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MEETING INDIVIDUAL AND COUPLE NEEDS IN MARRIAGE: AN INTERACTIONAL ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

By

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ABSTRACT

MEETING INDIVIDUAL AND COUPLE NEEDS IN MARRIAGE: AN INTERACTIONAL ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

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Much theory suggests that autonomy and connection should be balanced in intimate relationships. In order to integrate the two, the dimensions independence-interdependence and affiliation-disaffiliation were examined in couples' social support interactions. Parents of school-age children who are mildly to moderately mentally retarded (N=37 couples) took turns confiding about personal problems and supporting each other. The discussions were coded by observers using an adaptation of Benjamin's Structural Analysis of Social Behavior. Three processes were explored: social support, assertiveness, and power dynamics. Marital satisfaction, psychological distress, and self-esteem were assessed as outcome variables. The wives' behaviors as confiders and the husbands' behaviors as supporters were associated with their self-reports. The affiliative-disaffiliative clusters were associated with negative outcomes, and the independent-interdependent clusters were associated with positive outcomes. The latter cluster may represent healthy toleration for disagreement and an acceptable form of maintaining emotional intimacy during these discussions.

To those who have taught me what true autonomy and connection are all about-- my family, my women friends across the United States and Canada, and a very special pal in Michigan. Thank you, Arlene

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INTRODUCTION

In a poem taken from The Prophet (Gibran, 1923), Almitra offered the following message regarding marriage:

> You were born together, and together you shall be forevermore...
> But let there be spaces in your togetherness,
> And let the winds of the heavens dance between you...
> Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone,
> Even as the strings of a lute are alone though they quiver with the same music . . .
> And stand together yet not too near together: for the pillars of the temple stand apart,
> And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow. (p. 19-20)

These lines capture the essence of what most modern day couples hope to realize in their marriages, that is, a union where two people may attain happiness and satisfaction both as a couple and as individuals (Brehm, 1985; Grossman, Pollack, Golding & Fedele, 1987; Stapleton & Bright, 1976). As Angyal (1965) explained, humans are guided by two forces which govern the life processes, autonomy and homonomy. Drawing on his theory regarding personality and neuroses, the "trend toward autonomy" can be viewed as the need to be a separate and self-governing individual, and the "trend toward homonomy" is the need to join with others and be part of a meaningful relationship.

Several researchers have attempted to reconcile the role of autonomy and homonomy in close relationships, or as these two concepts have also been called respectively, separateness and connectedness (Kotler, 1985), and autonomy and affiliation (Grossman, et al., 1987). Bakan (1966) referred to this same process when describing the integration of agency, the existence of the organism as an individual, and communion, the participation of the individual in some larger organism, as being the most desirable state. Whereas agency manifested itself in self-protection, self-expansion, and the urge to master, communion was revealed in cooperation and the sense of being at one with other organisms.

However, attempts to incorporate the two processes have met with difficulty. The questions proposed and the methodologies utilized have resulted in reports which are only useful in understanding one dimension to the exclusion of the other. For example, Hyman & Woog (1987) called these concepts independence and interdependence, and examined them with respect to three areas of need in marriage: emotional, stability, and everyday. Although the study was useful in pointing out the importance of independence for older women, because the methodology involved a forced choice Q sort, it was not possible to describe the co-existence of independence and interdependence in marital relationships. Rather than being characterized as oppositional,

independence and interdependence might be better conceptualized as orthogonal constructs.

Similarly, a series of studies by Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow (1986) examining responses to dissatisfaction in close relationships, treated autonomy and affiliation as opposite ends of one continuum. They examined communication and behavior with a focus on relationship outcome variables, and used the concepts of exit, neglect, loyalty, and voice, located along the two dimensions of destructiveness/constructiveness and activity/passivity. Although some types of actions in the category "voice" could serve individual needs, the model generally described responses that pit meeting individual goals against working for the benefit of the relationship. For example, "constructive" reactions to periodic decline in relationships included trying to change one's own or a partner's behavior, seeking help from others (therapist, clergy, friend), or waiting and hoping for improvement. This conceptualization underscores the notion that in times of conflict, either the individual or the dyad as a whole must make a sacrifice. Thus, the research did not focus on the extent to which both autonomy and affiliation might be achieved simultaneously. Additionally, the framework proposed by Rusbult and colleagues assumes that keeping the peace is a necessary and fundamental aspect of relationships, ignoring the possibility that conflict

engagement or disagreement can be healthy for marital satisfaction over time (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989).

The importance of autonomy within relationships may be considered in light of concepts taken from attachment theory (Bowlby, 1979), in that in close relationships we find both proximity-seeking and exploratory behaviors. Kotler (1985) found that the four components of care, affection, affirmation, access, and aid, provided the basis for confident and satisfying exploration of the environment as measured by the relational qualities of trust, openness, and healthy self-reliance. In her study of 30 male and 30 female subjects from 60 different marriages at three different stages of the family life cycle, she found that interactions that contributed to sound attachment relationships included sensitive and appropriate responsiveness from spouse, a combination of empathic understanding and encouragement of autonomy and self-reliance, and the ability of spouse to seek and accept help in a way that affirmed the intentions and capacities of the other spouse.

As noted above, many studies have examined either autonomy or affiliation, but there are few which attempt to capture both of these phenomena concurrently, in part because until recently there has not been available a theoretical framework and a measurement methodology for doing so. Structural Analysis of Social Behavior (SASB;

Humphrey & Benjamin, 1989) provides such a methodology. SASB is a circumplex model of interpersonal relations and their intrapsychic representations. The model proposes that three foci of attention and two orthogonal dimensions of independence/interdependence and affiliation/disaffiliation are all that are needed to describe a full range of systemic and interpersonal events (Benjamin, Foster, Giat-Roberto, & Estroff, 1986). A brief discussion of the SASB model follows, but for a more complete explanation of its components, see Appendix A, Coding Manual.

Structural Analysis of Social Behavior

The SASB model proposes three foci of attention for social behavior, two of which are relevant to the interpersonal realm: focus on other and focus on self. Focus on other captures transitive action directed toward another person. Focus on self involves an intransitive state or reaction to another person. The third focus of attention identifies intrapsychic experiences and is conceptualized as introjection, or internalizing of interpersonal relationships with significant others, such as a parent, spouse or therapist.

For each focus of attention, two axes comprise the central structure of the SASB model. The vertical axis reflects independence versus interdependence, and extends from independent or differentiated behavior at the top, to

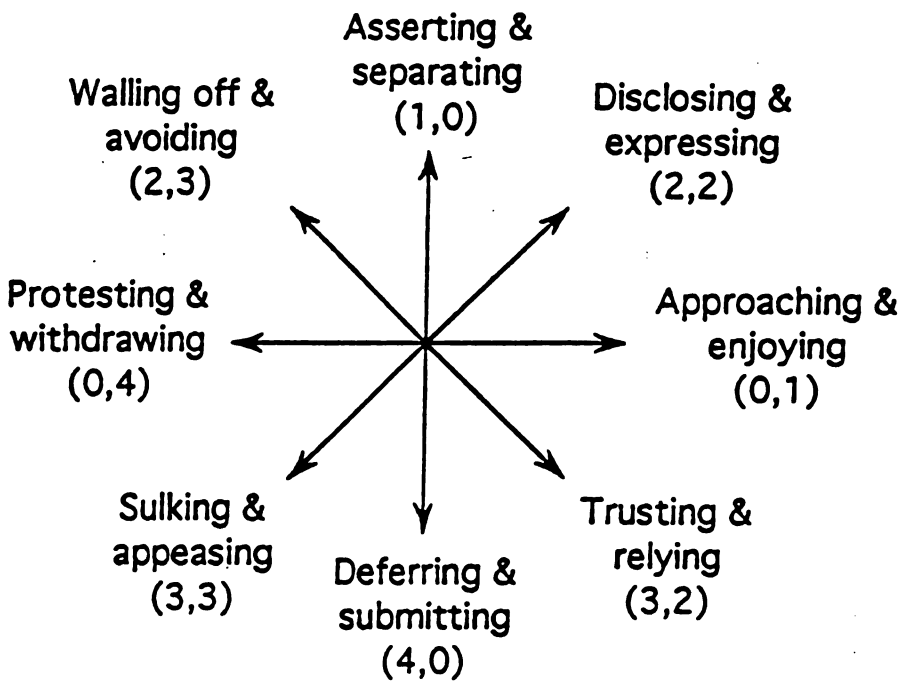
interdependent, undifferentiated, or enmeshed behavior at the bottom. The horizontal axis describes affiliation/disaffiliation, and ranges from friendly, loving, and approaching, on the right-hand side, to moving away, anger, and hatred, on the left-hand side.

These dimensions and foci permit organization of many interactional behaviors. SASB methodology has been used in several contexts: to study individual dynamics in psychotherapy (Benjamin, 1979a, b), to validate findings of double-binding, ambivalence and excessive submissiveness and helplessness in various clinical samples (Benjamin, 1986; Chiles, Stauss, & Benjamin, 1980), to operationalize and examine processes of complementarity, similarity, opposition, introjection, and antithesis (Benjamin, 1981), and to differentiate clinical from normal families (Humphrey, 1989; Humphrey, Apple, & Kirschenbaum, 1986). Most relevant to the present concerns, Henry, Schacht, & Strupp (1984) used SASB methodology to examine psychotherapy process. They applied the model to evaluate dyadic interaction between patients and therapists. Their version of the model is closest to the form used in the present study, which investigates social support among married couples.

Judgments along each of the two axes can be made with varying degrees of specificity. The full version of the model has 36 points on each of three surfaces, for a total

of 108 individual points. The cluster version of the SASB model is intermediate in complexity between the full model and the simpler quadrant form, and groups behaviors into eight clusters per surface or foci of attention, as illustrated by Figure 1.

Focus on self:



Focus on other:

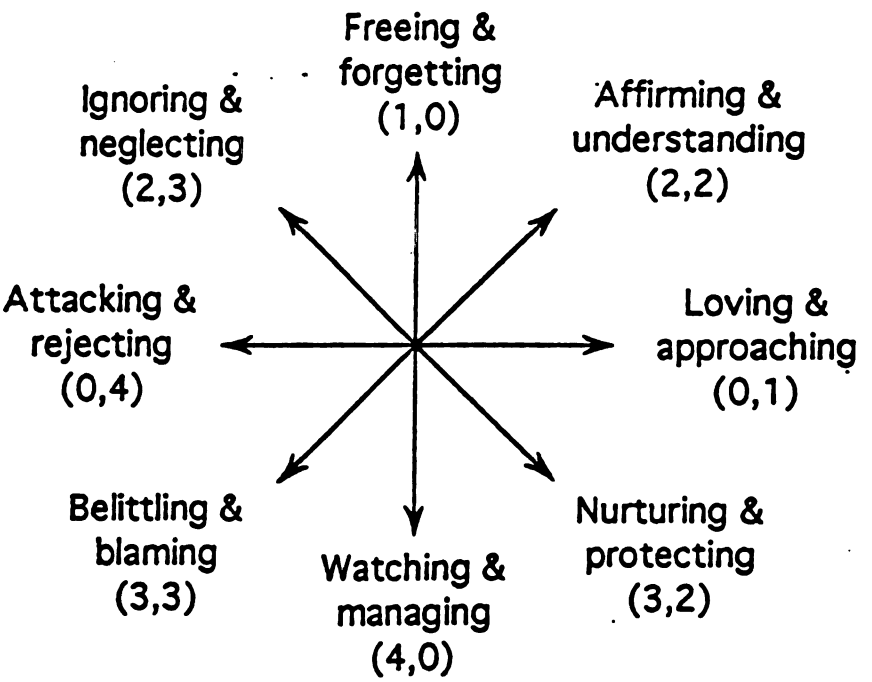


Figure 1. SASB circumplex model with two foci of attention. Adapted from 1986 Cluster Version of SASB, L. Benjamin

Berlin & Johnson (1989) used the SASB framework to argue that in understanding women's roles in intimate relationships, autonomy and affiliation are not necessarily oppositional characteristics. They defined autonomy as a respect for one's own needs, while respecting the rights of others, and argued that women can find both autonomy and connection in their lives. They stated:

> "Autonomy is necessarily a part of mature relatedness, that it is precisely the mix of autonomy and warm bondedness that transforms resentful self-sacrifice and submission into generous, attuned, and mutual interaction." (p. 81)

As illustrated in Figure 1, the SASB model proposes that an essential feature of autonomous actions is the degree of negative or positive affiliation that is combined with it. For example, for the domain focus on other, the category "Affirming and understanding" falls between the autonomy-giving and affiliation-expressing clusters, thus reflecting a balanced mixture of these two interpersonal endeavors. For the domain focus on self, the category "Disclosing and expressing" is in a complementary position. The model further proposes that behaviors are likely to occur in response to their complement. Thus, when spouses are able to affirm and understand, the probable response from their partner will be free expression of feelings and opinions. The reciprocal or complementary style that allows

for open communication between spouses is thus captured nicely by the SASB model.

Drawing on Berlin & Johnson's (1989) theoretical analysis, the present study seeks to empirically examine how autonomy and connection are balanced in one domain of marital relationships, that is, conjugal support in times of personal distress. Because the SASB model outlines ideal self-in-relation behaviors and distinguishes them from withdrawal, blaming, and submissive behavior, applying the conceptual framework to understand interactions related to conjugal social support allows for evaluation of several realms of functioning in marital relationships not adequately addressed in previous research. Three such processes that are explored in the present study are social support, assertiveness, and power dynamics. The study is designed to test the hypothesis that marital interaction patterns in a social support task will be structured and supported by a process of reciprocity between partners. That is, in autonomy-enhancing contexts, spouses will be more likely to demonstrate autonomous and assertive behaviors. In controlling contexts, spouses will be more likely to submit. Also, as illustrated in Figure 2, the study evaluates the hypothesis that self-esteem will explain a part of the variance exhibited in the behaviors designated to operationalize social support, assertiveness, and power dynamics. Finally, marital satisfaction and psychological

distress will be assessed as outcome variables of these interactions.

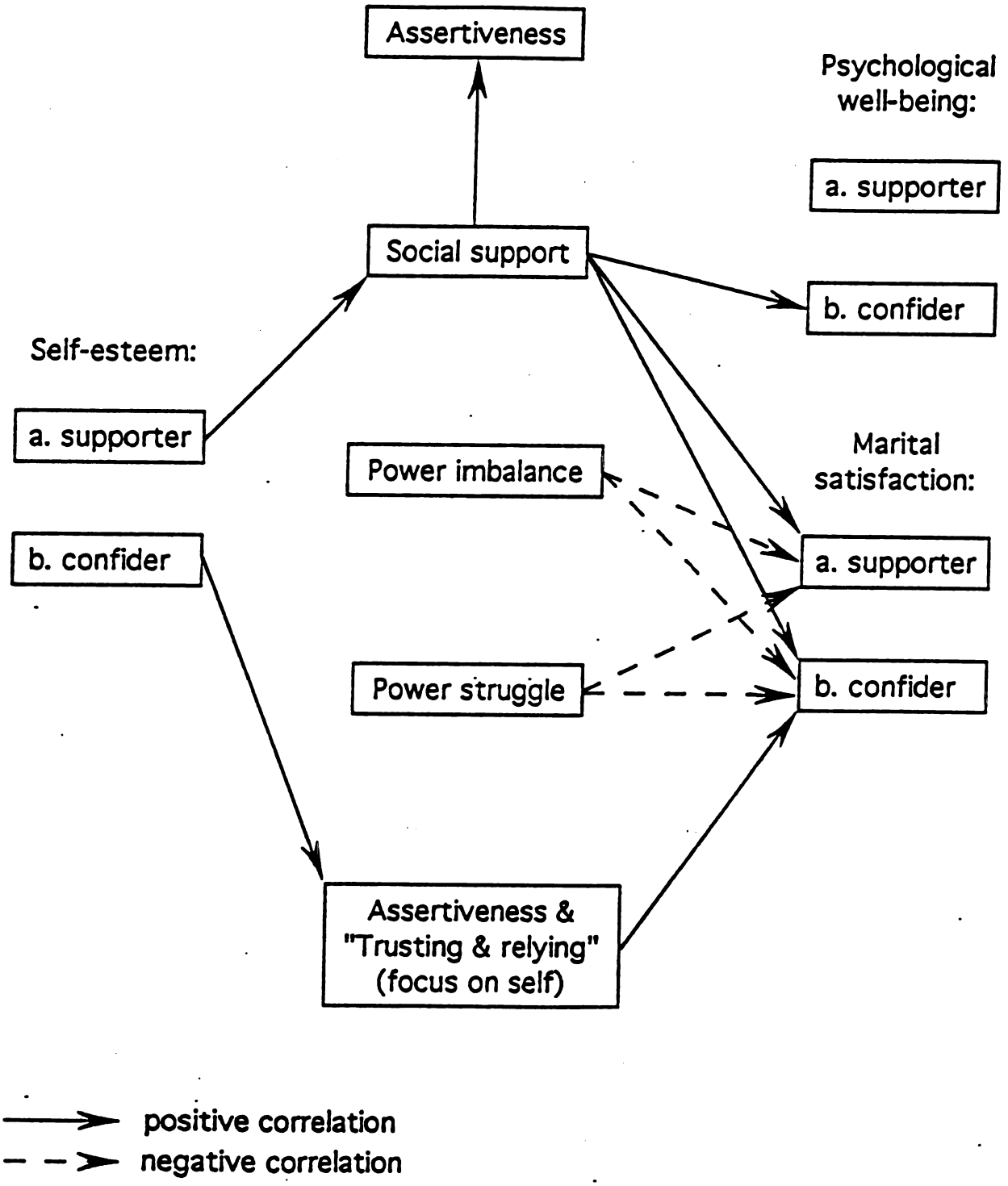


Figure 2. Conjugal support interaction model.

