni-corrected level. Two other predictor variables were significant at the traditional level: seclusion and autonomy-connection/visit frequency (interaction effect). Two more predictor variables (inclusion-seclusion and inclusion) approached traditional levels of significance, indicating a relationship may be at work between those variables.

Communication satisfaction was significantly related to feelings of understanding/misunderstanding at the Bonferroni-corrected level, while also significantly related to openness and closedness (for those respondents with LDD experience) at traditional levels of significance or better. Feelings of understanding/misunderstanding were significantly related to openness as a predictor variable (at the corrected level) and closedness and pre-separation marital length (at or near the traditional level). Relationship sustenance was successfully predicted by feelings of understanding/misunderstanding, at the corrected level.

These results indicate success of the current measures beyond reliability. These findings indicate that dialectics do play a role in the relationship satisfaction, communication satisfaction, and feelings of understanding of LDM couples. Furthermore, the feelings of

understanding/misunderstanding scale performed well both as a predictor and outcome variable, indicating a potentially important communication-related variable at work in LDMs. Finally, sustenance strategies at work in LDMs are significantly related to dialectics and FUM. Clearly, these findings offer a more complete view of LDMs than was previously available.

Discussion

By understanding the contributing factors of LDM success, the fallacy that these relationships lead to divorce can be annulled. This is important because until it is debunked, two problems will continue to occur. First, ‘society’ will continue to relate to LDM couples as if they are somehow abnormal, causing partners to repeatedly question their own motives and justify their actions. Thus, by falsifying the assumption that LDMs are divorce-bound, this already difficult-to-maintain relationship may be protected from sources of damaging input. Second, understanding that LDMs can be successful in and of themselves may expand the societal schema for marriage. In other words, the realm of acceptability for marriage may be expanded to include living separately. This does not mean it has to become the standard, simply more acceptable. To that end, understanding the factors that make LDMs successful, this chapter will be devoted to interpreting the findings of the current study, outlining limitations, and discuss areas of future research.

In all, there are three primary contributions of the current study: 1) the quantitative exploration of a growing marital form, 2) the successful quantification of dialectics, and 3) the overall support for quantifying phenomena that have previously only been investigated qualitatively. Gerstel and Gross (1982, 1983, 1984) and Winfield (1985), the two major research teams of LDMs relied primarily upon interviews to understand this unique marital form. These in-depth interviews allowed researchers to gain understanding into the decision-making processes and underlying concerns of LDM couples. The interview methodology, however, does not allow for extrapolation or predictions to be made. Given the preliminary understanding provided by Gerstel and Gross (1982, 1983, 1984) and Winfield (1985), enough information was available to warrant a statistical examination of the LDM phenomena.

The current findings contribute to the overall body of knowledge and allow researchers to begin to make predictions about the various factors that influence the LDM experience. For instance, the current study supports Gerstel and Gross's (1982) assertion that the longer couples live together prior to separation, the more likely they are to endure the separation and emerge from the separation with an intact marriage. In addition, there was tentative evidence to endorse Groves and Horm-Wingerd's (1991) and Winfield's (1985) claim that social support is important to the LDM couple. Furthermore, the role of feeling understood (Cahn, 1983, 1990) that was previously clear with PMs was supported with LDMs, as well.

The second major contribution of this study is the quantification of dialectics. Whereas primarily studied via interviews and conceptualized as a qualitative construct, there is support for quantifying dialectics (Baxter & Erbert, 1999; Baxter & Simon, 1993; VanLear, 1998). The current study was designed similar to Baxter and Simon's (1993), and found similar results: moderate to high reliabilities. The initial success of this instrument has definite implications for the future of interpersonal dialectic research. A quantitative scale designed to tap a traditionally qualitative construct makes such a measure that much more accessible to researchers. Whereas in terms of scale development the moderate reliabilities of the current study are a very small step toward a generally accepted (i.e., valid and reliable) instrument, the findings are a noteworthy contribution to the expansion of dialectical theory. The current study, given its acceptable reliability, strongly joins the burgeoning body of literature (i.e., Baxter & Dindia, 1990; Baxter & Erbert, 1999; Baxter & Simon, 1993; Bridge & Baxter, 1992) seeking to expand the operationalization of dialectics to include quantitative measures. This success was just one of the dominant contributions of the current work.

Finally, the current study took two qualitative elements and united them in a quantitative study. That is, to this date, LDMs had only been studied qualitatively. Furthermore, dialectics had been studied primarily qualitatively, as well. The current study blends the two previous elements into one cohesive, supporting study. The current study demonstrates that LDMs can be studied numerically, with the advantage of extrapolation and prediction. The current study also demonstrates (Baxter & Erbert, 1999) that dialectics can not only be quantified, but used to examine a complex phenomenon such as LDMs. Moreover, all of the other constructs used in this study (relationship satisfaction, communication satisfaction, relationship sustenance, II use, feelings of understanding/misunderstanding, and social support) were successfully extended to aid in understanding the LDM experience, and to enable researchers to make predictions about the LDM experience in light of the variables listed above.

Preliminary Analyses

The first finding from the current study refers to the stability of the dialectics scale. Given the results of the analyses, it is possible to reliably quantify the experience of dialectics. Whereas the original scale of five items was not reliable, three of the five were. Therefore, while the scale does require some refinement, it is an acceptable tool for understanding relationships, in this case, LDMs. The most troubling component of this measure was the low reliability found for the concealment dialectical pole. Apparently, the items designed to tap concealment salience/comfort were not reliable. In addition, the scenario explaining concealment might be imperfect. Future iterations of this scale should refine the wording of the five comfort items to more accurately capture comfort on all five items, as well as refine the scenarios provided for each dialectical pole.

In addition, whereas the sample size did not provide enough power to detect statistically significant differences, a post-hoc power analysis revealed that given an effect size of .50, a power of .75, and the Bonferonni corrected alpha of .002, the required sample size is 208. This finding alone indicates that sample size may have played a part in some of the nonsignificant findings. This post-hoc power analysis also indicates that the already statistically significant results are most likely 'real' and not type I errors, given the relatively small sample size.

Hypotheses

The first two hypotheses predicted that the decreasing order of internal dialectic comfort would be openness-closedness, autonomy-connection, and predictability-novelty, and the decreasing order of external dialectic comfort would be revelation-concealment, inclusion-seclusion, and uniqueness-conventionality. In reality, the data indicated that the order of dialectical comfort was openness-closedness, predictability-novelty, and autonomy-connection (internal) and conventionality-uniqueness, revelation-concealment, and inclusion-seclusion (external). Therefore the data revealed a different order of dialectical comfort than was predicted, and each overall model was statistically significant at the traditional level.

When comparisons were made between internal dialectics, however, no statistically significant relationships were found. This finding could be the result of the statistical tools used. The repeated measures ANOVA takes into consideration all the variables present, while the stepwise t-tests used fewer data points, and with a restricted critical value. Therefore, the overall model may be significant, whereas individual comparisons are not. With the second hypothesis, the first external dialectic comparison (conventionality-uniqueness and inclusion-seclusion) was significant, though no other combination was. Therefore couples feel much more comfort about the conventionality-uniqueness dialectic than the inclusion-seclusion dialectic. This difference

could be the result of not having opportunities to interact with other individuals when together (inclusion-seclusion), but always have the presence of being ‘unique’ in the face of desiring ‘conventionality.’

There are several factors that may explain the nonsignificant findings between dialectical contradictions. The first is sample size. There may not have been enough participants to fully distinguish distinctions between each dialectical item. Furthermore, it is possible that individuals really do not experience one dialectic more than others, or that other variables that were not tested were acting as suppresser variables. Multicollinearity diagnostics indicate variables tested in the current study are most likely not at issue, but that does not mean there are not other variables at work in this relationship.

Prior to this study, few researchers tested the experience of dialectical comfort through a strictly quantitative questionnaire-based methodology (one exception is Baxter & Simon, 1993), particularly with long distance couples. Whereas research indicates (i.e., Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983, 1984) that an order of dialectical comfort may emerge, this study did not uncover such a pattern. Future studies might examine all six dialectics in combination. In other words, maybe there is no statistically significant difference between the internal or external dialectics, but there may be a difference in combination. In a post-hoc analysis, the aggregate internal dialectic sum was compared to the external dialectic sum and no statistically significant difference was found. This finding indicates that perhaps there is no difference in the experience of the dialectics, for this LDM sample.

The third hypothesis predicted that there would be a positive relationship between autonomy-connection comfort and relationship satisfaction. Dainton and colleagues (Dainton & Kilmer, 1999; Dainton & Stafford, 1999) support the notion that relationship satisfaction for any

relationship may be a function of successfully negotiating dialectics. Further, Baxter and Montgomery (1996) reported that LDM couples might experience a shift of their autonomy-connection definition based on their separation experience. Therefore the prediction was made that as one feels more comfortable with the level of connection (versus autonomy), then relationship satisfaction would increase.

This hypothesis was not supported. In combination with visit frequency, however, this item approached significance at the non-corrected level. In other words, when the frequency of visits is considered, and relationship satisfaction is high respondents feel more comfortable with autonomy; when relationship satisfaction is low respondents feel more comfortable with connection. This finding makes intuitive sense. Whereas autonomy-connection alone doesn't influence relationship satisfaction, the amount and frequency of visits with one's spouse does make a difference in this equation. Gerstel and Gross (1982, 1983, 1984) offer qualitative support for this notion. They asserted that couples visiting more frequently were more likely to experience ease with the separation. Whereas the researchers did not specifically conceptualize 'ease' as relationship satisfaction or discuss specifically the notion of the autonomy-connection dialectic, satisfaction was one element discussed by the authors (Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1982, 1984).

The fourth hypothesis predicted that inclusion-seclusion comfort would also be negatively related to relationship satisfaction. This prediction was made for many of the same reasons as hypothesis three. Whereas Baxter and Montgomery (1996) discussed autonomy-connection and separation, the external 'sister' dialectic of inclusion-seclusion may pose the same concerns. This hypothesis was not supported, nor was an interaction effect uncovered. Clearly other factors are at work in predicting LDM relationship satisfaction.

The post-hoc analyses begin to tap into potential factors influencing the initial results. Post-hoc analyses revealed that inclusion alone and seclusion alone both influence relationship satisfaction, to a significant degree. The probability that seclusion does not influence relationship satisfaction is only 9 chances out of 1,000, indicating a high degree of certainty about this relationship. Whereas significant at a lower level, inclusion does also seem to forecast experiences of relationship satisfaction for LDM couples. Perhaps when tested together (as a unified dialectic), inclusion suppresses the effect of seclusion on relationship satisfaction. These results indicate that as comfort with inclusion increases, so does one's relationship satisfaction. Likewise, as one's comfort with seclusion increases, so does one's relationship satisfaction. Intuitively these findings make sense. If one is comfortable with the degree of interaction the couple has with other people, the more satisfied one would be with the relationship, in general. There may be a feeling of success about handling the separation, coupled with feelings of social support from those 'outside' individuals.

