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Levels of Differentiation of Self in Married Couples

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Levels of Differentiation of Self
In Married Couples

Margaret Galantowicz, B.A., M.L.S.

A Culminating Project presented to the Faculty
of the Graduate School of Lindenwood College
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts

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1992

Levels of Differentiation of Self
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Margaret Galantowicz, B.A., M.L.S.

An Abstract Presented to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Lindenwood College in Partial
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Abstract

The construct of differentiation of self, a key concept in the family theory of Murray Bowen, is examined with the purpose of testing Bowen's hypothesis that married couples are differentiated to the same degree. The Differentiation of Self Scale was used with 45 recently married couples from St. Louis County ranging in age from 20 to 71. Results of this study demonstrate that there is no significant correlation between the wives' and husbands' scores.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The concept of the differentiation of self was devised by Murray Bowen and is one of the chief components of the family systems theory that later became known as the Bowen theory.

Development of the Bowen Theory

The Bowen theory can be considered a logical step in the development of psychotherapy following the work of Sigmund Freud. Before the work of Freud, mental illness was considered to be a product of organic brain pathology, and was to be treated medically. Freud saw the origin of mental illness as a product of a disturbance in brain function rather than an organic or structural defect. He also conceptualized this functional disturbance as a product of a disturbance in the early parent-child relationship. To conceptualize emotional illness in relationship to others was a new paradigm and a monumental contribution to twentieth century psychotherapy.

For fifty years following Freud, psychoanalysis was accepted as the primary therapeutic method. After World War II, many psychiatrists experimented with variations in the psychoanalytic method,

seeking treatments for schizophrenia. The study of the family was one of these new areas of interest.

This interest in the study of the family was not entirely new. The child guidance movement, marriage counseling, and many studies in sociology and anthropology all preceded World War II. However, Kerr (1981) states that:

it is the view of a number of the early family researchers coming out of psychoanalysis that these related activities had only an indirect role on the emergence of the family movement (including theory, research and therapy) and that much of the contributions of sociology and other fields were recognized in retrospect by people working within psychiatry (p. 228).

Psychoanalytic theory was based on the study of the individual and the individual's perceptions of the family rather than on observations of the patient in relationship to his/her family. So the focus was on the patient, with the family outside the field of theoretical interest. Individual therapy was built on the medical model which postulated an etiology of pathology within the patient and determined a specific treatment. The medical model also implied that disease or malevolent forces outside the person's control made the patient a helpless victim. Bowen (1966) states that, "a conceptual dilemma was posed when the most important person in a patient's life was

considered to be the cause of his illness, and pathogenic to him" (p. 346). Many theorists had had the experience of a "cured" patient being released from the hospital to return home to their families, only to regress into renewed symptoms.

The earliest researchers in this area tended to work "underground" and so knew little of each other's work. They all faced the same difficult dilemma in relation to psychoanalysis: how to move from an individual to a family focus without contaminating one of the primary concepts of psychoanalysis, the transference of the therapeutic relationship. There were strict rules against the therapist's contaminating the transference by seeing other members of the same family: the early family work was done privately, probably to avoid critical colleagues who might consider this irresponsible until it was legitimized in the name of research.

Bowen puts the therapeutic relationship in a broader perspective by introducing more conceptual variables into the system (Bowen, 1976). These variables involve the successful, balanced "introduction" of a "significant other" into the family relationship in order to "modify" the system. A number of outside relationships can

accomplish this function, but it is most often performed by a psychotherapist. Bowen (1976) states that if the therapist:

can manage a viable and moderately intense therapeutic relationship with the patient, and the patient remains in viable contact with the family, it can calm and modify relationships within the family. It is as though the therapeutic relationship drains the tension from the family and the family can appear different. When the therapist and patient become more intensely involved with each other, the patient withdraws from emotional contact with the family and the family becomes more disturbed. Therapists have intuitive ways of dealing with this situation. Some choose to intensify the relationship into a therapeutic alliance, and to encourage the patient to challenge the family. Others are content with a supportive relationship. There are a number of other outside relationships that can accomplish the same thing (p. 47).

Because of his roots in psychoanalysis, Bowen went into great detail to redefine the therapeutic relationship. By gaining knowledge of emotional systems, Bowen was able to avoid the emotionality of the therapeutic relationship and work toward "avoiding the transference" (Bowen, 1976, p. 50). He sought to stay outside the family's emotional system and remain workably objective in an intense emotional field.

Evolution of the Concept of Self Differentiation

Early in his research, Bowen decided to use biological terms to describe his theories so that

they would be consistent with the recognized sciences. In this way, he hoped that future research would find connections between human behavior and the accepted sciences. His theory used the terms "symbiosis", "fusion", "instinctual", and "differentiation" to describe psychological phenomena.

Bowen began his research into families in 1951 by studying the theoretical formulations about the mother-child symbiosis in families with a schizophrenic member. He used the term "symbiosis" in the biological sense of two organisms living together for mutual benefit or harm. He (1978) states that:

the original hypothesis was based on a premise that the basic character problem, on which clinical schizophrenia is later superimposed, is an unresolved symbiotic attachment to the mother....According to the thinking, the process is initiated by the emotional immaturity of the mother who uses the child to fulfill her own emotional needs....The project might more properly be called a study of symbiosis as seen in schizophrenia and a specific treatment effort focused on the symbiosis rather than on the schizophrenia (p. 4).