Problems with previous observational research

Weiss (1978) proposed that marriage consists of twelve basic sectors of interaction: companionship, affection, consideration, sex, communication process, coupling activities, child care and parenting, household management, financial and decision making, employment-education, personal habits and appearance, and self and spouse independence. However, recent research focuses on only a limited number of life domains, including especially problem-solving or conflict resolution (e.g. Burggraff & Sillars, 1987; Floyd, 1988; Vincent, Weiss & Birchler, 1975). Conflict resolution studies may misrepresent the probability for meeting individual and couple needs concurrently. Many of the marital problem-solving studies view most conflict producing behaviors as destructive. However, there are cases in which these behaviors are not necessarily detrimental, as there can be challenges and complaints offered in a direct, nonpunitive manner (Margolin, Fernandez, Talovic, & Onorato, 1983). Similarly, problem solutions are typically evaluated as facilitative to the discussion, which may not always be a valid conclusion. Gottman & Krokoff (1989) propose that conflict avoidance behaviors such as compliance may leave unresolved critical areas of conflict, which over time might upset the relationship. In terms of the SASB model, it seems that such "keeping the peace" behaviors might be better

conceptualized as appeasing or submissive. Such behavior may eventually become overly aversive to one or both spouses, causing resentment within the couple. Similarly, Minuchin (1974) argues that unexpressed differences may be harmful to relationships. Instead, Gottman & Krokoff (1989) noted that, although they found a negative relationship between concurrent marital satisfaction and the expression of disagreement with neutral affect in marital problem-solving tasks, such disagreement was positively associated with change in marital satisfaction over time. They concluded that confrontation of disagreement is beneficial for marriage in the long run.

A reconceptualization of "negative" interaction behaviors is essential. Bach (1969) indicated that conflict is healthy for a relationship because it represents the presence of energy as opposed to apathy, given the issue and not the partner is being criticized, and provided these conflict behaviors are offered in a favorable context. In contrast to the context of marital problem-solving discussions, where assertions of individual needs would be considered as undermining joint resolution of the problem, in a conjugal support task, such behaviors are likely to reflect legitimate individual needs. Therefore, generalizing from findings of conflict resolution studies may distort implications for other forms of marital interaction, such as social support seeking and giving.

Utilizing the SASB model, these "conflictual" behaviors could more accurately be represented by the upper half of the independence dimension. Paired with affiliation, they should not be seen as destructive to the relationship, but rather are a form of open disclosure as a means of moving together.

The present study includes an assessment of couples involved in a conjugal social support task, as we believed that autonomy paired with affiliation, while difficult to observe in a conflict resolution task, should emerge in a personal problem situation. The analysis examines spouses' ability to behave assertively, as well as the extent to which they are able to provide a supportive context for their partner confiding a personal problem, while respecting their separateness, and encouraging their autonomy. In addition, SASB allows for an examination of specific power dynamics, that is, power imbalance and struggle, that interact with these two processes.

Research which relates social support to emotional or psychological functioning typically fails to examine the nature or type of support that is most helpful in different situations (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Regarding the sample of couples studied in the present research, parents of children who are mildly to moderately mentally retarded, there has been much debate in the literature as to the long-term effect of having a child who is mentally retarded on the

marriage, as well as on the mothers and fathers individually (Benson & Gross, 1989). Parents of children who are mentally retarded report that they are less likely to seek social support (Friedrich & Friedrich, 1981), have smaller social support networks (Kazak & Marvin, 1984), and do not utilize these sources to a degree consistent with their level of need (Waisbren, 1980). Thus, it is important to evaluate the quality of support that they are more likely to receive, that is, from their spouse. Floyd & Zmich (1990) found that parents of children who are mentally retarded obtained significantly lower scores than parents of typically developing children on an observational measure of marital problem-solving skill, which suggests that these families may be less effective in providing support for one another in times of personal distress. Topics chosen and discussed for the conjugal support task may be different for this sample, given the unique stresses experienced (Byrne & Cunningham, 1985). Thus, this is a particularly important group of couples to study because of the salience of spouse support for them.

SASB and Social Support

The area of mutual support is a key domain in which the balance of autonomy and connectedness should be enacted. Support may be defined as behaviors between individuals or groups that serve to improve adaptive competence in dealing

with short-term crises, life transitions, and long-term challenges or stresses (Caplan & Killelea, 1976).

In evaluating close relationships, one may identify facilitation versus interference processes for organization or exploration of one's ideas or goals (Kelley, Berscheid, Christensen, Harvey, Huston, Levinger, McClintock, Peplau, & Peterson, 1983). In order to achieve the dynamic balance between individual and couple needs, partners must be willing and able to support one another in their diverse roles. In Weingarten's (1978) analysis of 54 two-profession couples, she found that they were able to achieve and sustain a balance between autonomy and connection via a particular mode of interaction that was "difficult to describe, elusive, yet in the presence of these couples, it was palpable" (p. 148). She called this behavioral interaction "interdependence" and used adjectives such as mutual respect and regard, help, co-operation, reliance, letting go, and willpower to convey aspects of this quality. Weingarten acknowledged that these characteristics might be used to describe any dyad, but maintained that interdependence only pertained to intimates. Her definition of interdependence consisted of independence in the context of an intimate relationship. Partners were able to balance emotional needs in a complementary fashion, and the relationship could also withstand both partners acting dependently or independently concurrently. The

prerequisites for interdependence in marriage included commitment and trust, broad definitions of appropriate behavior, including a belief in androgynous roles, open communication, and a balance of giving and taking.

A better understanding of supportive behaviors may be derived from Boyd & Roach's (1977) questionnaire study of satisfaction in marital relationships. They found that three major clusters of items distinguished 111 satisfied from dissatisfied married couples: (1) open communication (e.g. "I say what I really think"), (2) active listening and receiving messages ("I 'check out' or ask for clarification so that I'll understand spouse's feelings and thoughts"), and (3) articulate expressions of respect and esteem for spouse ("I express appreciation and encouragement verbally").

Clearly, there is a need for observational evaluation of spouses' behavior to determine if Boyd & Roach's (1977) findings generalize to actual communication behaviors between spouses. Support for individual fulfillment has not been explored in a systematic manner with respect to marital adjustment (Sabbeth & Leventhal, 1984). Whereas we have much information regarding how couples are able to help one another for the benefit of the relationship (e.g. Rusbult, et al., 1986), we know little about this process with respect to individual needs.

Cohen & Wills' (1985) review of stress and social support outlined four types of support resources: informational support (help in defining, understanding, and coping with problematic events), social companionship (time spent with others to fulfill affiliation needs, help to distract persons from worrying about problems, facilitation of positive affect), instrumental support (provision of financial aid, material resources and needed services), and esteem support (information conveyed that a person is admired and accepted). In terms of independence versus interdependence, these may be reconceptualized as falling within two broader domains of support: (1) a more directive type, which would include informational, instrumental, and perhaps even social companionship support, and (2) a more freeing type, which would encompass esteem support.

The observational ratings used in the present research capture the two types of social support cited above. Using the SASB model, the quality of social support is assessed by the "focus on other" dimension, as pertains to the actions of the spouse toward the partner when the partner confides about a personal problem. The top half of the model represents behaviors promoting autonomy, while the bottom half are relatively more directive and managing. Behaviors must be considered with respect to the degree of affiliation, as well as in their context to assess whether they serve to promote or hinder autonomy. For example,

positive competence feedback may either support autonomy or control, depending on whether it is delivered and experienced as affirming (e.g. "You handled that really well") or as a form of interpersonal control ("You handled that really well, just like you should"). It is expected that spouses will demonstrate competent behavior in environments perceived as being both autonomy-supportive and as providing assistance, rather than in contexts that are controlling or neglecting.

Researchers have also investigated sex differences in social support. Epstein (1987) found that the nature of support for one another's work differed by gender, with husbands protecting and mentoring their wives, whereas wives tended to listen, reassure, and cater to their husbands. Sullivan's (1989) study supported the hypotheses that females would need, provide, receive, and perceive a greater need for emotional support in others than would males. Extrapolating from these data, it appears that husbands will tend to provide answers and advice in a task of social support. This type of behavior may be more controlling, in that it hinders wives from discovering solutions on their own. Thus, we predicted that among maritally satisfied couples, wives would be more likely to demonstrate autonomy-enhancing support, whereas husbands would be more likely to utilize a form of support that was somewhat more controlling, such as providing guidance and advice.

SASB and Assertiveness

The construct assertiveness is useful in identifying behaviors in which an individual's opinions may be sustained without necessarily diminishing relationship values. Assertiveness can be thought of as the outward expression of the integration of the internal states of autonomy and homonomy. Assertiveness relates autonomy- the inner endorsement of one's actions and sense that they emanate from oneself and are one's own (Deci & Ryan, 1987), to features of homonomy- the legitimate and honest expression of one's personal rights, feelings, beliefs, and interests, without violating or denying the rights of others (Alberti & Emmons, 1978). A succinct definition of assertiveness was offered by Booraem & Flowers (1978): "Assertion basically involves asking for what one wants, refusing what one doesn't want, and expressing positive and negative messages to others." (p. 17) However, this definition is somewhat lacking. Scammell & Stead (1984) added that assertiveness includes the "free expression of emotions without experiencing anxiety and while considering others' feelings." (p. 171)

Critique of previous studies on assertiveness

Assertiveness has typically been viewed as a set of social skills that are situationally governed (Vincent, et al., 1975). However, lack of assertion has been judged an

individual flaw that may be remedied by specific teaching methods (Rich & Schroeder, 1976; Riger & Galligan, 1980). Conceptualizing assertiveness as a personality characteristic has been a limitation. For example, Bouchard, Lalonde, & Gagnon (1988) note a lack of convergence in self-report and behavioral measures of assertiveness (see also McNamara, Delamater, Sennhauser, & Milano, 1988), and conclude that there is no clear relationship between assertiveness and several personality dimensions.

The abundance of literature on assertiveness training is commonly directed to women (Glesen, 1988; Mays, 1987), helping them to overcome personal deficiencies. Gervasio & Crawford (1989) pointed out that there are less than a handful of case studies and research reports of assertion training for men that investigate regulating problems caused by aggression, insensitivity to others' feelings, or emotional inexpressiveness. This distribution of effort thus reflects an implicit assumption regarding socially acceptable behavior; that is, that it is legitimate to "take care" of oneself, even if this involves violating the rights of others in the process.

The reason for male-female differences in assertiveness may be the social consequences of the action rather than an intrapersonal characteristic that differs for men and women. Expectations of positive and negative consequences affects

the performance of assertive behaviors (Eisler, Frederiksen, & Peterson, 1978; McNamara, et al., 1988). Although women are not any less likely than men to behave assertively (Crawford, 1988), sex differences may be found in terms of the consequences of women's assertive behaviors. For example, assertive women were evaluated as less competent, likeable, and attractive than assertive men in a situation involving unreasonable requests from strangers in public situations (Kelly, Kern, Kirkley, Patterson, & Keane, 1980). Thus, recognizing opportunities and ways to behave assertively, and evaluating the advisability of doing so may be independent processes (Schroeder, Rakos, & Moe, 1983). Women may be quite insightful as to the price they pay for assertion, and thus choose to avoid the associated risks. For example, husbands or lovers may become violent when women act assertively (Roy, 1977) and assertiveness training may not make a positive contribution to women employees' work settings (Scammell & Stead, 1984).

Studies treating assertiveness as an intrapersonal issue fail to take into account how a person's ability to assert themselves is mediated by their circumstances, and more specifically, by the person with whom they are interacting. Conflict styles in communication tend to be highly reciprocal, rather than sharply differentiated according to sex (Burggraf & Sillars, 1987). In other words, one spouse's antecedent acts strongly influences the

other spouse's consequent acts (White, 1989). Thus, the interactional context may either function to support or extinguish one's attempts at assertiveness. The importance of the interactional environment is suggested in a study by Deci & Ryan (1987), who distinguished between autonomy-supportive and controlling behavior in work organizations and among children. They argued that contexts may be either autonomy-supportive or controlling, that is, either someone in the environment attempts to support their autonomy (or control them) or the person orients toward others who are autonomy-supportive (or controlling). If one construes the context as autonomy-supportive, they will be more likely to behave assertively, whereas if they perceive the environment as controlling, they would be more likely to defer. Thus, in examining interpersonal transactions, a study of "listener" behavior is as important as an examination of the assertive versus unassertive speaker, and will bring to the surface the complementary nature of dyadic interaction.

Gervasio & Crawford (1989) recommended using the method of speech act analysis in order to correct for the previous failures of research on the evaluation of assertiveness. This methodology encompasses an examination of the grammar, semantics, and social roles associated with assertion, and advocates integrating linguistics, social psychology and behavior technology in order to guard against biased research.

As Fine (1985) indicated, research should address diverse groups or samples of women, focus on experiences in their social context, document interpersonal dynamics as well as individual characteristics, and critically analyze social, political and economic conditions as they influence and interact with women's individual and group psychologies. Neisser (1976) outlined the criteria for ecological validity, that is, studies should have something to say about what people do in real, culturally significant situations. Because it is essential to consider the cultural, ecological, and interactional context, the present study goes beyond systems theory to include societal and economic determinants, along with individual characteristics and social roles, in a feminist analysis of marital interaction. The present study proposes that the social context (i.e. spouses' behavior) is more strongly predictive of assertiveness than gender. That is, although women may display less assertiveness than men, this will be related to less autonomy providing behavior by men. Across couples, women's assertiveness and men's autonomy promotion will be positively correlated.

Operationalizing assertiveness

Using the SASB model, assertiveness will be defined in the present study by the confider's behaviors; that is, maximally independent behavior and behavior that is both

independent and affiliative ("Asserting and separating" and "Disclosing and expressing" for focus on self) will be summed to represent assertiveness. As explained previously, one may be oppositional without necessarily being coercive or dominant (Chiles, et al., 1980).

SASB and Power

Whereas social support is represented in the present study as specific behaviors of the "supporter," and assertiveness as behaviors demonstrated by the "confider," power dynamics relates to the interplay of these two processes. Power refers to the ability to achieve ends through influence (Huston, 1983). In close relationships, symmetry between meeting individual and couple needs can only be attained if the two individuals enter the relationship at comparable levels of power. If one partner is responsible for all autonomous behaviors and the other for all "homonomous" behaviors, the relationship as a whole may appear balanced, but for the individuals comprising the relationship, the balance is absent. Relationships such as these are more accurately described as complementary rather than egalitarian (Hare-Mustin, 1986). Complementarity assumes that partners in an interaction play roles that fit together in a yin/yang way. Typically, as Gilligan (1982) has documented, women maintain communication and connections, whereas men are more likely to create clear

hierarchical boundaries and seek distance in conflictual situations. While neither trend should necessarily be devalued, it is clear that the balance of autonomy and affiliation in such relationships is not evenly distributed.

Family power studies suffer from several weaknesses, including the predominant use of self-report methodologies and emphasis on outcomes to the exclusion of processes (e.g. McDonald, 1980, cited in Godwin & Scanzoni, 1989; Safilios-Rothschild, 1970). In addition, studies of family power which have examined gender-related issues generally have not tried to explain the cause of gender-related power differentials. Much research merely acknowledges that being female may also mean being in a low power position, thus using gender as an explanatory rather than a descriptive variable (Fine, 1985). It is not gender per se, but other gender-linked factors that are causal.

One important probable cause of gender-linked power differences is the relatively lower status of women in our society. For example, studies of speech as an interactive process have reconceptualized gender differences in power as differences resulting from status (Gervasio & Crawford, 1989; Henley, 1977). Lockheed & Hall (1976) argued that sex is a diffuse status characteristic associated with a value, a set of specific evaluated competencies, and a general expectation state. As such, relative power and prestige are determined by male or female status. They pointed to the

fact that low-status persons make fewer contributions to groups and that the contributions they do make are less likely to be accepted. Thus, Lockheed & Hall (1976) direct attention to the dysfunctions of status-ordered behavior, and call for the re-evaluation of men and women in society to eliminate the source of status differentiation.

Similarly, Thompson & Walker's (1989) review of the impact of gender in marriage, work, and parenthood cited evidence to support the idea that many of the qualities women display in marital conversation and conflict may be traced to their subordinate position. Women's subordination is most evident in instances of marital violence. As subordinates, they must be more sensitive to those in power, and are therefore responsible for monitoring relationships, confronting disagreeable issues, and resolving them when conflict is high. In the case of wife battering, it is a precarious chore for many married women to be as independent as they can without threatening the status of their husbands. Thus the task of acting on their autonomy values without renouncing homonomy is a difficult one. Even when there is some tolerance for assertive behavior, that is, in cases where such behavior does not necessarily imply threatening conflict, because women start from a subordinate position, their assertions are often tentative and may be perceived as nagging or even hysterical (Thompson & Walker, 1989). Also, in SASB terminology, when women consistently

receive controlling and belittling messages, submissiveness and resentful compliance are the predictable responses.

In addition to being berated, when a person is "one-down" they are also more likely to be susceptible to influence (Berlin & Johnson, 1989). This is where SASB is useful, as it acknowledges the coexistence of both dimensions of independence and affiliation. For example, although many believe that if they are not one-up they must be one-down, the autonomy alternatives go beyond either dominating the other or submitting to them. One can operate in a range that includes acknowledging someone's autonomy to trying to control them, as well as experiencing one's own autonomy in relation to another to submitting to that person (Berlin & Johnson, 1989).

To date, studies of family power have focused on conflict situations. Sexton & Perlman (1989) question whether power dynamics that are salient in conflict situations such as decision-making, would also emerge in other scenarios, such as crisis management. In a conflict task, power is understood in terms of clear attempts to win the conflict, and in fact, we commonly view the most powerful partner as the one who wins. However, in non-conflict situations, winning isn't a salient issue. Thus, power must be conceptualized on different terms. Here, French & Raven's (1959) typology of four bases of power is useful. Specifically, they defined legitimate power as

power stemming from values that dictate one has the right to influence the other and that that person has an obligation to accept this influence. This may be manifested in conjugal support interactions as a spouse deferring to their partner after being reminded about their "proper" role. Referent power, that is power stemming from an assumed and unspoken basis of identification between two participants, might be a preferred basis of influence in some relationships. An example of referent power in marital interaction could include quietly succumbing, as this basis of power reduces the frequency of open power struggles. Expert power, represented by one's attribution of superior knowledge to the other, may be seen in the marriage as each spouse having spheres of expertise, and thus noting particular areas where each other is more powerful. Finally, informational power is defined as the ability of one partner to point out contingencies of which the other has been unaware. In a support task, discussions might look like rational debates, with partners trying to influence the other by explaining their views.