Hypothesis five predicted that openness-closedness comfort would be negatively related to communication satisfaction. In preliminary analyses participants with long distance dating (LDD) experience scored significantly different on the communication satisfaction measure. Therefore for this item's results were separated based on LDD experience, however, no statistically significant results were uncovered. Because all of the dialectics are communicatively managed (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996), one might expect that the specifically communication-based dialectic would influence communication satisfaction. However, regardless of whether one is more comfortable with openness or closedness does not influence one's level of satisfaction with the communication. Clearly, there is either no true relationship, or there are extraneous and/or suppresser variables at work.

Post-hoc analyses reveal that combining the dialectics in a unified measure may be suppressing the effects of either/both poles of the dialectic. Regardless of LDD experience, comfort with openness clearly influences one's experience of communication satisfaction. This finding is supported by research (i.e., Gerstel & Gross, 1983) that states the importance of communication during the separation. Maintaining some level of connection is very important, and while apart, verbal communication is the means to maintain connection. Therefore, it makes sense that if one is satisfied with the amount and type of information shared with one's spouse (the openness pole of openness-closedness), one would be satisfied with his/her communication in the marriage.

On the other hand, closedness was only indicative of communication satisfaction for those with LDD experience. Essentially this finding indicates that LDD-experienced respondents are satisfied with lower levels of self-disclosure and the accompanying communication satisfaction. Conversely, the data does not indicate a relationship between closedness and communication satisfaction for those without LDD experience. Perhaps those with LDD experience have already worked out the communication quirks during their dating separation, and are thus comfortable with only sharing particular types of information. Though this finding cannot be fully understood in light of existing research, these post-hoc analyses do shed more light on the role of openness and closedness on communication satisfaction.

The sixth hypothesis predicted that openness-closedness would be positively related to feeling understood. Cahn (1983) reports that feeling understood is important to relationships and is concerned with the perception of one's partner understanding the other. Given the communication-based dialectic openness-closedness, one would expect the two to be related. This relationship was not supported by the poled data, however, post-hoc analyses did find

significant relationships between openness alone and feeling understood and closedness alone and feeling understood.

As with other post-hoc analyses reported above, it appears that one pole (in this case probably closedness, given its significance value) is suppressing the effects of the other (openness). Evidently, one's comfort with his/her self-disclosure does significantly influence one's level of feeling understood. Therefore, being comfortable with one's level of self-disclosure may be more indicative of feeling understood than whether one chooses to 'tell all' (openness) or hold back (closedness).

The seventh hypothesis was similar to the sixth. This hypothesis predicted that autonomy-connection comfort would be positively related to feeling understood. The idea was that if participants feel connected to their spouse, they may also be more likely to feel understood. This hypothesis was not supported, however.

The eighth hypothesis shifts focus to pre-separation marital length and its relationship to feeling understood. Gerstel and Gross (1982) reported that couples married longer prior to separating have more ease in adapting to the long distance life. Furthermore, Wood (2002) reported that over time a relational culture develops within a couple. Based on the research of Gerstel and Gross (1984) and Wood (2002) that couples develop a relational culture, communication rules and norms, through spending time together one might think that the time spent before separating would somehow influence one's level of understanding during the separation. This relationship was not supported. With a probability level of .078, however, this relationship does approach the non-corrected significance level, indicating there may be a relationship present that could be fleshed out with a larger sample size. Given the acceptable reliability of the FUM scale, it appears sample size may be at work with this item.

Allen (1994) reported higher uses of II for geographically separated couples. To examine the use of IIs in LDMs, in combination with dialectics, hypotheses nine and ten predicted an inverted curvilinear relationship between autonomy-connection and global II use, and openness-closedness and global II use, respectively. The rationale for this item was that at low levels of autonomy-connection (indicating concern for autonomy) or openness-closedness (indicating concern for closedness), one would experience high numbers of IIs. At moderate comfort levels of both dialectics, II use would fall, peaking again at high levels of each dialectic (connectedness and openness). In other words, if participants felt an extreme level of either dialectic, II use would be high. On the other hand, with moderate levels of either dialectic, II use would be low. These items were not supported, however. Whereas a slight curve was detected, it was not statistically significant. This finding may indicate that II use is rather consistent throughout the life of the LDM relationship.

Hypothesis eleven predicted that social support would be positively related to the revelation-concealment dialectic. Groves and Horm-Wingerd (1991) reported that LDM participants often feel as though their decision to live apart is not supported by family and friends as well as society, in general. Furthermore, Winfield (1985) reported that women in LDMs often feel as though they cannot discuss their LDM relationship; that people simply will not understand. To that end, this hypothesis predicted that if individuals are supported in their relationship, they are more likely to reveal information about the separation. On the other hand, if the person does not receive support for the LDM, s/he will be less likely to disclose information about the relationship. Due to the low reliability of the concealment dialectic measure, this item could not be examined in the initial tests. When examined against revelation alone (as an individual dialectic), no significance was detected either. Interestingly, this appears

to indicate that social support is not related to revelation. Clearly, other factors must predict the degree of disclosure one offers about the relationship. Furthermore, most respondents indicated that the person about whom social support questions were answered was indeed very supportive, and often a close friend or family member. Therefore, perhaps respondents would be revealing information (or not) regardless of the LDM situation. In other words, revelation may occur (or not) with the person in any situation, and these individuals selected particular people to reveal these issues to because they knew the person would provide positive feedback and support. Perhaps, then, revelation is more an individual preference, not related to outside factors such as social support.

Hypothesis twelve predicted links between various maintenance strategies and dialectical comfort. Two of the predicted relationships could not be examined due to low reliabilities. Hypothesis 12b predicted a relationship between the assurance sustenance strategy and concern for connection, whereas hypothesis 12e predicted a relationship between social networks and the revelation-concealment dialectical comfort. Two prior findings, in particular, lend support to this hypothesis. First, Dainton and Kilmer (1999) discovered that couples in long distance relationships (LDRs) have their expectations for sustenance behaviors met to a greater degree than geographically close relationships. This finding that LDR expectations for sustenance behaviors are met to a higher degree indicates that those in LDRs may be putting more effort into sustaining their relationship. Further, Gerstel and Gross (1984) report that LDM couples spend a great deal of time working on their relationship. The findings of Dainton and Kilmer (1999) and Gerstel and Gross (1984) indicate that sustenance use is different for those in LDMs than PMs. Though theoretical evidence supports connecting the constructs of sustenance and dialectics, no

research has previously tied sustenance behaviors to dialectical comfort. Due to the low reliability for assurances and concealment, these hypotheses could not be tested.

The remaining predictions for sustenance strategies and dialectics were openness as a sustenance strategy with openness comfort (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996), shared tasks as a sustenance strategy and connection comfort (Gerstel & Gross, 1983), and social networks as a sustenance strategy and revelation comfort (Gerstel & Gross, 1983; Winfield, 1985). Whereas there does seem to be theoretical support for these relationships, no statistical support was found. Interestingly, when examined as individual dialectics instead of as polar opposites, three of the relationships with acceptable reliabilities for study produced significant results. Results revealed that assurances influence connection comfort with one's spouse, whereas social networks influence both inclusion and revelation comfort. Given these findings, it is apparent that the presence of the dialectical counterpart for connection, inclusion, and revelation suppressed the influence of these dialectics on the sustenance strategies in question. In reality, therefore, the current data do support the previous research that indicate these relationships would exist. The one relationship that was not supported when examined as a dialectic or an individual element was the openness dialectic and openness as a sustenance strategy. Given the way this was tested, openness as a sustenance strategy was predicted to influence one's comfort with openness in the relationship. Perhaps, though both bear upon self-disclosure, one's comfort level with self-disclosure is not related to self-disclosure as a means to sustain the relationship. This association certainly warrants additional study, both with proximal and LDM couples.

The thirteenth hypothesis was based primarily on II research by Honeycutt (1999) and Allen (1994). Honeycutt (1999) reported that II use predicts marital happiness in certain couples, whereas Allen (1994) reported that geographically separated couples use IIs to aid in coping with

separation. In light of their findings, this hypothesis predicted that global II use would be positively related to relationship satisfaction. Data analysis indicates that this hypothesis was not supported. Given the fact that this item does not even approach the traditional significance score, this item may very well simply not be statistically significant. The theoretical rationale, however, still stands. This item warrants a closer examination in future studies.

The final hypothesis predicted a positive relationship between pre-separation marital length and communication satisfaction. Given Gerstel and Gross's (1984) report that the longer couples are married prior to separation gives couples more time to form their own rules for communicating, and Wood's (2002) support of this notion with work on relational culture, it seems clear that couples who spend more time together will have worked out more of the communication 'kinks' of the relationship than those spending less time together before separation. Using the Bonferonni corrected significance value this item was not supported. Using a traditional significance level, however, this hypothesis was supported. Therefore, it appears that there may be some support for this relationship that a future study may uncover.

Research Questions

The first research question investigated the relationship between length of separation and relationship satisfaction. Gerstel and Gross (1984) reported that it was important for couples to feel as though the separation was temporary. This need for the LDM to be seen as temporary may indicate that lengthy separations are difficult to handle, though Gerstel and Gross (1984) did not specifically address the issue of separation length and satisfaction. Likewise, Gerstel and Gross (1983, 1984) and Winfield (1985) all report that the presence of dual priorities (marriage and career) lends itself easily to living apart. Using a regression analysis, no relationship was found between these two variables (separation length and relationship satisfaction). This finding

may indicate that individuals in LDMs adopt a level of coping and a feeling of temporariness that precludes being ‘bothered’ enough by the distance to influence their levels of relationship satisfaction over time. A longitudinal analysis, however, would be the best way to fully test this relationship.

Cahn reported that individuals like to be understood (1983) and that feeling understood by one’s spouse positively contributes to overall relationship happiness (1990). Though true with PMs, this relationship had yet to be examined with LDM couples. Cahn’s findings led to the second research question of the relationship between feeling understood and relationship satisfaction in LDM couples. This question yielded a statistically significant positive relationship. Therefore, as LDM participants feel more understood, they also experience an increase in relationship satisfaction.

The third research question was an extension of the previous one. This question investigated the relationship between feeling understood and communication satisfaction. Similar to relationship satisfaction (Cahn 1983, 1990), it is thought that if one feels understood s/he would feel as though the communication was satisfactory, though no research to date had tested this relationship. Results indicate support for this relationship. Thus, as LDM participants feel understood by their spouse, communication satisfaction increases.

Research question four probed the relationship between feeling understood and global sustenance use. This research question sought to understand if there is any relationship between feeling understood and one’s level of relationship sustenance. One relationship might be that if one feels understood one might use more sustenance strategies overall. On the other hand, one might feel understood and therefore choose to use fewer sustenance strategies because the relationship seems to be going along fine. No previous research has sought to connect these two

variables, however, so there is not enough evidence either way to support this relationship. Analysis of the data indicates a statistically significant positive relationship between the two variables. In other words, as one feels more understood, one uses more sustenance strategies, overall.

