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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

DUAL-COUNSELLOR COUPLES' PERSPECTIVES ON WORKING TOGETHER

BY

MYRNA L. HIEBERT

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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Myrna Hiebert
#403 10547-83 Ave.
Edmonton, AB
T6E 2E1

Date: September 9, 1991

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THE UNDERSIGNED CERTIFY THAT THEY HAVE READ, AND RECOMMEND TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH FOR ACCEPTANCE, A THESIS ENTITLED DUAL-COUNSELLOR COUPLES' PERSPECTIVES ON WORKING TOGETHER SUBMITTED BY MYRNA HIEBERT IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION IN COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY.

Dr. W. J. Hague

Dr. L. L. Stewin

Dr. B. Munro

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Dedicated to my friend and husband Ron

whose love and support inspired the topic of this thesis

and encouraged me throughout the research and writing process.

Thank you!

Abstract

Twelve dual-counsellor couples were asked by means of an open-ended questionnaire about their perspectives on working together in counselling or related activities. The response rate was 87.5%. All subjects indicated that they have worked as co-leaders or co-counsellors at some time, although not all work together at present.

Responses were subjected to content analysis. Several themes emerged relating to the advantages and disadvantages of co-counselling for both the counselling couple and their clients, factors affecting the process of working together, and issues involved in the decision about working together. Following analysis of the questionnaire responses, one couple participated in an interview which asked about the themes which had arisen and the ways these themes appear to be related.

As predicted, the value of having a real couple as a model emerged as a special advantage for clients seeing a co-counselling couple. The most important theme for the married co-counsellors appears to be their relationship to each other. Working together can strengthen the couple's relationship or create significant problems depending on how issues such as differences, complementarity, competition, and communication are dealt with. An unanticipated theme was that many dual-counsellor couples who work together choose to do so partly because it is fun.

Advice emerging for couples working together or thinking of working together suggests that it is necessary to have and maintain a strong relationship, communicating well and resolving any problems as they arise. Couples who have shared goals and values, enjoy being together, and who are able to use their

differences as a basis for complementarity rather than competition appear to be more likely to work together successfully. Couples who decide to work together will also have to find a comfortable balance of work together and apart and determine how to deal with the overlap of work and home.

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Introduction

My interest in the topic of married couples doing co-counselling grew out of my personal dream of someday working in a counselling setting with my husband. Initially my reasoning focused on the special advantages that seemed likely to emerge when a married couple does co-counselling, particularly working with couples and families. As I thought further, it also appeared that there might be unique disadvantages to working as a co-therapist or co-leader with one's spouse. I began to wonder whether there are married couples working together in counselling and if so how their experiences in this area compared with what I suspected it might be like.

When I first began to dream of doing co-counselling with my husband, I pictured us as co-therapists modelling communication skills and sharing some of our experiences of marriage with our clients. I thought that a married co-therapy team would be a more effective model because clients know that the relationship is real and because seeing a married couple working together would encourage them. Another possible advantage that I saw to doing co-therapy with my spouse is that it might be easier to begin since it is not necessary to build an entirely new relationship; we already know each other well, understand each other's styles, and have learned to communicate together.

While the possible advantages of working as a married co-therapy team were uppermost in my mind, I also suspected that there might be unique disadvantages to this arrangement. The main problem that I thought of was that working with the same person you go home with might become "too much of a

good thing", as each person feels a need for individuality and space. When I mentioned the topic of married co-counselling to others, two drawbacks which were commonly raised were financial issues related to paying two counsellors and the possibility of competition between partners.

With both men and women working in counselling and related fields, it seemed likely that there would be dual-counsellor couples, that is, married couples where both partners work in a counselling field. With all of the reasons that I saw for trying counselling together, I wondered if any couples had done so. A perusal of the literature indicated that there are couples who work together as co-therapists and co-leaders, but there is not a great deal written about this special brand of co-therapy or special type of dual-career couple.

I decided to approach dual-counsellor couples who could potentially work together and ask them about their perspectives on working together in the counselling area. I wanted to find out their views on two general questions: a) what are the advantages and disadvantages of having married counsellors working together? and b) what factors affect the process of working together; what makes it better or worse? I also wondered how couples decide about whether to work together, how much to work together, and what types of shared work to do.

Ultimately, I hoped to gather information about co-counselling and co-leading with one's spouse for two main reasons. I thought that this would allow those couples who already work in this way to share and compare experiences. I also hoped that those couples who are thinking of working together can learn from those who have gone before and know what issues to consider rather than

having to discover everything anew.

Literature Review

Introduction

In exploring the issues affecting married couples in which both partners do counselling and looking at their attitudes towards working together, there are two large branches of literature which need to be dealt with. The first branch is the writings on dual-career couples in all types of careers. Coordinated-career couples, which are dual-career couples with some degree of commonality or overlap between the two careers, are of particular interest. The other branch is the co-therapy literature, aimed primarily at unmarried co-therapists but giving clues about what sort of special issues may face a couple who do this type of work. Finally, these two branches join in a small body of literature which looks specifically at married co-counsellors.

Dual-Career Couples

The term "dual-career couple" was coined to designate a couple in which both the husband and wife have careers. A career is usually defined more narrowly than just any job, being instead a "demanding occupational role" (Holmstrom, 1972, p. 1) or work of an "intrinsically demanding character" (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1976, p. 9). Shaevitz and Shaevitz (1980) have expanded the term to include more than just couples with full-time careers, saying instead: "a two career relationship is one in which both partners have a significant commitment, full time or part time, to a role outside the home" (p. 12). Most of the dual-counsellor couples who are subjects for this thesis would fit the more conservative definitions and all would fit Shaevitz and Shaevitz's. It is

therefore useful to turn to the dual-career literature to discover some of the factors which may be affecting the couples in my present study.

The Rapoports were among the first to study dual-career families in the 1960s. They re-examined this topic in the 1970s (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1976). From an in depth study made of five families where both partners had successfully combined career and family, the Rapoports identify five general categories of dilemmas facing the dual-career couple and their families in the 1960s and 1970s which may still be relevant to dual-career couples today: overload dilemmas, normative dilemmas, identity dilemmas, social network dilemmas, and role-cycling dilemmas. Sakaran (1986) picks up on Rapoports' theory and agrees with them that these five dilemmas are faced by all nontraditional couples. Many of the specific issues addressed by other authors can also be understood to fall within and explain these five general dilemmas. A brief look at these is helpful in providing background about the issues which are likely to face all of the couples studied in this thesis.

Overload dilemmas occur as the couple has to deal with the domestic work load following a full work day away from home for each of them. Shaevitz and Shaevitz (1980) comment: "if you will accept as Basic Fact Number One the inevitability of 'infectious exhaustion,' you are on your way to becoming a more successful, happier two-career couple" (p. 18). One common way of dealing with this problem produces another in its place, as working women overcompensate for being away from home. They attempt to perform all of the traditional housewife's tasks at home as well as pursuing their careers; many are not able to

keep up the pace and eventually burn out (Nadelson and Nadelson, 1980).

Normative dilemmas result when the couple perceives their choices involved in following a dual-career path to be conflicting with pressures to follow societal norms. The Nadelsons (1980) comment that a dual-career couple can cope with their situation from within a traditional sex role division of labour model or choose a nontraditional or egalitarian approach and that the normative pressures will be greater with the latter choices. At the time of their writing, they found that social support for women with careers and men performing home making tasks was still not strong. Not only is it possible that the couple may experience stress because of normative pressure from society, but their children may also be confused by the differences they see between home, community, and media (Nadelson and Nadelson, 1980). It is not clear how much of this problem still remains in 1991; it is likely to vary depending on the particular subsection of society with which the dual-career couple and family interacts. As couples who grew up in dual-career families enter upon their own dual-career marriage they are likely to face different types of pressures than their parents did.

Identity dilemmas stem from the conflict between an individual's conception of his or her appropriate sex-roles and his or her current wishes. Just as colleagues, friends, family, and the community may have sex-role expectations which can pressure the dual-career couple, each member of the couple has internalized societal expectations to some degree and may experience confusion about her or his identity in the process of integrating conflicting self-images.

Social network dilemmas involve the struggle of the busy dual-career

couple as they try to deal with social activities and extended family in light of demanding schedules. Nadelson and Nadelson (1980) comment that the problem of scheduling for two partners with demanding career roles is prominent, constant, and "without solution in the current contemporary context" (p. 105). Rapoport and Rapoport (1976) found that some solutions of the couples they studied were to cut back on some social activities and to form their friendships on a couple basis.

Role-cycling dilemmas occur when "at different stages in their life-, marriage- and career-cycles, changes in a couples' priorities may occur" (Gowler and Legge, 1978, p. 53) leading to conflicts or what Gowler and Legge call the break down of hidden contracts. Rapoports divide role-cycling dilemmas into two categories: the career-family dilemma and the dual-career dilemma. The career-family dilemma involves conflicts between the demands of each partner's occupational roles and family roles. The dual-career dilemma involves conflicts between the demands of the occupational roles of the wife and those of the husband. One example of the career-family dilemma would be readjusting work and family roles following the birth of a child. One commonly discussed example of a dual-career dilemma arises when one partner gets an offer for advancement conditional upon a move which would hurt the career of the other partner (Nadelson and Nadelson, 1980; Sakaran, 1986). The struggle to find two "right" jobs in close proximity is another dual-career dilemma (Matthews and Matthews, 1978).