A less direct form of influence, which may be equally controlling, includes communication behavior that is ignoring or neglecting. As Emerson (1972) suggested, when one party in a dyad feels they are not receiving an equitable rate of exchange, one option is to withdraw from the relationship. Henley (1977) reported that those who are

able to refuse attempts to take up their time are dominant in the situation. She based her conclusions on a review of studies which revealed that expressions of dominance and subordination between non-equals (e.g. between bosses and workers, among different racial groups) paralleled those used by males and females in the unequal relation of the sexes. The superior position is communicated by visually ignoring the other person, interrupting them, or remaining silent. Responses that are ignoring or neglecting also nullify attempts at assertiveness by a speaker and negatively reinforce future assertive behavior.

Thus, the above considerations suggest that marital power can be investigated in a useful way using the SASB framework to examine marital interactions focused on seeking and providing support. Power dynamics may be examined in several ways for both the confider and the listener using the SASB model. Power involves attempts to control another via advice, directives and belittling comments by the listener (reflected in the categories "Nurturing and protecting," "Watching and managing," and "Belittling and blaming" for focus on other), as opposed to attempts to liberate the confider, by encouraging the partner to explore and satisfy his/her autonomy needs ("Freeing and forgetting" and "Affirming and understanding" for focus on other). In the former, more controlling context, the confider is more likely to behave in an interdependent manner, either

accepting the advice, deferring, or behaving defensively (reflected in the categories "Trusting and relying," "Deferring and submitting," and "Sulking and appeasing" for focus on self). In contrast, the latter context is likely to promote autonomous and assertive behavior ("Asserting and separating" and "Disclosing and expressing" for focus on self).

In addition to influence attempts, power is also revealed by the success of the attempts, where change in the partner is actually brought about. For example, Godwin & Scanzoni (1989) operationalized control by coding the results of influence attempts of each spouse. An influence attempt was defined as a directive, suggestion, or request by one spouse intended to modify the beliefs or behaviors of the other spouse. These influence attempts then translated into control for the initiating spouse only if the recipient complied with or responded positively to the attempt. Interestingly, Godwin & Scanzoni (1989) found that couples in which one spouse was more controlling reported lower levels of consensus with decision outcomes. Thus, increased control for one spouse may be associated with decreased satisfaction among partners, illustrating the negative consequences of a power imbalance. The study thus validates the importance of focusing on dyadic exchanges to reveal power.

Here is where ignoring and neglecting can be examined as power tactics used by a listener (focus on other). Power can be accounted for by noting when such behaviors evoke submission by the speaker. In this case, one spouse controls the conversation by ignoring their spouse's immediate needs and concerns, which may lead them to another topic. By following, rather than further exploring their identified issue, they disregard their own needs, and essentially defer to their spouse.

Finally, in contrast to successful power assertions, unsuccessful attempts can be viewed as evidence of a struggle for power. This would be characterized by sequences in which the supporter demonstrated maximally controlling (focus on other), followed by the confider's maximally autonomous behaviors (focus on self). Such a couple does not communicate with each other, but rather talks at one another.

Economic Bases of Power in Marriage

Gillespie (1971) contends that the economic power base is most significant for predicting influence within marriage, with a positive relationship between economic resources and decision-making in the family. Similarly, Godwin & Scanzoni (1989) found a significant effect of couples' income inequality on wives' level of control, and posited that among couples where the husband's income was

greater than the wife's, the wife had less control or power during decision-making.

The problem with the aforementioned studies is that they merely assess outcome, such as consensus with decisions. We are therefore left without a clear sense of the processes involved in these marital discussions. Rather than concluding that income disparity per se causes a power imbalance among couples, the crucial intervening step worthy of study is the interaction in which spouses derive their decisions. Economic resources do not necessarily enhance influence levels. Instead it is assertiveness related to self-esteem which may underlie and explain the link between economics and power. For example, Steil & Turetsky (1987) found that the extent to which wives asserted the importance of their own careers relative to their spouses' was the best predictor of equality levels rather than their income per se.

Self-esteem is probably particularly important for the present sample. Relative occupational status may not be a relevant determinant of power differential for the sample of couples in this study, due to the large number of "stay-at-home" mothers. As such, staying at home and caring for the children, including a child who is mentally retarded, rather than pursuing a career, may not necessarily be an indicator of reduced power.

Self-esteem

Rosenberg (1965) presents a definition of self-esteem which is close to the concepts of self-regard or self-acceptance. His definition is relevant to the issue of self-assertion, which is a focus of the present study. Basically, he described self-esteem as an attitude toward an object, in this case the object is the self. The object is evaluated along the following dimensions: content (e.g. intelligent, kind, considerate), direction (positive/negative, favorable/unfavorable, worthy/unworthy), intensity (how likeable), importance (value of having particular sense of self), salience (degree to which self is at forefront of consciousness), consistency (presence of contradictory self-attitudes), stability (presence of shifting self-attitudes), and clarity (degree of ambiguity in image of self).

Rosenberg's definition is also useful for understanding interpersonal relationships. He reported that those low in self-esteem, who he called egophobes, lack respect for the self they observe and maintain a self-picture that is disagreeable. They feel that others lack respect for them, and therefore in interpersonal situations, usually fail to take initiative in establishing contacts with others or avoid others altogether. Regarding assertive behavior specifically, they are easily influenced and usually give in. In contrast, those high in self-esteem, or egophiles,

enjoy competing with others and can be assertive or dominant.

Interpersonal behavior seems to be an important coping mechanism to boost a fragile self-concept in those with low self-esteem, whereas people high in self-esteem are able to maintain a positive self-concept privately. Baumgardner, Kaufman & Levy (1989) found that those with low self-esteem tended to compliment positive sources and derogate negative sources of feedback more often than those with higher levels of self-esteem. Extrapolating from these data, perhaps those with low self-esteem would be more likely to depend on their relationships such as marriage for their own sense of self-regard and would therefore be more vulnerable to marital highs and lows. Research that relates self-disclosure to self-esteem within the family context has revealed that people sometimes refrain from expressing their true feelings because they are insecure about their marriage (Gilbert, 1976). Because self-disclosure entails a certain degree of risk-taking, spouses may hesitate to express dissatisfaction for fear of being rejected (Lantz & Snyder, 1969). Although Rusbult, Morrow, & Johnson (1987) reported that low self-esteem was not predictive of the tendency to accommodate in the face of relationship strife (that is, utilize "loyalty" behaviors), they reported that persons with lower self-esteem showed stronger tendencies towards "neglect." Thus, low self-esteem might at least lead to a

diminished propensity to behave assertively, and thus create strife in the first place. From the social exchange framework (e.g. Kelley & Thibaut, 1978), people with low self-esteem should behave nonassertively in close relationships because of a fear of the relationship terminating, and a perceived lack of alternatives for themselves. These considerations suggest that level of self-esteem is likely to have direct implications for the willingness to be assertive when in the support seeker role.

Self-esteem may also be related to the spouse's behavior in the supporter role, as research shows that self-esteem is associated with both the level at which one discloses and is disclosed to (Miller, Berg, & Archer, 1983; Miller & Kenny, 1986). These studies demonstrated that the frequency by which one was disclosed to was correlated with their empathy skills. Empathy calls for the ability to spontaneously adopt the psychological point of view of others, and necessitates an attempt to balance considerations of self and other (Berlin & Johnson, 1989). Because of their greater empathic abilities, individuals with high self-esteem may not feel the need to derogate, attack, or control even negative sources of feedback. Thus, autonomy-supportive environments are more likely to be provided by people with high self-esteem (Deci & Ryan, 1987).

Taken together, theory and previous research suggest several hypotheses regarding the role of self-esteem in spouses' exchanges regarding personal problems. Self-esteem seems to be an essential characteristic in predicting one's tendency for assertive behavior, as well as the ability to provide positive social support and foster the autonomy of one's partner.

Marital satisfaction

The descriptive richness of the SASB model in capturing self-disclosure among couples permits several predictions regarding marital satisfaction as an outcome variable. Navran (1967) found that satisfied couples, as opposed to unhappy couples, reported that they talked more to each other, conveyed the feeling that they understood what was being said to them, and had a wide range of subjects available to them, as well as many other characteristics that resulted in "open, rewarding communication." Waring (1981) found that cognitive self-disclosure is a major determinant of a couple's level of intimacy. Others (e.g. Gilbert, 1976; Levinger & Senn, 1967) have found a curvilinear relationship between marital satisfaction and self-disclosure as assessed by the three dimensions of content (what is said about a topic), valence (positiveness or negativeness of what is said) and intimacy level (degree of intimacy of statement). They proposed that selective

disclosure of feelings is more beneficial to marital harmony than either nondisclosure or total disclosure.

Thus, the type of disclosures with respect to the three process issues of social support, assertiveness, and power, should be predictive of marital satisfaction. Regarding social support, marital satisfaction for the couple should be positively correlated with the ability of a spouse to be autonomy-supportive and also able to offer advice or guidance in a sensitive manner when in the role of supporter. With respect to assertive behavior, spouses who demonstrate a balance between affiliative self-disclosures and reliance on their partners will be more likely to be satisfied with their marriage than spouses who are unable to openly confide in their partners or to rely on their partners' help in meeting their own needs. Regarding power, studies of decision-making suggest that the more that persons participate in "give-and-take" dynamics, the more they are likely to agree on the behavioral arrangements that emerge, and the more stable those arrangements will be. In marital relationships, a power imbalance in decision-making is usually associated with dissatisfaction (Godwin & Scanzoni, 1989). Thus, autonomy-enhancing versus autonomy-prohibiting interactions should predict marital satisfaction. High levels of control for the supporter will be associated with relatively low marital satisfaction for both partners, reflecting the negative consequences of a

power imbalance. Furthermore, power struggles will predict low levels of marital satisfaction for the couple.

Psychological functioning and social support

The relationship between psychological distress and social support has been examined extensively in the literature (Cohen & Wills, 1985). For couple members, psychological distress is negatively correlated with both the frequency that a spouse is named as a provider of support, and the level of satisfaction with this form of support (Kurdek, 1989).

Emotional support of significant others is one factor that contributes to the successful combination of multiple roles such as work and family (Epstein, 1987). However, it seems that the issue of attaining personal and marital satisfaction when facing multiple roles is more complex than simply dividing one's time between work and family (Bailyn, 1970). Stewart & Malley (1987) found that the effectiveness of balanced employment and family roles was related to the balance of agency-communion patterns within each role. That is, within each role, there were aspects of agency (e.g. individual initiative, separate tasks or activities, independent spheres of action) and communion (e.g. collective actions, mutual dependence, relationships). The balanced presence of agency and communion predicted emotional and physical health, whereas combination of

employment and family roles per se did not. Overemphasis on communion values without any opportunity for independent action may undermine an individual's sense of competence and result in a sense of helplessness and negative feelings, just as complete agency without any connectedness may be equally stressful (Stewart & Malley, 1987). Thus, spouses who receive support that combines agency and communion values should report experiencing less personal or emotional distress.

Hypotheses

The SASB model will be used to investigate three processes operating among spouses involved in a social support task. The first, social support, is represented by behaviors exhibited by the spouse currently in the "supporter" role. The second, assertiveness, is operationalized by the behaviors of the spouse in the "confider" role. Power dynamics, which represent the interplay of the two processes, are also explored. Several hypotheses follow, in which self-esteem and economic indicators are evaluated for both spouses as predictors of the aforementioned three processes. Finally, social support, assertiveness, and power are used as predictors of marital satisfaction and psychological distress among couples (see Figure 2).

Social Support

1. Social support will be positively correlated with marital satisfaction for both spouses. That is, when the "supporter" behaves in a manner that fosters autonomy in their partner and offers advice or guidance in a sensitive manner, higher scores on marital satisfaction will be found among both spouses. Thus, the relative frequency of "Freeing and forgetting," "Affirming and understanding," and "Nurturing and protecting" (focus on other) will be positively correlated with marital satisfaction for both spouses.

2. Social support will be correlated with the confiders' reports of experiencing less personal or emotional distress. The rate of "Freeing and forgetting," "Affirming and understanding," and "Nurturing and protecting" by the supporter (focus on other) will be negatively correlated with psychological distress for the "confider."

3. Based on previous research on gender differences in social support, when in the role of supporter, wives will be more likely to demonstrate autonomy-enhancing support ("Freeing and forgetting" and "Affirming and understanding" for focus on other), whereas husbands will be more likely to utilize a more controlling form of support, such as providing guidance and advice ("Nurturing and protecting"

for focus on other) among a subsample of maritally satisfied couples, selected out from the whole sample. Thus, significant group differences between husbands and wives are predicted for focus on other behaviors among this group of couples.

Assertiveness

4. Environments that support autonomy and provide assistance in an affiliative manner will be associated with spouses' assertive behavior. Thus, the rate of autonomy-supportive behavior of one spouse ("Freeing and forgetting," "Affirming and understanding," and "Nurturing and protecting" for focus on other) should be positively correlated with assertive behavior ("Asserting and separating" and "Disclosing and expressing" for focus on self) of their partner during the social support interaction.

5. Assertive behavior ("Asserting and separating" and "Disclosing and expressing," for focus on self), coupled with the ability to rely on one's spouse for advice and guidance ("Trusting and relying" for focus on self) will be positively correlated with marital satisfaction for the confider.

6. Self-esteem will predict assertive behavior for the confider as well as the ability to provide a context for fostering and supporting assertiveness in one's spouse.

a. Self-esteem for the confider will be positively correlated with the ability to utilize autonomous ("Asserting and separating" and "Disclosing and expressing" for focus on self) and reliant behaviors ("Trusting and relying" for focus on self) in seeking support from their spouses.

b. Self-esteem for the supporter will be positively correlated with the ability to provide a context for self-exploration and advise or guide in an affiliative manner ("Freeing and forgetting," "Affirming and understanding" and "Nurturing and protecting" for focus on other).

Power Imbalance and Struggle

7. Marital satisfaction scores should be negatively correlated with power imbalance and struggle exhibited in a social support task.

a. High levels of control for the supporter ("Ignoring and neglecting" or "Watching and managing" for focus on other) followed by submission by the confider ("Deferring and submitting" or "Sulking and appeasing" for focus on

self) will be associated with decreased marital satisfaction for both partners, reflecting the negative consequences of a power imbalance.

b. Power struggles in a task of conjugal support will predict low levels of marital satisfaction. The rate of controlling behavior by the supporter ("Watching and managing" for focus on other) followed by autonomous behavior by the confider ("Asserting and separating" for focus on self) will be negatively correlated with marital satisfaction for both spouses.

8. Self-esteem of the confider is a more important predictor of power imbalance than socioeconomic factors per se. Self-esteem will account for most of the variance in the relationship between socioeconomic factors between spouses and a power imbalance. Therefore, lower levels of self-esteem will predict higher rates of control for the supporter ("Ignoring and neglecting" or "Watching and managing" for focus on other) followed by submission by the confider ("Deferring and submitting" or "Sulking and appeasing" for focus on self). However, difference between spouses regarding education level may also account for a small part of the variance.

Method

Subjects

The subjects were participants in the second phase of a larger longitudinal study of family functioning and interaction in families with mildly to moderately mentally retarded children. This study focuses on approximately 37 married couples selected from the larger sample of single and two-parent families.

In the first phase of the study, 180 families with mentally retarded children were recruited. These families were initially recruited by mailing letters to the homes of all parents with children between the ages of 6-18 enrolled in classes for Educable Mentally Impaired (EMI) and Trainable Mentally Impaired (TMI) children in several public school districts. Although the response rate was less than 10% to the bulk mailing, 75% of the respondents completed the investigation. A comparison group of 53 families was also recruited through newspaper advertisements for families of typically developing school-age children enrolled in public schools, although data from these subjects are not included in the present report. Respondents were accepted into the study on a first-come basis, with some selection based on family composition and demographic variables in the comparison families to ensure comparability with families with mentally retarded children. Names, addresses, and phone numbers of all the families, as well as records of

people who would be able to reach them if they were to relocate, were kept in a separate folder, so that families could be recontacted 1 1/2 to 2 years later for follow-up data. Each family was paid $50 for their participation.

A follow-up evaluation was initiated eighteen months after the study began (and is currently underway) so that we could assess the ways in which families had changed since the last visit. The families were recontacted by phone or by mail. Of the original 180 families, 127 (71%) completed the investigation. Again, each family was paid $50 for participating in the larger study.

From the entire sample of 127 families who participated in the follow-up, 78 of the families (61%) with a mentally retarded child include two parents, legally married or cohabitating. Table 1 contains demographic information for subjects in the present study. These couples have been married an average of 12.77 years (SD= 7.4 years). The average age of the mothers is 39.16 years (SD= 5.73 years) and the average age of the fathers is 41.67 years (SD= 6.72 years). The fathers were significantly older than the mothers, $t(35)=2.23$, $p<.03$. 94% of these couples are Caucasian, and 3% are Hispanic. The average amount of formal education is 14.19 years (SD= 2.54 years) for the mothers; 23 (61%) of the mothers completed high school and 13 (34%) obtained a college degree or above. The fathers attained an average of 14.06 years (SD= 2.74 years) of

formal education, with 24 (63%) completing high school, and 9 (24%) obtaining a college degree or above. There was no significant difference between the mothers and the fathers for years of formal education. Families reported an average yearly income of $26,530 (SD=19,620; Median: 20,500; Range: $4,000-$132,000). The average on the Hollingshead four factor index of social status is 42.54 (SD=13.37; Range: 14-66).

Table 1

Family Demographics

Variable	Mean (SD)	Range
Age of target child (years)	12.5 (3.52)	7-21
Gender of target child:		
Boys	65	
Girls	62	
Child primary educational placement:		
EMI (1 child was mainstreamed)	80	
TMI	46	
Number of siblings	1.54 (1.17)	0-5
Yearly family income	26,530 (19,620)	4,000-132,000
Hollingshead index	42.54 (13.37)	14-66
Length of marriage (years)	12.77 (7.40)	.5-34.08
Age of parent (years)		
Mothers	39.16 (5.73)	28-55
Fathers	41.67 (6.72)	28-62
Education (years)		
Mothers	14.19 (2.54)	10-19
Fathers	14.06 (2.74)	7-20

Procedure

Apart from some demographics, all data for the present study were gathered at Time 2. Similar to the Time 1 procedures, families participated in two assessment sessions in their home, each of which lasted approximately two hours, and were usually scheduled one week apart. All family members currently living in the home were requested to be present for both of these sessions. The purposes and procedures of the study were explained to the family and they were informed of their rights as volunteers. A statement of informed consent was signed by both parents and a release of information form to obtain records from the child's school was obtained. The parents completed a battery of questionnaires measuring personal, social and familial sources of stress and support, as well as marital and family functioning and child adjustment. Most of the questionnaires were the same ones administered in the first phase of the study, although some new ones were added that asked about changes since Time 1. Subjects were reminded not to try to recall their previous answers, but rather to report on their current situation. Children of appropriate age also completed several of the measures on family functioning and relationships. At the close of the session, the parents completed a videotaped marital discussion in a room of the house isolated from the children, as explained below. The second research session consisted of collecting

the remaining questionnaires, administering one additional measure to one of the parents, and videotaping a fifty minute free interaction segment and a ten minute family problem-solving discussion.