The fifth research question investigated the relationship between pre-separation marital length and global relationship sustenance use. Research studying relationship sustenance primarily deals with the particular sustenance types that couples use in sustaining their relationship. Further, there is little evidence from LDM scholars addressing the issue of sustenance strategies. The closest inquiries come from Gerstel and Gross (1983) who report that LDM couples spend a great deal of time working on their relationship, and work from Dainton and Kilmer (1999) who report that LDR (dating) couples have sustenance expectations met to a higher degree than proximal couples. The work of Gerstel and Gross and Dainton and Kilmer therefore indicates that there may be a relationship between time spent together prior to separation and global sustenance – either that longer pre-separation marital length leads to greater use of sustenance behaviors, or that longer pre-separation marital length leads to greater understanding between the couple and therefore fewer sustenance strategies put into use.

Results for this question indicate no statistically significant relationship. Therefore, the amount of time a couple spends together prior to separating does not appear to influence the use of global sustenance behaviors. Pre-separation marital length does, however, positively influence the use of openness as a sustenance strategy. Therefore, the longer one is married prior to separating, the more likely one is to use openness as a sustenance strategy during separation. This finding makes sense given the importance of communication to LDRs (Dainton & Kilmer, 1999) and LDMs (Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983, 1984; Winfield, 1985).

Research question six considered the relationship between proactive II use and global sustenance behaviors. While no research had been conducted linking these two variables prior to this study, evidence suggested there might be a relationship between the two. Allen (1994) reported that proactive II use increased during geographic separation in part to sustain connection with another person during the separation. Allen's findings indicate there may be a relationship between the two variables for LDM couples.

The results of this question indicate no statistically significant relationship between proactive II use and global sustenance behaviors. In light of Allen's (1994) findings, the current results are disturbing. Whereas Allen's (1994) work does not suffice for a prediction to be made about the relationship, it does indicate that one might exist. Given the adequate reliabilities for both variables in the current study, several factors might be at work. First, the sample size may not be large enough. Second, just because Allen's (1994) participants used proactive IIs as one function of IIs (to sustain connection) does not mean that IIs were used to sustain the relationship. In other words, there may be a difference between sustaining connection and sustaining the relationship. This distinction should be explored in future research. Further, Allen's (1994) research examined proactive II shifts from proximal to separated. The current study only explored proactive II use during separation. Therefore, there is no way to know if proactive II use increased during the separation, and if so, for what purposes. Again, future research can determine that relationship.

The last two research questions, seven and eight, both addressed couple type. Research question seven probed the relationship between couple type and the likelihood of choosing an LDM lifestyle, and eight questioned the difficulties of separate-typed couples when reunited. Because of the poor reliabilities of the couple type scale these two items could not be analyzed.

The reason for the low reliabilities in the face of previously acceptable scores is somewhat unclear. Perhaps this particular life choice influences one's responses on these items. These couples make a clearly non-traditional choice. Admittedly, in both Fitzpatrick and Ritchie's (1994) study and Honeycutt's (1999) study, the traditionalism reliability scores were low (unacceptable, according to Nunnally, 1967), and were also low in the current study. The other dimensions, however, were also very low. The couple type measure was in the middle of the questionnaire, so fatigue was most likely not an issue. Furthermore, participants were instructed that they could take a break in between sections, if fatigue was setting in.

The only evident difference between this sample and previous ones (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994; Honeycutt, 1999) is the long-distance element. Future studies need to explore couple type in this particular marital form. While it is fairly common for college students to have LDRs and the number of LDMs is growing, the LDM lifestyle is still not 'mainstream.' Therefore, if research has indicated particular levels of satisfaction and communication styles associated with couple type, this information may be very helpful to those in LDMs. To that end, research should explore the relationship between LDM and couple type.

Synthesis

Given the length of the questionnaire and the feelings evoked by such in-depth inquiry into one's marriage, the small sample size and nonsignificant findings are altogether surprising. Of the variables tested in the current study, three yielded reliabilities too low for conducting analyses (the concealment pole of the revelation-concealment dialectic, the assurances sustenance strategy, and couple type). Of the remaining reliable variables, only IIs were not statistically significant in any hypothesis or research question. Acting as both a predictor and outcome variable, neither global nor proactive II use was significantly related to autonomy-

connection comfort, openness-closedness comfort, relationship satisfaction, or global sustenance behavior. Perhaps the shortened II scale was not powerful enough to detect small differences in this relatively small sample. Given research by Honeycutt (1999) with married couples, and Allen's (1994) research with LDR couples, it seems something would be statistically significant with IIs. Therefore, future studies might try using the extended II measure, accompanied by a larger sample size. In addition when Gilbertson et al. (1998) examined RCCUs there were elements of both imagining being with and interacting with the partner as well as more 'typical' sustenance behaviors. Perhaps the relationship between IIs, sustenance, and relationship satisfaction needs to be more fully explicated in general, in addition to application to LDM couples.

Length of separation was not significantly related to relational satisfaction. This finding was truly surprising. Given Gerstel and Gross's (1984) report that longer separations are more challenging for LDM couples and that a sense of temporariness is important, one might think that some relationship exists between these two. However the data clearly indicates that no relationship exists here. Perhaps individuals become accustomed to the separation, and use particular sustenance behaviors to avoid a decline in relationship satisfaction. This relationship, alone, would make a thorough research line. Given the increasing prevalence of this type of relationship (Armour, 1998) more fully understanding this type of relationship and what role the length of separation has could be very important as individuals increasingly come into contact with LDM participants.

On the other hand, the feeling understood variable performed strongly in the current study. Feeling understood was significantly related to pre-separation marital length, openness comfort, closedness comfort, relationship satisfaction, communication satisfaction, and global

sustenance use in long distance married couples. This relationship has not been found in proximal couples yet, so this finding is quite unique to this study. Clearly the perception that one's partner understands one's feelings, at least during separation, influences one's overall happiness with the relationship and communication, as well as pro-relationship behaviors. This finding greatly contributes to the extant body of knowledge about relationships in general and LDMs in particular. Whereas Gerstel and Gross (1982, 1983, 1984) did not address the concept of FUM specifically, based on their research it appears the current study does support their findings that LDM couples work to communicate with their spouse during separation.

Relationship satisfaction also played a large role in the current study. Not only was relationship satisfaction related to FUM, but also to autonomy-connection comfort (when interacting with visit frequency) and inclusion-seclusion comfort (as a dialectic and as individual constructs). This finding shows support for both what contributes to relationship satisfaction in LDMs and, also, for the presence of dialectics in LDM relationships. Again, this finding is new to this study and gives greater understanding to the existing body of knowledge about LDMs. Therefore, Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) assertion of the role of autonomy-connection in LDMs is empirically supported, as is a new dialectical relationship to LDMs.

From their extensive interviews Gerstel and Gross (1982) report that the longer couples live together prior to separation, the more likely couples are to endure the separation and remain intact. The current study supports that notion. Pre-separation marital length was a successful predictor of feeling understood and communication satisfaction. While not a predictor of relationship satisfaction for this sample, pre-separation marital length does play a role in one's adjustment and overall communication in an LDM. These findings support work by Gerstel and Gross (1982), and warrant more in-depth study.

The role of social support was not fully explored in the current study. Because the concealment measure was not completely reliable, the one measure of social support could not be analyzed. In a post-hoc analysis, positive social support was found to be positively and significantly related to relationship satisfaction, feeling understood with one's spouse, and global sustenance use. This finding indicates there may be a very specific role of positive social support in coping with and adjusting to the LDM life. Groves and Horm-Wingerd (1991) and Winfield (1985) report the importance of social support to LDM couples, but also the perceived lack thereof. The current study provides further evidence for the importance of such support.

Several findings were not statistically significant, despite evidence that they 'should be.' Whereas intuitively one might think that particular dialectics are more "important" than others (Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983, 1984) the data did not support this notion. Before this lack of support can be considered 'true' another, larger, sample should be obtained. On the other hand, couples may struggle with all the dialectics, each in its own time. In other words, there may not be a statistically significant difference in the experience of dialectics.

Another surprising finding was the lack of support for openness-closedness comfort to be related to communication satisfaction, feelings of understanding/misunderstanding, or openness as a sustenance strategy. Given the definition and experience of the openness-closedness dialectic, the reason for these findings is unclear. In post-hoc analyses, however, openness alone, and closedness alone, were significantly related to communication satisfaction and feelings of understanding. These results indicate that the effects of both openness and closedness were diluted by the presence of the other. Thus, whereas the dialectical pair was not significant, the individual scores of both were. These individual findings are supported by the literature.

Communication satisfaction refers to one's overall satisfaction with communicative interactions with one's partner (Hecht, 1978a, 1978b), feelings of understanding/misunderstanding refer to one's perception that his/her spouse understands what s/he says (Cahn, 1990), and the openness sustenance strategy includes discussing thoughts and feelings with one's spouse, talking in general about the relationship, and discussing the quality of the relationship (Canary & Stafford, 1992). Perhaps the lack of significance for these relationships refers more to the definition of the openness-closedness dialectic. According to Baxter and Montgomery (1996), the openness-closedness dialectic refers primarily to self-disclosure. This dialectic often comes down to how much to share with one's spouse (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Essentially the decision becomes whether to tell everything and be totally honest, or protect one's self a bit and hold some feelings private.

Clearly, this concept of openness as part of the dialectic may be different from satisfaction with conversations or feeling like one's partner understands one's feelings. This dialectic does still appear to be clearly related to the openness sustenance strategy. As for all nonsignificant results in this study, a larger sample size may illuminate differences otherwise not seen. In addition, a refined dialectics scale may shed light on relationships not uncovered in the current study.

Finally, no relationship was found between various sustenance strategies and the experience of dialectics as polarities. For instance, one might expect that offering advice would increase connection, that conflict management might be related to openness-closedness, that shared tasks might be related to connection, and shared social networks might be related to inclusion comfort. None of these connections were supported, however. Again, several factors may be at work with these relationships. First, sustenance in LDMs may be significantly

different from that of PMs. Whereas the sustenance scale was reliable in the current study, future studies may want to consider that the LDM experience may lead to different methods for sustaining connection over the miles.

Again, however, individual dialectics were significantly related to various sustenance behaviors. Shared tasks influence connection comfort, whereas social networks influenced both inclusion and revelation comfort. Given the supporting evidence discussed above, these findings are not without premise. Certainly if one's partner offers to help with various household necessities, one might feel more 'in touch' with one's spouse (more connected). The shared network measure operationalizes high scores as positive feelings about liking and spending time with family and friends other than one's spouse (and particularly friends and family of the spouse). Intuitively, one might imagine that if respondents who are satisfied with shared networks as one method of sustaining the relationship, one would also be comfortable with higher levels of spending time with those friends and family (inclusion) and talking about the marriage with them (revelation).

