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BEYOND ENMESHMENT: EVIDENCE FOR THE INDEPENDENCE OF INTRUSIVENESS AND CLOSENESS-CAREGIVING IN MARRIED COUPLES

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In a 1996 article on family theory, we (Green & Werner) proposed that family enmeshment should not be equated with high cohesion and that the construct of enmeshment fails to discriminate between two distinct relationship processes: Closeness–caregiving and intrusiveness. In this study, our model of these two independent dimensions of family connectedness was tested by assessing spouses from 264 couples, using the California Inventory for Family Assessment (CIFA). The CIFA scales showed acceptable reliability. Significant interspouse validity correlations also were obtained. As predicted by our theory, factor analyses distinguished dimensions of intrusiveness (blurring of boundaries) from dimensions of closeness–caregiving (such as warmth and nurturance). On all but two factors, behaviors of only one spouse (but not of both) had interpretable loadings. That is, in most areas, the two spouses' behaviors did not load together to form meaningful factors. The latter finding suggests that family systems theory—with its central notion of reciprocally contingent behaviors between family members—may be useful in understanding only a few dimensions of spouses' behavior (such as reciprocal aggression) whereas personality-in-context theories may be better for understanding most other dimensions (such as warmth and nurturance).

Previously, we (Green & Werner, 1996) proposed that family enmeshment cannot be equated with high cohesiveness. Thus we reconceptualized the domain underlying the concepts of family cohesiveness and enmeshment as entailing not a single dimension of cohesiveness (with disengagement at one pole and enmeshment at the other) but rather as two independent dimensions: Intrusiveness (blurring or violation of boundaries) and closeness–caregiving (entailing behaviors such as warmth and nurturance). To assess these clinically relevant aspects of intrusiveness, closeness–caregiving, as well as openness of communication, we

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developed the California Inventory for Family Assessment (CIFA; Werner & Green, 1989, 1993). In the present article, we describe findings based on the CIFA reports from each spouse about his or her own marital behavior and about the marital behavior of the other spouse.

INTRUSIVENESS AND CLOSENESS–CAREGIVING AS DISTINCT RELATIONSHIP CONSTRUCTS

Green and Werner (1996) demonstrated that the notion of "enmeshment" has been used in two logically distinct ways by structural family theorists (e.g., Minuchin, Rosman, & Baker, 1978). In one meaning, enmeshment denotes a lack of self–other differentiation; in the other, it denotes a style of high closeness and caregiving. Green and Werner argued that each of these meanings should refer to an independent conceptual dimension. One of these dimensions, at its extreme high end, represents lack of self/other differentiation (termed "intrusiveness"), entailing pathological blurring of relationship boundaries. In considering the contrasting pole of this dimension, Green and Werner (1996, p. 121) wrote: "To the extent that 'enmeshment' refers to a lack of self/other differentiation, its logical opposite should not be characterized as 'disengagement' but rather as individuation-in-relation."

Also in contrast to Minuchin et al. (1978), Green and Werner (1996) proposed that disengagement (emotional distance and lack of caregiving) should be conceptualized as falling at the low end of a separate dimension of connectedness (which, at its high end, entails healthy "closeness–caregiving" rather than pathological enmeshment). Green and Werner described this dimension as reflecting variations in interpersonal support as well as spatial/temporal proximity among family members, consistent with notions of contact time, personal space, and conversation space, as described by Wood (1985). Thus, overall in our model, a dyad could be characterized as intrusive and close, intrusive and distant, or any combination of levels of intrusiveness and closeness–caregiving.

This distinction between one or more dimensions referring to individuation-limiting, controlling, and conflictual relationship patterns and one or more independent dimensions referring to supportive, nurturant, and intimate behavior patterns has appeared in a number of other models of family relationships (e.g., object relations theory, social-cognitive development theory, attachment theory), and in their associated assessment devices. These instruments include the Structural Analysis of Social Behavior (e.g., control vs. emancipate; active-love vs. attack; Benjamin, 1974, 1993, 1996), the Mother–Father–Peer scale (overprotecting vs. independence-encouraging; accepting vs. rejecting; Epstein, 1983), the Measure of Attachment Qualities (ambivalence–worry; ambivalence–merger; avoidance [vs. closeness]; security; Carver, 1997); the Attachment Scales of Brennan and Shaver (1995; jealousy/fear of abandonment; anxious clinging to partners; proximity-seeking; self-reliance); and the Colorado Self-Report of Family Functioning Inventory (enmeshment; cohesion; Barber & Buehler, 1996; Bloom, 1985). With the goal of assessing relationship issues of particular relevance to psychotherapy, Horowitz, Rosenberg, Baer, Ureño, and Villaseñor (1988) presented similar dimensions in their Inventory of Interpersonal Problems (controlling, sociable, intimate). Thus, although there is not consensus with regard to the labels used to name these two independent dimensions, the underlying relationship themes distinguished by Green and Werner (1996) are roughly paralleled in a number of other authors' theoretical writings and research findings.