Sakaran (1986) identifies another dilemma which appears to fall

somewhere between Rapoports' normative and identity dilemmas, perhaps also affecting how much of a problem role-cycle dilemmas cause: that is, how to integrate the central life interests and sex-role orientations of the two partners in a dual-career marriage. She suggests that when there is a "fit" between wife and husband "quality of life" will be high while large incompatibilities in aspirations and sex-role orientations can lead either to divorce or to the wife giving up her career. While Sakaran's values are quite evident in her theory, the point that the couple must not only deal with external and personal pressures, but also reach individual identities and roles which are compatible is a reasonable one.

Another important concept in looking at the dilemmas and problems faced by dual-career couples is competition. Many authors address this issue but conclusions are still tentative. There appears to be a great deal of individual variation in terms of the extent to which competition is a problem for dual-career couples. Nadelson and Nadelson (1980) state that "competition is also an important dimension in dual-career couples. It may be intensified in dual-career marriages where many activities are shared" (p. 100). They suggest that competition may be overt or covert and may stimulate productivity or lead to tension and distress. Sakaran (1986) also sees competition as a potential source of stress for the dual-career couple, particularly if the wife is more successful than her husband or if both are in a similar career stage where each feels a need to prove himself or herself. Holmstrom (1972) explores the issue of competition within 20 dual-career couples. She says that most of her couples said they did not feel competitive toward each other. She found that it was possible for only

one member of a couple to feel competitive; in her study this was more often the husband. Where there was competitiveness, it did not correlate with similarity of activities; the focus of competition could utilize direct or indirect measures of comparison. Holmstrom concluded that the level of competition within a dual-career marriage depends upon whether the couple defines their relationship in competitive or non-competitive terms.

While dual-career couples face dilemmas and problems as outlined above, authors agree that there are also gains, benefits, or advantages to a dual-career lifestyle. There is general agreement that working brings personal fulfilment for the wife (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1976). Shaevitz and Shaevitz (1980) suggest that just as the wives are enriched by being outside the home the husbands are enriched by greater involvement within the home. Rapoports found that husbands may benefit vicariously from their wives' achievements, as wives traditionally have from their husbands' achievements. There is a potential for strong happy marriages not only because each individual is more fulfilled but also because the couple is given more ground for sharing. Nadelson and Nadelson (1980) indicate two rewards within a dual-career marriage: the opportunity for "sharing with one's 'best friend,' and being able to trade 'war stories'" (p. 101). Shaevitz and Shaevitz (1980) agree that working couples are often closer intellectual companions than are traditional couples. A higher family income is also a plus for a number of reasons, including its effect on standard of living, its role in symbolizing recognition of the wife's work, and the higher social status it can bring (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1976, Sakaran, 1986). It has been suggested

that children in a dual-career family may benefit and even have higher career goals because independence and resourcefulness are encouraged by the dual-career structure (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1976, Shaevitz and Shaevitz, 1980). Shaevitz and Shaevitz add that dual-career couples tend to have a potential for a wider range of friendships. They also point out that with both members of the couple having independent means of support, long-term illness or death of one partner will have less of an impact on the family and may give each partner greater flexibility in terms of changing jobs or returning to school. The extent to which any of these advantages are valued by an individual couple will vary.

Coordinated-Career Couples

Looking at issues common to all dual-career couples provides a good foundation for studying couples who do similar work or work together. However, it is also necessary to discover how couples with related careers may differ from other dual-career couples. Butler and Paisley (1980), a dual-career couple themselves, have done research on what they have termed "coordinated-career couples". They define the coordinated-career couple as one in which "the couple chooses to work together in the same field or in another arrangement that causes their work activities to overlap" (p. 207). They set out four categories of coordinated careers based on whether the couple have the same or different specialties and work in the same or different institutions: 1) "alter ego coordination" where the couple share both specialty and institution; 2) "institutional coordination" where they have different specialties within the same institution; 3) "specialty coordination" where partners have the same specialties

but work in different institutions; and 4) "complementary role coordination" where they have different specialties and generally work within different institutions but each persons' career still contributes to the other's success or to joint ventures. One interesting example of this final type of coordinated-career couple is Mitchell and Esther Fisher (1982), a lawyer and marriage therapist who cooperate in providing service to divorcing couples. They are also trying to teach others to provide the same type of service. This coordinated-career taxonomy is helpful in pointing out some of the variety which is possible within a coordinated-career situation but does not discriminate between those coordinated-career couples who work together directly, and those who work separately toward a shared goal. Butler and Paisley tried to look for patterns or strategies that these couple followed, however they did not find clear patterns. They found some couples moving towards greater convergence of their two careers while others moved in more divergent directions. They suggest that for some couples there are be more benefits to having a more closely coordinated career:

> Although roughly equal numbers of couples are moving toward convergence and divergence, there are indications in the data that convergence is a better goal if couples are temperamentally suited for it. All the case histories were positive about coordinated careers in principle, but couples sharing both specialty and institutional affiliation were more likely to mention the gratification of their work and less likely to mention the exhaustion brought on by jobs, home, children and the like. These "same-same" couples also had the highest joint productivity in the publication histories (p. 227-228).

Examples of coordinated-career couples appear to be becoming more common since Rapoports (1971, 1976) wrote about the Bensons, married architects in a private partnership based in their home. The Rapoports propose

two main issues which may pose more problems for a couple working together than for dual-career couples who do not work together: the overlapping of work and family life, and competition. Of these, the Bensons report difficulties only with the former; however, the Rapoports assume that "one of the hazards of a couple relationship where both persons are in the same profession is competitiveness" (p. 145) and go on to explore how the Bensons avoid competition. Perhaps the Rapoports have struggled with competition within their personal experiences working together and base their assumption of the importance of competition more on this; certainly there is not strong evidence within the Bensons' comments to justify the emphasis placed on this issue.

A look at the authors of literature on dual-career couples demonstrates another type of coordinated-career couple as it becomes clear that much of the writing in this area is done by married teams of psychologists or sociologists. Married co-authors of other literature, for example psychological self-help books, are also fairly common. While much writing by couples is trying to deal with some other topic than the authors' personal experiences, there are times when the authors comment on what working together is like. From these we can get clues about potentially important issues for couples working closely together. For example, Bryson and Bryson (1978), co-editors and part authors of a special edition of Psychology of Women Quarterly, commented that putting this issue together was both difficult and rewarding. They said that it was more stressful editing each others work than performing some of the less formal tasks they have had as colleagues because, "the existence of an official (although reciprocal)

status differential, however transitory, is not something that either of us accepted easily" (p. 8).

One interesting study (Bryson, Bryson, Licht and Licht, 1976) of couples in the same field looked at 200 professional couples where both wife and husband are members of the American Psychological Association (APA). Wives and husbands from these couples were compared with each other and with control groups of male and female APA members who are not married to an APA member. Comparisons were made on measures of productivity, job status, and satisfaction. Productivity in terms of publications, papers presented, and grants received, was highest for the husbands from the married professional pairs in terms of all measures. While the wives were less productive than the husbands, they far exceeded the female controls in all areas. It appears that for psychologists, having a spouse in the same field may have advantages in terms of productivity, but it does not necessarily lead to equal productivity for both partners. The wives generally reported the less satisfaction with their careers than did the other groups. Their responses were closest to those of the married women in the control group; indicating perhaps that low career satisfaction for women is related to being married rather than just to being married to someone in the same field. Husbands were more likely than wives to report the advantages of being a member of a professional pair. While this survey involves only correlational findings, some of the questions attempted to discover what factors may be involved in explaining the lower productivity and satisfaction among psychologist wives in comparison to their husbands. Many of these issues

are the same as those affecting other dual career couples: difficulties for wives finding work within a geographical area imposed by their husbands work, career-family and dual-career dilemmas resolved in favour of valuing the husband's career and the wife's domestic responsibilities. What appears to be an additional issue for these shared field couples is the institutional discrimination from anti-nepotism policies and the like.

Another subcategory of coordinated-career couples which may have some special contributions to make in terms of issues affecting dual-counsellor couples is dual-clergy couples. Because of the nature of their work, dual-clergy couples may have more in common with dual-counsellor couples than do some other dual-career couples. Since many clergy do at least some counselling, they may even be considered a special part of the counselling couple population. However, they will be considered separately here because the emphasis of studies on dual-clergy couples (Rallings & Pratto, 1984, Kieren & Munro, 1988) has not been primarily on counselling roles. Clergy roles have been called "greedy" or "absorptive" because they "demand a high investment of the person's resources. Jobs like this involve the whole person and intrude on all aspects of the person's life" (Kieren & Munro, 1988, p. 240). This absorptiveness has in the past meant that when the husband in a family was a clergyman, his wife was often drawn in to a supportive role to the extent that they could be said to have a "two-person single career". Kieren and Munro found that couples they studied found both advantages and disadvantages to having both members in the inevitably greedy clergy role. The main advantages cited were complementarity and mutual

support. However, they said that their relationships experienced strain because of the absorptiveness of their work, leading to time crunches and a lack of boundaries between work and the rest of life. They also found that congregations and other pastors had difficulties understanding or accepting them. A final strain on their relationships was the difficulty of switching from occupational roles into wife-husband roles. Because of some of the similarities between pastoral and counselling roles, it seems likely that these issues will affect dual-counselling couples.

Co-therapy

In looking at the possible benefits and drawbacks of working as a married co-therapy team, it is logical to first explore the advantages and disadvantages of co-therapy in general. Many of the usual advantages and disadvantages of co-therapy are likely to apply to a married co-therapy team but some may not. In sorting out the logical similarities and differences between co-therapists who are married to each other and those who are not, we will begin to discover issues which may appear as married therapists discuss the question of working together.