This was one of the first projects that focused on a system. A supportive therapeutic relationship for the mothers was established with a social worker and a medical psychotherapist was provided for the patient. Soon it became obvious that the

mother-child relationship was a dependent fragment of the larger family unit. So the research design was modified for fathers and normal siblings to live on the ward with the mothers and the schizophrenic patients.

One of the observations that was made during this study was that the mothers and children participated in "closeness-distance cycles" in which they would get overclose, fight, separate, come back together again, and then repeat the cycle. When they were in the separation stage, they would seek other relationships to duplicate the symbiotic relationship. Bowen (1978) states that, "the mothers and patients never seemed to have the inner strength to control the intensity of the cycles. They attempted to get outside rules, advice, or structure to control the vigor of the cycles" (p. 6).

When the fathers and siblings were included in the study, it was discovered that the parents maintained a pattern of overadequate-inadequate reciprocity. Bowen (1978) declared that:

Both parents are equally immature. In any teamwork activity, the one who makes decisions for the two of them becomes the overadequate one and the other becomes the inadequate or helpless one....The overadequate one is seen as dominating, authoritative, or stubborn and the inadequate one as helpless, compliant, and

forced into submission by the dominant one. Either mother or father can function in either position though they eventually find an equilibrium in which one is overadequate in most areas and the other overadequate in fewer areas (p. 27).

Later, Bowen (1966) used the term "undifferentiated family ego mass" (p. 355) to describe an emotional closeness that can be so intense that family members believe they know each others feelings, thoughts, fantasies and dreams. The relationships within the undifferentiated family ego mass are cyclical. First, there is a calm, comfortable closeness, which shifts into anxious, uncomfortable overcloseness with "the incorporation of the 'self' of one by the 'self' of the other" (Bowen, 1966, p. 355). This is followed by a period of distant, hostile rejection in which there is active repulsion of each other. This pattern can recycle frequently or can be stuck in the hostile phase for long periods, or even a lifetime.

The term, undifferentiated ego mass, was used to describe the emotional stuck-togetherness of families. Bowen used the term for years but later abandoned it because it did not conform to his plan to incorporate terms consistent with biology.

The concept of differentiation of self is the cornerstone of Bowen's theory. He believed that

this concept was so universal that all people could be categorized along a Differentiation of Self Scale. This scale had gradations from 0 to 100, with 0 representing the lowest possible level of human functioning and 100 representing a state of hypothetical perfection.

Differentiation of self has an intrapsychic aspect and an interpersonal aspect. Intrapsychic differentiation is the ability to separate feeling from thinking. Early in Bowen's research, he found that the schizophrenic patients may have appeared to function well and yet would have difficulty in distinguishing between their subjective feelings and their objective thinking. He found that this tendency was universal and present in all human beings in various degrees.

Bowen (1976) saw poorly differentiated people as "trapped within a feeling world" (p. 67), dominated by the automatic emotional system. They cannot distinguish thoughts from feelings, rather, their lives are governed by gathering up the feelings from those around them, and reacting to them violently or adhering to them blindly. These people are less flexible, less adaptable, are more easily stressed into dysfunction, and they "inherit a high percentage of all human problems" (p. 65).

Highly differentiated people, on the other hand, are able to balance thinking and feeling. They are capable of strong emotion and spontaneity, but are also capable of restraint and objectivity. They can retain relative autonomy in periods of stress, are more flexible, more adaptable, can cope better with stress, and are "remarkably free of human problems" (p. 66).

The interpersonal aspect of the differentiation of self is based on Bowen's (1978) belief that in human relationships, two natural forces counterbalanced one another. One of those forces is the drive towards individuality or autonomy, "which assumes responsibility for one's own happiness and comfort and well-being. It avoids thinking that tends to blame one's own unhappiness, discomfort, or failure on the other" (p. 218). The other force moves toward togetherness or fusion, and assigns "positive values to thinking about the other before self, being for the other, sacrificing for others, considering others, feeling responsible for the comfort and well-being of others, and showing love and devotion and compassion for others. The togetherness force assumes responsibility for the happiness and well being of others.

Ideally, these two forces are in balance. Unbalance in the direction of togetherness is called fusion or undifferentiation. The capacity for autonomous functioning is called differentiation. This quality helps people to avoid getting caught up in reactive polarities.

To sum up the intrapsychic and interpersonal aspects of differentiation: undifferentiated people react emotionally to others because they are unable to think clearly. They tend to fuse with others and have little autonomous identity. They find it difficult to describe what they think, usually talking of how they feel. They are unwilling to describe what they believe, rather echoing what they have heard.

Differentiated people, on the other hand, are able to take stands on issues because they are able to think things through, decide what they believe and act on it. This enables differentiated people to interact with others and maintain intimate relationships without losing their autonomy.

Another part of the concept of differentiation of self has to do with the levels of solid self and pseudo-self. The pseudo-self is an actor, portraying many different selves, and who is created by the emotional pressures within family

and society to conform to group ideals and principles. Bowen (1976) states that:

The pseudo-self is a "pretend" self. It was acquired to conform to the environment, and it contains discrepant and assorted principles that pretend to be in emotional harmony with a variety of social groups. institutions, businesses, political parties, and religious groups, without self's being aware that the groups are inconsistent with each other (p. 68).