Perhaps the most significant finding of this study is the post-hoc dialectical significance. Without a doubt, suppression is taking place when both poles are combined in a statistical measure. The post-hoc analyses clearly indicate this suppression is taking place. Baxter and Montgomery (1996) discuss the 'both/and' component of dialectics. It is very likely, indeed probable, that the current operationalization obscured the 'true' impact of individual dialectical experienced. Thus, the measure needs refinement.

Limitations

Though several important relationships were uncovered, there are several limitations to the current study, and several things the author would have done differently, given what she

knows now. This section will begin with a discussion of the limitations of the current study, followed by a discussion of changes that could have been made, given 20/20 hindsight.

The first limitation is the sample used. The characteristics necessary for inclusion in the study are admittedly limited. Participants were not to see each other more frequently than twice per month, have no children, and be separated for non-military career reasons. Whereas initially the research plan called for recruiting those who had lived together for at least one year prior to separating, and who were separated for at least one year before reuniting for at least one year before they would qualify for the study, it became increasingly evident that those characteristics were too stringent. The guidelines were expanded, then, to include individuals still separated, together or separated for approximately one year, and visits no more frequently than every 10 days.

The difficulty of finding LDM couples who met the criteria was tremendous. Because there is no single source for finding these couples, it was difficult to locate such individuals. Students were very helpful in asking their family members if they knew anyone, but recruitment was still a time consuming and difficult process. Locating the 92 individuals for the study took over two years of listserve postings, student-aided recruitment and networking.

Though the recruitment criteria were narrow, they were necessary. Gerstel and Gross (1982,1983, 1984) indicate the differences between having children versus not having children during the LDM, time spent together prior to separating, and length of the separation. Consistent with anecdotal evidence, Gerstel and Gross (1982) report that shorter periods of separation are easier to manage because the couple doesn't have to wait that long to be back together. Every holiday of the year is not (theoretically) spent apart from one's spouse. Therefore, the criteria for the study, while restrictive, were grounded in research and designed to elicit a nearly

homogeneous sample. That goal was attained (see Sample – Demographics and Characteristics, above).

Second, the power analyses revealed very low levels of power for the current study. The level of power directly affects the strength of the data to detect significant difference. More power leads to the ability to detect smaller effect sizes. Effect size refers to “an estimate of the degree to which a phenomenon is present in a population and/or the extent to which the null hypothesis is false” (Vogt, 1993, p. 79). Therefore, because the power in the current study was so small, it is possible that differences were present, but the current study did not have enough power to detect them. Sample size and power are inexorably united. Given the discussion above, a sample size of 208 would be necessary to detect differences given moderate power and effect size with a Bonferonni adjusted significance value of .002.

Third, the dialectic scale needs to be refined, with PMs as well as with LDMs. The scale used for the study was sufficient, but could be fine-tuned. Several nonsignificant findings may be the result of low, but acceptable, reliabilities for the dialectics. Results do offer preliminary evidence that dialectics can be quantified, at least with LDMs. Given the success of the post-hoc analyses operationalizing each dialectical pole as individual constructs, a diluting effect takes place when the poles are combined. Whereas important information was still gleaned from both tools (dialectic-as-pole and dialectic-as-individual-construct), questions remain about the ‘true’ role of dialectics in the LDM experience, particularly as a quantified theory.

Third, the questionnaire was quite lengthy. Participants may have fallen victim to fatigue, and several wrote unsolicited comments that the questionnaire brought up feelings they had not considered previously. These factors combined may have influenced the participants’ responses either by the emotions the questions stirred or fatigue.

Fourth, in conducting the post-hoc analyses with each individual dialectic, several significant relationships were uncovered that were not detected when the dialectics were operationalized as a continuum. Given further thought in light of this dialectical revelation (that the individual dialectics may be more telling than the dialectics-as-poles), perhaps dialectics are best not operationalized as a continuum (linear). Instead, particularly given the ‘both/and’ characteristic of dialectics (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996), dialectics may be better conceptualized as simultaneous constructs. In other words, rather than operationalizing the autonomy-connection experience with one number (even as Baxter & Simon, 1993, do), it might be more accurate to use two scores (one for each pole) and plot them on x- and y-axes.

Plotting the experience of the dialectics as a multidimensional construct much more completely exemplifies the intricacies of dialectical experiences. By transforming the dialectics into a quadratic equation, one can see the linear nature of autonomy, for instance, from low salience to high, while simultaneously capturing the linear nature of togetherness, from low to high salience. In this way, four quadrants representing all possible combinations of dialectics result. In other words, one can then ‘see’ every point from high autonomy-high togetherness to low autonomy-low togetherness and every point in between. In this way researchers can more fully ascertain the both/and element of dialectics. This process would more fully illuminate the interaction between both ‘poles’ of the dialectic. Whereas the measurement used in this research project did show success, the transformation used is likely an incomplete expression of the ‘both/and’ element of dialectics.

Finally, while spirited, the goals of this study were perhaps too ambitious. In examining the findings of the hypotheses and research questions, more questions emerged. While this cycle is the natural course of research, this project was more breadth-focused than depth-focused.

Given the preliminary research, a study of this breadth was necessary. There are many other questions to be asked, however, with each variable. In some cases, questions did not get asked in advance for trying to see the bigger picture.

In terms of what the author would do differently, there are four primary areas of change. First, the overall scope of the study would be less broad and more specific. Though the supporting research (i.e., Gerstel & Gross, 1982, 1983, 1984; Groves & Horm-Wingerd, 1985; Winfield, 1985) warranted a broad study, and all the variables and relationships explored were important, it was not a necessity. Given hindsight, perhaps a more fruitful study, in terms of depth, would have been fewer inter-relationships and more focus on two or three single variables. For instance, such a study might have focused on dialectics, FUM, and support, along with the distance variables. This change would have also resulted in a shorter questionnaire, perhaps increasing the number of respondents.

Social support, an area in need of study with LDMs, given the previous reports that LDMs perceive limited social support (Groves & Horm-Wingerd, 1985; Winfield, 1985), could have played a larger role in the current study. Because social support has not been quantified in LDMs before the current study, the created scale indicated good reliability. The role of social support (how it is offered, by whom, how often, and in what medium) may play a crucial role in the LDM experience. Because it was embedded with the other elements of the study, this level of exploration was not attained.

Furthermore, if both partners in the couple had responded to the questionnaire, comparisons could have been made across couples, and would have been very illuminating. Gerstel and Gross (1982, 1983, 1984) were able to talk with both partners for their studies, but given the small sample sizes, their ability to interview both spouses is not surprising. Given the

current study, and its needs for an adequate sample size to have enough statistical power, not enough couple pairs responded to the recruitment requests to make comparisons within couples.

Finally, if more money in the form of grants (or independent wealth) had been available, advertisements could have been placed in various strategic locations (i.e., large city newspapers, in-flight magazines, radio announcements, etc.), and a greater sample size may have been attained. Whereas network sampling worked well for the current study, and individuals responding to advertisements would be subject to self-selection bias, the sample may have been larger, thus providing greater statistical power, and thus be more representative of LDMs (though the population characteristics are not known, so this prediction is somewhat uncertain).

Whereas the above knowledge gained from the study cannot change the current methods or findings, it does render the author greater insight to the research process, especially with a non-traditional sample such as this, and shed light on new areas of inquiry for LDM researchers.

Future Directions

Many research programs can be derived from this single exploratory study. One could examine the role of any single variable in the study as LDM couples experience them: the quantification of dialectics, the role of dialectics in the lives of LDM couples, social support's role in the LDM experience, II use, relationship sustenance, and relationship/communication satisfaction, to name just a few. If the goal of LDM research is not only to understand the LDM experience, but to be able to make predictions about it, a comprehensive research program is needed. All of the above-listed variables can act as predictor or outcome variables with each other. The presence of such nonrecursive causal models (those in which variables act as both predictor and outcome variables) makes for a complicated endeavor to disentangle the various relationships.

Furthermore, the feeling understood variable is one that has not received much attention in the communication literature. Given its meaningfulness in the current study, this variable may be underlying many relationship types and forms. Future research could benefit by more fully understanding the origins of and implications of feelings of understanding/misunderstanding in interpersonal relationships.

The investigation into the role of dialectics in LDMs only scratched the surface of possibilities. While the measure needs to be fine-tuned in general, it does show promise in explaining some facets of the LDM experience. Future studies should more fully explicate the role of both internal and external dialectics in LDMs, the interaction between dialectics-as-individual-constructs and dialectics-as-poles, as well as how couples respond to the dialectics, an element not addressed in the current study.

Future studies should also use a cohort-based longitudinal framework. If at all possible, couples should be measured shortly after separation, and then again every year throughout the separation, with another measure at reunification, and a final measure six months or one year after reuniting, to determine the impact the distance had upon living together again. Using cohorts for samples will allow researchers to account for generational and societal factors that less structured research may not. Only through such an in-depth exploration of LDM phenomenon that researchers will come to understand more fully and be able to make predictions about it. In addition, in-depth interviews coupled with questionnaires at each data collection point may give the most complete view of the inner workings of the LDM experience.

In addition, the dual-career component of the study was assumed, but not tested. Had this component (asking for details about both spouses, instead of just the respondent) been included, it would have lengthened the questionnaire even more. In addition to exploring the dual-career

component of LDMs, there appear to be several different ‘categories’ of individuals who may choose to live with a LDM: professionals (technology companies, politicians, etc.), academics, blue collar workers (deep sea divers, truck drivers, etc.), and military personnel. Each of these situations may influence different LDM experiences based on societal perceptions of the ‘worth’ of the particular job and how long the separation lasts. Therefore, these elements need to be examined closer in future studies.

Finally, no researcher to date has explored the differences between PM and LDM couples. Future research should explore not only dialectics but satisfaction (communication and relationship), communication styles, preferred channels of communication, average daily talk time, etc. Whereas the experience of dialectics may not be significantly different (i.e., both may experience autonomy-connection as the most salient), research indicates that the degree of experience may differ (see Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Gerstel & Gross, 1983).

While every hypothesis and research question was not statistically significant, the current study did provide several illuminating points. The role of the length of marriage prior to separation and feeling understood were revealed as very important in long distance marriages. Further, the quantitative measurement of dialectics gained strides, both conceptually and operationally, through this research project. The current study also pinpointed several research programs that one could undertake. Regardless of significance, it is clear that LDMs are here to stay, and communication researchers would be remiss to neglect this valuable and rich area of study.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire: Separated Sub-Sample

COMMUNICATION & LONG DISTANCE MARRIAGES

Thank you for agreeing to complete this questionnaire. It should take approximately 30 minutes to answer all the questions. If you want to take a break in completing the questionnaire, please wait until the end of a given set of questions so you are in the same frame of mind for each cluster of questions. By participating in this project, you are assisting researchers in understanding the intricacies of long distance marriages to further aid couples in the future. All responses will be confidential, anonymous, and only used for research purposes.