The California Inventory for Family Assessment

In developing an assessment device to separately measure aspects of intrusiveness and of closeness-caregiving, Werner and Green (1993) emphasized three elements. The first is assessment of dyadic relationship behavior (e.g., wife–husband; parent–adolescent), rather than behavior at the level of the "family as a whole." They argued that a differentiated picture of subsystem processes, which may be particularly important for understanding individual and family outcomes, is lost when respondents are required by family-level items to "mentally average" all relationships to describe their families (e.g., in responding to whole-family items such as "Members of our family are warm"). Because not all persons and dyadic relationships in a family are equally warm, it seems obvious that whole-family level items must be obscuring the meaningful distinctions that clinicians and ordinary people make all the time about family

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relationships. When dyadic processes are assessed with the California Inventory for Family Assessment (CIFA), the configuration of these dyadic processes may be used to grasp the dynamics of the family as a whole.

The second hallmark of the CIFA is that it facilitates assessment of each member's perceptions of others' behaviors, as well as assessing self-reports of one's own behavior within family dyads. In other words, this approach allows assessment and comparison of different members' perspectives on the behavior of each person in the couple or family. It thus permits exploration of correlates of family members' self-reports of their own behavior, correlates of members' descriptions of others' behaviors toward them, and correlates of the degree of correspondence between these different persons' perceptions. Such results may contribute to more effective clinical work with families because reconciling the differences among members' perceptions may reduce conflict among family members.

The third hallmark of CIFA research is the emphasis on studies of varied family groupings and families of diverse characteristics. In studies of adult–adult relations, the CIFA has been used in research on marital relations in France (Fanjoux-Cohen, Mouly-Bandini, Werner, & Green, 1998; Seigneurie, 1997) and with married respondents of Taiwan Chinese ethnicity in Taiwan and in the United States (Lewinsohn & Werner, 1997). It has been used in research on lesbian couples (Desmond, 2000; Roper, 1997), and gay couple relations (Campbell, 2000). Similarly, the CIFA has been used to study college men's and women's dating relationships (e.g., Murphy, 1998), the relationships between teenaged mothers and their partners (Krechman, 1997), and sister–brother relationships (Brown, 1997*b*). The CIFA also has been used in studies of parent–adolescent/young adult–child relationships, both with ethnically mixed samples (e.g., Brown, 1997*a*; Ehrlich, 1998) and with Latino adolescents in particular (Cosulich, 1999; Frucht, 1995). To foster research on diverse samples, CIFA translations have been prepared in Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, and French, with translations into Japanese and Russian in progress, and other translations in the planning stages.

This article combines data from several research projects that used the CIFA to measure reports of spouses' relationship behaviors. Its goal is to present data from a large sample on the reliability and validity of descriptions of marital behavior using the CIFA. In addressing the question of whether the CIFA distinguishes between intrusiveness and closeness–caregiving, we also explore whether these dimensions are best conceived of as couple-level processes or as the processes of separate individuals interacting within marriages.

METHOD

Participants

Participants representing 264 marriages provided data for this report. These included a total of 249 wife–husband participant couples and 15 individual spouse participants. Respondents were recruited primarily from nonclinical settings in three regions of the United States: The San Francisco Bay Area and Northern California, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Albuquerque, New Mexico, as part of three dissertation projects (Browne, 1995; Greenberg, 1996; McKenna, 1996) and from on-going research by the first two authors. Mean age was 41.2 years for wives (SD = 10.0; range = 22–73) and 43.3 years for husbands (SD = 10.1; range = 23–70). The mean duration of marriage was 12.7 years (SD = 10.0; range = 1–44). Respondents were primarily white (76.8% of wives; 76.9% of husbands), with smaller percentages of respondents spread across African American (5.6% of wives; 7.5% of husbands), Hispanic (6.8% of wives; 5.2% of husbands), Asian American (5.1% of wives; 2.9% of husbands), and Native American (0.6% of wives and 1.7% of husbands) groups. Wives had a mean of 15.1 years of education (SD = 2.6; range = 10–23), and husbands had a mean of 15.2 years of education (SD = 2.7; range = 10–22). The sample's mean of 47.6 (SD = 11.0; range = 20–66) on Hollingshead's (1975) five-level social stratum scale placed it at the level four (members of minor professions and those in technical occupations; owners of medium-sized businesses).

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Materials

The CIFA yields scores on 13 scales. See the Appendix at the end of this article for definitions of the 13 constructs. Green and Werner (1996) hypothesized that the scales for warmth, time together, nurturance, physical intimacy, and consistency would represent the theoretical domain of *closeness–caregiving;* scales for anger/aggression, separation anxiety, possessiveness/jealousy, emotional interreactivity, projective mystification, and authority/dominance would represent the theoretical domain of *intrusiveness*; and scales for openness/self-disclosure and conflict avoidance (the latter weighted negatively) would represent the theoretical domain of *openness of communication.* This research employed the 182-item true–false response format versions of the CIFA questionnaire (Werner & Green, 1993). It should be noted that the current edition of the CIFA uses a four-point response format (Werner & Green, 1999; updated information about the CIFA is available at its world wide website whose address appears in the author footnote on the first page of this article).