Social Support Interaction

Near the end of the first session each parent completed a short questionnaire (See Appendix B: Personal Problem Questionnaire) which asked him/her to recall and list areas in which he/she had experienced disappointment, personal problems, or stress not specifically related to the marital relationship (e.g. work, relationship with own family or friends, personal leisure activities, health). They were also asked to rate the severity of the problem on a scale of 1-4 (not a problem to major problem). With the assistance of the interviewers, each spouse identified a topic to discuss with the spouse for approximately ten minutes. These discussions took place in a room isolated from the children and were videotaped. The interviewers read a set of standardized instructions to the couple which informed them that they would be taking turns in confiding a personal problem to their spouse. One spouse was randomly selected to go first, and was instructed to confide in the partner, like he/she "usually would do when distressed or bothered by a personal problem." The other spouse was told to listen and respond to the partner in the manner as he/she "usually

would when sharing these moments." Listeners were not given explicit instructions to provide support, in order to avoid building a set that the spouse should "help." Couples were told that they would have ten minutes in each role. The interviewers started the camera and left the room for the discussion, returning in 8 minutes to ask the couple to switch roles.

Observational Measure

Coding marital interactions. Videotapes of the spouses' discussions were evaluated by experienced behavioral coders, utilizing a modified cluster version of the Observational Coding System for use with Structural Analysis of Social Behavior (SASB; Humphrey & Benjamin, 1989).

In a social support situation, the support seeker or confider performs self-directed behaviors, and the support giver is focusing on the other. Thus, all behaviors performed by the spouse in the role of "confider" were coded according to the focus on self domain, and all behaviors of the spouse whose task was to listen as their partner confided (the "supporter"), were coded according to the focus on other domain. This consistent assignment of focus was the major modification in the original SASB coding scheme. As Humphrey & Benjamin (1986) stated:

> "In an ideal adult relationship, interpersonal focus is well balanced between equal amounts of focus on others and focus on the self . . . There are, though, some situations in which an imbalance of focus is quite appropriate because it is defined by the role relationship. A common example of this role defined inequality of focus is in psychotherapy where the therapist focuses almost exclusively on the patient. Similarly, the patient would be focusing primarily on him or herself, in relation to the therapist." (p. 2)

The floor switch (i.e. all behaviors between changes of listener and speaker) was the basic unit of coding, so that there was at least one code for each spouse's speaking turn. When a speaker emitted more than one type of codable behavior before a switch occurred, a code was given for each independent and different behavior. However, a particular code was only assigned one time within a floor switch. Thus, multiple codes were used if the speaker conveyed two or more distinct interpersonal actions within one floor switch.

The SASB coding system has a circumplex structure which classifies dyadic and group interactions along two dimensions. Each statement is rated on two four-point scales, first indicating the degree of independence versus interdependence, followed by the degree of affiliation versus disaffiliation. Thus, each code consisted of two numbers, written in the form of a coordinate pair. The meaning of these ratings varies depending on the role of the speaker. On the independent/interdependent dimension, a

rating of maximally independent (1) represents the ability to maintain an autonomous focus on oneself when in the role of the "confider." When in the role of "supporter," maximal independence represents the ability to relate to one's spouse by supporting or fostering their autonomy. At the opposite end of the scale, a rating of maximally interdependent (4) for the "confider" is given in a situation in which the speaker exhibits submissive behavior; in the role of the "supporter," a maximally interdependent rating is given when the spouse provides a managing or controlling directive. Maximally affiliative behavior (1) represents friendly, joyful connection, whereas maximally disaffiliative behavior (4) represents hostility, anger and moving away. Eight clusters of behavior for each focus are identified in the SASB model from ratings along these two dimensions, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

SASB Clusters and Constructs Operationalized

Cluster	Rating (0-4) Independence	Affiliation
Focus on self		
Asserting & separating	1	0
Disclosing & expressing	2	2
Approaching & enjoying	0	1
Trusting & relying	3	2
Deferring & submitting	4	0
Sulking & appeasing	3	3
Protesting & withdrawing	0	4
Walling off & avoiding	2	3
Focus on other		
Freeing & forgetting	1	0
Affirming & understanding	2	2
Loving & approaching	0	1
Nurturing & protecting	3	2
Watching & managing	4	0
Belittling & blaming	3	3
Attacking & rejecting	0	4
Ignoring & neglecting	2	3
Social support		
Focus on other		
Freeing & forgetting	1	0
Affirming & understanding	2	2
Nurturing & protecting	3	2
Assertiveness		
Focus on self		
Asserting & separating	1	0
Disclosing & expressing	2	2

Power imbalance			
Focus on other:	followed by	Focus on self:	
Watching & managing	(4,0)	Deferring & submitting	(4,0)
	or	Sulking & appeasing	(3,3)
Ignoring & neglecting	(2,3)	Deferring & submitting	(4,0)
	or	Sulking & appeasing	(3,3)
Power struggle			
Watching & managing	(4,0)	Asserting & separating	(1,0)

Coding was initially done in pairs for training purposes, but later was completed individually the coders. Twenty percent of the videotaped interactions in this study were evaluated independently by two coders in order to assess interobserver agreement. Mean kappa, computed on each of the seven coders total was .74 (Range = .54 - .90) for focus on other, and .73 (Range = .37 - .96) for focus on self.

Operationalizing processes of support, assertiveness and power. As seen in Table 2, social support was operationalized by summing relative frequency scores for focus on other for the categories "Freeing and forgetting," "Affirming and understanding" and "Nurturing and protecting." Assertiveness was operationalized by summing relative frequency scores for focus on self for the two categories of "Asserting and separating" and "Disclosing and expressing." Both lag sequential z-scores and conditional probability statistics were used to operationalize power dynamics examined in this study. "Watching and managing" or "Ignoring and neglecting" (focus on other) followed by "Deferring and submitting" or "Sulking and appeasing" (focus on self) represents an exertion of power or control. "Watching and managing" (focus on other) followed by "Asserting and separating" (focus on self) represents a struggle for power.

Questionnaire Measures

Self-esteem. During the first research session of Time 2 data collection, each spouse completed the Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Inventory (see Appendix C), a unidimensional scale with ten Likert-type items that measures self-regard in a brief format. Rosenberg (1965) presented evidence for the internal reliability and face validity of the scale, as well as construct validity, citing positive correlations with social and interpersonal variables such as assertiveness. The scale has also been praised as a reasonable compromise between a weighted, facet model and a more global approach to assessing self-esteem (Fleming & Courtney, 1984).

Marital Satisfaction. General marital satisfaction was measured by the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976), a 32-item scale designed for use with both married and unmarried cohabitating couples (see Appendix D). This questionnaire, which assesses the quality of the marriage with respect to four components (dyadic satisfaction, consensus, cohesion, and affectional expression), was administered at both Time 1 and Time 2 of the study. The measure conceptualizes dyadic adjustment as an "ever-changing process, with a qualitative dimension which can be evaluated at any point in time on a dimension from well adjusted to maladjusted" (Spanier, 1976, p. 17). Total

scores on the DAS as well as subscale scores have shown high levels of validity and reliability for distinguishing happily married couples from couples experiencing distress in their marriage (e.g. Margolin, Michelli, & Jacobson, 1988).

Emotional Distress. Psychological or emotional distress as experienced by both spouses was assessed by the Symptom Checklist-90-Revised (SCL-90-R; Derogatis, 1983), a 90-item self-report symptom rating scale (see Appendix E). This questionnaire requires that subjects first endorse the occurrence of symptoms experienced within the past seven days, and then rate the severity of each symptom on a 4-point scale. The checklist has excellent reliability and validity (Derogatis, Abeloff, & Melisaratos, 1979; Derogatis, Rickels, & Rock, 1976), and provides information on nine factor analytically derived scales (e.g. somatization, obsessive-compulsive, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, hostility, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation, and psychoticism), as well as a single summary distress score, the Global Severity Index (GSI), which is the total sum of the severity ratings for all of the items endorsed by a subject, divided by 90. The GSI is the best indicator of the current level or depth of disorder in general.

Demographics. Information regarding highest level of education completed in years was collected for each spouse during the first session interviews at Time 2 data collection.

Results

The relative frequencies of behaviors in each SASB cluster for both focus on other and focus on self were calculated for the husbands and the wives separately. Also, as outlined in Table 2, total summary scores for the categories of Social support and Assertiveness were calculated for each subject. Table 3 provides the means and standard deviations of the relative frequencies for each SASB cluster for the husbands and the wives in each role.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations of SASB Relative Frequencies

Variable	Husbands (n=37)	Wives (n=37)
Focus on other (supporter role)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Freeing & forgetting	.06 (.07)	.09 (.09)
Affirming & understanding	.24 (.19)	.23 (.18)
Loving & approaching	.03 (.05)	.01 (.04)
Nurturing & protecting	.38 (.18)	.40 (.20)
Watching & managing	.06 (.09)	.06 (.08)
Belittling & blaming	.01 (.05)	.01 (.04)
Attacking & rejecting	.00 (.01)	.00 (.01)
Ignoring & neglecting	.22 (.22)	.20 (.24)
Focus on self (confider role)		
Asserting & separating	.09 (.09)	.14 (.09)
Disclosing & expressing	.47 (.24)	.45 (.18)
Approaching & enjoying	.01 (.04)	.03 (.04)
Trusting & relying	.18 (.15)	.19 (.13)
Deferring & submitting	.10 (.15)	.09 (.14)
Sulking & appeasing	.01 (.02)	.01 (.01)
Protesting & withdrawing	.00 (.00)	.00 (.02)
Walling off & avoiding	.15 (.18)	.11 (.18)

Paired t-tests contrasting husbands and wives on each variable ns.

Scores for Power imbalance and Power struggle were determined for each couple by using a lag sequential z-score for one lag. Sequences were measured with Bakeman's (1986) E-LAG procedure, which calculates the conditional probability for a consequent event given an antecedent event, compares the conditional probability to the base rate for the consequent, and produces a z-score statistic indicating the strength of the association between the antecedent and the consequent. The use of one-step antecedent-consequent sequences for husband-wife or wife-husband involved examining the antecedent at lag 0 and the consequent at lag 1. These one-step sequences were entered into subsequent analyses. The one-step sequences adequately captured husband and wife exchanges because the majority of coded actions involved an exchange of the floor with each new code.

In addition to the SASB relative frequency scores, balance scores for Social support and for Assertiveness/Trusting and relying were calculated. For Social support, scores reflected the balanced use of various types of social support (i.e., Freeing and forgetting, Affirming and understanding, Nurturing and protecting), as opposed to the reliance on one form of supportiveness by the listener. Balanced Assertiveness/Trusting and relying meant that Assertiveness (Asserting and separating, and Disclosing and expressing) was coupled with the ability to rely on

one's spouse for advice and guidance (Trusting and relying). To compute these scores, the subjects were placed into groups based on the following decision rules. First, if the difference between the rates of any two of their scores for these SASB clusters was greater than or equal to 50 percent they were placed in the "unbalanced" group. Some subjects showed relatively balanced use of behaviors because they displayed low rates of all three behaviors. These people were placed in a separate group from the other balanced subjects; that is, these subjects were placed in the "low" group if the total percentage of Social support (or Assertiveness/Trusting and relying, in separate analyses) was less than or equal to the median. The remaining subjects were placed in the "balanced" group. For the husbands as supporters, the median for Social support was 45%, for the wives it was 65%; for the husbands as confiders, the median for Assertiveness/Trusting and relying was 63%; for the wives it was 75%. The third group was comprised of those subjects for whom the difference between the rates of any two of their scores for the SASB clusters was less than 50 percent and for whom the sum of all three components of the composite was greater than the median of the total behaviors emitted.

Because most of the relative frequencies were fairly normally distributed, analyses mainly consisted of Pearson product-moment correlations and ANOVAs, in order to test

whether each or both types of scores (i.e., relative frequency or balance scores) were associated with the outcomes as hypothesized (i.e., marital satisfaction, psychological distress, and self-esteem). However, several of the SASB clusters with low base rates were not normally distributed. Instead, the modal score was zero, but some couples did demonstrate relatively high rates of these behaviors. Thus, the relative frequencies were bimodally distributed. Therefore, these variables were dichotomized and treated as categorical measures. Specifically, the relative frequencies for the clusters Loving and approaching, Belittling and blaming, Attacking and rejecting, Ignoring and neglecting (focus on other), and Approaching and enjoying, Deferring and submitting, Sulking and appeasing, Protesting and withdrawing, and Walling Off and avoiding (focus on self) were divided into two categories of "none-low" and "some-high" displays of the behavior. Subjects were placed into one of these two groups based on a median split for each SASB cluster. The hypotheses were addressed by conducting separate t-tests contrasting the groups on each of the outcome measures. Additionally, relative frequencies for the category Watching and managing were divided into three groups of "none" "medium," and "high," where one standard deviation above the modal score of zero served as the cut-off between the medium

and high groups. ANOVAs were calculated to contrast these three groups on the outcome measures.

Social Support and Marital Satisfaction

The first set of analyses tested the hypothesis that higher levels of Social support exhibited by the spouses in the supporter role would be associated with marital satisfaction for both spouses. That is, when the supporter fosters autonomy in their partner by exhibiting higher rates of Freeing and forgetting, Affirming and understanding, and offers advice or guidance in a sensitive manner via higher rates of Nurturing and protecting, both spouses will report higher levels of marital satisfaction. This hypothesis was tested using relative frequency scores for each of these three SASB clusters, the sum total of the three clusters (Social support), and the balance scores for Social support. Separate correlation matrices were computed for the husbands and the wives between the behavioral interaction measures and the total scores and subscale scores of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale.

The correlations revealed significant relationships for the subscales Dyadic Satisfaction, Consensus, Affection, and the total adjustment score, only when the husbands assumed supporter roles. All correlations were nonsignificant for the wives' behaviors in the supporter role (Range r's (35) .00 to -.32). Further, in general, contrary to the

hypotheses, Social support as provided by the husbands was negatively correlated with marital satisfaction for both the husbands (Dyadic Consensus, $r(35)=-.40$, $p<.05$; Dyadic Affection, $r(35)=-.37$, $p<.05$) and the wives (Dyadic Affection, $r(35)=-.35$, $p<.05$). The correlations between each of the SASB clusters for the husbands and the husbands' and the wives' scores on the marital satisfaction scales are given in Table 4.

Table 4

Correlations Between Husbands' Social support and Husbands' and Wives' Scores on the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS)

DAS Subscale	SASB Component: Husbands as Supporters			
	Social Support	Freeing & Forgetting	Affirming & Understanding	Nurturing & Protecting
Husbands' scores				
Satisfaction	-.22	.10	-.41*	-.06
Consensus	-.40*	.02	-.33*	-.35*
Cohesion	-.10	.04	-.27	.06
Affection	-.37*	.11	-.49**	-.22
Adjustment	-.32	.08	-.43*	-.18
Wives' scores				
Satisfaction	-.05	.17	-.32	.07
Consensus	-.31	-.08	-.20	-.23
Cohesion	.06	.10	-.04	.03
Affection	-.35*	.01	-.34*	-.24
Adjustment	-.18	.06	-.27	-.10

*p<.05 **p<.01

As shown in the table, the husbands' Affirming and understanding scores showed significant correlations with four of the five marital satisfaction variables as reported by themselves, and with Dyadic Affection as reported by their wives. The husbands who displayed relatively high rates of Affirming and understanding reported relatively low marital satisfaction in general and had wives who reported relatively low Dyadic Affection. The scores for Freeing and forgetting did not show significant correlations with any of the marital satisfaction scales, and the category Nurturing and protecting was significantly negatively correlated with only one of the five scales, Dyadic Consensus, for the husbands only.

In order to determine whether relatively balanced use of different forms of SASB Social support clusters would be associated with marital satisfaction, the three balance groups were contrasted on the marital satisfaction scores. When the wives assumed the supporter roles, significant relationships emerged for their own reports of Dyadic Consensus, $F(2, 34) = 6.31$, $p<.01$, Dyadic Affection, $F(2, 34) = 4.18$, $p<.05$, and Dyadic Adjustment, $F(2,34) = 5.24$, $p<.01$. The ANOVAs for the other two marital satisfaction scales were nonsignificant for the wives' behaviors in the supporter role (Range F's .75 to 2.29). Post-hoc Duncan analyses revealed that consistent with the hypothesis, the wives in the balanced Social support group had significantly

higher scores on both Dyadic Consensus, Dyadic Affection, and Dyadic Adjustment than the wives in the unbalanced support group. However, contrary to the hypothesis, the group of wives demonstrating an overall low percentage of Social support had significantly higher scores on Dyadic Affection than the wives in the unbalanced support group. In addition, when the wives were in the supporter role, significant relationships emerged for their husbands' reports of Dyadic Satisfaction, $F(2, 34) = 4.37$, $p<.05$, and Dyadic Adjustment, $F(2, 34) = 3.67$, $p<.05$. Post-hoc Duncan analyses revealed that consistent with the hypothesis, the husbands of wives in the balanced Social support group had significantly higher scores on both Dyadic Satisfaction and Dyadic Adjustment than the wives in the unbalanced support group. See Table 5 for specific findings when the wives were in the supporter role.