The solid self can declare who he is, what he believes, what he stands for, and what he will and will not do. It is made up of the beliefs, opinions, convictions and life principles that are incorporated into the self from life experiences by the process of intellectual reasoning and consideration of the consequences of all choices. The solid self takes responsibility for choices, and can take action on its beliefs even in situations of high anxiety and stress.

While the solid self is stable, the pseudo-self is unstable. The pseudo-self responds to social pressure, was acquired to facilitate interaction with the relationship system, and it is negotiable in the relationship system. This process of negotiation is described by Bowen (1976):

It is the pseudo-self that is involved in fusion and the many ways of giving, receiving, lending, borrowing, trading, and exchanging of self. In any exchange, one gives up a little self to the other, who gains an equal amount....These

mechanisms are much less intense in better levels of differentiation (p. 69).

Marital Attraction and Differentiation

Bowen (1966, 1976, 1978) stated that people pick spouses who are differentiated to the same degree. "The life styles of people at one point on the scale are so different from others a few points removed that they consider themselves to be incompatible" (Bowen, 1978, p. 203). Couples usually experience the closest and most open relationship of their lives during courtship. Then, within the commitment of the marital relationship, the two pseudo-selves fuse into a we-ness in which one becomes the dominant decision maker or the most active in taking initiative for the we-ness. The adaptive one may volunteer to give up self to the dominant one, who accepts it; or the exchange may be worked out after bargaining. This is an automatic emotional process that occurs subtly as spouses manipulate each other.

People with similar togetherness needs are attracted to each other and tend to form long term relationships that will be balanced toward intense relationship fusion. One partner will take on the appearance of independence and differentiation,

when in reality, both have equivalent needs for togetherness and capacities to be a self. For example, one partner takes on the role of the dependent one, feeling vulnerable and frustrated in the need for closeness, while trying to please the other in the desire for approval and harmony. This person might compromise his/her beliefs, and might feel inadequate in defending thoughts and opinions. The other spouse might take the role of independence, with a cool lack of emotions. While not being aware of a need for closeness and approval, the independent one might overvalue him/herself and criticize the apparent inadequacy of the other. The stronger-appearing spouse will be in charge of formulating opinions and making decisions for the couple. This couple is demonstrating an equivalent emotional problem which is played out in opposite ways.

However, a more differentiated couple will be equally balanced in their level of individuality. While the need for togetherness is present, it is not so prominent that it impairs independent, individual functioning. While approval and attention by the other is desired, the self-image of the partners is not dependent on what each spouse thinks of the other. A differentiated

couple will be less emotionally reactive toward each other so that one can become anxious about a problem without the other resonating with the same anxiety.

"All people have some degree of unresolved emotional attachment to their parents. The lower the level of differentiation, the more intense the unresolved attachment" (Bowen, 1976, p. 84). People might handle the unresolved attachment by denial and isolation of the self while living close to the parents, or by leaving the geographical area, or by a combination of physical distance and emotional isolation. The person who runs away from his family is as emotionally dependent as the person who never leaves home.

Bowen (1978) believes that the emotional attachment between the spouses is identical to the emotional attachment that each spouse had in his or her family of origin. Couples who seek to complete themselves in each other have failed to resolve their relationships with their parents. Without the resolution of the emotional attachment to the family of origin, a person is not free to build a new relationship based on appreciation of the self and the other.

Bowen (1976) states that, "the level of

differentiation of a person is largely determined by the time he leaves the parental family and he attempts a life of his own. Thereafter, he tends to replicate the life-style from the parental family in all future relationships" (p. 74).

Statement of Purpose

Bowen (1966, 1976, 1978) states that husbands and wives are attracted to each other based on similar levels of the differentiation of self. The purpose of this study will be to compare the levels of differentiation of self in couples who have been married for less than one year. This would test Bowens's (1976) statement that:

Most spouses can have the closest and most open relationships in their adult lives during courtship. The fusion of the two pseudo-selves into a common self occurs at the time they commit themselves to each other permanently, whether it be the time of engagement, the wedding itself, or the time they establish their first home together (p. 79).

Empirical data will be gathered to determine whether husbands and wives, in the earliest stages of their committed relationship, have similar levels of differentiation of self.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

The following literature review is a sample of some of the theorists who have written on the concept of the differentiation of self.

Bowenian Theorists

Several theorists have repeated Bowen's concept that couples are attracted because of their similar level of differentiation. Among them is Aylmer (1986), who states that:

the relative ability of individuals and family systems to tolerate stress and maintain problem-solving functions (differentiation), and to handle relationship issues without triangling, are major determinants of how, who, and when individuals marry and how well spouses then deal with the problems of living in a committed intimate peer relationship (p. 108).

Kerr (1985) describes how, in a nuclear family system, the basic level of differentiation of each parent is the same, because people with similar levels of differentiation are attracted to each other. However, the differentiation level of the children may vary up or down to the degree that they are each caught up in the family's emotional dysfunction. Each child will be attracted to a partner with a similar basic level of differentiation so that the differentiation

level of the family units gradually increases or decreases through the passing generations.

Papero (1990) agrees that couples with a similar level of differentiation tend to be attracted to one another. He states that, "in the closeness of an intense relationship the emotional selves of each blend or fuse together into a common self, a 'we-ness'" (p. 51). The intensity of this common self is addressed by using mechanisms learned within each individual's relationship with his parents. These mechanisms are emotional distance, marital conflict, dysfunction in a spouse, and transmission of the problem to a child.