Two versions of the CIFA were given to each spouse: One version to describe his/her own marital behavior (CIFA "given" version) and a second version to describe his/her spouse's marital behavior (CIFA "received" version). Thus, if both partners each completed two versions of the CIFA, a total of four sets of 13 scale scores were available on each couple. Because of different test administration protocols in the studies contributing data to this analysis, scores on all four CIFA versions were available from 208 of the couples for which data were analyzed. Each of the remaining couples provided scores on only the "given" (self-description) or only the "received" (description of spouse) CIFA versions, but not on both.

Table 1
Coefficients and Retest Correlations for Descriptions of Marital Behavior

	Wife's behavior				Husband's behavior			
	Wife's report "Given"		Husband's report "Received"		Husband's report "Given"		Wife's report "Received"	
CIFA Scale	α (n = 256)	Test–retest (n = 30)	α (n = 210)	Test–retest (n = 30)	α (n = 253)	Test–retest (n = 30)	α (n = 211)	Test–retest (n = 30)
Warmth	.85	.78***	.90	.94***	.83	.41*	.90	.90***
Time together	.83	.66***	.83	.90***	.83	.93***	.84	.83***
Nurturance	.73	.52**	.90	.86***	.81	.85***	.91	.88***
Physical intimacy	.82	.84***	.87	.95***	.84	.95***	.86	.95***
Consistency	.85	.82***	.89	.87***	.84	.86***	.84	.89***
Openness/self disclosure	.89	.89***	.90	.93***	.88	.89***	.86	.72***
Conflict avoidance	.85	.92***	.86	.69***	.86	.86***	.85	.88***
Anger/aggression	.87	.91***	.90	.91***	.86	.83***	.87	.90***
Separation anxiety	.77	.91***	.83	.88***	.78	.66***	.82	.85***
Possessiveness/jealousy	.87	.94***	.93	.91***	.87	.89***	.91	.86***
Emotional interreactivity	.80	.64***	.74	.84***	.73	.76***	.70	.71***
Projective mystification	.64	.71***	.73	.70***	.62	.61***	.72	.76***
Authority/dominance	.88	.84***	.88	.72***	.90	.72***	.89	.88***

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

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RESULTS

Reliability

Table 1 presents Cronbach's α and retest reliability coefficients for the scales of the CIFA. The α coefficients indicate satisfactory internal consistency. Mean α was .82 for both wives' and husbands' self-reports of their own marital behaviors. The mean α for respondents' reports of their spouses' behaviors was .86 for husbands' reports and .84 for wives' reports. At least 10 of the 13 scales showed α = .80 on each CIFA version. Scores on the CIFA scales also demonstrated considerable stability over a 2-week interval. The mean retest correlations (n = 30) for respondents' reports of their own marital behaviors were .80 for wives' self-reports and .79 for husbands' self-reports. The mean retest correlations for respondents' reports of their spouses' behaviors (n =30) were .85 for husbands' reports and .85 for wives' reports.

Validity of Self Reports

We also computed correlations between the two spouses' reports about each individual spouse's behavior in the marriage. These correlations indicate the validity of these descriptions of marital behavior, in that they reflect the correspondence between self and partner perspectives on behavior.

All of the obtained correlations were statistically significant (see Table 2). For example, the wife's report of her own warmth correlated .36 ($p < .001$) with her husband's report of her warmth. The mean correlation between wives' and husbands' descriptions of wives' marital behavior was .42, and the mean attenuation-corrected correlation (correcting for both internal consistency reliability and retest reliability) was .59. Correlations > .40 were obtained on the following scales: Time together, physical intimacy, openness/self-disclosure, conflict avoidance, anger/aggression, separation anxiety, and possessiveness/jealousy. The strongest validity correlation for descriptions of wives was that for anger/aggression (r = .68; attenuation-corrected r = .84), and the weakest validity correlation was that for projective mystification (r = .16; attenuation-corrected r = .33).

TABLE 2
Correlations between Self Reports and Spouse Reports of Each Partner's Behavior

CIFA Scale	Wife	Husband
Warmth	.36***	.26***
Time together	.46***	.48***
Nurturance	.28***	.43***
Physical intimacy	.56***	.51***
Consistency	.37***	.36***
Openness/self–disclosure	.50***	.36***
Conflict avoidance	.49***	.38***
Anger/aggression	.68***	.62***
Separation anxiety	.52***	.48***
Possessiveness/jealousy	.43***	.42***
Emotional interreactivity	.33***	.37***
Projective mystification	.16*	.32***
Authority/dominance	.28***	.42***

Note. Column labeled "wife" shows the correlation between her self–report of her own behavior and her husband's report of her behavior. Column labeled "husband" shows the correlation between his self-report of his own behavior and his wife's report of his behavior; N = 202 couples.
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

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The mean correlation between wives' and husbands' descriptions of husbands' marital behavior was .42, and the mean attenuation-corrected correlation was .62. Correlations above .40 were found on the following scales: Time together, nurturance, physical intimacy, anger/aggression, separation anxiety, possessiveness/jealousy, and authority/dominance. The strongest validity correlation for descriptions of husbands was that for anger/aggression (r = .62; attenuation-corrected r = .83), and the weakest validity correlation for descriptions of husbands' behavior was on the warmth scale (r = .26; attenuation-corrected r = .50).