Table 5

Means, Standard Deviations, ANOVAs, and Post-hoc Analyses Contrasting SASB Social Support Balance Groups on Husbands' and Wives' Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS)

DAS subscale	Group Means (SD)			F-value	Post-hoc Contrasts
	Unbalanced	Low	Balanced		
Wife as supporter					
Satisfaction					
Husbands	36.92 (4.68)	40.18 (3.63)	41.77 (4.07)	4.37*	B>U
Wives	37.08 (6.20)	37.72 (3.70)	41.39 (2.99)	ns	
Consensus					
Husbands	46.83 (4.53)	50.82 (7.45)	50.69 (4.87)	ns	
Wives	46.00 (5.49)	51.64 (3.64)	52.08 (4.66)	6.31**	B>U
Cohesion					
Husbands	13.82 (4.14)	17.00 (2.90)	17.23 (3.09)	ns	
Wives	16.17 (3.33)	15.27 (3.52)	18.62 (3.89)	ns	
Affection					
Husbands	8.88 (2.84)	9.00 (2.61)	9.08 (2.37)	ns	
Wives	8.00 (1.95)	10.00 (1.73)	9.77 (1.83)	4.18*	L>U; B>U
Adjustment					
Husbands	105.75 (13.09)	117.00 (14.39)	118.77 (11.11)	3.67*	B>U
Wives	107.25 (14.54)	115.64 (8.18)	121.85 (10.04)	5.24**	B>U

(Table continues)

Table 5 (cont'd)

DAS subscale	Group Means (SD)			F-value	Post-hoc Constrasts
	Unbalanced	Low	Balanced		
Husband as supporter					
Satisfaction					
Husbands	40.22 (3.73)	43.00 (3.63)	38.00 (4.73)	4.13*	L>B
Wives	38.67 (4.82)	40.00 (3.51)	39.00 (5.29)	ns	
Consensus					
Husbands	48.11 (2.15)	55.38 (7.67)	45.58 (4.57)	7.27**	L>U; L>B
Wives	48.67 (3.24)	54.25 (5.60)	8.37 (2.27)		
Cohesion					
Husbands	16.78 (3.96)	16.75 (3.20)	15.42 (3.78)	ns	
Wives	17.11 (3.98)	16.25 (4.95)	16.84 (3.32)	ns	
Affection					
Husbands	7.78 (3.07)	10.63 (1.85)	8.37 (2.27)	3.39*	L>U; L>B
Wives	8.44 (2.13)	10.63 (1.30)	9.05 (1.99)	ns	
Adjustment					
Husbands	112.89 (7.82)	125.75 (14.70)	109.37 (13.18)	4.90**	L>B
Wives	112.89 (10.42)	121.13 (11.53)	113.58 (13.67)	ns	

Note: Significant post-hoc contrasts are based on the Duncan test.

Wife as supporter:
U=Unbalanced (N=12), L=Low (N=11), B=Balanced (N=13).
Husband as supporter:
U=Unbalanced (N=9), L=Low (N=9), B=Balanced (N=19).

*p<.05 **p<.01

The findings for Social support balance with the husbands as supporters were more complex. When the husbands assumed the supporter roles, several significant group differences in marital satisfaction emerged for both the husbands only. Post-hoc Duncan analyses revealed that similar to the finding with the wives as supporters, the husbands who displayed an overall low rate of Social support had significantly higher marital satisfaction scores than those in the unbalanced support group. However, unlike findings for the wives as supporters and contrary to the hypothesis, the balanced group had significantly lower scores on Dyadic Consensus and Dyadic Affection, and overall Dyadic Adjustment for the husbands as compared with the "low" support group. See Table 5 for specific findings when the husbands were supporters.

Exploratory Analyses of Support Behaviors and Marital Satisfaction

Because all significant correlations found were counter to the hypotheses, a series of t-tests and ANOVAs were conducted to examine the relationship between the marital satisfaction scores and all other SASB clusters for spouses in the supporter role. These analyses used the groups divided into "none-low" and "some-high" or "none," "medium," and "high" on the SASB rate scores. Of the nine t-tests, only Ignoring and neglecting for the husbands as supporters

showed significant effects for one marital satisfaction scale; higher rates of Ignoring and neglecting were associated with higher scores on Dyadic Affection for husbands $t(35) = -2.16$, $p<.04$. This result may be linked to the finding discussed above, that is, that husband Affirming and understanding was negatively correlated with marital satisfaction scores. The counterintuitive positive correlation between Ignoring and neglecting and Dyadic Affection can be understood in terms of the fact that husbands who exhibited relatively lower rates of Affirming and understanding demonstrated relatively higher rates of Ignoring and Neglecting; these two SASB clusters are negatively correlated, $r(35)= -.51$, $p<.01$. The ANOVAs for the Watching and managing groups revealed significant effects on marital satisfaction when the husbands were in the supporter role. High rates of husbands' Watching and managing were associated with higher scores on Dyadic Affection for both the husbands, $F(2, 34) = 3.61$, $p<.04$, and the wives, $F(2, 34) = 3.81$, $p<.03$. Post-hoc Duncan analyses revealed that the "high" group had significantly higher husbands' reports on Dyadic Affection than the "none" group; the "medium" group had significantly higher wives' reports on Dyadic Affection than the "none" group.

In order to better understand the relative significance of the aforementioned variables in predicting marital satisfaction, stepwise multiple regression analyses were

computed. The criteria for the regressions were the husbands' and the wives' scores on each of the marital satisfaction subscales and the total summary scale. In all analyses the supporter behaviors found to be statistically significant from the correlational, t-test, and ANOVA analyses were entered stepwise in order to examine the relative importance of each variable. The regression results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Regressions Predicting Husbands' and Wives' Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) From SASB Clusters of Supporter Behaviors

DAS	Predictors	df	beta	R2	F-value
Wives					
Satisfaction	ns				
Consensus	Wife supporter "balance"	(1, 35)	.43**	.19	8.06
Cohesion	ns				
Affection	Husband Watching & managing	(2, 34)	.53***	.38	10.49
	Wife supporter "balance"		.53***		
Adjustment	Wife supporter "balance"	(1, 35)	.44**	.20	8.58
Husbands					
Satisfaction	Husband Affirming & understanding	(2, 34)	-.43**	.27	6.30
	Husband supporter "balance"		-.32*		
Consensus	Husband Social support	(1, 35)	-.40**	.16	6.71
Cohesion	ns				
Affection	Husband Affirming & understanding	(1, 35)	-.49**	.24	10.78
Adjustment	Husband Affirming & understanding	(2, 34)	-.48**	.35	9.08
	Wife supporter "balance"		.41**		

*p<.05 **p<.01

With just a few exceptions, the regressions revealed that marital satisfaction scores were best predicted by the spouses' own behaviors in the supporter role. For the wives', their balance scores was predictive of their own levels of Dyadic Consensus, Dyadic Affection, and Dyadic Adjustment. Also, the husbands' Watching and managing behaviors was predictive of the wives' reports of Dyadic Affection. For the husbands', their own Social support balance scores predicted their reports of Dyadic Satisfaction, the husbands' total Social support behaviors predicted Dyadic Consensus, and their Affirming and understanding behaviors predicted Dyadic Satisfaction, Dyadic Affection, and overall Dyadic Adjustment. The one exception was that the wives' support balance scores also predicted the husbands' Dyadic Adjustment scores.

In sum, contrary to the hypotheses, Social support as provided by the husbands was negatively correlated with marital satisfaction for both the husbands and the wives. This was especially true for the husbands' Affirming and understanding behaviors. Regarding balance scores, when both the husbands and the wives were supporters, the spouses in the low group had significantly higher marital satisfaction scores than the unbalanced group. When the wives were in the supporter roles, the wives from the balanced group had significantly higher scores than the wives from the unbalanced group on two marital satisfaction

scales and the summary scale, which is consistent with the hypothesis that there is a benefit to using a variety of behaviors as a supporter. However, when the husbands were in the supporter roles, the spouses from the balanced group reported significantly lower marital satisfaction than the low group. The regression analyses revealed that spouses' behaviors as supporters was mainly predictive of their own reports of marital satisfaction, with wife balance scores more often predictive for the wives' self-reports, and husband Affirming and understanding more often predictive of the husbands' reports.

Social Support and Psychological Distress

The second set of analyses tested the hypothesis that spouses who receive relatively higher rates of Social support will report lower levels of psychological distress. That is, higher rates of Freeing and forgetting, Affirming and understanding, and Nurturing and protecting by the supporter will be associated with lower levels of psychological distress for the confider. Spouses' scores on the summary scale of psychological distress (i.e., Global Severity Index) and the subscale Depression of the SCL-90-R were correlated with their partners' scores on each of the SASB clusters associated with Social support. None of these correlations showed significant effects; thus the hypothesis was not supported for these SASB clusters. Although no

correlations were significant for psychological distress or depression in relation to spouse behavior, one correlation was significant in relation to one's own behavior. A high rate of husband Affirming and understanding in the supporter role was positively correlated with husbands' own scores on the Depression subscale, $r(35)=.41$, $p<.05$.

In order to determine whether relatively balanced use of different forms of SASB Social support clusters would be associated with psychological distress, the three balance groups were contrasted on the global distress and depression scales. There were no significant relationships for either the husbands or the wives with respect to either spouses' balance scores as supporters.

Exploratory Analyses of Support Behaviors and Psychological Distress

Similar to the analyses examining marital satisfaction, t-tests were conducted to contrast psychological distress and depression for the groups based on the SASB clusters Loving and approaching, Attacking and rejecting, Belittling and blaming, and Ignoring and neglecting. None of these t-tests, nor the ANOVA for Watching and managing, was statistically significant.

Exploratory Analyses of Confider Behaviors and Psychological Distress

Although no specific hypotheses were generated regarding the relationship between confider behaviors and psychological distress, these analyses were conducted because in general confider and supporter behaviors were related. Thus, despite the fact that significant relationships were not found for supporter behaviors and psychological distress, significant effects might emerge for the confiders' behaviors. Pearson product moment correlations revealed that the wives' scores on psychological distress and depression were related to their own behaviors as confiders. High rates of Disclosing and expressing for the wives were related to their reporting higher general distress, $r(35)=.45$, $p<.01$, and depression, $r(35)=.42$, $p<.05$.

In order to determine whether relatively balanced use of the SASB confider cluster Assertiveness/Trusting (i.e., Asserting and separating, Disclosing and expressing, and Trusting and relying) would be associated with psychological distress, three balance groups similar to the ones created for Social support were formed and were contrasted on the global distress and depression scales. When the wives assumed the confider roles, one significant relationship emerged for the wives' global distress, $F(2, 33) = 3.22$, $p<.05$. Post-hoc Duncan analyses revealed that the

unbalanced group had significantly higher scores than both the low group and the balanced group on global distress. An evaluation of the composition of the wives' confider behaviors in the unbalanced group revealed that the wives typically demonstrated an abundance of Disclosing and expressing, and exhibited relatively lower rates of Asserting and separating and Trusting and relying. Although the number of subjects in each group is somewhat problematic (unbalanced group: N=7; low group: N=13; balanced group: N=16), the result is consistent with the hypothesis that there would be a benefit to using a variety of behaviors as a confider.

Gender Related Differences in Social Support Styles

Hypothesis three predicted gender differences in styles of providing support. Paired t-tests were used to contrast the men and the women from a subsample of maritally satisfied couples, and test the prediction that the women would display more Freeing and forgetting and Affirming and understanding, and less Nurturing and protecting than the men. Only couples in which both spouses reported scores greater than 100 on the total adjustment scale of the DAS (100 is considered the cut-off for couples who are generally satisfied with their marriages) were included in this analysis (N=30 couples). This subsample was chosen based on initial hypotheses that the maritally satisfied couples

would be more likely to demonstrate behaviors from these three SASB clusters. No significant findings emerged from the paired t-tests. However, when the entire sample was used for the analysis, the results showed a trend in the expected direction for rates of Freeing and forgetting. That is, the rate at which the wives provided this form of support showed a tendency to be greater than the husbands, $t(36) = 1.71$, $p<.10$.

Assertive Behavior in Autonomy-enhancing Contexts

Hypothesis four predicted that the spouses would be more likely to behave assertively in contexts that support autonomy and provide assistance in an affiliative manner. That is, the confiders would exhibit relatively higher rates of Asserting and separating and Disclosing and expressing when their partners demonstrated Freeing and forgetting, Affirming and understanding, and Nurturing and protecting behaviors as supporters. In order to test this hypothesis, discloser behaviors were correlated with supporter behaviors; that is, the husbands' sum total SASB scores for Social support were correlated with the wives' sum total SASB scores for Assertiveness, and vice versa. The effect was stronger when the wives were in the supporter roles, $r(35)=.58$, $p<.01$, but was also statistically significant when the husbands were in the supporter roles, $r(35)=.32$, $p<.05$. Thus, as expected, contexts which fostered autonomy

but also provided guidance in an affiliative manner were associated with the highest rates of assertive behaviors.

Confider Assertiveness and Marital Satisfaction

The next set of analyses tested the hypothesis that the confiders' assertive and relying behaviors (comprised of Asserting and separating, Disclosing and expressing, and Trusting and relying) would be positively associated with their own reports of marital satisfaction. Similar to the analyses with supporter behaviors, each of the individual confider behaviors as well as a summary behavior score was correlated with each of the marital satisfaction subscales and the total adjustment scale.

None of the correlations with the marital satisfaction measures showed significant effects when the husbands were confiders. Rather, the hypothesis was only supported when the wives were confiders. Several significant effects emerged and are given in Table 7.

Table 7

Correlations Between Wives' Assertive and Relying Behaviors and Wives' Scores on the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS)

DAS Subscale	SASB Cluster for Wives as confiders			
	Summary Scale	Asserting & Separating	Disclosing & Expressing	Trusting & Relying
Wives' scores				
Satisfaction	.24	.35*	-.22	.23
Consensus	-.04	.36*	-.49**	.07
Cohesion	.32	.42**	.05	.02
Affection	-.02	.44**	-.38*	-.09
Adjustment	.16	.47**	-.34*	.11

*p<.05 **p<.01

Partial support was obtained for the hypothesis. As shown in Table 7, the wives' Asserting and separating behaviors were significantly correlated in a positive direction with their scores on Dyadic Satisfaction, Consensus, Cohesion, Affection, and overall Adjustment. However, contrary to the hypothesis, the wives' Disclosing and expressing was negatively correlated with Dyadic Consensus, Affection, and overall Adjustment. Neither the SASB cluster Trusting and relying nor the sum total score showed any significant correlations with the marital satisfaction measures.

In order to determine whether balanced use of different forms of Assertiveness/Trusting SASB clusters would be associated with marital satisfaction, balance scores were computed in the same manner as balance for Social support described above. That is, three groups were formed (i.e., unbalanced, low, and balanced), and were contrasted on the four marital satisfaction subscales and the total adjustment score. When the husbands assumed confider roles, no statistically significant effects emerged from the ANOVAs. However, when the wives assumed confider roles, several significant effects were found (see Table 8). Post-hoc Duncan analyses revealed that consistent with the hypothesis, for the wives, the balanced group had significantly higher scores than the unbalanced group on Dyadic Satisfaction, Consensus, and overall Adjustment. The

low group had significantly higher scores than the unbalanced group on all of the marital satisfaction scales, with the exception of Dyadic Cohesion and Dyadic Affection. An evaluation of the composition of the wives' confider behaviors in the unbalanced group revealed that the wives typically demonstrated an abundance of Disclosing and expressing behaviors, and exhibited relatively lower rates of Asserting and separating behaviors, and Trusting and relying behaviors.

Table 8

Table 8

ANOVAs and Post-hoc Analyses Contrasting SASB Confider Balance Groups on Wives' Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS)

DAS subscale	Group means (SD)			F-value	Post-hoc Contrasts
	Unbalanced	Low	Balanced		
Satisfaction	36.00 (6.11)	38.46 (4.72)	41.06 (3.23)	3.40*	B>U
Consensus	44.29 (4.75)	51.62 (3.45)	51.00 (5.45)	6.33**	L>U, B>U
Cohesion	16.00 (3.79)	15.92 (3.48)	17.81 (3.99)	ns	
Affection	8.14 (2.00)	9.45 (2.18)	9.50 (1.83)	ns	
Adjustment	104.43 (15.18)	115.54 (9.16)	119.38 (11.71)	4.05*	L>U, B>U

Note: Significant post-hoc contrasts based on the Duncan test

U=Unbalanced (N=7), L=Low (N=13), B=Balanced (N=16)

*p<.05 **p<.01

Exploratory Analyses of Confider Behaviors and Marital Satisfaction

Similar to the analyses utilizing supporter behaviors to group spouses and examine marital satisfaction, t-tests were calculated dichotomizing and contrasting marital satisfaction between the groups determined by scores for the following confider behaviors: Approaching and enjoying, Deferring and submitting, Sulking and appeasing, Protesting and withdrawing, and Walling off and avoiding. Regarding these categorical variables, only the wives' in high versus low Approaching and enjoying groups showed differences on two satisfaction scales, with high Approaching and enjoying associated with relatively lower levels of Dyadic Consensus, $t(35)=3.05$, $p<.01$, and Adjustment, $t(35)=2.19$, $p<.04$.

Power Imbalance, Power Struggle, and Marital Satisfaction

The next hypotheses proposed that marital satisfaction scores would be negatively correlated with Power imbalance and Power struggle. First, in order to operationalize Power imbalance, lag sequential z-scores for controlling behaviors for the supporter (i.e., Ignoring and neglecting, Watching and managing) followed by submission by the confider (i.e., Deferring and submitting, Sulking and appeasing) were calculated. The lag sequential z-score statistic indicates the strength of the association between the antecedent, supporter control, and the consequent, confider submission.

The four possible one-step sequences for each spouse as confiders were calculated and entered into subsequent correlational analyses with the marital satisfaction scales.

Only one pattern of Power imbalance was significantly correlated with marital satisfaction scores. However, contrary to the hypothesis, husband Watching and managing followed by wife Deferring and submitting was positively correlated with the wives' reports on Dyadic Consensus, $r(35)=.33$, $p<.05$, and Affection, $r(35)=.32$, $p<.05$.

Power struggle was operationalized for each spouse in the confider role by lag sequential z-scores for supporter Watching and managing, followed by confider Asserting and separating. Contrary to the hypothesis, Power struggle was positively associated with marital satisfaction. Wife Watching and managing followed by husband Asserting and separating was positively correlated with the husbands' scores on Dyadic Consensus, $r(35)=.33$, $p<.05$. And, husband Watching and managing followed by wife Asserting and separating was positively correlated with the wives' scores on Dyadic Adjustment, $r(35)=.33$, $p<.05$.

Thus, findings from both sets of analyses correlating Power imbalance and Power struggle with the marital satisfaction scales were counter to the hypotheses. Interestingly, significant relationships emerged only when Watching and managing was the antecedent behavior involved in the analysis.