Please answer all of the following questions with the current, living apart phase of your marriage in mind. If you are uncertain about your response, indicate the answer that most closely approximates your true feeling. Whereas some questions may be similar to others asked, please answer all questions as honestly as possible, without worrying about duplicate items.

Section I: For this section of items think about times you communicate with each other, through any medium (letters, phone, e-mail, visits, etc.). Answer each set of questions according to the directions provided based on your experiences of living apart.

A In many relationships, we feel pulled in certain directions which at times may appear contradictory. For the following items, please read each description of preferences in marriage, then answer the following questions about your experiences.

1. Some individuals prefer to spend time away from their spouse, even when in the same household. They prefer to spend time with friends other than one's spouse and desire overall independence in a relationship.

a. This describes one component of how I feel.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

b. I am very comfortable with this aspect of my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

c. I am rather dissatisfied with this aspect of my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

d. This is very important to my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

e. This is a problem for me in my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

2. Some individuals want to talk a great deal about their marriage with other people. Details of the marriage are shared with family and friends because one wants others to know and desires talking about those topics with others.

a. This describes one component of how I feel.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

b. I am very comfortable with this aspect of my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

c. I am rather dissatisfied with this aspect of my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

d. This is very important to my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

e. This is a problem for me in my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

3. Some individuals want to be surprised in marriage. These people desire spontaneity and change in their relationship.

a. This describes one component of how I feel.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

b. I am very comfortable with this aspect of my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

c. I am rather dissatisfied with this aspect of my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

d. This is very important to my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

e. This is a problem for me in my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

4. Some individuals feel the desire to tell their spouse everything about their thoughts and life. These individuals believe complete honesty is crucial in marriages and want to be able to discuss thoughts and issues whenever the need arises.

a. This describes one component of how I feel.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

b. I am very comfortable with this aspect of my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

c. I am rather dissatisfied with this aspect of my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

d. This is very important to my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

e. This is a problem for me in my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

5. Some individuals feel the desire to spend all their time with their spouse. These individuals like being dependent on their spouse and would rather spend time together than apart.
- This describes one component of how I feel.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
 - I am very comfortable with this aspect of my marriage.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
 - I am rather dissatisfied with this aspect of my marriage.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
 - This is very important to my marriage.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
 - This is a problem for me in my marriage.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
6. Some individuals want to spend time as a couple with other people. They like to be invited to parties and get-togethers as a couple and in turn desire to invite others to visit them.
- This describes one component of how I feel.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
 - I am very comfortable with this aspect of my marriage.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
 - I am rather dissatisfied with this aspect of my marriage.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
 - This is very important to my marriage.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
 - This is a problem for me in my marriage.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
7. Some individuals experience pressures to conform in conventional ways to the expectations of the general society, or their friends and family, about how their relationship should be. These individuals prefer what may be termed a more 'traditional' marriage.
- This describes one component of how I feel.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
 - I am very comfortable with this aspect of my marriage.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
 - I am rather dissatisfied with this aspect of my marriage.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
 - This is very important to my marriage.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
 - This is a problem for me in my marriage.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

8. Some individuals do not want to tell their spouse everything; there are some issues they keep from their spouse. These individuals do not believe in 100% honesty about *everything*. These people may want to discuss fewer topics, or see some topics as not worthy of discussion, or would rather discuss them with someone other than their spouse.

a. This describes one component of how I feel.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

b. I am very comfortable with this aspect of my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

c. I am rather dissatisfied with this aspect of my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

d. This is very important to my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

e. This is a problem for me in my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

9. Some individuals desire certainty and predictability about one another and the relationship. This may come in the form of knowing what to expect, being assured of stability in the relationship, and relying on routines.

a. This describes one component of how I feel.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

b. I am very comfortable with this aspect of my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

c. I am rather dissatisfied with this aspect of my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

d. This is very important to my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

e. This is a problem for me in my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

10. Some individuals want to spend time with their spouse alone...just the two of them. These people may not want to 'share' their spouse with others when the pair has time to spend together.

a. This describes one component of how I feel.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

b. I am very comfortable with this aspect of my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

c. I am rather dissatisfied with this aspect of my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

d. This is very important to my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

e. This is a problem for me in my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

11. Some individuals desire to keep information about their marital relationship from other people. They may do this by not talking about their marriage in any detail to anyone else. These people want to keep their relationship confidential or private between themselves and their partner.

a. This describes one component of how I feel.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

b. I am very comfortable with this aspect of my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

c. I am rather dissatisfied with this aspect of my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

d. This is very important to my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

e. This is a problem for me in my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

12. Some individuals desire to be unique from all other relationships. These people want to be seen as a 'different' type of couple. Thus, these individuals may feel their marriage is rare.

a. This describes one component of how I feel.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

b. I am very comfortable with this aspect of my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

c. I am rather dissatisfied with this aspect of my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

d. This is very important to my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

e. This is a problem for me in my marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

B. Just as in many relationships there exist contradictions, there are many ways for dealing with these oppositions. Some of the strategies for dealing with the oppositions discussed above are listed below. Read through the possible ways of dealing with the contradiction(s) and then answer the questions that follow.

1. Sometimes we want to spend time with our partner and other times we just want our own private space.

A. I solve this by just spending time with my spouse.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

B. I solve this by acting like it is not a problem.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

- C. I offer to spend Friday night with friends and Saturday night with my spouse.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
- D. I solve this by just spending time alone.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
- E. It is not that I want time alone, but time away from my spouse makes me appreciate him/her that much more.”
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
- F. We decide to spend time together, but doing separate activities (i.e. he reads and she grades papers, but both in the living room).
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
- G. I spend time with my spouse until I am ‘sick of’ him/her, then spend time alone until I want his/her company again. I do this off and on system repeatedly.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

2. Sometimes we want to tell our spouse every thought we have and all about our experiences, whereas at other times we do not want to share as much information.

- A. I solve this by telling my spouse every thought I have.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
- B. I solve this by acting like it is not a problem.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
- C. I offer to talk when I feel like it, and say nothing when I do not want to talk.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
- D. I solve this by telling my spouse nothing, unless asked (and then as little as possible).
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
- E. I decided that it is not that I want to keep secrets from my spouse, but s/he simply may not be interested in some things.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
- F. We decide to have time set aside to talk about what we’d like, but not necessarily talk at other times.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
- G. I talk until I am ‘talked out,’ then stay quiet until I feel like talking again, then talk until I am ‘talked out,’ and so on.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

3. Sometimes we want lots of spontaneity and change and at other times want stability and predictability.

- A. I solve this by always doing the same thing so life is very predictable.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

- B. I solve this by acting like it is not a problem.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
- C. I offer to be spontaneous about some things (like romance) but agree to predictability on other issues (i.e. not bringing people for dinner unexpectedly).
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
- D. I solve this by never doing the same thing twice, and surprising him/her often – that keeps life exciting.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
- E. I decided that spontaneity just ruins plans. I would rather know what is happening so I can look forward to it.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
- F. We decide to have scheduled evenings where one person is in charge of planning fun – so it is a surprise for the other person.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
- G. I used a planned routine until I cannot stand it any more, then I throw in some spontaneity until we need some predictability again, and keep doing this cycle of predictability and novelty on and off.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
4. Sometimes we want to spend time with other people whereas we are with our spouse, whereas at other times we want him/her ‘all to ourselves.’”
- A. I solve this by just spending time with my spouse when we are together.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
- B. I solve this by acting like it is not a problem.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
- C. I offer for us to spend certain holidays or events with family/friends, and other visits alone.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
- D. I solve this by suggesting we spend time with family/friends every time we are together.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
- E. I feel that our relationship is most important, so our time during visits should be ours only.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
- F. I feel we decided to spend time with family/friends when we are apart so we can spend our together time alone.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
- G. I feel we spend time with others until we are ‘sick of’ being with them, then spend time by ourselves until we crave company, then spend time with others....and so on.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

5. Sometimes we want our relationship to be seen by others as unique and different and at other times want to be seen as more traditional and like everyone else's relationships.
- A. I solve this by telling everyone we have a long distance marriage, and asserting how happy we are even though we do not live together.
- | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
- B. I solve this by asserting that we are not 'different' from other married couples, we just made different choices.
- | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
- C. I do not see our relationship as different, therefore it is not an issue.
- | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
- D. I solve this by acknowledging I am in a long distance marriage, but also clear that we are 'just like everyone else.'
- | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
- E. I tell some people about our living situation, but not other people.
- | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
- F. I tell people about our living situation until I am tired of hearing their comments, then I do not tell anyone for a whereas. After some time I decide to tell people again...and so on.
- | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
6. Sometimes we want to tell other people all about our marriage, whereas at other times we do not want others to know the details of the relationship.
- A. I solve this by telling others all about my marriage.
- | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
- B. I solve this by acting like it is not a problem.
- | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
- C. I offer to talk when I feel like it, and say nothing when I do not want to talk.
- | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
- D. I solve this by telling other people nothing, unless asked (and then as little as possible).
- | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
- E. I decided that it is not that I want to keep secrets from my family/friends, but s/he simply may not be interested in some things.
- | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
- F. I decide to tell others rather innocuous facts so they feel like they are getting information, but I am not really disclosing anything about my marriage.
- | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|

G. I talk until I am 'talked out,' then stay quiet until I feel like talking again, then talk until I am 'talked out,' and so on.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

C. This section deals with your perception of your marriage in general. For the following items, please use the following scale:

1 = Very strong disagreement 2 = Moderate disagreement 3 = Slight disagreement 4 = Neutral
 5 = Slight agreement 6 = Moderate agreement 7 = Very strong agreement

1. Our marriage is strong.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2. My relationship with my partner is very stable.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3. My relationship with my partner makes me happy.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4. We have a good marriage

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5. I really feel like part of a team with my partner.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

6. The degree of happiness, everything considered, during the separation:

Very unhappy 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Perfectly happy

D. The purpose of this set of questions is to investigate your reactions to conversations you have with your spouse. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree that each statement describes your feelings about those conversations. *The 4 or middle position on the scale represents 'undecided' or 'neutral' then moving out from the center, 'slight' agreement or disagreement, then 'moderate agreement' then 'strong agreement or disagreement. For example, if you strongly agree with the following statement you would circle 1.*

(Example) The other person talked a lot.

Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Disagree

1. The other person lets me know I am communicating effectively.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

2. Nothing is accomplished during our conversations.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

3 My spouse genuinely wants to know more about me.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

4. I am very <i>dissatisfied</i> with the conversations.								
Strongly Agree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Disagree
5. I have other things to do (whereas talking).								
Strongly Agree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Disagree
6. I am very satisfied with the conversations.								
Strongly Agree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Disagree
7. My spouse expresses a lot of interest in what I have to say.								
Strongly Agree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Disagree
8. I do <i>not</i> enjoy the conversations.								
Strongly Agree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Disagree
9. We each get to say what we want.								
Strongly Agree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Disagree
10. The conversations flow smoothly.								
Strongly Agree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Disagree
11. The communication with my spouse is <i>very different</i> during the separation than prior to living apart.								
Strongly Agree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Disagree

E. For this set of questions, recall how you generally feel when talking with your spouse. The following terms refer to feelings that may be relevant when people attempt to make themselves understood by others. Please indicate the extent to which each term describes how you generally feel immediately after trying to make yourself understood by your spouse. Respond to each term according to the following scale:

1 = very little 2 = little 3 = some 4 = great 5 = very great

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| _____ Annoyance | _____ Sadness |
| _____ Satisfaction | _____ Acceptance |
| _____ Self-reliance | _____ Humbleness |
| _____ Discomfort | _____ Failure |
| _____ Relaxation | _____ Comfortableness |
| _____ Shyness | _____ Hostility |
| _____ Dissatisfaction | _____ Incompleteness |
| _____ Pleasure | _____ Happiness |
| _____ Enviousness | _____ Compassion |
| _____ Insecurity | _____ Uninterestingness |
| _____ Good | _____ Importance |
| _____ Attentiveness | _____ Assertiveness |

Please indicate the extent to which your feelings about these issues have changed in general during the living apart phase of your marriage (from prior to living apart).

1 = very little 2 = little 3 = some 4 = great 5 = very great

F. For the following items, place circle the number that best shows how you feel about the statement in terms of agreeing or disagreeing with the statement. Please note that the endpoints for some of the items are reversed. This ensures a more careful reading of the statement and the accompanying scale.

1. I think we joke around and have more fun than most couples.

Strongly Agree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Disagree
----------------	---	---	---	---	---	-------------------
2. My spouse reassures and comforts me when I am feeling low.

Strongly Agree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Disagree
----------------	---	---	---	---	---	-------------------
3. We tell each other how much we love or care about each other.

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
-------------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------
4. A woman should take her husband's last name when she marries.

Strongly Agree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Disagree
----------------	---	---	---	---	---	-------------------
5. Our wedding ceremony is important to us.

Strongly Agree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Disagree
----------------	---	---	---	---	---	-------------------
6. Our society, as we see it, needs to regain faith in the law and in our institutions.

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
-------------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------
7. Some issues will disappear if two people can just avoid arguing about them.

Strongly Agree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Disagree
----------------	---	---	---	---	---	-------------------
8. It is better to hide one's true feelings in order to avoid hurting one's spouse.

Strongly Agree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Disagree
----------------	---	---	---	---	---	-------------------
9. In marriage, it is better to avoid conflicts than to engage in them.

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
-------------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

G. For the following questions, indicate the extent to which each of the following statements accurately reflects the way that you maintain your relationship. Do not indicate agreement with things that you think you should do, or you wish you had done. That is, think about what you actually do. Remember that much of what you do to maintain your relationship can involve mundane or routine aspects of day-to-day life. Whereas some of the questions may be similar to those answered earlier, please answer as honestly as possible, not worrying about any duplicate items.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Somewhat disagree 4 = Neutral/do not disagree or agree
5 = Somewhat agree 6 = Agree 7 = Strongly agree

1. I stress my commitment to my spouse.

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
-------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Somewhat disagree 4 = Neutral/do not disagree or agree
 5 = Somewhat agree 6 = Agree 7 = Strongly agree

2. I encourage my spouse to disclose thoughts and feelings to me.								
Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
3. I share equally in the joint responsibilities that face us.								
Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
4. I like to spend time with our same friends.								
Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
5. I like to have periodic talks about our relationship.								
Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
6. I attempt to make our interactions very enjoyable.								
Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
7. I include our friends or family in our activities.								
Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
8. I show myself to be faithful to my spouse.								
Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
9. I imply to my spouse and others that our relationship has a future.								
Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
10. I present myself as cheerful and optimistic.								
Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
11. I help equally with tasks that need to be done.								
Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
12. I try to be romantic, fun, and interesting with my spouse.								
Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
13. I am patient and forgiving of my spouse.								
Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
14. I am cooperative in the ways I handle disagreements between us.								
Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
15. I act cheerful and positive with my spouse.								
Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
16. I do my fair share of the work that has to be done.								
Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
17. I simply tell my spouse how I feel about our relationship.								
Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
18. I focus on our common friends and affiliations.								
Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Somewhat disagree 4 = Neutral/do not disagree or agree
 5 = Somewhat agree 6 = Agree 7 = Strongly agree

19. I show my love for my spouse.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

20. I seek to discuss the quality of our relationship.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

21. I tell my spouse what I need or want from our relationship.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

22. I do not shirk my duties.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

23. I do not criticize my spouse.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

24. I show that I am willing to do things with my spouse's friends or family.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

25. I perform household responsibilities.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

26. I ask how my spouse's day was.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

27. I try to build my spouse's self-esteem, including giving compliments, etc.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

28. I remind my spouse about relationship decisions we made in the past (for example, to maintain the same level of intimacy).

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

29. I am very nice, courteous, and polite when we talk.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

H. Imagined interactions are those 'mental' interactions we have with others who are not physically present. We may have imagined conversations that occur in self-controlled daydreams or whereas the mind wanders. We may imagine interactions before falling asleep, before interacting with someone, after interacting with someone and so on.

Imagined interactions may be brief or long. They may be ambiguous or detailed. They may address a number of topics or examine one topic exclusively. The interactions may be one-sided where the person imagining the discussion does most of the talking, or they may be more interactive where both partners take an active part in the conversation.

Following are a few items asking you about imagined interactions. Please read each item carefully and try to answer it as honestly as possible.

YES! = very strong agreement

NO! = very strong disagreement

YES = strong agreement

NO = strong disagreement

yes = agreement

no = disagreement

? = neither agreement or disagreement

1. I have imagined interactions all the time.

NO! NO no ? yes YES YES!

2. I often have imagined interactions before interacting with my spouse on the phone.

NO! NO no ? yes YES YES!

3. I often have imagined interactions before interacting with my spouse in person.

NO! NO no ? yes YES YES!

4. Before I have important discussion with my spouse, I often imagine conversations with him/her.

NO! NO no ? yes YES YES!

5. I frequently have imagined interactions.

NO! NO no ? yes YES YES!

6. I rarely imagine myself interacting with anyone else.

NO! NO no ? yes YES YES!

7. I enjoy most of my imagined interactions.

NO! NO no ? yes YES YES!

8. It is hard recalling the details of imagined interactions.

NO! NO no ? yes YES YES!

9. My imagined interactions are very specific.

NO! NO no ? yes YES YES!

10. My imagined interactions are usually quite unpleasant.

NO! NO no ? yes YES YES!

11. My imagined interactions are usually quite pleasant.

NO! NO no ? yes YES YES!

12. Before important discussions with my spouse, I frequently imagine them.

NO! NO no ? yes YES YES!

13. I have imagined interactions with many different people.

NO! NO no ? yes YES YES!

I. Complete the following items about the supportiveness of your family/friends during the separation. Please choose the person other than your spouse with whom you speak with most frequently about the separation.

Please list the relationship of the person about whom you are responding. S/he is my (please circle one):

Mother Father Sister Brother Other family member
Friend Roommate Other:

Approximately how often do you speak with this person about your situation (please circle one)?

Daily Twice per week Weekly Every other week
 Once per month Less than once per month

Please use the following scale when answering the next set of questions:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Moderately Disagree 3 = Slightly Disagree 4 = Undecided
 5 = Slightly Agree 6 = Moderately Agree 7 = Strongly Agree

1. This person makes negative comments about my living situation.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

2. This person makes negative implications about long distance marriages in general.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

3. This person praises me for our ability to handle the situation.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

4. This person is nosy about my living and marital situation.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

5. This person offers to help with the situation.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

6. This person offers sympathetic words about the troubles of a long distance marriage.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

7. This person implies that our marriage is 'doomed' because we do not live together.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

8. This person implies that our marriage is 'strange' because we do not live together.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

9. This person affirms my loyalty to my spouse.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

10. This person implies that our marriage is 'not normal' because we do not live together.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

11. This person implies that our marriage is "unnatural" because we do not live together.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

12. This person makes positive comments about our relationship (i.e. "you two are so good together" etc.).

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

13. This person is critical of the marriage in light of us not living together.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

On a scale of 1 to 10, please rate the general supportiveness of this person:

14. Least supportive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Most supportive

3. Would you be willing to answer additional questions about your experience in the future? If so, please indicate how I may contact you.

4. Do you know anyone else who has been separated for career reasons that may be willing to assist in this project?

Thank you for your participation in this study. Your responses will be used to help other couples in long distance marriages.

Appendix B₁

Letter Accompanying Electronic Questionnaire Packet

April 12, 2002

Thank you for agreeing to help with my dissertation study. In this study I am interested in learning about the communication that takes place during long distance marriages, as well as understanding the experience itself.

In anticipation of your being able to help, I am enclosing several items. The first is an informed consent form that essentially says I am not paying you to do this. I am also enclosing a copy of the questionnaire. It is rather lengthy, but all the information is critical. Please answer each question to the best of your ability. If no one answer represents exactly what you feel, please choose the response closest to how you feel. You do not have to complete the questionnaire in one sitting. You can fill it out at your leisure, but please stop in between sets of questions so each set is consistent. Please do not share your answers with your spouse until you have mailed it back, to ensure the answers are yours alone.

When you have completed the entire questionnaire please mail it back to me via e-mail, or call and I will send you a SASE. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at 315-267-2786. Thank you, again, for your assistance.

Thank you,

Andrea Towers Scott
Visiting Instructor, Communication Division
SUNY Potsdam

Appendix B₂

Letter Accompanying Mailed Questionnaire Packet

April 12, 2002

<address information>

Dear <name of participant>,

I am sending my study materials we discussed via e-mail. I am interested in learning about the communication that takes place during this type of marriage, as well as gaining a greater understanding of the experience itself. Participation for this study entails completing a questionnaire that is enclosed with this note.

I am currently an instructor at SUNY Potsdam, teaching courses in interpersonal communication, communication theory, family communication, and research methods. I am working on my Ph.D. through Louisiana State University, and am 2/3 of the way through finding my sample for my dissertation.

I am enclosing several items. The first is an informed consent form that essentially says I am not paying you to do this. I am also enclosing a copy of the questionnaire. It is rather lengthy, but all the information is critical. Please answer each question to the best of your ability. If no one answer represents exactly what you feel, please choose the response closest to how you feel. You do not have to complete the questionnaire in one sitting. You can fill it out at your leisure, but please stop in between sets of questions so each set is consistent.

When you have completed the entire questionnaire, please mail it back to me in the enclosed envelope. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at 315-267-2786. Thank you, again, for your assistance.