This set of results suggests that on every CIFA scale there is an association between both spouses' reports about the marital behavior of each spouse. In addition, the results suggest that there is, on the whole, moderate but statistically significant convergence between the two spouses' CIFA descriptions of the behavior of each.

Structure of Dyadic Relations

With the goal of determining which sets of relationship variables cluster together, we used factor analysis to study the structure of reported marital behavior. Although it was predicted that independent factors for intrusiveness and for closeness–caregiving would be found, exploratory factor analysis (rather than confirmatory factor analysis) was employed to investigate whether the factors that emerged would represent dyadic or individual behavior patterns. Two factor analyses were conducted, each using the principal axis method followed by varimax rotation.

In the first analysis, the 13 CIFA scale scores from both wives' and husbands' reports of their own behaviors toward their spouse were factor analyzed. In other words, assuming that each accurately describes her or his marital behavior, which aspects of the behavior of the spouses toward one another covary? In these analyses, seven factors emerged (Table 3), accounting for 68.7% of the variance. The factor labels, based on interpretation of scales with loadings of .30 or higher in absolute value (as is conventional in use of factor analysis) and percent of variance accounted for by each factor were as follows:

Factor 1: Husband's closeness–caregiving (25.7%)
Factor 2: Wife's closeness–caregiving (12.6%)
Factor 3: Husband's intrusiveness (9.4%)
Factor 4: Couple's anger/wife's projection and inconsistency (6.8%)
Factor 5: Wife's closedness (vs. openness) of communication (5.7%)
Factor 6: Wife's clinging behavior (4.5%)
Factor 7: Husband's openness of communication (3.9%)

We next factor analyzed the 13 CIFA scale scores from both wives' and husbands' reports of their partners' behavior in the marriage. This analysis takes as its starting point each spouse's view of how the other spouse acts in the marriage, and it investigates, from this perspective, which aspects of the behavior of the spouses toward one another covary. Six factors emerged, accounting for 68.4% of the total variance (Table 4). The factor labels and percent of variance accounted for by each factor were as follows:

Factor 1: Wife's closeness–caregiving (29.2%)
Factor 2: Husband's closeness–caregiving (11.9%)
Factor 3: Wife's intrusiveness (8.7%)
Factor 4: Husband's intrusiveness (7.8%)
Factor 5: Wife's openness of communication/husband's low dominance (6.4%)
Factor 6: Husband's openness of communication (4.4%)

In both of the factor analyses, variables that Green and Werner (1996) described as representing closeness–caregiving and variables that they described as representing the independent dimension of intrusiveness loaded on different factors. Parallel factors for husband's closeness–caregiving, wife's closeness–caregiving, husband's intrusiveness, and husband's openness of communication were found for both self-reports and spouse reports. Wife's openness versus closedness of communication also emerged as a separate factor from other aspects of the wife's reported behavior. On the spouse-report factor distinguishing wife's openness versus closedness of communication (spouse report factor 5), husband's

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Table 3
Factors in Wives' and Husbands' Reports of their Own Behavior toward their Spouse

CIFA Scale	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7
Wife's Behavior (self-report)							
Warmth	.10	**.89**	−.05	−.20	−.07	−.05	.04
Time together	.13	**.89**	−.02	.13	−.11	.04	−.02
Nurturance	−.02	**.69**	.02	−.03	−.05	−.11	.02
Physical intimacy	.14	**.71**	.01	−.09	−.10	.12	.15
Consistency	.15	**.59**	−.14	**−.35**	−.16	−.09	−.12
Openness/self–disclosure	.13	**.52**	−.14	−.06	**−.63**	−.01	−.03
Conflict avoidance	−.05	−.18	.11	.01	**.78**	.15	.03
Anger/aggression	−.06	**−.44**	.08	**.67**	−.12	.09	−.01
Separation anxiety	−.03	.05	.14	.17	−.01	**.70**	.04
Possessiveness/jealousy	−.12	−.19	.09	.22	.17	**.63**	.08
Emotional interreactiv.	−.04	.19	.06	**.41**	.14	.22	−.01
Projective mystification	−.22	−.13	.04	**.46**	.12	.18	.06
Authority/dominance	−.00	−.07	−.02	**.31**	−.12	.00	−.23
Husband's Behavior (self-report)							
Warmth	**.86**	.05	−.10	−.14	.01	−.02	−.10
Time together	**.83**	.07	.04	.04	−.05	−.10	.14
Nurturance	**.80**	.05	−.11	.01	−.05	−.07	.02
Physical intimacy	**.80**	.00	.06	−.08	.02	−.15	−.08
Consistency	**.70**	.21	−.23	−.18	−.04	.00	−.16
Openness/self-disclosure	**.68**	.13	−.07	−.07	−.18	.12	**.42**
Conflict avoidance	**−.50**	−.13	.29	.05	.12	−.11	**−.50**
Anger/aggression	**−.49**	−.22	**.30**	**.34**	.09	−.06	**.36**
Separation anxiety	.02	−.04	**.76**	−.08	.00	.25	−.08
Possessiveness/jealousy	−.22	−.09	**.66**	.01	.12	.06	.13
Emotional interreactiv.	−.00	.04	**.55**	.08	.04	.01	−.02
Projective mystification	**−.37**	−.08	**.44**	.25	.05	.03	.04
Authority/dominance	−.17	.04	.23	−.08	.17	.29	**.36**