Bergman (1985) sees many couples in therapy who appear to be married to their families of origin rather than to their spouse. He follows Bowen's notion that spouses are matched equally with respect to differentiation of self. He states that:

if it appears that the husband is still married to his parents, remember that it was the wife who picked the husband who is still married to his parents. This gives the wife the opportunity to remain married to her parents, and if she is a good victim, she can additionally claim being victimized by the husband's emotional unavailability (p. 66).

Guerin, Fay, Burden, and Kautto (1987) redefine Bowen's concept as the process of partially freeing

oneself from the emotional chaos of one's family. Getting free requires analyzing one's own role as an active participant in relationship systems, instead of blaming problems on everyone but oneself. They use the term, "adaptive level of functioning" to provide a concept of self that is easily measured in the short term. They incorporate this term with the differentiation of self to provide a method to measure each family member's short-term and long-term functioning within the system. They define the adaptive level of functioning as, "the relative ability to maintain functioning in the areas of productivity, relationships, and physical and emotional well-being in the face of significant amounts of stress" (p. 123).

Waanders (1987) recognizes the tendency to choose partners who are at the same level of differentiation. He examines Bowen's concept of self differentiation within marriage in relation to the Judeo-Christian tradition of covenantal marriage.

In Genesis 2:24, one leaves father and mother, joins one's spouse and becomes "one flesh". So there is a leaving of one's family of origin, a sort of differentiation, and a forming of a new

unity. The term "one flesh" implies oneness, or sameness in the fusion sense. However, marriage is also based on the covenantal sense of righteousness, justice, loyalty, mercy, faithfulness and knowledge. Waanders (1987) states that:

The covenant notion is always two-sided with each side having its own integrity. There is a relational quality in which the two sides are joined and the joining is in the spirit of justice, loyalty and mercy which implies intergrity for each side of the covenant (p.106).

Waanders suggests an understanding of differentiation that would include an ethical framework. He would add to Bowen's differentiation of self scale an ethical dimension, that of the differentiated self for others. "Persons with this kind of selfhood can differentiate between feelings and objective reality and bring strength and maturity to their relationships, but they are also aware of a larger world of meaning and they find direction and purpose in that reality which transcends the self" (p. 109).

Personality Characteristics

Some studies of dyadic relationships have focused on the personalities of the individuals within the dyads. The differentiation of self has been a variable in these research studies.

Gilbert and Kelley (1985) compared the results of the Relationship Enhancement (RE) program to a Cognitive Relationship Enhancement (CRE) group to discover whether the emphasis on improved self-esteem of the CRE group would demonstrate greater success than the RE group. Changes in the differentiation of self were measured by the Differentiation of Self Scale (DOSS) developed by Kear (1978). Results showed that the CRE group experienced significant gains on the DOSS while the RE group experienced a slight decrease. Given these findings, it appears that the addition of cognitive restructuring techniques facilitates the development of differentiation of self in individual spouses. However, these subjects did not improve on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE).

Greene and Kelley (1985) concluded that although the CRE group became more differentiated, and autonomous, their more assertive behaviors may have threatened the other spouse. The more differentiated behavior may have threatened the spouse, who might react with displeasure or disapproval. Since people evaluate themselves as they think others are evaluating them, the reactions of the spouse may have delayed the

improvement in self-esteem until the spouse could adjust to the new behaviors.

Some studies have suggested that couples who are similar in personality traits have more satisfactory relationships. In a study by Grayson (1980), married and cohabiting couples were tested to determine the relationship between personality and satisfaction in marriage and long-term, non-marital relationships. Subjects were given the Adjective Check List (Gough, 1952), including Welsh's Scales of Intellegence and Origence (1975) and scales on the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976) and the Inventory of Family Feelings (Lowman, in press). The couples were divided into a Moderately Satisfied group and a Highly Satisfied group and were compared for average man-woman discrepancies on all 26 personality scales. For 19 of the 26 comparisons, the average difference between partners' scores proved higher for the Moderately Satisfied than the Highly Satisfied group. Even though the requirement of independent measures was not met, the sign test provided a rough approximation of the probability ($p > .02$) of one group exceeding the other in 19 or more of 26 instances. Then, high satisfaction and similar personality scores are associated. It was

concluded that the happiest couples generally tended to be more similar on traits than moderately satisfied partners.

Object Relations

Developmental theorists with a psychodynamic perspective, such as Margaret Mahler, have examined the processes of symbiosis and separation-individuation. Some have drawn a parallel to adult behavior and differentiation of self in relation to others.

Mahler, Pine, and Bergman (1975) studied mothers and infants during the first three years of life and described the process of separation-individuation. During an infant's first month, the autistic phase, the infant is concerned primarily with its own bodily needs and sensations. From two to six months of age, the symbiotic phase, the mother relieves the infant's tension through the nurturing activities of feeding, changing, holding and smiling. Good self-esteem is a by product of adequate care during this phase. Next, the infant engages in a gradual process of separation from the mother, renouncing the symbiotic fusion of infancy. If these stages are successfully completed, the self becomes well-differentiated and

internally integrated. "Failure to achieve separation and individuation undermines the development of a cohesive sense of self and a differentiated sense of identity, resulting in an overly intense emotional attachment to the family" (Nichols & Schwartz, 1991, p. 233).