Co-therapy is usually done within the context of either group therapy or marriage and family therapy. It is frequently discussed in writings from both of these areas. The advantages and disadvantages listed by different authors do not correspond entirely but there is considerable agreement.

There are advantages to co-therapy for both the clients and the therapists. In a positive co-therapy situation, the co-therapists work as a team and each is a source of support for the other. With this mutual support, the team is able to

work within a complex situation where one therapist alone might feel over powered or become enmeshed with the family or group and lose objectivity. Co-therapy provides each therapist greater flexibility or "mobility" (Napier and Whitaker, 1972) including the freedom to move in and out of various roles and to have different levels of emotional involvement at different times. It enables two therapists with different strengths and weaknesses, professionally and/or personally, to complement and balance each other. With its flexibility and complementarity, the process of co-therapy has been compared to a tennis game in which one person plays at the net while the other plays back; over the course of a game or games, players may switch back and forth between these positions. (Napier and Whitaker, 1972; Bruggen and Davies, 1981) This type of relationship allows for feedback between therapists and provides opportunities for their personal growth. Both clients and therapists benefit as therapists grow professionally and personally and clients receive higher quality therapy.

One administrative advantage of having two therapists working as a team is that they can assure greater continuity of care since a client may be seen even when one therapist is absent (Bowers and Gauron, 1981). However, the value of this is questioned by those who say that the lack of either therapist dramatically reduces the effectiveness of the therapy because "there are two people there, but the therapist is the twosome" (Napier and Whitaker, 1972 emphasis in original).

A further advantage of co-therapy for the clients is that they are able to watch a model of an effective relationship. Different writers stress different aspects of this modelling, but most agree that it is important. Carl Whitaker

(Haley and Hoffman, 1967), who rarely works without another psychiatrist, talks about how two therapists are able "demonstrate what a confident, direct relationship can be like" (p.311), including fights and the expression of real anger. He, like others, says that the therapeutic relationship has a lot in common with a marriage, making the modelling appropriate and effective.

Many writers (Bellville, Raths and Bellville, 1969, Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark, 1973, Glick, Clarkin, and Kessler, 1987, Masters and Johnson, 1970, Rice and Rice, 1975, Sonne and Lincoln, 1966) feel that ideally a co-therapy team should contain one member of each sex. Some, such as Sonne and Lincoln (1966) feel that this is important primarily in order to model a "symbolic healthy marriage" in which the relationship is structured along tradition gender lines. Others (Bellville et al., 1969, Masters and Johnson, 1970) stress the value of having one same-sex therapist who can support and identify with each client and whom that client can use as a model. Boszormenyi-Nagy and Sparks (1973) add that "a heterosexual team permits each individual to function more comfortably in his or her life-long assigned biological-emotional role" (p. 204). Rice and Rice (1975), agree that a female-male team has advantages in terms both of modelling a relationship and having one same sex therapist for each client to identify with but have challenged the assumption that what should be modelled is the traditional sex roles. The Rices suggest instead that sex role equality should be modelled and that when partners in a mixed-sex team work together as equals, a "very powerful force exists for modelling a democratic relationship between the sexes" (p. 148). Whitaker (Haley and Hoffman, 1967) does not feel that

therapists have to be of different sexes because each therapist can model both male and female roles. He says "I think of us as both the parents. We take both parts interchangeably, like hermaphrodites" (p. 310). Despite disagreement about how vital it is to have a female/male therapy team and exactly what goals the team should pursue, no one suggests that a same sex therapy team is preferable and there are many who consider the mixture to be an asset.

Ideally, all co-therapy would be characterized by the type of mutually supportive complementarity and positive modelling described above. However, not all co-therapy teams reach this goal to the same extent. Many of the potential disadvantages of co-therapy occur to the extent that co-therapists fail to achieve an ideal co-therapy relationship. Napier and Whitaker (1972), strong advocates of co-therapy with families, admit that "co-therapy can be a hell of a mess" (p. 498). Many of the difficulties they discuss are problems within the therapy team's relationship as the commitment to work together puts stress on them. Their list of common problems between co-therapists include competition rather than complementarity, and role fixation, where there is not the flexibility for each therapist to play different roles at different times. Napier and Whitaker believe that co-therapists need to be open about negative emotions and free to argue issues to resolution in front of clients; they find that a refusal to do so harms the therapeutic process. Although Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark (1973) differ from Whitaker in many of their assumptions about how to do co-therapy, their discussion of problems in the therapeutic relationship generally concurs:

> If there is not enough essential trust, respect, and capacity for openness and differences, the family can then split the team and

> scapegoat or parentify one team member against the other, which invariably leads to rejection of the therapists. If there is too much competitiveness or rivalry between the therapists, this may also feed into the family's resistance (p. 215).

These types of problems between the co-therapists limits their effectiveness in that they lose the advantages of a supportive complementary relationship and they do further damage because they provide a less positive or healthy model of relationships for the clients to emulate. As Bowers and Gauron (1981) point out, "therapists must assure that they show a healthy relationship because patients frequently assume that whatever therapists do with each other in their relationship is acceptable and worthy of imitation, regardless of what it is" (p. 226).

One family therapist who no longer does co-therapy (Roberts, 1982) not only had the personal experience of failed therapy as a result of poor communication between co-therapists but also discovered other disadvantages related to trying to do co-therapy within an agency setting. Roberts says that at one point she felt pressured to try and develop three co-therapy relationships at the same time rather than focusing on developing one well. In addition, frequent staff turnover often led to the termination of co-therapy relationships before the team was able to realize its full potential. This is frustrating for the remaining member of the team and leaves him or her feeling ambivalent about starting over with a new partner.

As therapists approach the closeness of the ideal co-therapy relationship, a whole different set of problems become more likely (Bowers and Gauron, 1981). The co-therapy relationship can become of primary importance to the co-

therapists. At this point, the treatment of patients or clients suffers as focus is lost. The close co-therapy relationship may also pose a threat to the therapists' spouses or significant others as they become jealous or suspicious or feel left out. These feelings may be justified since a therapist who experiences difficulties managing two close relationships may in fact choose to draw away from or even leave their spouse or significant other. Sexual relationships between co-therapists can be another outgrowth of this close relationship. Other co-workers and peers may also become more shut out by the co-therapists as they give a message to others that it is this work relationship which is most supportive and important. This closing off from other co-workers and peers can lead to a reduction in external accountability as each co-therapist looks only to the other for support and verification of their work.

In trying to sort out how much of the description of co-therapy above is likely to apply to married co-therapists, it is important to recognize that the above generalizations will apply to different degrees in every co-therapy team, whether married or not. Keeping this in mind, it seems reasonable to assume that the ideal co-therapy relationship described above would also be the goal of a married co-therapy team and that individual married teams would approach this ideal to different extents. Since the mutual support, complementarity, and openness involved is also characteristic of a strong marriage, a healthily married couple might have an advantage in developing a co-therapy relationship since their personal relationship is already established. Of course, any weaknesses in the marriage relationship would be expected to be evident in the co-therapy

relationship as well. In terms of modelling, any advantages of a male/female team would be assumed to apply to the married team. However, modelling may be even more effective because rather than just approximating a married relationship, this team actually has one. Modelling theory (Bandura, 1986) suggests that seeing a real couple may enhance clients attention to the modelling and increase their motivation to perform the modelled behaviours. First, in marriage or family counselling there is a greater degree of similarity between the couple and the models, possibly leading to closer attention. Secondly, whether in family or group work, the clients are more likely to believe that the behaviours being modelled are effective, increasing the probability of attention and motivation to perform.

It is difficult to predict how being married would affect the typical problems arising within the co-therapy relationship. It would be nice to believe that since the couple are actually married they would be experienced at working out difficulties as they arise and so should experience fewer problems than co-therapists who spend much less time together, know each other less well, and have less commitment to each other. However, a married couple also has a more complex relationship to work out and may not always do so in the most exemplary manner. Perhaps working in this type of relationship with someone you are married to would put too much strain on the relationship, as unresolved issues at home creep into work and vice-versa. This will be one area to keep in mind when couples are asked about working together.

The agency related disadvantages that Roberts discusses would be less

likely to occur for married co-therapists. In a married co-therapy model there would be no pressure to be in more than one co-therapy relationship at a time. It is also less likely that the team would be broken up because one member leaves the staff unexpectedly, although it is still possible. On the other hand, a work structure which is unwilling to hire two members of the same family would present a unique barrier to a married couple hoping to do co-therapy.

Some of the problems arising from team closeness may be risks for married co-therapists as well; however, others clearly are not. The difficulties with conflict between co-therapist and spouse cannot arise when they are the same person. Likewise, there is no ethical uncertainty about having a sexual relationship with your co-therapist when you are married to her or him. It is possible that the relationship of married co-therapists may take precedent over the therapy, however, the likelihood of this may be reduced by the fact that they would be expected to have more alternative places and opportunities to work on their relationship than do unmarried co-therapists. It would be interesting to see if there is any difference in the way colleagues and peers react to a married co-therapy team compared with an unmarried one. They may be more likely to expect and accept closeness between the couple. If so, would this increase or decrease their willingness to be involved in calling them to external accountability?