Note. Bold and underline indicate scales with loadings of |.30| or higher. $N = 255$.

authority/dominance scores also obtained a negative loading, suggesting that this aspect of the husband's reported behavior covaries inversely with wife's openness of communication. A wife's intrusiveness factor clearly emerged in the analysis of spouse reports. In self-reports, the scales that Green and Werner (1996) described as assessing the wife's intrusiveness were divided between two factors, rather than comprising a single intrusiveness factor. These were factor 6 (reflecting the wife's reported clinging behavior or anxious attachment) and factor 4 (reflecting the wife's reported projective mystification and emotional interreactivity, as well as the anger and aggression of both spouses). Each of these factors encompasses a component of what Green and Werner (1996) labeled "intrusiveness."

In summary, results of the factor analysis showed that, as predicted, variables representing

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Table 4
Factors in Wives' and Husbands' Reports of How their Spouse Acts toward Them

CIFA Scale	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
Wife's behavior (as reported by husband)						
Warmth	**.82**	.24	–.04	–.16	.12	–.02
Time together	**.84**	.07	.12	–.03	.11	–.01
Nurturance	**.76**	.18	–.05	–.07	.22	–.07
Physical intimacy	**.78**	.09	.04	–.05	.09	–.18
Consistency	**.66**	.27	–.23	–.11	–.15	.13
Openness/self-disclosure	**.60**	.12	–.09	–.07	**.61**	.13
Conflict avoidance	–.25	–.05	.18	–.02	**–.84**	.06
Anger/aggression	**–.56**	–.26	**.52**	.09	.29	.04
Separation anxiety	–.02	–.17	**.73**	.13	–.11	–.03
Possessiveness/jealousy	–.13	–.11	**.68**	.12	–.19	–.10
Emotional interreactiv.	.13	–.02	**.63**	–.03	–.02	.19
Projective mystification	**–.50**	–.12	**.49**	.01	–.03	.16
Authority/dominance	**–.36**	.15	**.33**	.02	.29	.23
Husband's behavior (as reported by wife)						
Warmth	.19	**.79**	.04	–.14	.00	–.01
Time together	.10	**.85**	–.07	.02	.05	–.14
Nurturance	.10	**.75**	–.06	–.09	.02	**–.32**
Physical intimacy	.21	**.58**	–.06	.06	.03	–.13
Consistency	.12	**.73**	–.17	–.18	.14	.10
Openness/self-disclosure	.02	**.60**	–.07	.02	–.01	**–.57**
Conflict avoidance	–.15	**–.36**	.10	.14	.06	**.63**
Anger/aggression	–.22	**–.56**	.27	**.34**	–.11	–.10
Separation anxiety	–.10	–.01	–.04	**.83**	–.11	.08
Possessiveness/jealousy	–.28	–.21	.01	**.69**	–.12	–.03
Emotional interreactiv.	.04	–.02	.10	**.37**	.07	.01
Projective mystification	–.12	**–.40**	.15	**.41**	–.07	.18
Authority/dominance	.04	**–.30**	.14	.24	**–.33**	–.08

Note. Bold and underline indicate scales with loadings of |.30| or higher. $N = 208$.

closeness–caregiving and intrusiveness load on separate factors. These empirical results were consistent with the theoretical model proposed by Green and Werner (1996). Furthermore, this study revealed that some aspects of wives' and husbands' reported behavior covary (e.g., wife's openness of communication covarying with husband's low dominance) whereas others do not covary appreciably (e.g., wife's closeness–caregiving, husband's closeness–caregiving, wife's intrusiveness, husband's intrusiveness, and husband's openness of communication).

DISCUSSION

These findings demonstrate that the CIFA provides a reliable and valid assessment of married spouses'

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relationship behaviors. The factor analytic results suggest that married spouses' CIFA responses yield independent dimensions largely consistent with the proposed theoretical distinction between intrusiveness and closeness–caregiving in relationships (Green & Werner, 1996; Werner & Green, 1993, 1999). These results imply that it is not appropriate to put both enmeshment and disengagement on a single cohesion continuum. Our findings fit with other evidence (e.g., Cluff, Hicks, & Madsen, 1994), suggesting that enmeshment is not the high extreme end of a cohesion dimension. Rather, high levels of cohesion-related processes (closeness–caregiving) are distinct from levels of instrusiveness (whether high or low). Thus, cohesion-related processes should be conceptualized as a separate dimension from blurring of boundaries (intrusiveness). Findings with married respondents in France (Fanjoux-Cohen et al., 1998; Seigneurie, 1997) and with married respondents of Taiwan Chinese ethnicity in Taiwan and in the United States (Lewinsohn & Werner, 1997), likewise suggest the separateness of intrusiveness and closeness–caregiving as dimensions of marital process.