Several studies (Bader & Pearson, 1983; Kovacs, 1983; Kovacs, 1988; Quadrio, 1986; Solomon, 1973) have used Mahler's model of the development of the child to describe the stages of development within a marriage. Kovacs (1983) states that, "in infancy and adolescence, the psychic structures of the individual evolve out of the separation-individuation process. In adulthood, separation-individuation becomes an evolutionary process through which the individual (in relation to a significant other) continues his/her development as an adult" (p. 188).

Kovacs (1988) describes six stages and tasks of marital development with tasks for each stage and transitions into the next, as well as characteristics of couples who get "stuck" in these stages. A case study is then presented to demonstrate these stages. Kovacs states that:

the therapist's data indicated that these two adults, as children, did not have their early needs met...and probably were not supported or encouraged in their movement

toward differentiation....Developmentally, both were struggling to differentiate in the marital relationship and were emotionally unable to overcome the fear of being abandoned (p. 152).

Quadrio (1986) describes how the stage of symbiosis and hatching applies to adults. There are adults who cannot progress from a state of blissful oneness to a happy interdependence. Instead they remain stuck at an undifferentiated level. "Such people may proceed from one love affair to another, constantly recapturing the bliss of symbiosis, constantly traumatised by the process of differentiation, by the painful, intolerable recognition that the lover is no longer part of the self" (p. 221). These people are constantly searching for a partner who is willing to engage in the same intense symbiosis, someone who has the same needs for symbiotic merger. "Such symbiotic couples do not present often for treatment--this in itself would represent a serious fragmentation of the system" (p. 221).

Chapter III

Methodology

Subjects

The subjects for this study were drawn from the marriage register roles of St. Louis County, Missouri, for November 9, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, December 2, 3, 4, and 9, 1991. Between these dates, 299 couples had registered for a marriage license. Each couple was sent an introductory letter (Appendix A), inviting them to participate in a study of mate selection. If they chose to participate, they were asked to return an enclosed post card to the researcher.

Sixty-two couples responded with the return post card. Of these couples, 45 participated in the study by completing the test and returning it to the researcher.

Materials

The 45 couples who agreed to participate in the study were sent an instructional letter (Appendix B), a consent form (Appendix C), and two questionnaires. The purpose of the first questionnaire (Appendix D), designed by the researcher, was to gather demographic data on the couple, including age, religion, racial background,

and length of marriage.

The second questionnaire (Appendix E) was the Differentiation of Self Scale (DOSS), developed by Kear (1978). In designing the test, the differentiation of self construct was conceptualized by Kear as having three factors: (1) separation of thinking and feeling systems, (2) emotional maturity, and (3) emotional autonomy. From these factors, a preliminary questionnaire of 72 questions was administered to 50 subjects. The data from this preliminary test:

indicated that there were there were six factors found in the construct. When examined for content, the following labels best indicate what the question clusters measured:

- I. Emotional Autonomy
 - II. Emotionality-Bodily Conversion
 - III. Familial Relationships
 - IV. Emotional Maturity
 - V. Concern About Self-Perception
 - VI. Avoidance of Emotional Intimacy
- (Kear, 1978, p. 35)

The selection of questions for the final test was based on two criteria. The first criterion used communality estimates as lower limit approximations of item reliability. For inclusion in the revised questionnaire, the item reliability (communality) had to be equal to or greater than .30. The second criterion used was significant factor loading, operationally defined for this study as a factor loading with an absolute value of

.40 or greater. Only those items with a communality value of .30 or greater and a factor loading with an absolute value of .40 or greater were deemed acceptable for use in the final instrument. Forty-one of the preliminary 72 questions qualified for inclusion in the revised DOSS. The final list of 41 questions, as contained in Appendix D, indicates how each of the six factors is reflected in the questions.

The DOSS is a 41-item Likert-type scale which requires the subject to respond by circling a number from 1 to 5 to describe how much he or she believes the statement is like or unlike him or her. Therefore, the highest possible total score is 205 and the lowest possible score is 41. The time needed to complete the questionnaire was approximately 15 minutes.

Design

With the data from the DOSS, the Pearson product moment correlation was calculated to determine the correlation coefficient between the marital pairs. The alpha level for this test was 0.05. The mean, range, and standard deviation were calculated for the husbands' and wives' scores. Additionally, the mean, range and standard

deviation were calculated for the differences between the scores for each marital dyad.

Procedure

The 62 couples who consented to participate in the study were sent a packet containing a consent form, a demographics data sheet and the DOSS questionnaire. The DOSS questionnaires were coded solely by an identifying number (eg. husband 1 or wife 1) and were not attached to the demographics form or the consent form to insure the anonymity of the subjects.

The couples then completed the DOSS questionnaire and returned the materials to the researcher in an enclosed return envelope. Of the 62 packets that were sent, 45 couples completed the questionnaires and returned them to the researcher.

Results

All the respondents reported being married from 2 to 3 1/2 months. Thirty-five couples (77.8%) were Caucasian, four couples (8.9%) were Native American, and one couple did not answer the question about their race. In four couples (8.9%), the husband and wife were of different races and one couple reported themselves as "other". Of the

45 couples that responded to the questionnaire, none were Black or Hispanic.