Regressions Predicting the Wives' Marital Satisfaction from Confider Behaviors

In order to better understand the relative significance of each of the confider behaviors in predicting marital satisfaction, stepwise multiple regression analyses were conducted. The criteria for the regressions were the husbands' and the wives' scores on each of the marital satisfaction subscales and the summary scale. In all analyses the confider behaviors found to be statistically significant from the correlational, t-test, and ANOVA analyses were entered to examine the relative importance of each variable. The regression results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

Regressions Predicting the Wives' DAS scores from SASB Clusters of the Wives' Confider Behaviors

DAS	SASB Cluster	df	beta	R2	F-value
Wives					
Satisfaction	Assertiveness balance	(1, 35)	.47**	.22	10.13
Consensus	Disclosing & expressing	(3, 33)	-.38**	.52	12.13
	Approaching & enjoying		-.42***		
	Assertiveness balance		.32*		
Cohesion	Asserting & separating	(1, 35)	.42**	.18	7.67
Affection	Asserting & separating	(2, 34)	.44**	.34	8.69
	Disclosing & expressing		-.38**		
Adjustment	Assertiveness balance	(2, 34)	.36*	.33	8.44
	Asserting & separating	(2, 34)	.34*		

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

As shown in Table 9, the wives' Asserting and separating positively predicted their own levels of Dyadic Cohesion, Affection, and overall Adjustment. The wives' Disclosing and expressing behaviors as confiders negatively predicted Dyadic Consensus and Dyadic Affection. Confider balance scores positively predicted Dyadic Satisfaction, Consensus, and overall Adjustment. Regarding the categorical variables (i.e., "none-low" vs. "some-high" groups), the wives' Approaching & enjoying negatively predicted Dyadic Consensus.

The Effects of Self-esteem Level on Confider and Supporter Behavior

The next set of analyses examined the hypothesis that high self-esteem would be associated with the tendency to: (a) as a confider, behave assertively and rely in an interdependent-affiliative manner on the partner for support, and (b) as a supporter, foster autonomy and provide guidance in an affiliative manner. The first relationship was examined using the relative frequencies of each of the SASB cluster scores for the assertive confider behaviors (i.e., Asserting and separating, Disclosing and expressing), and the trusting confider behaviors (i.e., Trusting and relying), as well as the sum total of these three behaviors. The relationship between self-esteem and supporter behaviors was evaluated using the relative frequencies for each of the

SASB cluster scores for Social support (i.e., Freeing and forgetting, Affirming and understanding, Nurturing and protecting), as well as the sum total Social support score.

Pearson product moment correlations revealed significant findings only for the relationship between the wives' level of self-esteem and their own behaviors as confiders. Only one significant correlation emerged, and this was in the opposite direction than predicted. The wives' Disclosing and expressing was negatively associated with their level of self-esteem, $r(35)=-.39$, $p<.05$.

Self-esteem, Socioeconomic variables, and Power Imbalance

Stepwise multiple regression was used to test the hypothesis that the variance in Power imbalance could be accounted for by self-esteem alone, with little additional variance accounted for by education level differences between the husbands and the wives. Education level was computed for the husbands and the wives separately in terms of the highest level completed in years (e.g., high school graduate= 12 years, college graduate= 16 years). Three groups of couples were formed based on the differences between the husbands' and wives' education levels (i.e., husbands' education level greater than, equal to, or less than wives' education level). Education level was used for the analyses, rather than occupation because in this sample many mothers remained in the home. The predictors for the

regressions were education level, and the husbands' and the wives' self-esteem scores. These variables were entered into separate stepwise multiple regression analyses to predict each of the four Power imbalance patterns and a sum total composite pattern of Power imbalance. None of the variables entered into the equations. Therefore, neither self-esteem nor education level of the husbands and the wives significantly accounted for the variance in Power imbalance scores.

Relationship Among Self-report Measures

The relationship between the husbands' and the wives' reports of marital satisfaction, self-esteem, and psychological distress and depression were computed in order to validate expected relationships as documented in the literature. The statistically significant relationships that emerged were generally consistent with past research. As shown in Table 10, the husbands' reports of psychological distress were negatively correlated with both their own and their wives' scores on Dyadic Satisfaction. The wives' reports of psychological distress were negatively correlated with their own reports of Dyadic Consensus. Further, the husbands' level of self-esteem was positively related to their own reports on Dyadic Consensus. The wives' level of self-esteem was positively associated with their own reports on Dyadic Affection. Additionally, many significant

correlations emerged between the husbands' and the wives' reports on the marital satisfaction subscales and the total summary scale (see Table 11).

Table 10

Correlations of Husbands' and Wives' Scores on the DAS with Self-esteem (SE), Psychological Distress (PD), and Depression (Dep)

DAS Scale	Husbands' reports			Wives' reports		
	SE	PD	Dep	SE	PD	Dep
Husbands' scores						
Satisfaction	ns	-.63**	ns	ns	ns	ns
Consensus	.40*	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Cohesion	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Affection	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Adjustment	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Wives' scores						
Satisfaction	ns	-.40*	ns	ns	ns	ns
Consensus	ns	ns	ns	ns	-.40*	ns
Cohesion	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Affection	ns	ns	ns	.33*	ns	ns
Adjustment	ns	-.45*	ns	ns	ns	ns

*p<.05 **p<.01

Table 11

Correlations of Husbands' and Wives' Scores on the Dyadic Adjustment Scale

	Satisfaction	Consensus	Cohesion	Affection	Adjustment
Satisfaction	.60**	.60**	.44**	.59**	.84**
Consensus	.69**	.42**	.45*	.63**	.87**
Cohesion	.73**	.54**	.66**	.54**	.71**
Affection	.51**	.56**	.40*	.79**	.79**
Adjustment	.91**	.88**	.81**	.68**	.71**

Note: The wives' correlations are given in the upper triangle, the husbands' correlations are given in the lower triangle, and the wife-husband correlations are along the diagonal.

*p<.05 **p<.01

Table 12

Correlations of Husbands' and Wives' Scores on Self-esteem (SE), Psychological Distress (PD), and Depression (Dep)

	SE	PD	Dep
SE	.22	-.44*	-.39*
PD	-.26	.05	.88**
Dep	-.34*	.86**	.22

Note: The wives' correlations are given in the upper triangle, the husbands' correlations are given in the lower triangle, and the wife-husband correlations are along the diagonal.

*p<.05 **p<.01

Finally, as shown in Table 12, the husbands' reported level of self-esteem was negatively correlated with the Depression subscale but not overall distress, whereas the wives' reported level of self-esteem was negatively correlated with both overall psychological distress, and the Depression subscale.

Discussion

The present study applied the conceptual framework of the SASB model to understand interactions related to conjugal social support. By attending to both the independence and affiliation dimensions, the study evaluated several realms of functioning in marital relationships not adequately addressed in previous research. The three processes explored were related to social support, assertiveness, and power dynamics.

The results showed partial support for the hypotheses relating social support and assertiveness to marital satisfaction and psychological distress. First, as expected, the context of spouse supporter behaviors that included fostering autonomy and also providing guidance in an affiliative manner (i.e., Freeing and forgetting, Affirming and understanding, and Nurturing and protecting) was associated with the greatest amount of assertive behaviors (Asserting and separating, Disclosing and expressing) for both husbands and wives as confiders. This finding is in accord with the complementary framework of the SASB model. That is, husbands and wives tended to show similar amounts of affiliation and interdependence when one spouse was focusing on the other (supporter) and their partner was focusing on self (confider). According to the

SASB model, each partner is complementing the posture adopted by their spouse (Benjamin, et al., 1986).

The correlations relating Social support and marital satisfaction revealed significant relationships for the marital subscales and the total summary scale only when the husbands assumed supporter roles. There were no significant correlations between Social support and marital satisfaction when the wives were in the supporter roles. Contrary to the hypothesis, the significant correlations were found in the opposite direction than expected; that is, the husbands' ability to foster autonomy and provide guidance in an affiliative manner (i.e., Social support clusters Freeing and forgetting, Affirming and understanding, and Nurturing and protecting) was associated with relatively lower scores on marital satisfaction for both partners, and especially for the husbands themselves. The Social support construct represented a total summary score, and it was revealed that one behavior in particular, husband Affirming and understanding, seemed to account for the negative correlation with marital satisfaction. The results from the balance score analyses demonstrated that in cases where the husbands' behavior as supporters was "unbalanced" their marital satisfaction scores were lower than in those cases where a low rate of social support behaviors was provided. In cases where the husbands' behavior as supporters was "balanced" their marital satisfaction scores were also lower

than in those where a low rate of social support behaviors was provided. In contrast, when the wives' behavior as suppporters was "balanced" their marital satisfaction scores were higher than in those cases where "unbalanced" support was provided. Additionally, Affirming and understanding was negatively correlated with Ignoring and neglecting behaviors, and thus the counterintuitive positive correlation between Ignoring and neglecting and marital satisfaction can also be understood as the result of lower rates of Affirming and understanding for husbands who exhibited relatively high rates of Ignoring and neglecting.

Thus, the present findings radically diverged from theory proposing positive effects of behaviors falling within the Affirming and understanding category (e.g., active listening, empathic statements, clarification requests). This raises the question as to whether an abundance of these behaviors may indeed be considered "positive" social support in the context of marriage. In other situations, such as in self-help groups or psychotherapy, and along with a variety of other supporter behaviors, Affirming and understanding may be considered a way of remaining connected (Kandaras, 1985). However, in the context for this study, i.e., marital discussions, these behaviors may have functioned as a way of staying distanced or removed. That is, they represented a more cautious way of behaving at a highly sensitive time, rather than engaging

in more intimate behaviors, or directive forms of support, such as informational and instrumental support (Cohen & Wills, 1985).

The hypothesis that the confiders' assertive and relying behaviors (Asserting and separating, Disclosing and expressing, and Trusting and relying) would be positively associated with their own reports of marital satisfaction was also partially supported by the data. That is, contrary to hypotheses, the wives' reports of marital satisfaction were negatively associated with Disclosing and expressing, but consistent with hypotheses, marital satisfaction was positively associated with Asserting and separating. Both the balanced group and the low group were higher than the unbalanced group on marital satisfaction. The unbalanced group in this case was mainly comprised of elevated levels of Disclosing and expressing. These relationships may be explained by a tendency for spouses to express and discuss troubles rather than performing other types of behaviors and to also show greater likelihood of endorsing items on questionnaires indicating areas of dissatisfaction. That is, both measures may indicate a tendency to complain.

Alternatively, similar to the interpretation about supporter involvement, perhaps the confider's Disclosing and expressing in the absence of other important confider behaviors may represent an inability to engage their partner in more active dyadic problem-solving. As Kotler (1985)

found in a study of marriages at three different stages of the family life cycle, spouses who were able to seek and accept help in a way that affirmed the intentions and capacities of the other spouse expressed greater satisfaction with their marriages than spouses who were not able to do this. Thus, merely sharing information about the problem and thoughts and feelings about the situation, rather than probing for the spouse's opinion or using the spouse as a sounding board for possible courses of action, may maintain the interaction on a superficial level. In other words, Disclosing and expressing is the easiest behavior to display in this situation, and similar to elevated rates of Affirming and understanding for the supporter, may indicate a failure by the couple to become actively engaged in the task at hand. Supporter Affirming and understanding was not highly correlated with confider Disclosing and expressing for these couples. Instead, each occurred somewhat independently; that is, high rates of Disclosing and expressing emitted by the wives and high rates of Affirming and understanding emitted by the husbands were associated with dissatisfaction.

Feldman (1979) links intrapsychic and interpersonal domains regarding fear of intimacy and interspousal exchange which provides a partial explanation as to why spouses' expressions of feelings and empathy were not associated with concurrent reports of marital satisfaction in the present

study. Couples who mainly disclose their thoughts and feelings in a superficial manner regarding areas of personal distress or provide support in the form of active listening may engage in such "low risk behaviors" in order to distance themselves from distress. Such tactics may temporarily serve to allay anxiety associated with intimate, complex discussion topics. Feldman stated that the fears of exposure, merger, attack, and abandonment, as well as fears of one's own destructive behavior represent forces that activate and sustain conflictual behavior in marital relationships. The fear of exposure may be particularly relevant to confider behavior, in that highly disclosive behavior in times of personal distress is threatening. Because spouses may be afraid of being seen as weak or inadequate, and of experiencing a sense of inferiority and shame accompanying the exposure, they may restrict the intimacy level of their disclosures. These feelings and their consequent censorship may stem from, as well as perpetuate, discontentment within the marriage. Indeed, Gilbert (1976) found a curvilinear relationship between intimacy of self-disclosure and marital satisfaction, noting that both total disclosure and non-disclosure were associated with reports from the least satisfied couples.

The fear of merger is a type of intimacy anxiety that is relevant to supporter behavior, in that disclosure may stimulate a relative weakening of the boundaries between the

spouses, which then may arouse anxiety in the supporter. Consequently, the supporter may engage in more superficial behavior such as Affirming and understanding in order to deflect the anxiety. The finding that the wives' maximally affiliative behaviors as confiders (i.e., Approaching and enjoying) was associated with lower levels of marital satisfaction may also be understood in this context as an unsatisfactory method of "lightening the air" of more solemn disclosures.

In contrast, more overtly controlling, involved, and interdependent interactional behaviors may have functioned as an acceptable method of maintaining emotional intimacy. For example, the husbands' Watching and managing supporter behaviors were positively associated with both spouses' reports of dyadic affection. In the SASB system, Watching and managing falls at the extreme end of the scale dimension for supporter interdependent (i.e., controlling) behavior and midway with respect to affiliation versus disaffiliation. When spouses engage in these behaviors, they explicitly attempt to influence and take control in the exchange by telling their spouses what to do. The "commands" are issued in a neutral tone of voice, not a blaming, mocking, or amiable manner. As such, these behaviors by the husbands in the supporter role may have been perceived by the wives as clear, rational concern, and also may have been less subject to negative interpretations

due to the lack of negative affective undertones. The amount of involvement of the husband in decision-making, family life, and child-rearing has been found to be an important predictor of marital satisfaction among other families with children with a chronic illness (e.g., Allan, Townley, & Phelan, 1974). Because many of the social support discussions centered on topics related to the unique stressors of raising a child with mental retardation, a highly sensitive topic, perhaps the husbands' directive and "logical" support was seen as involved, helpful, caring, and encouraging by these women.

Although spouses differed somewhat in the pattern of associations between marital satisfaction and balanced versus unbalanced social support, both spouses reported higher marital satisfaction when the supporters demonstrated an overall low percentage of all of the categories comprising Social support than when the support was "unbalanced." Thus, it may be that other SASB categories not included in the Social support cluster are important in maintaining satisfaction within the marriage. For example, positive outcomes for supporter behaviors tended to relate to interdependent activities such as Watching and managing, as described above, and also indirectly to Nurturing and protecting, via the balance scores. Further, relationships that can endure a certain amount of complaining and resisting (e.g., supporter Ignoring and neglecting, confider

Asserting and separating) may strengthen the marital relationship in general. Especially in families coping with the stresses associated with raising a child with mental retardation, flexibility in problem-solving and support is essential, and, greater tolerance for distress may be required. Sabbeth and Leventhal's (1984) review of marital relationships among parents of children who have a chronic illness found that these couples experience greater marital distress than control families, but that they also exhibit relatively lower divorce rates. Thus, marital satisfaction and adjustment may be related to tolerance for conflict and strife.

Berlin & Johnson (1989) maintained that the SASB clusters representing the "mix of autonomy and warm bondedness" (i.e., Affirming and understanding, Disclosing and expressing) were essential for favorable and harmonious interaction, but for the couples in this study, the reliance on these behaviors to the exclusion of others was detrimental. In terms of predicting such outcomes as marital satisfaction, autonomy paired with a neutral level of affiliation versus disaffiliation (Asserting and separating) was a better correlate of marital satisfaction for the wives in this study than the type of autonomy Berlin & Johnson (1989) conceptualized as "mature relatedness" (Disclosing and expressing). Thus, although Disclosing and expressing is considered autonomous in the SASB system in

general, the importance of autonomy for marital satisfaction was only supported by Asserting and separating in this study, perhaps due to the demands of the situation which made Disclosing and expressing function as a form of avoidance rather than assertion.

Berlin & Johnson (1989) discuss how relying on these two behaviors (i.e., Affirming and understanding, Disclosing and expressing) may represent one manner of coping with difficulty, yet it is not necessarily a panacea. They likened behaviors within these clusters to Gilligan's (1982) third level of moral development, which represents a shift in concern from "goodness" to "truth" in order to include one's own needs in the scope of care and concern in relationships. Nevertheless, Berlin & Johnson (1989) noted that such resolutions do not necessarily leave one with a clear sense of being right or feeling comfortable. Thus partners who rely on these behaviors may report greater dissatisfaction for their relationship because of these ambiguous feelings.

Another finding that ran counter to hypotheses concerned Asserting and separating and Watching and managing. In addition to being positively correlated with marital satisfaction, the wives' Asserting and separating was associated with the husbands' Watching and managing as supporters. Although it was predicted that supporter Watching and managing followed by confider Asserting and

separating would represent a struggle for power, and consequently would be associated with lower levels of marital satisfaction for both spouses, just the opposite was found. "Power struggle" was positively associated with marital satisfaction for both the husbands and the wives. Thus, perhaps this sequence may be better described as an acceptable form of assertiveness or active resistance rather than a struggle for power. Henley (1977) observed that controlling behaviors of the ignoring type nullify assertiveness, because when one person feels that they are not receiving an equitable rate of exchange they will also show a tendency to withdraw; consequently, a cycle of interpersonal avoidance is initiated. In contrast, interactions including the Watching and managing type of control may represent adaptability and a toleration for disagreement within the marriage. Further, theory suggests that the relative absence of criticism and disagreement is not necessarily a marker of accord, but rather may represent a decision to maintain a calmness in the interaction as a way of avoiding potential disequilibrium and discord (Minuchin, 1974). This is a pattern that is also associated with a decline in relationship satisfaction over time (Baucom, Notarius, Burnett, & Haefner, 1990). For example, Gottman & Krokoff's (1989) longitudinal predictions of satisfaction versus distress showed that confrontation and

disagreement are actually beneficial for marriage in the long run.