Co-Counselling Couples

The literature on couples where both are counsellors who work together is relatively limited. The earliest documented example of husband-wife co-

therapists treating couples conjointly is a pilot project in which the husbands were psychotherapists and the wives had no previous training in therapy (Bellville, Raths, & Bellville, 1969). More recent examples of married co-therapy teams tend to consist of partners where both have training in therapy, although not always the same amount or type of training (Rice & Rice, 1975, Low & Low, 1975, Lazarus, 1976, Hoffman & Hoffman, 1981 & 1985, Paul, 1987). The focus in most of these articles is on married co-therapy primarily as a special type of co-therapy, however Hoffmans also (1985) look at the married co-therapy relationship as a special dual-career relationship. From these articles it is possible to find clues about how this work affects both the couple and their clients and how it differs from other co-therapy and other dual-career relationships. Since both the questionnaire responses for this thesis and most of the literature about counselling couples is based on the personal experiences of counselling couples, one would expect at least some degree of agreement between these sources as themes are explored.

The issues which are identified as central to the married co-therapy relationship may vary depending upon the stage of development of this relationship. Lazarus (1976), Paul (1987), Hoffmans (1981), and Lows (1975), all break their experiences in co-therapy with their spouse into stages or phases. Lazarus and Lows discuss three stages while Paul and Hoffmans discuss four. The progression from one stage to another may not be very clear. Hoffman and Hoffman (1981) comment that the four stages they have experienced and observed in others "do not appear to emerge as discrete phenomena, but rather

they blend into each other; the phenomena of each phase re-emerge again and again, albeit with different intensity and varied duration" (p. 220). In comparing these authors' comments on the progression of their co-therapy relationship it is important to remember that they have not all had the same amount of time working together. Hoffmans, Paul and Lazarus base their comments on several years of working together, while the Lows' article discusses experiences from their first year of co-leading a group.

When a married couple begins to consider working together in co-therapy, regardless of whether they have previously worked together in other capacities such as research, Hoffman and Hoffman (1981) say a new threatening quality enters the relationship. At this time, they found themselves sharing their dreams of what could be and their fears of what might be. Feedback from colleagues about the feasibility of working together was primarily negative but for them this provided an impetus to test their belief in the potential of this work. While the others do not speak of this decision making stage separately, at least two of the other three authors do appear to have had a period of discussion about the potentials and hazards of such a venture. Lazarus (1976) comments that working with his spouse was preceded by "considerable introspection and discussion with colleagues and [his] wife of possible countertransference factors that might account for the contemplated change in treatment approach, as well as potential problems within our co-therapy relationship" (p. 226). Betty Byfield Paul says that she and her husband, a psychiatrist, discussed working together when she entered a Masters of social work program and agreed at that point that it would

be good. However, when she graduated, she no longer felt able to enter directly into work with him because of a need to establish her own identity. It took six years for them to begin working together. Lows do not discuss their process of choosing to work together beyond giving their reasons for doing so and commenting that their supervisor approved, unlike the Lazaruses' colleagues. It is not clear from their article whether they went through the same soul searching process as the other couples.

Once working together begins, there is considerable agreement that the main issue that couples encounter is trying to integrate their different styles. Lazarus (1976) found that as he began to work with his wife, differences in their theoretical orientations became apparent and each felt insecure and uneasy with the other's style. Molly and Paul Low (1975) also felt some resentment about the others' style. Initially, Molly felt she was only on hand to play the role of supportive wife; as they tried to adjust to Molly's discomfort, Paul began to feel squelched. Hoffmans (1981) similarly comment that they "alternated between the pleasure of [their] ability to integrate [their] two different ways of being and the fear/resentment aroused by [their] awareness of the differences between [them]" (p. 221). They write that reading about the experiences of the Lows and Lazarus was reassuring, apparently validating their experiences of early married co-therapy. Betty Paul (1987) appears to have had a somewhat different early experience in doing married co-therapy, perhaps because of a greater inequality of experience between herself and her husband. She labels the first stage of her co-leadership as an "apprenticeship" in which she tried to follow her husband's

lead and viewed herself as a student. She quotes another therapist/wife who also went through an apprentice stage in which she did not compete with her more experienced husband. Even within the first year however, Paul describes differences in style between herself and her husband and the difficulties coming out of these. In her next two stages, Paul says she began to have more opinions of her own and more conflicts developed between her and her husband. Paul's experiences in her second stage, which she calls "beginning family therapist", appear to correspond to those of the other couples in their beginning co-therapy.

Lazarus (1976) describes the next stage as "characterized best by increasing openness, trust and complementarity" (p. 228). Hoffmans (1981) agree, calling this stage "integrating". The processing, confrontation and consultation of this stage helped them to reconnect with the trust they had in each other. Positive modelling of conflict resolution became possible for Hoffmans at this time and they found themselves increasingly tolerant of their stylistic differences. At the same time, each member became more free to modify his or her own behaviours and roles. Lows (1975) also found that the second phase of their experiences co-leading a group was characterized by improved communication; they dealt with any resentments as they arose and did so in the presence of the group. They began to get more insight into their relationship including a better understanding of how they had been avoiding competition. Paul does not discuss her third stage, "intermediate family therapy", extensively but quotes a therapist/husband who comments that he became aware of many intimate things that he and his wife had not talked about before they were brought up in the group they were co-

leading. This increased openness to intimacy appears to fit with the other descriptions of the middle stage.

All of these couples conclude with quite positive comments about their final stage of co-therapy. Lows, who it must be remembered only worked together for 1 year, found that in the last stage of their group they were increasingly able to model responsibility for their own feelings. They comment that although Molly had privately decided at one point in their co-leading never to subject herself to another year of this, by the end of the group she found she had grown personally and was looking forward to running more groups with her husband. Hoffmans, who have worked together for years, call their fourth and final stage "stabilizing and growing androgyny of the partners". They found less need for confrontation and processing times because they felt a positive "working rhythm and balance of polarities" (p. 222). Both felt more free to be innovative and take risks in their therapeutic interventions. Lazarus also comments that in their present phase of co-therapy both have become more comfortable sharing personal marital experiences and are moving into greater flexibility of therapeutic approaches. Paul calls her fourth stage of co-leading becoming a "valued collaborator". At this stage they are discovering an equal professional partnership, rather than the inequality of roles and status which characterized the earlier stages. For this, she says it was "necessary for [them] to learn to communicate clearly and intimately both professionally and personally" (p. 13). One evidence of this equality is that fees are shared equally between them. Hoffmans (1985) comment that reaching this stage is important because they have

observed that any husband/wife co-therapy team which retains a rigid and severely skewed distribution of power tends to either lack creative energy or have a relatively short life span.

One additional factor which Hoffmans found in their final stage, which relates to equality in the partnership and to greater flexibility, was an increased level of androgynous behaviour for both partners, rather than feeling bound by traditional sex roles. While Rice and Rice, (1975) do not comment on the stages of their co-therapy relationship, they have reached the same conclusions about the value of this kind of status and sex-role equality. Lazarus, (1976) concurs, saying that the support and role-modelling of the wife in the married co-therapy team may be specially helpful for some housewives who are dissatisfied but ambivalent about suppressed ambitions.

While the process outlined above may also contain factors to which unmarried co-therapists can relate, there appear to be differences because of the shared history of the couple involved. According to Lazarus (1976), being married means that developing a smooth style of working together takes less time. There also appear to be unique advantages in the actual workings of the married co-therapy. In comparison with nonmarried co-therapy teams, Bellvilles (1969) comment that along with the usual advantages of heterosexual co-therapy, "actual marriage of the therapists adds another dimension of reality" (p. 475). Both Bellvilles and Lazarus agree that the actual marriage allows for more effective sharing from within their real lives and modelling of conflict resolution, division of labour, and tolerance for each other's differences. In addition, since

couples can relate to the real marriage relationship between the co-therapists, including shared problems, the therapeutic alliance is strengthened (Lazarus, 1976).

Bellville et al. (1969) also found that they did not encounter many transference hang-ups, possibly because "the patients have less tendency to fantasize extratherapeutic involvements with either of us or to fantasize about our extratherapeutic interaction because they know we are married" (p. 479). Lazarus says that countertransference distortions on the part of the married co-therapists are also more likely to be identified and confronted before they can interfere with the course of therapy.

In dealing with the conflict between co-therapists which they believe is inevitable, Bellvilles and their colleagues (1969) feel that marriage provides an advantage because the process of resolving tensions related to therapy is not different than that involved in resolving the other tensions which arise in a marriage. In addition, "marriage offers more time and opportunity for resolutions of differences than is available to unmarried therapists [and] a marital pair can have the added supports of loving experiences and involvement with children" (p. 479). They comment that they have not quarrelled about events in therapy, perhaps because there are enough other things they quarrel about.

Throughout the articles on married co-therapy, the authors stress that "marriage per se offers no guarantee for therapeutic effectiveness" (Bellville et al., 1969, p. 480). Hoffmans (1985) suggest that "the husband/wife (h/w) teams who practice as co-therapists tend to concentrate more intimacy and intensity in their

relationship than any other professional team" (p. 133) and while this can be rewarding, it also carried the potential for disaster. The intimacy and intensity of their work means that their marriage must be functioning well if their work is to be effective. Dormant marital problems may be awakened when working together. If the main reasons for working together are "neurotic", for example to resolve personal or marital conflicts, working together may help neither the therapist couple nor the clients (Lazarus, 1976).

Some other difficulties or potential disadvantages of married co-therapy are that clients may compare their marriage unfavourably with that of their therapists and feel jealous, resentful or lower self-esteem and colleagues may question the orthodoxy of the approach (Lazarus, 1976). A potential disadvantage for the co-therapist couple is that they may encounter difficulties setting limits on how much of their professional lives invade home, family and recreation time. "Among h/w cotherapy teams, in contrast to other families, the tolerance based on understanding and empathy can be extended to the point of dysfunction - with destructive results for the family" (Hoffman & Hoffman, 1985, p. 137). Hoffmans also suggest a related issue for married co-therapists is that the intensity of close work encounters, combined with the other normal married interactions of the couple, can produce an imbalance in the contact-withdrawal pattern of the couple and lead to feelings of boredom, criticism, and tension which they call signs of "withering intimacy".