Thank you,

Andrea Towers Scott
Visiting Instructor, Communication Division

Appendix C

Reliabilities of Dialectics Measure

Dialectic #, name	alpha reliability	revised alpha (items b, c, & e)
1. autonomy	.8682	.8930
2. revelation	.5728	.6878
3. novelty	.6101	.7412
4. openness	.7134	.8478
5. togetherness	.4119	.7254
6. inclusion	.6182	.8157
7. conventionality	.3350	.7498
8. closedness	.5872	.6670
9. predictability	.7504	.9174
10. seclusion	.4472	.8400
11. concealment	.6046	.5824
12. uniqueness	.5167	.6560

Appendix D
Social Support Factor Loadings

Item	Loading
<i>Factor 1 (positivity)</i>	
3. This person praises me for our ability to handle the situation.	.748
5. This person offers to help with the situation.	.717
6. This person offers sympathetic words about the troubles of an LDM.	.790
9. This person affirms my loyalty to my spouse.	.787
12. This person makes positive comments about our relationship (i.e., “you two are so good together” etc.)	.595
<i>Factor 2 (negativity)</i>	
1. This person makes negative comments about my living situation.	.742
2. This person makes negative implications about long distance marriages in general.	.789

Item	Loading
4. This person is nosy about my living and marital situation.	.712
7. This person implies that our marriage is “doomed” because we do not live together.	.836
8. This person implies that our marriage is “strange” because we do not live together.	.897
10. This person implies that our marriage is “not normal” because we do not live together.	.866
11. This person implies that our marriage is “unnatural” because we do not live together.	.890
13. This person is critical of the marriage in light of our not living together.	.871

Appendix E

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Min	Max	Mean	sd
Age	85	24.00	69.00	45.8235	9.6537
<hr/>					
separation distance					
(miles)	33	50.00	7000.00	1161.32	1522.85
<hr/>					
separation length					
(months)	28	11.00	240.00	41.2857	49.1361
<hr/>					
married prior to					
separation (months)	82	11.0	360.00	114.23	104.88
<hr/>					
How long reunited?					
(months)	30	1.00	384.00	69.5000	78.4249
<hr/>					
how long					
separated (months)	81	4.00	384.00	37.8395	57.0641
<hr/>					
length of dating					
prior to marriage	85	4.00	102.00	29.7294	21.5453
(months)					
<hr/>					
long distance dating					
distance (miles)	27	25.00	7000.00	1268.15	1693.97
<hr/>					
long distance dating					
length (months)	26	2.00	60.00	28.2308	18.9701

Appendix F

Frequencies: Demographics

	Frequency	PercentValid %	Valid %	Cumulative %
<i>Income</i>				
0-15,000	2	2.2	2.3	2.3
15,001 - 30,000	6	6.7	7.0	9.3
30,001 - 45,000	11	12.2	12.8	22.1
45,001 - 60,000	15	16.7	17.4	39.5
60,001+	52	57.8	60.5	100.0
<hr/>				
<i>Occupation</i>				
student	4	4.4	4.6	4.6
clerical/office worker	4	4.4	4.6	9.2
service provider	2	2.2	2.3	11.5
faculty/staff	39	43.3	44.8	56.3
management	11	12.2	12.6	69.0
health services	8	8.9	9.2	78.2
other	19	21.1	21.8	100.0
<hr/>				
<i>Sex of respondent</i>				
male	33	36.7	37.9	37.9
female	54	60.0	62.1	100.0

	Frequency	PercentValid %		Cumulative %
<i>Education level</i>				
some high school	1	1.1	1.1	1.1
completed high school	12	13.3	13.8	14.9
some college	11	12.2	12.6	27.6
completed college	13	14.4	14.9	42.5
grad/prof school	50	55.6	57.5	100.0
<hr/>				
<i>Ethnic origin</i>				
white, Anglo	74	82.2	85.1	85.1
Asian-American	2	2.2	2.3	87.4
African-American	2	2.2	2.3	89.7
Hispanic	2	2.2	2.3	92.0
Other	7	7.8	8.0	100.0
<hr/>				

Appendix G

Frequencies: LDM-Related

Have you known an LDM couple?

no	47	52.2	54.0	54.0
yes	40	44.4	46.0	100.0

How happy was that LDM couple?

very unhappy	1	1.1	2.9	2.9
2.00	1	1.1	2.9	5.9
3.00	2	2.2	5.9	11.8
4.00	2	2.2	5.9	17.6
5.00	4	4.4	11.8	29.4
6.00	7	7.8	20.6	50.0
7.00	7	7.8	20.6	70.6
8.00	8	8.9	23.5	94.1
perfectly happy	2	2.2	5.9	100.0

What was your relationship to the LDM couple?

friend	14	15.6	35.9	35.9
parent	4	4.4	10.3	46.2
co-worker	7	7.8	17.9	64.1
acquaintance	7	7.8	17.9	82.1
other	7	7.8	17.9	100.0

	Frequency	PercentValid %		Cumulative %
<i>Did you have a commuter dating relationship?</i>				
no	58	64.4	66.7	66.7
yes	29	32.2	33.3	100.0

How often did you and your spouse visit?

every week/10 days	28	31.1	32.2	32.2
twice per month	18	20.0	20.7	52.9
once per month	20	22.2	23.0	75.9
every 6 weeks	4	4.4	4.6	80.5
every 8 weeks	4	4.4	4.6	85.1
< every 8 weeks	12	13.3	13.8	98.9

Appendix H

Multicollinearity Diagnostics

<i>Predictor variable</i>	<i>Tolerance</i>	<i>VIF</i>
Positive social support	.694	1.441
Length of separation	.876	1.141
Pre-separation marital length	.869	1.151
Feelings of understanding/misunderstanding	.743	1.346
Global II use	.261	3.830
Proactive II use	.263	3.797
Sustenance – openness	.624	1.602
Sustenance – tasks	.800	1.250
Sustenance – networks	.651	1.537

Appendix I

Stepwise t-tests for Overall Dialectical Salience

Hypothesis One

<i>Pair One:</i>	<u><i>M</i></u>	<u><i>t</i></u>	<u><i>df</i></u>	<u><i>p</i></u>
Autonomy-connection	10.0766	-1.823	86	ns
Openness-closedness	10.6973			

Hypothesis Two

<i>Pair One:</i>	<u><i>M</i></u>	<u><i>t</i></u>	<u><i>df</i></u>	<u><i>p</i></u>
Conventionality-uniqueness	11.0114	3.358	86	.05
Inclusion-seclusion	9.9242			

Pair Two:

Inclusion-seclusion	9.9242	-2.293	86	ns
Revelation-concealment	10.6322			

Appendix J

Glossary of Terms

FUM	feelings of understanding/misunderstanding (scale)
IIs	imagined interactions
IM	instant messenger
LDD	long distance dating
LDM	long distance marriage
LDR	long distance relationship
PM	proximal marriage
RCCU	relational continuity constructional units

Appendix K

Variable Frequencies

Variable	Mean	sd	Actual		Theoretical	
			Min	Max	Min	Max
Autonomy-Connection	10.03	3.01	1.00	14.0	1.0	14.0
Openness-Closedness	10.61	2.60	3.00	14.0	1.0	14.0
Predictability-Novelty	10.33	2.78	1.00	14.0	1.0	14.0
Inclusion-Seclusion	9.92	2.81	3.67	14.0	1.0	14.0
Revelation-Concealment	10.63	2.08	5.00	14.0	1.0	14.0
Conventionality-Uniqueness	11.01	2.65	1.00	14.0	1.0	14.0
FUM	13.98	10.53	-15.0	32.00	- 32.0	+ 32.0
II	4.50	.97	1.00	6.54	1.0	7.0
Social Support	5.22	1.31	1.00	7.0	1.0	7.0
Relationship Sustenance	5.54	.74	3.59	6.83	1.0	7.0
Relationship Satisfaction	6.13	1.21	1.40	7.00	1.0	7.0
Communication Satisfaction	4.90	1.21	2.00	7.00	1.0	7.0

Appendix L

Hypotheses and Research Question Results Chart

Hypothesis	Method	p	R ²	power
1: comfort = openness-closedness > autonomy-connection > predictability-novelty	stepwise t-tests via Ryans	see Appendix I	see Appendix I	see Appendix I
2: comfort = revelation-concealment > inclusion-seclusion > uniqueness-conventionality	stepwise t-tests via Ryans	see Appendix I	see Appendix I	see Appendix I
3: negative relationship between autonomy-connection comfort and relationship satisfaction	regression	0.424	0.000	0.002
<i>post-hoc</i> : visit frequency and autonomy-connection interaction effect with relationship satisfaction	regression	0.053	0.045	N/A
<i>post-hoc</i> : autonomy comfort and relationship satisfaction	regression	0.949	0.000	0.050
<i>post-hoc</i> : connection comfort and relationship satisfaction	regression	0.755	0.001	0.051
4: negative relationship between inclusion-seclusion comfort and relationship satisfaction	regression	0.066	0.026	0.115
<i>post-hoc</i> : inclusion comfort and relationship satisfaction	regression	0.062	0.042	N/A
<i>post-hoc</i> : seclusion comfort and relationship satisfaction	regression	0.009	0.077	N/A
5: positive relationship between openness-closedness and communication satisfaction	regression			
w/o long distance dating experience:		0.458	0.000	0.000
w/ long distance dating experience:		0.326	0.008	0.002
<i>post-hoc</i> : openness comfort and communication satisfaction	regression			
W/o long distance dating experience:		0.004	0.145	N/A
w/ long distance dating experience:		0.020	0.198	N/A

Hypothesis	Method	p	R²	power
<i>post-hoc</i> : closedness comfort and communication satisfaction	regression			
w/o long distance dating experience:		0.337	0.017	0.061
w/ long distance dating experience:		0.025	0.185	N/A
6: positive relationship between openness-closedness and feeling understood	regression	0.675	0.026	0.003
<i>post-hoc</i> : openness comfort and feeling understood	regression	0.000	0.156	N/A
<i>post-hoc</i> : closedness comfort and feeling understood	regression	0.043	0.048	N/A
7: positive relationship between autonomy-connection comfort and feeling understood	regression	0.419	0.000	0.002
<i>post-hoc</i> : autonomy comfort and feeling understood	regression	0.436	0.007	0.055
<i>post-hoc</i> : connection comfort and feeling understood	regression	0.277	0.014	0.060
8: positive relationship between pre-separation marital length and feeling understood	regression	0.078	0.038	0.004
9: curvilinear relationship between autonomy-connection comfort and global II use	regression	0.230	0.019	0.003
<i>post-hoc</i> : autonomy comfort and feeling understood and global II use	regression	0.151	0.046	0.089
<i>post-hoc</i> : connection comfort and global II use	regression	0.192	0.039	0.082
10: curvilinear relationship between openness-closedness comfort and global II use	regression	0.459	0.002	0.003
<i>post-hoc</i> : openness comfort and global II use	regression	0.783	0.006	0.054
<i>post-hoc</i> : closedness comfort and global II use	regression	0.238	0.034	0.078