One other finding in the domain of power dynamics ran counter to hypotheses. That is, although it was predicted that displays of power imbalance (controlling behavior by the supporter followed by submissive behavior by the confider), would be associated with relatively lower levels of marital satisfaction for both spouses, the opposite was found when the husbands were in the supporter role. Relatively higher rates of husband Watching and managing followed by wife Deferring and submitting were associated with higher marital satisfaction scores for the wives. It should be noted that it was the lag sequential z-score rather than the base rate for wife Deferring and submitting that was significantly associated with marital satisfaction. In other words, it was not high rates of the wives' yielding behavior per se, but rather the conditional probability of this behavior, given the husbands' directing behavior, that was positively associated with the wives' reports of marital satisfaction. Similar to other unexpected findings, this may reflect an increased involvement on the part of both spouses during the task. This pattern may indicate trust between the husband and wife as she reflects upon his advice. It may also be her way of thanking him for his attempts to help her with this personal issue. Work by Guthrie and Snyder (1988) on spouses' self-evaluations

during emotional communications suggests that spouses differ in their appraisals of emotional expressiveness. Relevant to the present discussion, they find that wife's appraisals of situations of diminished power (e.g., saying you're sorry) were associated with self-evaluative descriptions of acceptance by the partner. Thus, perhaps SASB sequences of interdependent behavior also evoke feelings of acceptance and trust for the wives, which is related to marital satisfaction.

The hypothesis regarding the effect of Social support on psychological distress and depression for the confiders was not upheld. However, the husbands' level of depression was positively associated with rates of Affirming and understanding as supporters. This finding also provides a partial explanation for the results regarding the detrimental effect of husbands' Affirming and understanding behaviors for marital satisfaction. That is, the husbands who most frequently demonstrated this behavior were also those who were relatively more depressed. Extant literature has documented the detrimental effects of depression on the quality of a marriage (e.g., Mirowsky & Ross, 1989). Affirming and understanding is also the same behavior that was associated with marital dissatisfaction, and thus may provide an explanation for the link between depression and marital distress. That is, husbands who are relatively more depressed may engage in more subtly avoidant behaviors such

as Affirming and understanding because of fears and anxiety related to intimacy. By refraining from more active participation in the conversation or more actual assistance with their wives' difficulties, the husbands' sense of helplessness is maintained, and a cycle of interpersonal avoidance is initiated. Thus the link between depression and marital distress may be explained by a style of interaction that is interpersonally superficial and evasive.

For the wives, their behaviors as confiders were the most important predictors of their scores for psychological distress. Higher rates of wife Disclosing and expressing were associated with their reporting relatively higher scores on psychological distress and depression. Further, balance scores computed for wife confider behaviors revealed that the unbalanced group was higher than both the low and the balanced groups on global psychological distress. An evaluation of the composition of behaviors in the unbalanced group revealed an abundance of Disclosing and expressing. This is consistent with the above interpretation that spouses who primarily engage in Disclosing and expressing behaviors may be more willing to discuss their troubles, and as such, also more likely to endorse items on a self-report measure of distress. Similar to the relationships between husband Affirming and understanding and marital satisfaction, confider Disclosing and expressing in the absence of other important confider behaviors may represent

a dwelling on the difficulties and a superficial engagement in more active dyadic problem-solving.

Interestingly, the results for self-esteem were consistent with links between confider behaviors, marital satisfaction, and psychological distress for the wives. Hypotheses regarding the effect of self-esteem level on confider and supporter behaviors were supported by only one finding. The wives' behaviors as confiders, specifically, their relatively higher rates of Disclosing and expressing, was associated with lower levels of self-esteem. Rosenberg (1965) noted that people with low self-esteem tend to be less assertive, and this may play a part in the creation and maintenance of strife in their relationships. Disclosing and expressing is also the same behavior that was associated with marital dissatisfaction and psychological distress, and thus may provide an explanation for the link between low self-esteem and on-going tension.

In spite of other gender-related findings, counter to the hypothesis, there were no significant gender differences in style of providing Social support among the subsample of maritally satisfied couples. For the entire sample, there was only one trend consistent with the hypothesis; that is, the wives showed a tendency to provide higher rates than the husbands for the maximally autonomy-enhancing form of support, Freeing and forgetting. Gender differences in confider behaviors were not found either. In particular,

the fact that the wives did not show expected lower rates of assertiveness deserves note. The abundance of assertive behavior by the wives may be accounted for in part by the consequences or pay-offs of such behaviors (Eisler, et al., 1978; McNamara, et al., 1988). As noted, in this study, wife assertiveness was associated with relatively higher levels of marital satisfaction, which may explain the absence of significant gender differences. That is, contrary to literature suggesting that assertiveness has negative social consequences for women (e.g., Kelly, Kern, Kirkley, Patterson, & Keane, 1980; Roy, 1977), the type of assertiveness examined here seems to have had positive consequences for the wives, thus they behaved as assertively as the men. Perhaps the negative consequences of assertiveness are not applicable to intimate marital relationships.

Interestingly, popular notions that women are largely other-focused might suggest that their behaviors in the supporter as opposed to the confider role might have the strongest implications for marital relationships and personal adjustment. However, the present results suggested that their behavior as confiders rather than supporters was more often indicative of marital satisfaction, psychological distress, and self-esteem. On the other hand, the husbands' behavior as supporters was more often associated with their outcome measures than their behaviors as confiders.

Perhaps the fact that certain types of emotional expression may be perceived by males and females to be more vulnerable than others may explain the independent patterns of significant correlations with the outcomes. For example, in mixed-sex dyads, more often men tend to reveal strengths and women tend to disclose weaknesses, even though there may be little difference in the total amount of self-disclosure between males and females (Hacker, 1981). Thus, wives may be relatively more at ease with disclosing personal problems to their partners, whereas husbands may experience relatively greater comfort in the position of supporting their spouses.

Another explanation for these gender differences is suggested by recent analyses of causal attributions, i.e., the ways in which individuals explain why certain events occur. Research has indicated that sex-role identity is correlated with the attributions spouses make for their partners' behaviors, which in turn might also be related to outcomes such as marital satisfaction. Specifically, feminine persons are more likely to view themselves as the cause of their partner's negative behavior, whereas masculine individuals are more likely to see their partner as the cause of the partner's negative behavior (Baucom & Voirin, 1989, cited in Baucom, et al., 1990). Thus, a feminine attributional style (internal cause of spouse distress) may be associated with increased attention to the

focus on self (i.e., confider role) behaviors for evaluating the domains of marital dissatisfaction and psychological distress, whereas a masculine attributional style (external cause of spouse distress) may be associated with increased attention to the focus on other (supporter role) behaviors for such evaluations. Although the authors emphasized that it is not females or males per se that have a particular attributional style, but rather feminine and masculine persons, if we assume that sex-role orientation was associated with gender for these couples, the explanation is relevant. Future studies would benefit by incorporating locus of control orientation with confider and supporter behaviors, as well as sex-role identity to predict outcome measures such as marital satisfaction, psychological distress, etc. (Jorgensen & Johnson, 1990).

Finally, the hypothesis that self-esteem level would account for patterns of control and submission in the interaction, with little additional variance accounted for by education level differences between the husbands and the wives was not supported. No significant differences were found, perhaps because control/submission displays were relatively infrequent. Alternatively, other aspects of the interpersonal context not assessed in the present study, for example, expectations about the spouses' disclosures and assertive and supportive behaviors may have been more powerful in predicting patterns of control and submission

than the personality variable of self-esteem. In other words, cognitive and affective reactions to spouses' behaviors may function as significant mediators of reciprocal patterns of behavior (Weiss, 1984).

The present study provided information regarding how couples support one another with respect to individual needs. It elucidated both the effects on several outcome measures as well as underlying theoretical issues such as the orthogonal nature of the constructs autonomy and affiliation. The working model was able to reconcile the coexistence of these two constructs in one domain of close relationships, conjugal social support. The findings demonstrate the potential value of simultaneously examining the two dimensions in understanding how behavioral exchanges mediate outcomes such as marital satisfaction, psychological distress, and self-esteem. The findings differed from theory suggesting positive effects of several SASB affiliative behaviors (Disclosing and expressing, Affirming and understanding). However, behaviors comprising the SASB independent-interdependent dimension (Asserting and separating, Watching and managing) demonstrated certain positive outcomes. It was proposed that the latter behaviors may have functioned as more acceptable forms of emotional intimacy. As spouses interact and evaluate their relationship, they are incorporating the two processes of

autonomy and affiliation, thus research which examines dyadic interaction must do so as well.

Although there has been much research comparing clinically distressed versus nondistressed couples, there has been little research documenting marital interaction and adjustment for couples that are not necessarily identified as maritally distressed, but are confronting other serious stressors. Markman (1984) stated that there was a need for studies with families struggling with certain external changes, such as families with handicapped children. The link between social support interaction, marital satisfaction, and psychological well-being may be different for couples raising a handicapped child than for other couples. Consequences for the child when the parents stay together despite increased marital distress has not been examined in this population. It is important that we better comprehend the variables that significantly contribute to marital adjustment in order that our intervention and prevention efforts for the family can become more effective.

Several limitations of the present study suggest avenues for future research. First, our method of coding interactions assumed that spouses would neatly fit into confider versus supporter roles, and this assumption was sometimes inaccurate. Thus, our adaptation of the SASB coding system was not sensitive to all of the factors that contributed to the behavioral exchanges. For example,

sometimes a discussion of an area of "personal" distress became a mutual problem for the couple, and the distinctions between focus on other versus focus on self were rather artificial. Future studies should examine the effects of maintaining versus violating "assigned" foci of attention on the outcome measures.

Second, couples were also not always mindful of the instructions which asked them to keep the discussion centered on issues not pertaining to their marriage. Possibly, this was a form of collusion in order to avoid intimate discussion of personal issues. This possibility should be addressed in future studies. That is, spouses who relate personal issues to their marital relationship without being able to maintain a separation here may represent a unique population.

Third, although this study assumes the position that the behavioral exchanges caused the outcomes, the reverse may be true, or a third factor may have caused both. Thus, another weakness is the fact that the correlations could not reveal the direction of effects.

A more explicit test of the spouses' cognitions during the exchanges, that is, their expectancies about the impact of their disclosures, assertiveness, and supportive behaviors, would provide a broader understanding of the behavioral and emotional similarities and differences among husbands and wives. For example, spouses who expect that

their assertions will be met with disapproval rather than support may perceive such interactions as detrimental to the relationship. Spouses who feel that their partners may evaluate their more interdependent behavior as too intrusive may also evaluate such interactions as obstacles to marital satisfaction. In other words, spouses' interpersonal models might not match SASB hypotheses. Guthrie & Snyder's (1988) work on the dimensional structure of husbands' and wives' self-appraisals during situations involving emotional communication is particularly relevant here. They found that the expression of personal vulnerabilities involved different self-evaluations for husbands and wives. Thus, hypotheses generated for the couple as a unit are inappropriate.

Future studies might also benefit from examining how behaviors and cognitions during the conjugal social support situation differ from, and impact problem-solving interactions, and how the two types of interactions relate to the outcome measures. Preliminary work evaluating these two domains suggests that they each offer unique information about the marital relationship with respect to both strengths and weaknesses. If distinct and significant relationships are found on a larger scale, it would point to the need for multiple assessment procedures to represent more than one model of marital distress and adjustment. Finally, implications for longitudinal outcomes should be

investigated. The hypotheses regarding the effect of supporter and confider behavioral interactions which were not found here may be positively associated with long-term, rather than concurrent marital satisfaction.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Appendix A

Structural Analysis of Social Behavior

To code, you need to take into account several items:

I. The role of the speaker: This is a social support task where each spouse has been given a duty; in the first eight minutes either the wife or the husband is to confide in their spouse about a personal problem (the instructions were to avoid topics pertaining to their marital relationship). For those eight minutes, the other spouse is to listen as their spouse confides in them, and to support them as they usually would in times such as these. Thus the "confider" is always focusing on self, and the "supporter" is always focusing on other during the first eight minutes. In the second eight minutes, the roles are switched so that the spouse who was confiding now becomes the supporter and the supporter is now to confide about their personal problem.

Note: It may seem as if husband and wife reverse roles, e.g., one spouse talks about their problem, although it is not their turn to "confide." You must still keep the assigned roles in mind as you code. Make a note on the top of the scoring sheet if such a change in focus has occurred.

II. Floor switches: The floor switch (i.e. all behaviors between changes of listener and speaker) is the basic unit of coding, so that there is AT LEAST one code for each spouse's speaking turn. When the speaker emits more than one type of codable behavior before a switch occurs, a code is given for each independent and different behavior (number these). A particular code is assigned ONE time within a floor switch. Multiple codes are used if the speaker conveys 2 or more distinct behaviors within 1 floor switch.

III. Coding decisions: There are two major steps to follow in order to code a statement. Each statement is rated on two four-point scales, first indicating the degree of independence versus interdependence, followed by the degree of affiliation versus disaffiliation. Thus, each code will consist of two numbers, and will be written in the form of a coordinate pair (X, Y).

A. The first step is coding the degree of independence vs. interdependence on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 representing maximally independent and 4 representing maximally interdependent. The meaning of these ratings varies depending on the role of the speaker. See explanations below:

(a) Focus on self:

1. Maximally independent: autonomous focus on self; assertive behavior; stating what one needs to do in order to remedy a problem which may or may not include their spouse, planned suggestion or decision.

2. Somewhat independent: factual or emotional disclosure; presenting thoughts and feelings about the problem or tentative ideas about how to solve it; somewhat assertive.

3. Somewhat interdependent: asking for or accepting advice/feedback.

4. Maximally interdependent: deferring, submitting, dependent behavior, asking to be controlled.

(b) Focus on other:

1. Maximally independent: encourage spouse's freedom, foster independence, neutral/open opinion and feeling probes/questions, asking "freeing" questions that recognize the other's expertise on either the subject matter or themselves.

2. Somewhat independent: statements that affirm spouse's ability, active listening, empathic statements, validations, clarification requests, non-biased statements; statements that do not control the spouse but may control the flow of conversation (i.e. by ignoring or neglecting the spouse's immediate needs to confide).

3. Somewhat interdependent: providing advice or suggestions, taking care of spouse, diagnosing, statements or questions that bring in listener's bias (e.g. by reformulating the problem or serving to help the "supporter" understand the problem), putdowns, jokes.

4. Maximally interdependent: manage and control spouse completely; moralize.

Keep in mind the number that you have chosen as the first coordinate-- e.g. (1, _); (2, _); (3, _); (4, _) as you decide on a code for the second coordinate.

B. The second step is coding the degree of affiliation vs. disaffiliation, on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 representing a maximally affiliative statement and 4 representing a maximally disaffiliative statement.

Affiliative statements are ones in which a spouse is friendly or loving towards the other, and disaffiliative statements are characterized by a moving away from the spouse, anger, hostility, or hatred.

(a) Focus on self:

1. Maximally affiliative: loving, enjoying spouse's company, touching, hugging.

2. Somewhat affiliative: pleasant, warm, friendly, relaxed, hopeful, talking about a positive feeling or state.

3. Somewhat disaffiliative: moving away from spouse, verbally or nonverbally, by not including them in their thoughts or disclosures, failing to draw on spouse as a source of support.

4. Maximally disaffiliative: hostile, hateful or angry interaction with spouse.

(b) Focus on other:

1. Maximally affiliative: loving, initiation of warm affectionate bonding; touching, hugging.

2. Somewhat affiliative: expression of respect, kindness, friendly, appreciating interaction.

3. Somewhat disaffiliative: moving away from spouse's interests; criticizing, uncaring, berating, scolding.

4. Maximally disaffiliative: anger, hostility, vengeful, disgust, physical/psychological attack.

C. Using the two scales to make coding decisions:

Due to the circumplex structure of the coding model, initial scores on both scales must be considered together in order to capture both process and content of the statement and determine a final code. For example, statements that are either maximally affiliative or maximally disaffiliative (i.e. received code of 1 or 4), AND maximally independent or maximally interdependent (received 1 or 4 on the independent/interdependent scale), require a multiple coding.

Example: Spouse states, "I'm going to quit my job and I don't care what you say about it." This sentence gets

a 1 for independence, but because it is also quite hostile, it gets a 4 on the affiliation/disaffiliation scale. Thus the multiple coding would be (1, 0); (0, 4), and you would check both of these boxes.

However, for statements that are not at the extremes on both dimensions, it is helpful to refer to the category names and descriptions for each foci to determine which code most closely represents the behavior. These categories must be considered as a final check to determine whether the code chosen makes sense conceptually. Find the code that you've decided upon on the following pages to check whether the behavior corresponds to the description given. If the two do not correspond, proceed through the coding steps again. Here's a picture so that you get a sense of the categories and codes:

<u>Focus on self</u>:

Asserting & separating
(1, 0)

Walling off & avoiding
(2, 3)

Disclosing & expressing
(2, 2)

Protesting & withdrawing
(0, 4)

Approaching & enjoying
(0, 1)

Sulking & appeasing
(3, 3)

Trusting & relying
(3, 2)

Deferring & submitting
(4, 0)

<u>Focus on other</u>:

Freeing & forgetting
(1, 0)

Ignoring & neglecting
(2, 3)

Affirming & understanding
(2, 2)

Attacking & rejecting
(0, 4)

Loving & approaching
(0, 1)

Belittling & blaming
(3, 3)

Nurturing & protecting
(3, 2)

Watching & managing
(4, 0)

IV. Category descriptions:

A. Focus on self:

(0, 1) Approaching and enjoying: joyfully connecting; relaxing and feeling good about being with spouse, accepting spouse's help and caregiving, compliments.

Examples:
- "I love you too." - Lovingly joking around with spouse
- "Thanks for listening; you always make me feel better."

(0, 4) Protesting and withdrawing: refusing to accept spouse's offers of support; with rage or fear tries to escape from spouse; tense, shaky, wary with spouse; hatefully chooses to let spouse's needs and wants count more than their own.

Examples:
- "You can't help me with this." (if voice and body posture connote a sense of annoyance and disapproval)
- "I don't care what you have to say about my decision."

(1, 0) Asserting and separating: acting independently and in accord with the person's own internal standards and beliefs, concrete attempts to remedy problem that may or may not include spouse (including working out details of plan); speak up clearly and firmly and state own separate position; can include defying or disagreeing with rationale; telling spouse what to do.

Examples:
- "What I need to do about my work is ask for a raise."
- "I am going to make my own decisions."

(2, 2) Disclosing and expressing: freely talk with spouse about self in a warm and friendly way, speaking in a straightforward manner, factual or feeling disclosures.

Examples:
- "I want to talk about..." - "I'm really angry about that."
- "I feel a little better now that we've talked about this."
- "I am glad that you have been able to open up more lately."
- "It hurts when you say things like that."