The issue of competition, raised earlier in discussions of dual-career and coordinated-career couples and as well as for co-therapists does get mentioned in

the married co-therapy literature as well. However, there still remains some lack of consensus about its importance. As was discussed previously, some competition may be a normal part of at least the middle stages of co-therapy team development. Lows (1975) discovered during the second stage of their work together that they had been trying too hard to avoid competition. Hoffmans (1985) comment that the issue of competitive or cooperative interactions is not nearly as important as that neither of these orientations be held rigidly. They indicated that cooperation can lead to less stress and conflict but "rigid adherence to cooperation can produce excessive mutual protection and safety, and stagnation" (p. 136) and may lead to feelings of impatience. On the other hand, some competition can be stimulating and motivating. They suggest that these two attitudes may not be true opposites and propose that lack of contact be considered the true opposite of cooperation.

Summary

In my study looking at dual-counsellor couples' attitudes toward working together, it is important to keep in mind the themes which have emerged in this study of the literature. As mentioned, it is likely that many of the advantages and disadvantages of co-therapy in general will also apply to married co-therapy; modelling and mutual support may be key issues to keep in mind as well as the possibility of problems if the counsellors' relationship breaks down. In addition, the previous research on dual-career couples and dual-counsellor couples suggests that issues related to the couples' own relationship and to the overlap of work and home demands may be important. It is interesting to see whether there is

any evidence in this present study of different stages in the process of working together. Another issue which will need consideration is the role of competition in the counselling couples' work interactions.

Method

Rationale

In choosing a method for this study, I first had to decide between a quantitative and qualitative research design. Since I wanted to explore attitudes and experiences related to dual-counsellor couples working together and did not know what all might be included in these, a quantitative approach did not seem appropriate. I felt that it would be presumptuous even to create any sort of closed questionnaire which assumed that I knew all of the issues which might be raised. An open question format leaves subjects free to respond without having the terms of their responses artificially directed or constrained (Abrahamson, 1983; Warwick & Lininger, 1975). I was not trying to test a specific set of hypotheses about co-counselling or co-leading with one's spouse, instead I wanted to remain open to the variety of issues which might be involved. I decided therefore that an open qualitative approach needed to be taken.

In choosing a qualitative approach, the two alternatives were interviews and open questionnaires. Many of the authors which advise against the use of open questionnaires give as their main reason non-comparability of responses and difficulties with coding and analysis (Abrahamson, 1983; Fowler, 1984; Warwick & Lininger, 1975). However, this is in comparison with closed questionnaires; the same difficulties apply to any open questions, whether the answers are written or spoken. The content analysis which I proposed to use can be done with either written documents or transcriptions of verbal communications (Berg, 1989).

In choosing between interviews or mailed questionnaires, I considered a

number of issues raised by Berdie, Anderson and Niebuhr (1986). They advised that it is necessary to consider the available resources of the researcher in terms of time, money and staff. In this regard, the constraints of this research would mean that fewer people could be interviewed than reached by questionnaires. A second issue is that of establishing contact, how easy is it to set up interviews or determine who to mail questionnaires to. Telephone contact with potential subjects indicated that setting up interviews would be more difficult and that more people would agree to participate if they were sent questionnaires than if they were asked to participate in an interview. Both interviews and questionnaires have a potential for bias but a well written questionnaire will have no interviewer bias and can avoid much possible response bias. Ease of completion differs as well since a questionnaire requires literacy but allows the respondent to fill in the answers at their leisure. Since my population is well educated, most having at least one degree, the fact that the questionnaire requires them to write was not likely to be a drawback as it might be for other populations. On the other hand, leaving them free to choose their own times to answer questions was likely to be an advantage for busy professionals. Method familiarity was not a deciding factor since both interviews and written questions would be familiar to this population. Finally, in terms of response rate Berdie et al. point out that both methods can have response rate problems and that a good questionnaire with follow-up can produce excellent response rates.

It appeared that many of the potential disadvantages of questionnaires either were not likely to apply to my population or could be avoided through

good questionnaire design, personal contact with respondents prior to sending questionnaires, and follow-up of unreturned questionnaires. In addition, I was likely to get responses from more people by utilizing questionnaires. I expected that I would get briefer responses to a questionnaire and possibly some comments which are somewhat ambiguous. However, what they lacked in depth I expected they would make up for in greater breadth of ideas. Unwilling to loose the depth of interviews and the ability to probe responses, I determined upon a two stage process whereby open questionnaires would be sent and analyzed, followed by an interview which could explore the issues raised in the questionnaire responses. This second stage would also act as a type of validity testing of the results from the first stage. If the questionnaire responses were briefer than expected, failing to provide adequate data for analysis, the planned method could be changed to include more interviews. Berdie et al. discuss a compromise between the interview and questionnaire, that of a telephone interview; however they suggest that it should be no more than 15 minutes long. I felt that this would not be long enough to get either the depth of information of an interview or the breadth of a questionnaire.

Questionnaire design

A rough draft of the questionnaire was prepared following as much as possible the principles of questionnaire design outlined by Berdie, Anderson and Niebuhr (1986). Because Berdie et al. assume that most questions will be closed, not all of their advice was applicable to this questionnaire with its open questions.

The rough questionnaire was given to a professor in educational

psychology and his wife who is also a psychologist; they went through it together to discuss their impressions of the questionnaire and filled it in from their experiences. Based on this feedback, some changes were made to the questionnaire to make the instructions more clear and to reduce ambiguity in some of the questions. (See Appendix I for the final form of the questionnaire.) Their answers to the questions were extensive enough to suggest that this open-ended questionnaire format would be likely to provide adequate data for content analysis. Speaking to this professor about their answers provided additional information about their perspectives, suggesting that greater depth of information would be provided by a follow-up interview. This couple was not included in the sample of people who responded to the final form of the questionnaire.

Subject selection

A list of possible subjects was compiled from three types of sources. I knew some members of dual counsellor couples and found more couples by examining the Edmonton Yellow Pages listing of psychologists and counsellors for those who share the same last name. Thirdly, friends and colleagues from a variety of different backgrounds were asked whether they were aware of any couples where both partners engage in counselling or related activities. This final source of potential subjects has been called a "modified network approach" (Holmstrom, 1972) and, as Holmstrom points out, has the advantage of having the researcher as the only common link in the network. This method helps to avoid the potential bias which might arise where only subjects recommend other subjects or one source gives the majority of names. From these sources, a list of

14 couples, 12 from the Edmonton area and one couple from each of Calgary and Victoria, was compiled. While these are probably not all of the couples in the Edmonton area who fit the criteria for this study, eventually no new names were forthcoming in discussion with acquaintances and the same names were being repeated.

Telephone calls were made to all of the couples on the list of potential subjects with the exception of one couple who had already expressed their willingness to participate through a mutual acquaintance. When one member of each couple was reached by telephone, the purpose of the study was briefly explained and he or she was asked whether they would be willing to fill out a questionnaire about their perspectives on working together. They were assured that it did not matter whether they had ever worked together, so long as both did counselling types of work. One couple was not reached because their telephone number was no longer in service and one couple did not agree to participate in the study. In the rest of the cases, at least one member of the couple agreed to complete a questionnaire.

Questionnaire distribution and follow-up

Two questionnaires, printed on salmon coloured paper, were sent along with covering letters and a return envelope to those couples who had agreed to complete them. Two small wrapped chocolates were included with the questionnaires as an additional thank you for the subjects' participation. The covering letters were form letters (see Appendix II) but were personalized for each member of the couple; each was addressed individually and indicated who

had been spoken to by telephone. In the case where a friend had been the one to secure the couple's agreement to participate, the letter was changed to reflect this fact. No names were on the questionnaires when they were sent out. A random number table was used to determine a number to be assigned to each couple in order to keep track of which questionnaires were returned. The final digit of the couple's number was varied by one so that each questionnaire has a unique number while still retaining the ability to tell which questionnaires belong together.

If the questionnaires were not returned within four to six weeks of mailing, telephone calls were made in order to ensure that the questionnaires had been received and would be completed.

When questionnaires were received, the final page on which subjects indicated whether they were willing to be contacted with further questions and whether they wanted to receive information about the study was removed. In cases where subjects were willing to be contacted, the number on the front of the questionnaire was written on this final sheet. These pages were filed separately so that when analysis of the questionnaire data was under way there would be no names associated with the questionnaires. If subjects were not willing to be further contacted, the questionnaire number was not written on this final sheet.

All responses to the open questions, listed only by questionnaire number, were typed into a computer. Because most of the responses were hand written and rough, obvious spelling mistakes have been corrected and abbreviated words have been written in full when quoting a response. No other changes have been

made to the questionnaire answers.

Content Analysis

The long answer data were subjected to content analysis as described by Berg (1989), also drawing from Glaser and Strauss's (1967) discussion of the constant comparative method of qualitative analysis. The first step in the analytic process was to establish criteria of selection which when systematically applied would prevent the researcher from selecting only material which supports a particular hypothesis. In this study, I decided that each complete unit of thought, whether that be a paragraph, sentence or phrase, in each of the questionnaires would be taken as a unit of analysis and would then be categorized according to its general theme.