Hypothesis	Method	p	R²	power
11: positive relationship between social support and revelation-concealment comfort	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>post-hoc</i> : social support and revelation comfort	regression	0.573	0.004	0.053
12a: positive relationship between openness sustenance strategy and concern for openness (versus closedness) comfort	regression	0.344	0.002	0.003
<i>post-hoc</i> : openness sustenance strategy and openness comfort	regression	0.422	0.008	0.056
12b: positive relationship between assurances sustenance strategy and connection (versus autonomy) comfort	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
12c: positive relationship between shared tasks and connection (versus autonomy) comfort	regression	0.424	0.000	0.002
<i>post-hoc</i> : assurances sustenance strategy and connection comfort	regression	0.031	0.054	N/A
12d: positive relationship between social networks and inclusion (versus seclusion) comfort	regression	0.368	0.001	0.002
<i>post-hoc</i> : social networks and inclusion comfort	regression	0.002	0.112	N/A
12e: positive relationship between social networks and revelation (versus concealment) comfort	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>post-hoc</i> : social networks and revelation comfort	regression	0.004	0.094	N/A
13: positive relationship between global II use and relationship satisfaction	regression	0.442	0.000	0.002
14: positive relationship between pre-separation marital length and communication satisfaction	regression	0.038	0.038	0.004

Research Question	Method	p	R²	power
1: relationship between length of separation and relationship satisfaction	regression	0.271	0.004	0.000
2: relationship between feeling understood and relationship satisfaction	regression	0.000	0.446	N/A
3: relationship between feeling understood and communication satisfaction	regression	0.000	0.406	N/A
4: relationship between feeling understood and global relationship sustenance use	regression	0.000	0.226	N/A
5: relationship between pre-separation marital length and global relationship sustenance use	regression	0.117	0.018	0.003
6: relationship between proactive IIs and global relationship sustenance use	regression	0.289	0.004	0.000
7: relationship between couple type and likelihood of choosing an LDM lifestyle	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
8: will separates choose and sustain an LDM lifestyle but experience marital difficulty when reunited	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Appendix M

Correlation Matrix

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1	1.000													
2	0.339	1.000												
3	0.465*	.499*	1.000											
4	0.557*	.453*	.541*	1.000										
5	0.65*	ns	.463*	.418*	1.000									
6	0.401*	.456*	.578*	.497*	ns	1.000								
7	ns	<u>0.330</u>	ns	ns	ns	ns	1.000							
8	ns	0.310	0.305	0.336	0.312	ns	.563*	1.000						
9	Ns	.386*	<u>0.325</u>	0.354	0.311	ns	.668*	.638*	1.000					
10	Ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	.451*	Ns	.475*	1.000				
11	Ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	Ns	ns	.451*	1.000			
12	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	Ns	ns	ns	ns	1.000		
13	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	Ns	ns	ns	ns	.660*	1.000	
14	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	Ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	1.000
15	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	Ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	.540*

LEGEND:

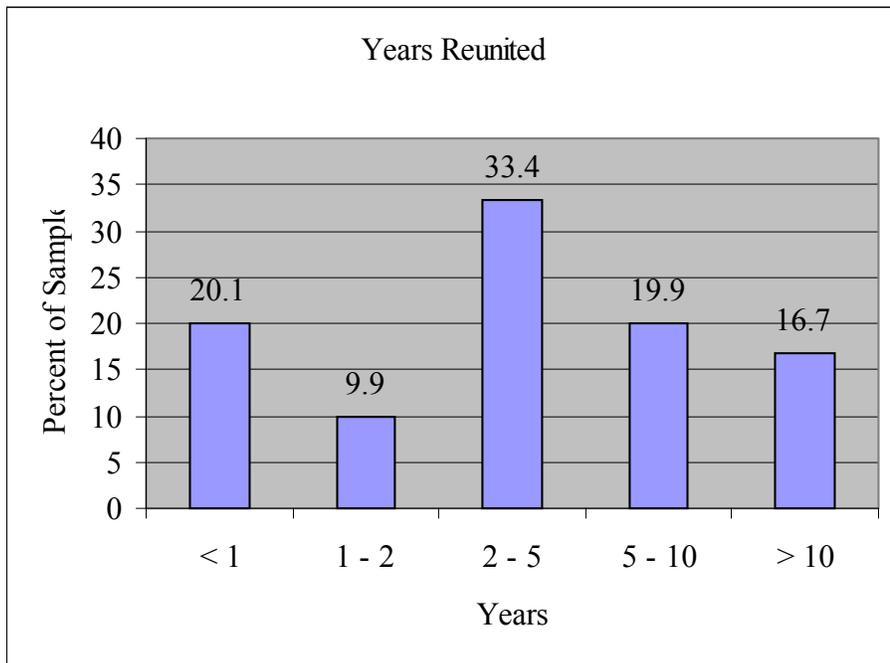
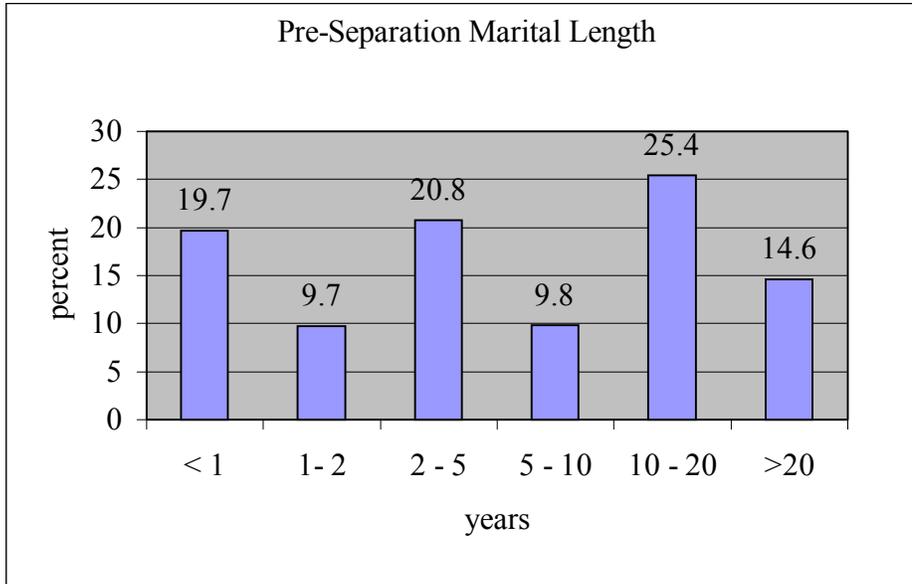
- 1 = Autonomy-Connection
- 2 = Openness-Closedness
- 3 = Predictability-Novelty
- 4 = Revelation-Concealment
- 5 = Inclusion-Seclusion
- 6 = Conventionality-Uniqueness
- 7 = Relationship Satisfaction
- 8 = Communication Satisfaction
- 9 = FUM
- 10 = Relationship Sustenance

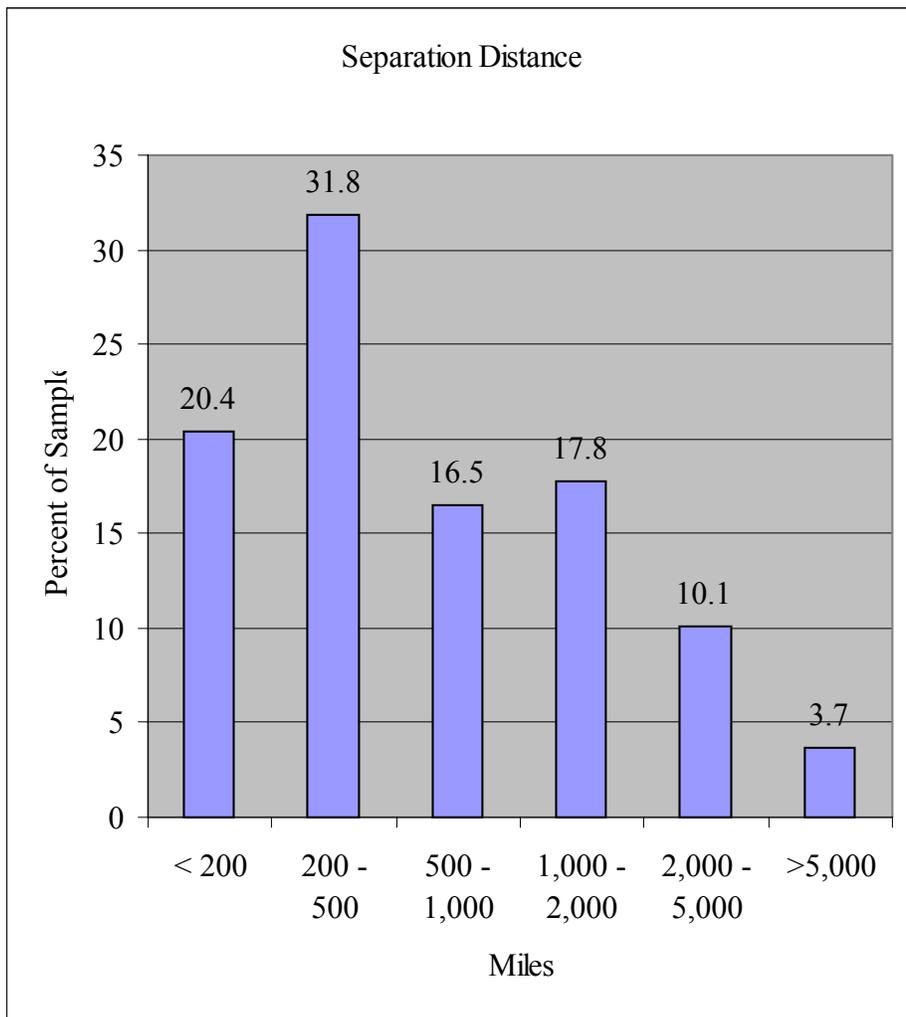
- Correlation is significant at the .003 level (2-tailed)*
- Correlation is significant at the .002 level (2-tailed)
- Correlation is significant at the .001 level (2-tailed)**
- Correlation is significant at the .000 level (2-tailed) ***

- 11 = Social Support
- 12 = Visit Frequency
- 13 = Separation Distance
- 14 = Pre-Separation Marital Length
- 15 = Age

Appendix N

Frequency Distribution Charts





Vita

Andrea Towers Scott, a 1990 graduate of Northeast Bradford Junior-Senior High School in LeRaysville, Pennsylvania, has been studying communication for twelve years. She earned her bachelor's degree in communication from Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania, her master's degree in communication from Saint Mary's University (San Antonio, Texas), and is a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy to be awarded at the May commencement, 2002, at Louisiana State University, with a major in communication studies and a minor in human ecology.

Other research interests include theories of friendship initiation and sustenance, long distance familial relationships, and societal perceptions of long distance marriages. Her interest in long distance marriages was precipitated by her own career-induced separation from her husband for over four years. Ms. Scott now resides in Florida with her husband, while working at a local university.