Note: Non-evaluative, factual statements about events, 3rd parties (e.g., their child), etc. may/may not fit into this category, depending on the context. Decide whether the spouse is "disclosing and expressing" or just talking on and on (not truly exhibiting "independence") without including their spouse (which is an indicator of "disaffiliation").

(2, 3) Walling off and avoiding: too busy and alone with their "own thing" to be with or seek support from spouse, shutting out others, preoccupied and non-reactive, doesn't hear or react to spouse or reacts in a strange, disconnected way, detaches from spouse; engages in monologue about problem which may or may not be in a complaining, whining manner, changes topics many times without exploring any one of them or introduces irrelevant topics; refuses requests, discounts spouse's advice; denies responsibility; little or no non-verbal contact.

Examples:
- "Just leave me alone."
- talking without making eye contact

(3, 2) Trusting and relying: counting on spouse to come through when needed, going along with spouse's reasonable suggestions and ideas, learning from spouse, asking for or taking advice or guidance, requests for validation.

Examples:
- "Do you think what I'm doing is right?"
- "Yes, I do want you to help me with that."
- "I really appreciate your suggestions."
- "You're right; I can try being more patient with my boss."

(3, 3) Sulking and appeasing: whining, unhappily protesting, pout, defensive self-justification, going along with spouse's views although doubtful, bottling up rage and resentment to avoid spouse's disapproval, giving in to spouse but sulking about it (scurrying to appease spouse), disagreement without rationale.

Examples:
- "But, we always have to do things your way."
- mumbling under breath

(4, 0) Deferring and submitting: checking with spouse about everything because they care so much about what spouse thinks, doing or thinking or feeling what they believe spouse wants, giving in, yielding to spouse, mindlessly obeying spouse's rules about how things should be done; falling into a role; following spouse's off-beam statements.

Examples:
- following new line of conversation if spouse introduces irrelevant topic (i.e. not "utilizing" their time to confide)
- "So I'm supposed to... "
- "I'll do whatever you tell me to."

B. Focus on other:

(0, 1) Loving and approaching: soothing or calming without asking for anything in return, initiating a warm and affectionate approach toward spouse, inviting spouse to be in close, gentle contact, compliments, positive non-verbal behavior.

Examples:
- "I love you."
- "I really missed you, honey."

(0, 4) Attacking and rejecting: threatening or endangering spouse either physically or mentally, refusing to have anything to do with spouse, meanness, trying to hurt spouse or take all they can from spouse.

Examples:
- "I really don't care how things turn out."
- "I hate you."

(1, 0) Freeing and forgetting: encourage separate identity; uncaringly let go; acknowledging spouse's expertise on the problem and/or the self (non-biased opinion and feeling probes/questions), helping the spouse get self back on topic.

Examples:
- "Do whatever you think is best."
- "You can do it fine."
- "And what do you want to get out of this?"
- "What do you think you could do or change about that?"
- "How have you coped with this before?"

(2, 2) Affirming and understanding: non-judgmental validation, empathic understanding of other's experience, hearing the other even if they disagree; active listening in a fair and affirming manner, especially to a different opinion; clarification requests of information previously conveyed; supportive statements, assent, acceptance, positive regard despite acknowledged conflict; positive competence feedback if it functions to affirm, rather than reveal contingencies.

Examples:
- "You handled that really well."
- "I understand how you must feel."
- repetition of spouse's statement to express paying attention
- "I can see how that would make you feel badly."
- "Mmhmm." (if spouse also appears to be actively affirming and listening empathetically)

(2, 3) Ignoring and neglecting: not paying attention, non-responsiveness, impatient voice tone, neglecting interests and needs of spouse, ignoring facts, abandonment when spouse needs it the most, resisting requests, leading spouse off-beam, controlling conversation (not the spouse), self-focused comments, offering unbelievable nonsense, joking that substitutes for serious discussion of issue.

Examples:
- "It doesn't matter to me what she does."
- "We can discuss that later."
- "Can't you think of anything better to do?"
- introducing topics unrelated to the present conversation.
- "Mmhmm." (if spouse appears disinterested/self-absorbed)

(3, 2) Nurturing and protecting: friendly influence, teaching/guiding/problem-solving in a kind and friendly way how to understand to do things, problem-solving statements that initiate mutual consideration of solutions to conflicts; reassuring; paying close attention so as to figure out all of spouse's needs and take care of everything and/or soliciting disclosure or information in order to do this, leading questions; providing answers; positive competence feedback that connotes contingencies; statements that bring in the listener's bias.

Examples:
- "You did that really well, just as I told you to."
- "What do you think would happen if you tried X?"
- "What does so and so think about this?"
- "Things will turn out OK, don't worry about this."
- "What concerns me..." - "What usually works for me..."

(3, 3) Belittling and blaming: punish, mislead, disguise to gain control, try to get spouse to believe they're wrong, criticize, condemn or act condescending toward spouse, accusations, arrogance, put-downs, making fun of problem or feelings, sarcasm, hostile questions or jokes.

Examples:
- "No, you idiot, that's the wrong way to handle it."
- "You always say it's my fault."
- "Oh, come on, you're exaggerating."
- "How can you possibly feel like I don't care?"

(4, 0) Watching and managing: remind spouse about what they need to do, belief they know what's best, exert control in matter-of-fact way, block, restrict spouse.

Examples:
- "No, that's wrong; do it this way."
- "You better..." "What I would do is..." "You have to..."

APPENDIX B

Appendix B

Personal Problem Questionnaire

Instructions: Most people to through times when they experience disappointment or problems not specifically related to their marital relationship. The following are some general areas in which a person may be experiencing personal problems, stress or disappointment. For each item, rate how much of a problem you feel that area currently is in your personal life.

		No Problem	Minor Problem	Moderate Problem	Major Problem
1.	Work	1	2	3	4
2.	Relationship w/ own family	1	2	3	4
3.	Relationship w/ children	1	2	3	4
4.	Health	1	2	3	4
5.	Relationship w/ friends	1	2	3	4
6.	Personal leisure activities	1	2	3	4
7.	Other _____	1	2	3	4
8.	Other _____	1	2	3	4

Write the top problem or disappointment you are currently (or have been recently) experiencing, outside your marital relationship, in the space below: (Be as specific as possible).

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX C

Appendix C

Rosenberg (1965) Self-esteem Inventory

Individual Reactions Inventory

Please complete the following items by circling the number most clearly representing you personal reaction. Please be frank and honest.

1. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.

1.Strongly agree 2.Agree 3.Neither agree nor disagree 4.Disagree 5.Strongly disagree

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

1.Strongly agree 2.Agree 3.Neither agree nor disagree 4.Disagree 5.Strongly disagree

3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

1.Strongly agree 2.Agree 3.Neither agree nor disagree 4.Disagree 5.Strongly disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

1.Strongly agree 2.Agree 3.Neither agree nor disagree 4.Disagree 5.Strongly disagree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

1.Strongly agree 2.Agree 3.Neither agree nor disagree 4.Disagree 5.Strongly disagree

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

1.Strongly agree 2.Agree 3.Neither agree nor disagree 4.Disagree 5.Strongly disagree

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

1.Strongly agree 2.Agree 3.Neither agree nor disagree 4.Disagree 5.Strongly disagree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

1.Strongly agree 2.Agree 3.Neither agree nor disagree 4.Disagree 5.Strongly disagree

9. I certainly feel useless at times.

1.Strongly agree 2.Agree 3.Neither agree nor disagree 4.Disagree 5.Strongly disagree

10. At time I think I am no good at all.

1.Strongly agree 2.Agree 3.Neither agree nor disagree 4.Disagree 5.Strongly disagree

APPENDIX D

Appendix D

Case #: _____ Date: _____ Sex: M F

MARITAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Most persons have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the list.

	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occasionally Disagree	Frequently Disagree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
____1. Handling family finances	____	____	____	____	____	____
____2. Matters of recreation	____	____	____	____	____	____
____3. Religious matters	____	____	____	____	____	____
____4. Demonstration of affection	____	____	____	____	____	____
____5. Friends	____	____	____	____	____	____
____6. Sex relations	____	____	____	____	____	____
____7. Conventionality (correct or proper behavior)	____	____	____	____	____	____
____8. Philosophy of life	____	____	____	____	____	____
____9. Ways of dealing with parents or in-laws	____	____	____	____	____	____
10. Aims, goals, and things believed important	____	____	____	____	____	____
____11. Amount of time spent together	____	____	____	____	____	____
____12. Making major decisions	____	____	____	____	____	____
____13. Household tasks	____	____	____	____	____	____
____14. Leisure time interests and activities	____	____	____	____	____	____
____15. Career decisions	____	____	____	____	____	____

	All the time	Most of the time	More often than not	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
____16. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship?	____	____	____	____	____	____
____17. How often do you or your mate leave the house after a fight?	____	____	____	____	____	____
____18. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?	____	____	____	____	____	____
____19. Do you confide in your mate?	____	____	____	____	____	____
____20. Do you ever regret that you got married? (or lived together?	____	____	____	____	____	____
____21. How often do you and your partner quarrel?	____	____	____	____	____	____
____22. How often do you and your mate "get on each other's nerves?"	____	____	____	____	____	____

		Every Day	Almost Every Day	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
___ 23.	Do you kiss your mate?	____	____	____	____	____

		All of them	Most of them	Some of them	Very few of them	None of them
____24.	Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?	____	____	____	____	____

HOW OFTEN WOULD YOU SAY THE FOLLOWING EVENTS OCCUR BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR MATE?

		Never	Less than once a month	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Once a day	More often
____25.	Have a stimulating exchange of ideas	____	____	____	____	____	____
____26.	Laugh together	____	____	____	____	____	____
____27.	Calmly discuss something	____	____	____	____	____	____
____28.	Work together on a project	____	____	____	____	____	____

THESE ARE SOME THINGS ABOUT WHICH COUPLES SOMETIMES AGREE, SOMETIMES DISAGREE. INDICATE IF EITHER ITEM BELOW CAUSED DIFFERENCES OF OPINIONS OR WERE PROBLEMS IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP DURING THE PAST FEW WEEKS. (CHECK YES OR NO)

	Yes	No	
____29.	____	____	Being too tired for sex.
____30.	____	____	Not showing love.

____31. Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the future of your relationship? (CHECK ONLY ONE)

- _____ I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and would go to almost any length to see that it does.
- _____ I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do all I can to see that it does.
- _____ I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do my fair share to see that it does.
- _____ It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but I can't do much more than I am doing now to help it succeed.
- _____ It would be nice if it succeeded, but I refuse to do any more than I am doing now to keep the relationship going.
- _____ My relationship can never succeed, and there is no more that I can do to keep the relationship going.

____32. The dots on the following line represent different degrees of happiness in your relationship. The middle point, "happy", represents the degree of happiness of most relationships. PLEASE CIRCLE THE DOT WHICH BEST DESCRIBES THE DEGREE OF HAPPINESS, ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Extremely Unhappy	Fairly Unhappy	A Little Unhappy	Happy	Very Happy	Extremely Happy	Perfect

APPENDIX E

Appendix E

SCL—90—R

SIDE 1

INSTRUCTIONS:

Below is a list of problems people sometimes have. Please read each one carefully, and circle the number to the right that best describes HOW MUCH THAT PROBLEM HAS DISTRESSED OR BOTHERED YOU DURING THE PAST 7 DAYS INCLUDING TODAY. Circle only one number for each problem and do not skip any items. If you change your mind, erase your first mark carefully. Read the example below before beginning, and if you have any questions please ask about them.

SEX

MALE ○

FEMALE ○

NAME _____

LOCATION _____

EDUCATION _____

MARITAL STATUS MAR ___ SEP ___ DIV ___ WID ___ SING ___

DATE MO DAY YEAR	ID. NUMBER	AGE

VISIT NUMBER _____

EXAMPLE

HOW MUCH WERE YOU DISTRESSED BY	NOT AT ALL	A LITTLE BIT	MODERATELY	QUITE A BIT	EXTREMELY
1. Bodyaches	0	1	2	(3)	4

HOW MUCH WERE YOU DISTRESSED BY:		NOT AT ALL	A LITTLE BIT	MODERATELY	QUITE A BIT	EXTREMELY
1.	Headaches	1	0	1	2	3	4
2.	Nervousness or shakiness inside	2	0	1	2	3	4
3.	Repeated unpleasant thoughts that won't leave your mind	3	0	1	2	3	4
4.	Faintness or dizziness	4	0	1	2	3	4
5.	Loss of sexual interest or pleasure	5	0	1	2	3	4
6.	Feeling critical of others	6	0	1	2	3	4
7.	The idea that someone else can control your thoughts	7	0	1	2	3	4
8.	Feeling others are to blame for most of your troubles	8	0	1	2	3	4
9.	Trouble remembering things	9	0	1	2	3	4
10.	Worried about sloppiness or carelessness	10	0	1	2	3	4
11.	Feeling easily annoyed or irritated	11	0	1	2	3	4
12.	Pains in heart or chest	12	0	1	2	3	4
13.	Feeling afraid in open spaces or on the streets	13	0	1	2	3	4
14.	Feeling low in energy or slowed down	14	0	1	2	3	4
15.	Thoughts of ending your life	15	0	1	2	3	4
16.	Hearing voices that other people do not hear	16	0	1	2	3	4
17.	Trembling	17	0	1	2	3	4
18.	Feeling that most people cannot be trusted	18	0	1	2	3	4
19.	Poor appetite	19	0	1	2	3	4
20.	Crying easily	20	0	1	2	3	4
21.	Feeling shy or uneasy with the opposite sex	21	0	1	2	3	4
22.	Feelings of being trapped or caught	22	0	1	2	3	4
23.	Suddenly scared for no reason	23	0	1	2	3	4
24.	Temper outbursts that you could not control	24	0	1	2	3	4
25.	Feeling afraid to go out of your house alone	25	0	1	2	3	4
26.	Blaming yourself for things	26	0	1	2	3	4
27.	Pains in lower back	27	0	1	2	3	4
28.	Feeling blocked in getting things done	28	0	1	2	3	4
29.	Feeling lonely	29	0	1	2	3	4
30.	Feeling blue	30	0	1	2	3	4
31.	Worrying too much about things	31	0	1	2	3	4
32.	Feeling no interest in things	32	0	1	2	3	4
33.	Feeling fearful	33	0	1	2	3	4
34.	Your feelings being easily hurt	34	0	1	2	3	4
35.	Other people being aware of your private thoughts	35	0	1	2	3	4

Please continue on the following page ▶

SCL—90—R

SIDE 2

	HOW MUCH WERE YOU DISTRESSED BY		NOT AT ALL	A LITTLE BIT	MODERATELY	QUITE A BIT	EXTREMELY
36	Feeling others do not understand you or are unsympathetic	36	0	1	2	3	4
37	Feeling that people are unfriendly or dislike you	37	0	1	2	3	4
38	Having to do things very slowly to insure correctness	38	0	1	2	3	4
39	Heart pounding or racing	39	0	1	2	3	4
40	Nausea or upset stomach	40	0	1	2	3	4
41	Feeling inferior to others	41	0	1	2	3	4
42	Soreness of your muscles	42	0	1	2	3	4
43	Feeling that you are watched or talked about by others	43	0	1	2	3	4
44	Trouble falling asleep	44	0	1	2	3	4
45	Having to check and double-check what you do	45	0	1	2	3	4
46	Difficulty making decisions	46	0	1	2	3	4
47	Feeling afraid to travel on buses, subways, or trains	47	0	1	2	3	4
48	Trouble getting your breath	48	0	1	2	3	4
49	Hot or cold spells	49	0	1	2	3	4
50	Having to avoid certain things, places, or activities because they frighten you	50	0	1	2	3	4
51	Your mind going blank	51	0	1	2	3	4
52	Numbness or tingling in parts of your body	52	0	1	2	3	4
53	A lump in your throat	53	0	1	2	3	4
54	Feeling hopeless about the future	54	0	1	2	3	4
55	Trouble concentrating	55	0	1	2	3	4
56	Feeling weak in parts of your body	56	0	1	2	3	4
57	Feeling tense or keyed up	57	0	1	2	3	4
58	Heavy feelings in your arms or legs	58	0	1	2	3	4
59	Thoughts of death or dying	59	0	1	2	3	4
60	Overeating	60	0	1	2	3	4
61	Feeling uneasy when people are watching or talking about you	61	0	1	2	3	4
62	Having thoughts that are not your own	62	0	1	2	3	4
63	Having urges to beat, injure, or harm someone	63	0	1	2	3	4
64	Awakening in the early morning	64	0	1	2	3	4
65	Having to repeat the same actions such as touching, counting, or washing	65	0	1	2	3	4
66	Sleep that is restless or disturbed	66	0	1	2	3	4
67	Having urges to break or smash things	67	0	1	2	3	4
68	Having ideas or beliefs that others do not share	68	0	1	2	3	4
69	Feeling very self-conscious with others	69	0	1	2	3	4
70	Feeling uneasy in crowds such as shopping or at a movie	70	0	1	2	3	4
71	Feeling everything is an effort	71	0	1	2	3	4
72	Spells of terror or panic	72	0	1	2	3	4
73	Feeling uncomfortable about eating or drinking in public	73	0	1	2	3	4
74	Getting into frequent arguments	74	0	1	2	3	4
75	Feeling nervous when you are left alone	75	0	1	2	3	4
76	Others not giving you proper credit for your achievements	76	0	1	2	3	4
77	Feeling lonely even when you are with people	77	0	1	2	3	4
78	Feeling so restless you couldn't sit still	78	0	1	2	3	4
79	Feelings of worthlessness	79	0	1	2	3	4
80	The feeling that something bad is going to happen to you	80	0	1	2	3	4
81	Shouting or throwing things	81	0	1	2	3	4
82	Feeling afraid you will faint in public	82	0	1	2	3	4
83	Feeling that people will take advantage of you if you let them	83	0	1	2	3	4
84	Having thoughts about sex that bother you a lot	84	0	1	2	3	4
85	The idea that you should be punished for your sins	85	0	1	2	3	4
86	Thoughts and images of a frightening nature	86	0	1	2	3	4
87	The idea that something serious is wrong with your body	87	0	1	2	3	4
88	Never feeling close to another person	88	0	1	2	3	4
89	Feelings of guilt	89	0	1	2	3	4
90	The idea that something is wrong with your mind	90	0	1	2	3	4

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