The questionnaire answers were read straight through the first time in order to get a feel for the entire content. On a second reading, phrases of meaning were highlighted. In most cases, each sentence or phrase contained a thought and the key words expressing that thought were highlighted. In cases where a paragraph was used to explain the main thought with examples, only the key phrase was highlighted unless the examples seemed to be saying something unique that might not be entirely covered by the main thought. On subsequent readings, these highlighted phrases were explored to see what common themes would emerge.

The data were approached without a list of categories already decided, so that they could emerge at least in part from the data itself. The categories which emerged in the literature review were also kept in mind. Thus the analysis

constituted a blending of inductive and deductive technique. As themes appeared, part way through the third reading of the data, they were written down as tentative categories. These categories were then used with the rest of the data and those concepts which did not appear to fit into any of the tentative categories were used to establish more tentative categories which were utilized in further readings of the data.

When possible relationships between categories appeared to exist or variations within a category were discovered, notes were written down so that these could be considered later. Writing about categories was begun before all of the theme phrases had been categorized. The process of writing helped to clarify those themes which were already identified and made classification of the rest of the phrases easier.

Difficulties classifying some comments helped to make the relationships between categories clearer. Those phrases which appeared to belong to two or more different categories suggested that either the categories involved had some relationship to each other, such as both falling under a more general category or one being a subcategory of the other, or that the categories should be combined because they are not sufficiently different.

Feedback Interview

When the analysis of themes was completed, one of the couples who had participated in answering the original questionnaire agreed to look at the themes and provide feedback on them. A copy of the results section on the themes and questions 8 though 12 was sent to this couple and a few days later they were

interviewed together. They were asked whether the themes accurately reflected what they had been trying to say in their questionnaire answers and whether any issues were not included which they felt should be. We also discussed some of the apparent relationships among themes.

Questionnaire Results

In reporting the results of the questionnaire, I may refer to a question by number without necessarily re-stating the question. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix I.

Of the 12 sets of questionnaires sent out, 10 sets were returned and in one case only one member of the couple returned a questionnaire. This gives a response rate of 87.5%.

Many individuals answered the open questions with brief phrases, rather than complete sentences and paragraphs. The number of words in subjects' responses to questions 7 through 12 ranged from 34 to 862 with a median of 404, a mean of 415, and a standard deviation of 227. The total number of words from all subjects' responses to questions 7 through 12 was just over 8,700. This confirmed my expectations that the questionnaire responses would be extensive enough to apply content analysis to them.

Subject characteristics (Questions 1 - 5)

Ten women and 11 men responded to this study. The mean age for female respondents was 45.5 years. The women's age range was from 36 to 59 years. The mean age for male respondents was 47.1 years. The men's age range was from 35 to 59 years.

The shortest length of time that any of the 11 couples in this study had been married was 5 years while the longest marriage was 35 years. The mean number of years married for subjects in this study was 18 years.

Individuals in this study bring a wide variety of different types of training

and experience to their counselling work. Table 1 summarizes the highest level of training for each subject. One of the women and one of the men who are listed as having Masters' degrees indicated that they are currently doctoral candidates. Those subjects who do not have any university degree reported that they have had training related to their counselling work from sources that do not grant degrees.

Table 1. Education of Subjects

Level of Training	Sex	
	Males	Females
Ph.D. (psychology, educational psychology, clinical psychology)	4	0
Masters (counselling psychology, family studies)	4	5
Bachelors (psychology, nursing, occupational therapy, drama, social work)	1	4
Medical Degree	1	0
Other	1	1

Question 6: Amount that subjects work together.

All subjects indicated that they have worked together as co-counsellors or co-leaders to at least some extent although not all work together at this time.

Subjects were asked to estimate the total number of hours that they have spent co-counselling or co-leading with their spouse. They were also asked what percentage of their counselling time over the past year has been spent working with their spouse. Estimates of total number of hours from spouses were quite

close and often identical while some wives and husbands reported quite different percentages of counselling time in the last year. When looking at the latter values, it is important to remember that some subjects spend much more time doing counselling than others and even within a couple this may be true.

Figure 1 shows each individual's estimate of the number of hours they have worked with their spouse vs. the percentage of their counselling time spent working together. Please note that the number of hours has been recorded in log. form because of the wide range of values. There is no correlation between total number of hours worked together and percentage of counselling time together.

Question 7: Type of work done together

All of the subjects in this study indicated that they had worked together as co-counsellors, co-therapists or co-leaders at some time. Some participants also listed other ways in which they work together which will also be mentioned in this discussion although they are peripheral to the main focus of the study. As with any open question, there was considerable variety in the responses to this question. Some people were very brief, saying no more for example than "marital therapy". Others gave more specific information, such as outlining the different seminars they have led together.

Analysis of the responses to this question reveals five general categories of types of work that the subjects in this study have done together. These are: 1) co-counselling; 2) co-leading; 3) joint involvement in assessment; 4) co-authoring and developing of materials; and 5) shared administrative functions. All subjects

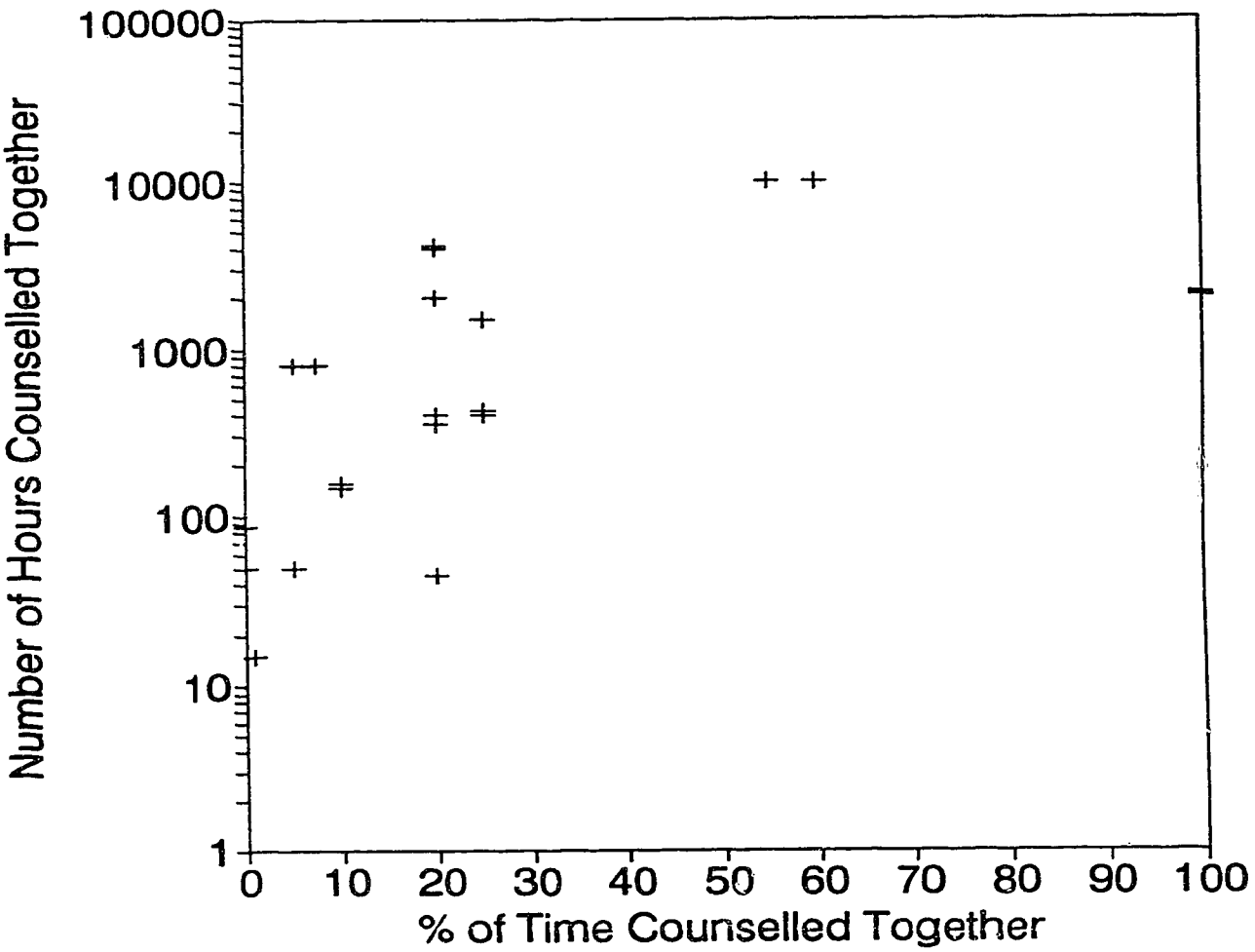

Figure 1. Total number of hours counselled together vs. percent of counselling in past year.

indicated some involvement at some time in at least one of the first two categories. Some couples indicated that they worked together in several of the above task areas. Because the open question did not explicitly ask about anything but co-leading and co-counselling, it is important to note that some couples may have been involved in the latter three areas without reporting them.

In counting the number of couples who engage in each of the above five categories of shared work, any activity reported by one member of a couple was

included even if it was not listed by the other member. Only 4 of the 10 couples where both questionnaires were returned had any differences in the categories of work that they reported. These differences generally appear to relate to activities which were not the main focus of the couple's attentions so that only one member of the couple thought it worthwhile to report the activity. It is therefore reasonable to base a reckoning of couples' activities on their combined answers rather than taking only the consensus.