To clarify our findings, we should point out that these results do not mean that scales measuring "good" aspects of dyadic behavior (such as warmth and nurturance) and scales measuring "bad" aspects of dyadic behavior (such as possessiveness/jealousy and separation anxiety) fall at the opposite ends of a single bipolar continuum. Rather, the present findings for the most part suggest that these two groupings of dyadic processes (closeness-caregiving and intrusiveness) are largely independent of one another, and each factor has a positive and negative end to its continuum ("high intrusiveness" being the negative end of the intrusiveness factor and "disengagment" being the negative end of the closeness-caregiving factor). The exceptions—higher scores on anger/aggression and on projective mystification scales, which would fall at the undesirable ends of both the closeness–caregiving and the intrusiveness factors—will be considered in more detail below.

In defining intrusiveness as a relationship construct characterized by blurring of relationship boundaries and lack of self-other differentiation, Green and Werner (1996) viewed it as embracing a range of emotionally dependent and controlling relational behaviors, including separation anxiety, possessiveness/jealousy, emotional interreactivity, and projective mystification. The results of the factor analysis of spouse reports, as well as the intrusiveness factor obtained for husbands' self-reports, were consistent with the notion that these relational variables do reflect a common underlying psychological theme. These results also are consistent with findings of previous factor analyses of reports of spousal behavior with the CIFA (Lewinsohn & Werner, 1997; Fanjoux-Cohen et al., 1998).

However, in the factor analysis of wives' self-reports, these behaviors were split into two independent factors—one pertaining to emotional interreactivity and projective mystification and the second pertaining to separation anxiety and possessiveness/jealousy. In other words, the latter result suggested two dyadic pathways for blurring of boundaries in the self-reports of wives. Combining the results concerning wives' intrusiveness from our two factor analyses, these findings suggest that whereas in husbands' views these four aspects of their wives' behaviors toward them are interrelated, from the wives' perspective they represent two independent themes. Further research is needed to clarify whether this is a stable finding in the comparison of spouse reports and self-reports of wives' marital behavior. If so, it may suggest interventions in couples' therapy that could take into account the apparently disjunctive views that husbands and wives have about the constellations of boundary-blurring behaviors of the wife.

These findings lead to a revised view of the assignment of three CIFA scales (openness/self-disclosure, conflict avoidance, and anger/aggression) to underlying theoretical domains. It appears that openness/self-disclosure and conflict avoidance (weighted negatively) may pertain to both closeness–caregiving and to openness of communication. A particular element of the openness of communication dimension may be its role in fostering relationship development; that is, in helping the relationship move forward, solve problems, and deal with the challenges that it faces over time. Closeness–caregiving, on the other hand, may be considered a reflection of the relationship's steady state in terms of caring and affection. Thus, the openness/self-disclosure and conflict avoidance scales may be partly associated with the "steady state" of closeness in the relationship yet separately may represent the couple's progressive problem-solving process, perhaps having implications for the couple's closeness–caregiving down the road. For example, depending on the nature of what is being disclosed, openness of communication may be related inversely to warmth



and nurturance at least temporarily and may even be associated with greater distress and eventual divorce; but couples who are able to remain warm and nurturing over time are likely to describe themselves as open in communication. The seeming paradox is that in order to be and remain closely connected and warm over many years, spouses also have to be able to disclose mistakes, express disagreements, reveal important negative feelings or dissatisfactions, and resolve conflicts throughout their relationship. A close and caring relationship is not devoid of conflicts but rather is one in which conflicts are discussed openly and managed successfully to the overall satisfaction of both partners. On the other hand, conflict that is open but persistent, unresolved, and aggressive, or conflict that is avoided and denied, almost inevitably leads to less closeness and caregiving over the long run (Green, 1981).

Another enlightening finding in this study was that the anger/aggression and projective mystification scales tended to load somewhat positively on intrusiveness factors and negatively on closeness–caregiving factors. In other words, higher levels of anger/aggression and projective mystification may be seen as indicating both rejection and distance/indifference toward the spouse (low closeness–caregiving) as well as indicating emotional coerciveness toward the spouse (intrusiveness). This result modifies our earlier view (Green & Werner, 1996) that anger/aggression and projective mystification would be related only to the intrusiveness domain.