Among the 45 couples, 25 (55.6%) declared themselves from the same religion and 20 couples (44.4%) were of different religions. Of the group that indicated the same religion, 12 were Catholic, and 13 were Protestant.

Twenty-one couples (46.7%) indicated their ages as both being in their 20's, 16 couples (35.6%) indicated that either one or both were between the age of 30 and 39, seven couples (15.6%) indicated that one or both were between the age of 40 and 49, and the oldest respondents were a husband who was 71 and a wife who was 61 years of age.

An analysis of the data collected relative to the principle objective of the study indicates that there is no significant relationship between the differentiation of self levels within married couples. The correlation between the scores for husbands and wives ($r = .29244$, $p < .05$) suggests that 8.55% of the variability in the wives's (X) scores might be accounted for by the husbands's (Y) scores. This is not a high enough score to suggest a direct relationship.

The mean, range and standard deviation for the husbands' and wives' scores are listed in Table 1.

Scores from the DOSS questionnaire are included in Appendix F.

Table 1
Means, Range & Standard Deviation for Scores of Husbands and Wives on the DOSS

| | <u>Husbands</u> | <u>Wives</u> |
|--------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Mean | 147.17778 | 146.13333 |
| Range | 116-188 | 117-177 |
| Standard Deviation | 14.95188 | 14.64675 |

The range of the differences between the husbands' and wives' scores was from 0 to 37. The mean difference and standard deviation of the differences were 14.28889 and 10.1144.

Chapter IV

Discussion

The specific objective of this study was to demonstrate that people choose spouses who are at a similar level of differentiation of self. The analysis of the data, however, does not indicate a significant relationship between differentiation of self in each husband-wife dyad. The results of the present study can not give empirical validation to the Bowen theory.

Limitations of this study must be taken into consideration when viewing the results and conclusions drawn from them. One limitation is in the method of collecting the data. Subjects in the study were contacted entirely by mail with no other connection between the researcher and the subjects. It therefore cannot be verified as to who filled them out or under what conditions. If the questionnaires were filled out with both spouses working on them together or even in the same room, there may have been comparisons of answers or other factors which may have skewed the responses.

The data may also be limited by the use of a Likert scale. The scale offered 5 choices for every question. However, an individual's answers

could more accurately be reflected by an infinite number of choices along the scale. Indeed, 4 of the respondents wrote notes explaining and qualifying their answers.

This study was designed to seek subjects from the marriage register roles in an effort to gather subjects from a a broadly representative sample of racial and religious backgrounds. However, the people that chose to participate in the study were mainly Caucasian in race, and Protestant or Catholic in religion. No Blacks or Hispanics, or people of "other" races chose to participate. Therefore, the sample is not representative of the population in general.

Implications of the Research

Even though this study does not indicate a similarity in level of differentiation between husbands and wives, the concept of differentiation of self can still be useful in both premarital instruction and counseling, and in marriage counseling. If couples considering marriage are tested for their levels of differentiation, they can be helped to understand the contingencies for a successful marriage, as well as helping them to see potential difficulties in the relationship.

Premarital counseling could help the two individuals to reach a more equal level of differentiation or to have them strive to increase their individual levels of differentiation, which might help to ensure a successful marriage.

In marriage counseling, determining the level of differentiation in the partners might open new avenues of communication and understanding.

Suggestions for Further Research

There are several areas in which further research concerning the differentiation of self might be fruitful. It might be questioned whether cultural, ethnic, or religious factors influence differentiation in men and women.

Other fruitful research might include a correlation of differentiation of self with various personality types.

Another area of investigation concerning differentiation would be a longitudinal study employing married couples. This would involve determining the level of each spouses' differentiation at the beginning of the union and then following the couple over a period of years, retesting for differentiation at selected intervals. It would be quite useful to compare

couples who are at various levels of differentiation to see if the marriages of more differentiated individuals are more successful than the relationships of couples with lower levels of differentiation. It would also be fruitful to see whether or not an individual's level of differentiation of self changes over time, and if couples with more similar levels of differentiation have more stable, more successful relationships than do those with unequal levels of differentiation for the two spouses.

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APPENDICES

APPENDICES

January 2, 1957

Dear Mr. [Name],
I am writing you today to inform you of the results of the survey conducted by the [Organization]. The survey was held on [Date] and the results are as follows: [Details of survey results]

APPENDIX A

The following table shows the results of the survey. The table is divided into two columns: [Column 1] and [Column 2]. The rows represent the different categories of the survey. The data is as follows: [Table content]

Introductory Letter

January 8, 1992

Dear Newlyweds:

As a part of the completion of my master's degree in psychology at Lindenwood College, I am conducting a study of newly married couples. The purpose of the study is to see if men and women who fall in love and get married are similar or different in their attitudes and opinions about life. I would like to ask for your help in the investigation of this idea.

The kind of help I need would take about 10 minutes of your free time at home. If you agree to participate in the study, I will send to you a short questionnaire for each of you to fill out. The questionnaire will ask you to rate yourself on such statements as, "I am very aware of my strengths and weaknesses."

I will also send a brief questionnaire for information about the length of time you have been married, your age and occupation. A postage-paid envelope will be included for you to return the questionnaires to me.

For your participation in this study, I will send you \$5.00 in cash as soon as I receive the completed questionnaires.