Eight of the couples in this study indicated that they have done co-counselling together, although for some it is a very rare activity. In one case where co-therapy is so rare that they have not done any in the last 10 years, only one member of the couple reported doing any at all and no indication was given of whether this therapy was with an individual, couple, or family. However, from the other couples who do co-therapy it is evident that married co-therapists can and do practice in all of these areas. Working with couples is the most common arena for the co-counsellors in this study; all 7 of the couples who gave details about their co-therapy worked at least some with client couples. Four indicated some co-therapy with families and three reported working with individuals. Included in these latter two categories is a couple who have done co-therapy with sexually abused children and their families; some sessions were with the child alone and some appear to have included more of the family.

All activities involving working together to lead or teach a group of people with regard to psychological issues have been included under the category of co-leading. Although I had thought of the activities of co-leading groups, co-

teaching classes, or jointly presenting a paper at a conference as quite different, as I read about the variety of interactions that couples in this study had with groups of people the distinctions became blurred in several ways. The blurring comes partially because the term "co-leading" is used by some with regard to a wide variety of different teaching and therapy situations. In addition, some activities are not exclusively educational or therapeutic. For example, marriage enrichment workshops seem to have elements of both. Finally, several different terms may refer to a very similar activity; terms such as leading, working, presenting, facilitating, and running were all used to describe what the counsellor couples do together at workshops or seminars.

Within the broad definition of co-leading which emerged in this study, 8 of the couples in this study have done some co-leading. Specifically, couples in this study reported being involved in leading workshops, seminars, conferences and classes. None reported leading long-term therapeutic groups, however some of the workshops described appear to have had a therapeutic component. Couples in this study have worked with groups of individuals, couples, business and industry employees, health care groups, and university students. Topics that they reported dealing with include: marriage preparation and enrichment, communication, neurolinguistic programming, transactional analysis, human relations, sexuality, personal development, aging, attitudes towards people with disabilities, team building, and play therapy. Working with groups of couples on issues related to marriage and communication appears to be the most common area in which counselling couples in this study to co-lead.

In looking at the other types of work these couples do together it is necessary to remember that some couples may be involved in these activities without reporting them. Of those who mentioned other types of joint work besides co-counselling and co-leading, 2 indicated that they are involved in doing joint assessments, report writing or debriefing after an assessment. Two couples indicated that they have worked together in writing papers or developing programs and materials. This number is probably underestimated since those who jointly presented papers at seminars or conferences, which is included under category 2 above, were probably also involved in co-authoring. Two couples referred to their joint administrative work in answer to question 7 and others gave indications in answer to other questions that they may be sharing administrative functions. For example, one wife who listed co-therapy as their work together commented under question 12: "A co-therapy relationship may be easier to achieve than a co-management one." When comments from other questions are taken into consideration, it seems likely that at least 4 couples in this group share some management responsibilities.

Common emergent themes (Questions 8-12)

Because questions 8 through 12 are inter-related, there is considerable overlap of themes among the responses to these questions. The individual themes will be explored first, followed by a brief look at each of questions 8 though 12. How the themes appear to be related to each other and to the general questions of this study will be examined more fully during the discussion and conclusions sections.

No single theme was found across all of the subjects' responses, however several themes were present frequently enough to suggest that they are probably common elements related to the experience of married co-therapists working together. Other issues which are mentioned less frequently suggest possible sub-themes and variations within the married counsellors' experience. Table 2 shows the number of different subjects who refer to each of the themes. In many cases, a theme is mentioned more than once by one individual, however Table 2 counts each theme only once per subject.

Table 2. Themes Across Subjects

Themes & Sub-themes	Frequency
Counsellors' relationship	19
Growth, learning, challenge	17
Complementarity/team work	16
Modelling	15
Time issues	14
Work-home overlap	13
Enjoyment	13
Real couple/real experience	13
Communication	13
Differences and conflicts	12
Both sexes represented	11
Plan ahead/set up structures	11
Two counsellors better than one	10
Financial drawbacks	10
Competition and non-competition	9
No problems/negatives	8
Client comparison/identification with counsellors	7
Resolve problems as they arise	7
Client comfort	7
Debrief and consult	5
Children	5
Shared dreams, values etc.	5
Self-disclosure and sharing	4

The counsellors' relationship

The general theme which emerged within the answers of the most subjects was that of the therapists' own relationship with each other. The contexts in which this issue is raised vary, suggesting a number of sub-categories or themes. Several of the other general themes which will be discussed separately also relate at least indirectly to this theme of the counselling couple's relationship. Some comments were on the present strengths of the relationship, for example: "we are good friends and it's nice to work with your friend all the time" or "the firm foundation of stable and balanced relationship spread out to include the counselling relationship". Subjects also indicated that working together enhances their relationship, that a strong relationship must be pursued as a prerequisite to good therapy, and that working together can put stress on the co-therapist couple's relationship.

Working with one's spouse can help to strengthen or enhance the marriage. For example, one subject said that an advantage of working together is that it "helps clarify our own issues". Similarly, another comments: "working on issues for others can help us with our issues". One wife said that their decision to go to school together prior to their working together was made in order to follow the husband's "growing interests in marital bonding" and that as they saw each other at work they respected each other more. As one subject explained: "our own relationship problems do not seem to spill into our work in a negative way - I think we draw on them as a way of learning about ourselves and about relationships. Perhaps this concept of the enhanced relationship was most poetically expressed by one subject who commented that in working together, they

"have the opportunity to call each other forth, to understand one another and to discover the fullness of the mystery of being a couple".

While working together can strengthen the relationship, several of the subjects advised that a strong relationship is necessary if a couple is to counsel or co-lead together and that this relationship strength should be deliberately pursued. Examples of their advice include: "make sure you 'know' each other well enough"; "be very sure of your own relationship"; "maintain closeness in your couple otherwise you cannot be very effective"; "nourish your own relationship with special nurturing events, workshops, time together"; and "make sure you are good friends first". One person's advice to married therapists thinking of working together summed up this theme: "The relationship of the counsellors must be very open, respectful and healthy. If either feels threatened by the intelligence or effectiveness of the other there will be a low likelihood of success."

Some of those in my study warned that working together can strain the relationship of the married counsellors. The same individual who commented on the way they are discovering the "fullness of the mystery of being a couple" shared that sometimes they "lose sight of each other in all that needs to be done". Another respondent listed the risk of "marriage burnout" first among his reasons for advising not to work with one's spouse in the counselling area. Yet another wrote: "WARNING: Depending on the setting, but I think sustaining a positive marital relationship in a small or private practice setting places a great deal of strain on a marital relationship".

Work-home overlap

From thirteen of the respondents there seems to be agreement that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to keep personal and professional issues separate when working with one's spouse. Some subjects shared their personal difficulties in this area. Examples of their comments include: "at times I find we have the tendency to talk too much about work at home. This is not totally resolved as it is very easy to try to solve work related problems at home"; and "My wife's style is to work out her therapeutic direction through discussion. So for me: it's like I'm always working and can't leave the work 'at the office'". Under the heading of disadvantages for the counsellors, comments such as "a lot of 'home time' is spent discussing work and clients" appeared. The problem of taking work home was also a common theme in the advice given to other married co-counsellors with comments such as: "leave office problems at the office - don't take too much air time at home - don't let it invade your private life"; "watch the trap of bringing work home"; and "don't take work home - debrief and give straight feedback, but time limit it".

Some people also indicated that problems in their personal relationship intruded into work in negative ways. They commented for example that "an interpersonal problem is obvious to the client(s)" and state that "our own marital dynamics intrude into the work inevitably, in my opinion, and its impossible not to mix-up home and work issues... Sooner or later, there are organizational difficulties, and then its totally impossible to be objective because marital dynamics get played out via the organization's problems".

A few of the comments indicated that the overlap of home and work may

have some advantages at times. However, even those who see these advantages also expressed a need to limit work/home overlap. For example, one subject indicated that it was nice for the counsellors to be "easily available to each other for consultation" but later commented that counsellors "can spend too much time on work related interaction and neglect intimacy". Another individual explained that it is an advantage to "have [the] ability to combine travelling together with work commitments. I have a physical disability and do not need to hire another assistant when travelling to do workshops." This same person still advised that dual-counsellor couples thinking of working together "separate personal life from professional life" and to "take holidays without a work agenda!". When positive aspects of the private relationship are evident in the therapy, this may also be considered an advantageous type of home/work overlap; however, this type of interaction appears to fall more fully under the themes of modelling and being a real couple.

Time issues and balancing time together and apart

The words "time" and "space" appear frequently in the responses to the questionnaires. Comments about time demands in general and about how to balance working time and private time and how much of each to spend together and apart, appeared in 14 of the respondents' answers. Some of these time issues are closely related to the theme of work-home overlap, for example in comments such as "sometimes we would not be able to get 'time' to ourselves -re: taken up by client time". However this time theme includes a broader range of issues.

At their most general, were time comments such as the following: "lots of

demands on time and little privacy", or brief mentions of "schedule conflicts" and "time commitments". One subject commented: "Being self employed, we tend to work long hours and get tired. I sense that this is not unique to couples working together though!"

More specific remarks looked at the balance of time together and apart. This balance of time was a concern for one respondent when trying to decide whether to work with her husband: "the extra hours together might interfere with a relationship which was very well balanced and contented". Some responses indicate that time spent working with one's spouse is generally a positive experience while others talk about the need to have time for separate interests and activities. Yet others appear to integrate both positions, pointing to the need for balancing time use. One subject shared: "there are times when we need time out and time away from one another and time out and time away together to have fun and enjoy our relationship for ourselves". Another subject advised that those counsellors thinking of working together need to make sure that "their plan includes priority time for each other, time for family, time for self as well as time for work".