From a theoretical standpoint, some additional, very intriguing findings came from these factor analyses. Aspects of husbands' and wives' behaviors loaded together on only two out of the 13 factors obtained (the self-report factor 4—couple's anger/wife's projection and inconsistency; and the partner-report factor 5—wife's openness of communication/husband's low dominance). In the spouses' self-report factor 4, the joint loadings imply that there is similarity and reciprocal contingency in the two spouses' anger/aggression and that such behavior in the couple also is associated with projection and inconsistent behavior by the wife. This reciprocal (perhaps escalating) aggression would be predicted on the basis of family systems theory (e.g., Lidz, Fleck, & Cornelison's (1965) concept of "marital schism" and Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson's (1967) concept of "escalating symmetry").

A different form of contingency was suggested in partner-report factor 5 (based on each spouse's report of the other spouse's behavior). In these results, when husbands described their wives as high in self-disclosure and low in conflict avoidance, wives tended to describe their husbands as less dominant in the relationship. At one end, this factor 5 may imply that wives' verbal expressiveness is experienced as a form of assertiveness or leadership to which husbands tend to respond with acquiescence or with egalitarian behavior; or, conversely, that husbands' low dominance elicits or facilitates greater verbal expressiveness or assertiveness from wives. At its other end, this factor may reflect culturally prescribed gender-related power differentials in traditional marriages, in that the husband's greater dominance is associated with the wife's reluctance to express what is on her mind (a dominance/submission dynamic, which would fit with Lidz et al.'s concept of "marital skew," 1965; and with Watzlawick et al.'s concept of "rigid complementarity," 1967).

In contrast (and unexpectedly), for all 11 of the other factors that emerged in our analyses, aspects of husbands' and wives' behaviors in the marriage loaded together minimally. These findings have clear implications for future research on couples, for family theory, and for questionnaire assessment of couple processes. Most self-report measures of couple functioning ask the respondent to answer items about the couple as a unit (e.g., "We seldom quarrel"). Such items require that the respondent perform some kind of mental averaging or differential weighting of the two spouses' individual behaviors in the marriage in order to come up with a single overall rating of the couple as a unit (the "We" in these items). However, the current results suggest that such items must be forcing respondents to blur existing distinctions between the two spouses' behaviors, creating considerable distortion and loss of information.

If, as our study suggests, husbands' and wives' levels of closeness–caregiving in their marriages are largely independent of one another, how can respondents meaningfully describe their couple-as-a-unit closeness–caregiving without reference to differences between the spouses in this domain? For example, imagine the following sets of wife and husband closeness–caregiving scores provided by wives in three couples (using a hypothetical rating scale on which 10 is the highest possible score and zero is the lowest):



Couple 1

Score for wife's self-description of her closeness–caregiving = 10

Score for wife's description of her husband's closeness–caregiving = 0

Couple 2

Score for wife's self-description of her closeness–caregiving = 0

Score for wife's description of her husband's closeness–caregiving = 10

Couple 3

Score for wife's self-description of her closeness–caregiving = 5

Score for wife's description of her husband's closeness–caregiving = 5

If each of these wives was required to mentally average her own and her husband's closeness–caregiving to arrive at one rating for the couple as a unit (or if a researcher averaged together each wife's self rating and spouse rating to create a composite closeness–caregiving score for that couple as a unit), then each of these three couples would be described as identical in closeness–caregiving (a mean score of 5 for each couple). However, as described by these wives, the three couples have very different patterns, which may have profoundly differential effects in terms of the wife's versus the husband's level of satisfaction, global psychiatric distress, levels of sexual desire, and so on. Indeed, couples 1 and 2 in our example illustrate circumstances in which the notion of the "closeness of the couple" may not be meaningful at all, because one partner would be described as seeking proximity (as warm and as affectionate) and the other would be described as avoiding proximity (as cold and as unaffectionate).

It may well be that averages of husband and wife scores, or items describing the couple as a unit, are adequate for assessing domains in which the typical behaviors of the husband and wife within a couple tend to be similar (e.g., anger/aggression). However, these methods are inadequate for assessing relationship domains in which the husband's typical behavior and the wife's typical behavior tend to be independent. For these latter domains (including most aspects of closeness–caregiving, intrusiveness, and openness of communication), separate assessments of each spouse's behaviors in the marriage, such as those provided by the CIFA, are necessary to grasp how various configurations (rather than averages) of husband and wife behaviors are related to each one's mental and physical health.

Our results thus imply that when one is studying or assessing typical interactional processes that are associated with symptoms in one spouse, it is necessary to look at that person's unique interactional position and at that person's unique experience and behavior in the marriage. That is, although Janet and Joe are married (and thus "in" the same marriage), each is not necessarily treated in the same way by his or her spouse in that marriage. Being married to Janet could be (and usually is) a very different experience than being married to Joe. Their differential treatment of one another may help to explain, for example, why one spouse is depressed but the other is not.

How does the finding of few associations between spouses' reports of their typical behaviors bear on systems conceptualizations of married couples' interactional processes? The criterion for a systems relationship is not correlation between spouses' behaviors but, rather, mutual behavioral influence. Such mutual influence may be difficult to establish with correlational data summarizing behavior across circumstances, as were used in the present report. Nonetheless, in our results there was surprisingly little indication of behavioral similarity between spouses (that is, symmetry of behavior). There also was little evidence of complementarity (that is, correlation of opposite spouse behaviors). Thus, the present findings were, for the most part, inconsistent with the idea of mutual behavioral influence.