If you would like to participate in this study, please mail the enclosed postcard by no later than January 20, 1992. I will send a packet to you which will include the questionnaire for each of you to fill out, a consent form which will give me permission to use the data in my study, and a postage paid return envelope.

Please consider being a part of this historic study and return the post card before January 20th.

With many thanks,

P. Galantowicz

APPENDIX B

to participate
I hope that
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together
For
There will also be a brief

consent form, and to
return the completed papers.
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The data from the study
to look at the
results of the study. Your data will be strictly
and the data will be strictly
results of the study will be
I will be gathering
when completed, the results
and placed on the shelf

Consent Form

to the "DOCS", the
signing the consent
is the procedure
received for

Instructional Letter

Thank you for your willingness to participate in my study of newly married couples. I hope that this study will be an important contribution to the understanding of what factors draw people together in a marital relationship.

Enclosed in this packet are two questionnaires, entitled "DOSS", one for the husband and one for the wife to fill out. There will also be a brief demographics questionnaire, a consent form, and an envelope in which to return the completed papers.

The purpose of the consent form is to give me permission to use the data from the "DOSS" in the thesis. The consent form states that I will be responsible for protecting the privacy of the participants in this study. Your name will not be on the questionnaires and the data will be strictly confidential. The results of the study will be a summary of numerical data that I will be gathering from many couples. When completed, the master's thesis will be bound and placed on the shelves at the library at Lindenwood College.

After completing the "DOSS", the demographics questionnaire, and signing the consent form, please return the papers in the enclosed envelope. As soon as I have received them, I will send to you

\$5.00 in cash as a gift in gratitude to you for participating in this project.

Sincerely,

P. Galantowicz

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| Chapter X | 90 |
| Chapter XI | 100 |
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| Chapter XV | 140 |
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APPENDIX C

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| Table XI | 100 |
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| Table XIII | 120 |
| Table XIV | 130 |
| Table XV | 140 |
| Table XVI | 150 |
| Table XVII | 160 |
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| Table XIX | 180 |
| Table XX | 190 |
| Table XXI | 200 |
| Table XXII | 210 |
| Table XXIII | 220 |
| Table XXIV | 230 |
| Table XXV | 240 |
| Table XXVI | 250 |
| Table XXVII | 260 |
| Table XXVIII | 270 |
| Table XXIX | 280 |
| Table XXX | 290 |
| Table XXXI | 300 |
| Table XXXII | 310 |
| Table XXXIII | 320 |
| Table XXXIV | 330 |
| Table XXXV | 340 |
| Table XXXVI | 350 |
| Table XXXVII | 360 |
| Table XXXVIII | 370 |
| Table XXXIX | 380 |
| Table XL | 390 |
| Table XLI | 400 |
| Table XLII | 410 |
| Table XLIII | 420 |
| Table XLIV | 430 |
| Table XLV | 440 |
| Table XLVI | 450 |
| Table XLVII | 460 |
| Table XLVIII | 470 |
| Table XLIX | 480 |
| Table XLX | 490 |
| Table XLXI | 500 |
| Table XLXII | 510 |
| Table XLXIII | 520 |
| Table XLXIV | 530 |
| Table XLXV | 540 |
| Table XLXVI | 550 |
| Table XLXVII | 560 |
| Table XLXVIII | 570 |
| Table XLXIX | 580 |
| Table XLXX | 590 |
| Table XLXXI | 600 |
| Table XLXXII | 610 |
| Table XLXXIII | 620 |
| Table XLXXIV | 630 |
| Table XLXXV | 640 |
| Table XLXXVI | 650 |
| Table XLXXVII | 660 |
| Table XLXXVIII | 670 |
| Table XLXXIX | 680 |
| Table XLXXX | 690 |
| Table XLXXXI | 700 |
| Table XLXXXII | 710 |
| Table XLXXXIII | 720 |
| Table XLXXXIV | 730 |
| Table XLXXXV | 740 |
| Table XLXXXVI | 750 |
| Table XLXXXVII | 760 |
| Table XLXXXVIII | 770 |
| Table XLXXXIX | 780 |
| Table XLXXXX | 790 |
| Table XLXXXXI | 800 |
| Table XLXXXXII | 810 |
| Table XLXXXXIII | 820 |
| Table XLXXXXIV | 830 |
| Table XLXXXXV | 840 |
| Table XLXXXXVI | 850 |
| Table XLXXXXVII | 860 |
| Table XLXXXXVIII | 870 |
| Table XLXXXXIX | 880 |
| Table XLXXXXX | 890 |
| Table XLXXXXXI | 900 |
| Table XLXXXXXII | 910 |
| Table XLXXXXXIII | 920 |
| Table XLXXXXXIV | 930 |
| Table XLXXXXXV | 940 |
| Table XLXXXXXVI | 950 |
| Table XLXXXXXVII | 960 |
| Table XLXXXXXVIII | 970 |
| Table XLXXXXXIX | 980 |
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(viii)

Chapter

CONSENT FORM

I give my permission for Peggy Galantowicz to use the data she collects from my answers to the questionnaires for the purposes of her research. I understand that I will not be identified individually in her study and that she has the responsibility to protect my privacy. I understand that the results of the study will be available both to me and the general public in the form of an unpublished thesis.

Signed,

(wife)

(husband)

(today's date)

DEPRECIATION SCHEDULE

1. Description of Property
 2. Date of Acquisition
 3. Original Basis
 4. Depreciation Method
 5. Estimated Useful Life
 6. Residual Value

APPENDIX D

1. Description of Property
 2. Date of Acquisition
 3. Original Basis
 4. Depreciation Method
 5. Estimated Useful Life
 6. Residual Value

Demographics Questionnaire

HUSBAND:

Age-----

Religion-----

Ethnic background (circle one):

Caucasian Black Hispanic

Native American Other:

WIFE:

Age-----

Religion-----

Ethnic background (circle one):

Caucasian Black Hispanic

Native American Other:

How many months have you been married?-----

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APPENDIX E

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DOSS Questionnaire



Below you will find a set of statements, each followed by the numbers from 1 to 5. Please read each statement carefully, and if you think it is very much like the way you think, circle 5. If, however, you feel that it is very much unlike you, then circle 1. Use the other numbers if the statements are a little like you (2), somewhat like you (3), or much like you (4). There are no right or wrong answers. In answering the statements, think about how you are, and have been most of your life, not just the way you are now. Please read and answer all questions.

- 1.*I have trouble with communication in close relationships. (I and VI)**
2. When I am emotionally upset I often feel sick. (II)
3. When I am emotionally upset I get depressed. (II)
4. My teenage years were filled with emotional difficulties. (III)
5. I like visiting with my family. (III)
6. My life seems to go from one crisis to another. (I)
7. When I become tense or nervous, I keep to myself. (VI)
8. I will change or ignore my beliefs if it will help me to get something I want. (VI)
9. I am very concerned about approval and love. (II)
10. I join groups more to be with others, than because I believe in the cause. (I)
11. I am always bothered by anxiety. (II)
12. When there is tension between me and somebody else, I "clam up" and try to avoid talking with them. (VI)

13. I believe that luck is an important part of my life. (IV)
14. I avoid close emotional relationships. (VI)
15. I am very aware of my strengths and weaknesses. (IV)
16. How I feel about myself depends a lot on how others feel about me. (I and V)
17. I have had more than my share of emotional and physical problems. (V)
18. The people in my family have been open and honest with each other. (III)
19. I am easily upset. (II)
20. I often depend on others to help me when I am in a crisis. (I)
21. Close emotional relationships provide me with a sense of security. (II)
22. When I feel myself getting emotionally close to someone I feel like running away, or ending the relationship. (VI)
23. When I make a decision I often worry about the disapproval of others. (I)
24. My knowing that I have done a good job is more important than the praise of others. (V)
25. I get very upset over rejection or lack of love. (II)
26. I have a well defined set of values and beliefs. (IV)
27. I have no trouble establishing close relationships with others. (VI)
28. If I fight with somebody close to me I worry about it for quite awhile. (II)
29. I give in to group pressure easily. (I)
30. I tend to deal with emotional problems by myself, rather than getting help from others. (VI)

31. When I was growing up there seemed to be a lot of conflict and tension in my family. (III)
32. I will change my opinions to avoid arguments with people. (I)
33. A lot of my energy goes into being what other people want me to be. (I)
34. I am emotionally mature. (IV)
35. My relationship with my parents has been very good. (III)
36. I am very sure of my masculinity (femininity). (V)
37. As a child, I was pretty independent from my parents. (I)
38. I have control over my life. (IV)
39. I have set very clear and detailed goals for myself. (IV)
40. During a crisis I can "keep my head" and figure out a logical solution to the problem. (V)
41. I avoid saying things that might start arguments. (V)

* Underscored items are reverse scored, i.e., 1 is scored as 5, 2 is scored as 4, and 5 is scored as 1, 4 is scored as 2.

** The Roman numerals indicate which of the six factors is reflected by the question.

Number

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APPENDIX F

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DOSS Data

| <u>Couple #</u> | <u>Husband (Y)</u> | <u>Wife (X)</u> |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | 150 | 146 |
| 2 | 134 | 117 |
| 3 | 141 | 145 |
| 4 | 152 | 141 |
| 5 | 163 | 162 |
| 6 | 161 | 153 |
| 7 | 136 | 121 |
| 8 | 155 | 177 |
| 9 | 152 | 141 |
| 10 | 165 | 164 |
| 11 | 141 | 149 |
| 12 | 146 | 138 |
| 13 | 116 | 126 |
| 14 | 131 | 148 |
| 15 | 150 | 152 |
| 16 | 121 | 140 |
| 17 | 188 | 161 |
| 18 | 168 | 153 |
| 19 | 147 | 158 |
| 20 | 127 | 169 |
| 21 | 138 | 139 |
| 22 | 149 | 136 |
| 23 | 160 | 149 |
| 24 | 156 | 125 |
| 25 | 172 | 152 |
| 26 | 159 | 133 |
| 27 | 149 | 149 |
| 28 | 154 | 158 |
| 29 | 145 | 142 |
| 30 | 165 | 159 |
| 31 | 117 | 131 |
| 32 | 157 | 166 |
| 33 | 144 | 170 |
| 34 | 122 | 152 |
| 35 | 144 | 128 |
| 36 | 133 | 163 |
| 37 | 157 | 120 |
| 38 | 152 | 150 |
| 39 | 145 | 132 |
| 40 | 150 | 130 |
| 41 | 131 | 149 |
| 42 | 162 | 146 |
| 43 | 144 | 154 |
| 44 | 137 | 158 |
| 45 | 137 | 124 |