It may be that the systems notion of mutual impact is more relevant in terms of emotions experienced rather than in terms of behavior elicited. By this we mean that each spouse's ongoing behavior may have more specific impact on the other's internal experience (e.g., may make the other person feel sad, happy, afraid, confused), and may have less impact in terms of triggering the other's overt behavioral responses. In this light, perhaps researchers should distinguish between each spouse's emotion-eliciting impact versus behavior-eliciting impact on the other spouse. These two kinds of influence may be separate relational phenomena.

Our results suggest that the family systems idea of contingent behavior fits only certain domains of couple interactions (e.g., escalating conflict) but not others (e.g., closeness and caregiving). In this vein, it



is interesting to recall that two of systems theory's central concepts (symmetry and complementarity) emerged from Bateson's (1936) anthropological field observations of escalation and deescalation of aggression in a New Guinea tribe. Has the field of family therapy overgeneralized Bateson's theory by using it to explain all manner of human interactions beyond reciprocal aggression?

If replicated in future studies, these results may lend increased weight to Bowenian, psychodynamic, and behavior genetics ("nonshared environment") conceptions of family relations, which focus on each individual's unique behavior and experience within the couple and family (Bowen, 1978; Bussell & Reiss, 1993; Green, Bettinger, & Zacks, 1996). These findings also seem consistent with the view that individual personality is a set of interactional predispositions that are enacted as a consistent style in an enduring social context, such as a marriage. Thus, with the exceptions of "wife's openness of communication/husband's low dominance" and of "couple's anger/wife's projection and inconsistency," spouses in this study tended to describe themselves and each other as having substantially distinct personalities and unrelated behavior patterns. Taking these results into account, we must conclude that the family systems notion of contingent behavior may be useful for understanding and treating problems in only a few areas of marital functioning (such as anger/aggression) whereas personality-in-context theories may be more useful for understanding and treating problems in other areas of marital functioning (such as closeness–caregiving and intrusiveness).

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APPENDIX
DEFINITIONS OF CALIFORNIA INVENTORY FOR FAMILY ASSESSMENT SCALE CONSTRUCTS

1. *Warmth:* The degree to which Person A shows warmth, kindness, acceptance, caring, friendliness, love and positive regard toward Person B.

2. *Time Together:* The degree to which Person A enjoys, puts a high priority on, seeks time with, and gives attention to Person B.

3. *Nurturance:* The degree to which Person A extends emotional comfort, help, caretaking, and emotional support to Person B.

4. *Physical Intimacy:* The degree to which Person A hugs, holds hands, cuddles with, kisses, seeks physical closeness to, and enjoys touching and being affectionate with Person B.

5. *Consistency:* The degree to which Person A's behavior and feelings toward Person B are consistent, clear, predictable, and emotionally constant from day to day.

6. *Openness/Self-Disclosure:* The degree to which Person A is open, self-revealing, honest, direct, and forthright with Person B.

7. *Conflict Avoidance:* The degree to which Person A tries to avoid facing conflict, denies that there are differences of opinion or needs, evades discussing sources of tension (for example, by changing the topic), pretends to agree or pretends that everything is harmonious (pseudomutuality), and generally tries to "sweep difficulties under the rug" in the relationship with Person B.

8. *Anger/Aggression:* The degree to which Person A gets angry, is critical, gets annoyed, uses harsh words, raises his/her voice, "blows up," and acts in a physically aggressive or emotionally hurtful way toward Person B.

9. *Separation Anxiety:* The degree to which Person A feels uncomfortable, upset, anxious, worried, or feels hurt or left out when Person B wants to spend time alone, have privacy, or spend time doing things independently.

10. *Possessiveness/Jealousy:* The degree to which Person A feels threatened and afraid of losing Person B to others and acts toward B in a possessive and jealous manner.

11. *Emotional Inter-reactivity:* The degree to which Person A overidentifies with, and overreacts emotionally to, stressful events and problems in Person B's life (for example, Person A may worry excessively or become more upset than Person B when B is sad, anxious about something, going through a hard time, applying for a job, etc.).

12. *Projective Mystification:* The degree to which Person A erroneously assumes he/she knows what is on Person B's mind without checking it out first ("mindreading," projection), especially the degree to which Person A presumes he/she knows better what B really needs, thinks and feels, and why B acts in certain ways.

13. *Authority/Dominance:* The degree to which Person A takes and is granted greater authority and dominance in the relationship in terms of having final say over how things are done, taking the lead, getting his/her own way when disagreements arise, setting the rules for B's behavior, and making decisions for B or for what they will do together.

Note. Adapted from Werner, P. D., & Green, R. -J. (1993). *Preliminary manual: California Inventory for Family Assessment—Research edition.* Reprinted by permission of the authors.

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