Two counsellors

Without regard to other issues such as the sex of the two therapists or the fact that they are married to each other, several responses indicate generally that two counsellors are better than one. Primarily under the category of advantages of married co-therapy for clients came comments such as the following: "two people with varied backgrounds and expertise to serve people better"; "two people

thinking are better than one"; "2 brains = better than 1 in therapy"; and "clients receive the benefit of two therapeutic points of view". Subjects also reported that clients get the "benefit of two minds... two representational systems (I am quite markedly visual, and my wife is kinesthetic primarily)".

One potential disadvantage of having two counsellors was mentioned: some clients may find it hard to focus on two people or may just prefer to deal with only one counsellor at a time.

Two sexes represented

Eleven of the respondents referred to the fact that when working with their spouse both male and female sexes are represented. Having both sexes represented in the co-therapy team was generally seen as positive. It was listed as a possible reason why clients might choose to see a husband-wife team. Subjects commented that it is good to have both "male and female", or "masculine and feminine", perspectives represented. They indicate that this gives both male and female clients someone of the same sex to identify with. "Each spouse can feel understood by someone of the same sex". Some indicated that the extent to which having both sexes present would be an advantage would vary depending upon the specific situation. For example: "in group work the male and female perspective is often an advantage but it depends on the group - a group of survivors of abuse would not benefit from that".

Differences and conflicts

At least twelve of the respondents referred at some point in their answers to differences and conflict between the two married counsellors. Terms they use

include not only differences and conflict but also disagreements, difficulties, issues, dissention, and friction. Several subjects used these terms in discussing their personal experiences working with their spouses. Some subjects warned against these types of situations; however, others said that differences or conflicts need not create serious problems.

In discussing the differences which present problems for married counsellors, the terms "style" and "approach" come up frequently. These terms are used by some without more specific explanation. For example: "personal styles differed somewhat" and "we occasionally differ in approach". More specifically, they discuss differences of "personality styles", "teaching styles", and "presentation styles". Some describe their differences with greater detail: "I tend to be more non-directive so my wife can feel very obligated to be assertive to make up for my quietness and passivity. My style is unfair to her"; "Being somewhat unsure of myself, I tended to give him far too much data and background until I became more confident". When one prefers to take work home more than the other, they also classify this as a style difference.

In some of these comments about differences it is hard to determine whether the subjects consider their differences to have been the cause of conflict. Others however, indicate that they have experienced conflict with their spouse. One said that they "have had some disagreements about workshops, such as time spent by one presenter or the other, punctuality, staying on topic, etc.". Another said that they sometimes have "conflict re: what approach to take". Others referred to their conflict in general. For example: "Needless to say, there are

times when we have issues that cause conflict."

While the number of subjects who referred to their differences, disagreements and conflicts appears to indicate that this is a common experience for couples working together, there seems to be more disagreement about whether to view these as problems. At least one subject points to the potential problems related to conflict: "if there's conflict in the couple, energy is dissipated ... especially if the conflicts are denied". Other subjects appear to see the differences and conflicts as normal and not necessarily a cause for concern if issues are dealt with as they arise. Their comments include statements such as, "when you work as a part of a team, a healthy team - some conflict is inevitable. So it has developed naturally". They advised that co-counsellor couples should "expect to meet difficulties and have a solid 'grievance procedure'".

Complementarity

Many of the respondents comment that married therapists or co-leaders need to work together as a complementary team in order to do a good job. Complementarity, team work, shared responsibilities, and mutual support were all terms used to describe important or positive aspects of working together which fall I have placed under the general heading of complementarity. Many subjects made general comments that their styles, talents or perspectives complement each others. Some gave more specific examples of how their complementarity or team work manifests itself.

Subjects gave many examples of how they complement each other and work as a team. For example: "I tend to overlook facts and details in my

enjoyment of the client's story, or drama. My wife asks questions re. the details which is good for the clients and myself"; "We are sensitive to each others energy levels and can spell each other at the 'sharp end'"; "One of us is logical and linear - the other more of a fun spiral. Over time, we've blended the best of both"; and "My partner is an organizer and I am an ideas person so we complement each other". One unique example of the team work that is possible for couples with different educational backgrounds is one couple who do play therapy with children. They utilize one partner's training in art, crafts, and puppetry, along with the other's skill as a psychologist.

Advice from respondents to the questionnaire stresses the need for dual-counsellor couples to develop complementarity: "develop presentation styles suitable to your personalities and learn how to complement each other".

Competition and non-competition

Variations of the word "compete" occur less frequently in the responses than variations of the word "compliment". However, the problem of competition appears to be important to at least some of the subjects in this study. Competition appears to be seen as a negative factor in working together and some subjects expressed this by stressing a need to be non-competitive.

Only one subject stated directly that competition has been a problem in their relationship, saying that there was "some competitiveness in that we both like to talk and perceive the other to take more presentation time than ourselves". However, there are other cases in which it is unclear whether a problem described can be accurately classified as competition. For example,

when someone indicates that they have had "feelings that the other takes over", is this an example of competition or not? Competition is also listed by two subjects as a disadvantage of married co-therapy while learning to be non-competitive is listed as an advantage for the counsellors: "we have to be extremely professional and non-competitive".

Some of the subjects appear to see competition and complementarity as opposites. This is particularly clear in their advice to other potential married co-counsellors where subjects indicate that complementarity or team work is something to cultivate while competition needs to be avoided. They advised: "develop an understanding of respective strengths and weaknesses. Complement each other - don't compete with each other"; "Make sure you feel sufficiently secure about what you have to offer. Don't set up a 'contest' situation"; and "It's important not to compete with one another but to find what creates harmony and unity - to acknowledge the gifts and allow each spouse to live their complementarity".

Financial drawbacks

Approximately half of all the respondents cited finances as a obstacle to doing co-therapy with one's spouse. Some indicated that working together in co-counselling was a poor investment of time because they did not get paid double for being two therapists. Others indicated that they did charge twice as much when both were present and said that this may be a disadvantage for the clients. No one gave a solution to this problem which can satisfy both clients and therapists.

Modelling and the real couple (including sub-theme: client comparison/identification with counsellors)

Many individuals referred to their roles as models for their clients as a positive part of the therapy process. Modelling and role playing appear under the heading of advantages for clients of seeing married co-therapists: "more appropriate role modelling and modelling of communication". The same theme appears as part of the reason the couples chose to work together and within the advice they give to other married co-therapists. In terms of advice for example, they recommend: "be willing and able to model appropriate behavior".

While some comments on modelling and clients observing examples of positive communication make no reference to the fact that the counsellors' relationship is real, more often the two issues are intertwined. For example: "we decided to work together because we felt that not enough couples were offering marriage courses... Our working together was intended to provide a basis and model for other couples". Another individual said that the advantage of seeing married co-counsellors is that "they have a role model that works well and feels good. Clients have on many occasions remarked about the harmony and respect we share... They know ours is not just a philosophy, but a lived experience and it gives them hope to work at their relationship and/or individual healing".

Being a real couple also appears occasionally as a theme separately from comments about modelling per se. One example is the couple who decided to work together because they felt that their experiences as a couple gave them something special to offer: "Few couples were working as co-leaders. We wanted

to try it out and add a personal dimension to it drawing from our own 'authentic' experiences."

Related to the themes of modelling and the real couple, is the sub-theme of clients identifying, or comparing themselves, with the counselling couple. Apparently, clients may compare themselves to the counsellors and whether this is a positive or negative experience varies. On the one hand, the clients may identify with their counsellors as real people with similar problems so that "clients feel that their problems are not 'odd'". On the other hand, the clients may compare themselves unfavourably with the counsellors and "may feel uncomfortable having 'problems' in their marriage if therapists don't".

Some of the questionnaire responses indicate how the concepts of modelling, the real couple, and client identification with the counsellors can interact. One subject appears to believe that the counselling couple's relationship serves as an encouraging model for clients because the clients can identify with the counsellors: "Our personalities are very different... We have a great marriage and our love for each other is very obvious. I think this encourages clients to learn how to enjoy their own differences". Another individual comments: "It is a positive experience in family counselling when positive role-models can be provided for the clients. Experience as a married couple with children gives the clients a sense of assurance that the therapist can truly understand some of the stresses and concerns that accompany marriage".

Enjoyment

Many of the respondents indicate that they enjoy working together.

Thirteen subjects referred in some way to a fun aspect of working together. "We enjoy each other greatly and we wanted to see how well we could work together on an ongoing basis", and "shared enjoyment of activity", were listed as reasons for working together. The brief comment "it's fun" was listed as an advantage for the therapists by both partners in one husband/wife team. Others reinforced this sentiment with comments such as: "it's also a lot more fun working with my best friend"; "it is fun being on the same road"; and "it seems hardly fair sometimes to charge for having so much fun." One couple indicate that they limit the amount of time that they work together so as not to loose the fun aspect of that work: "We have always kept working together as fun and not allowed ourselves to sacrifice that". This issue also appears in the advice that subjects give to others thinking of working together: "Make it fun and celebrate all the successes along the way" and "Make it fun. Life is too short."

Growth, learning and challenge

A theme appearing across questions and from many different respondents is that of the importance of growth, learning and challenge in the process of working with one's spouse. Personal growth and growth as a couple are both considered important. These issues appear in several different contexts.

The challenge and the learning which occur are part of what is rewarding about working together and are reasons why some subjects choose to work together. One explains: "it [working together] gave me a chance for personal growth in another area as well as balance my work in the mental health field". Other subjects referred to "advantages of learning from each other" and write: "I

benefit and learn from him as his skill level is high and his knowledge vast". They indicate that working together "shows us what we do right (or wrong)" and comment: "we share ourselves fully and grow from our experience".

Growth and learning are also listed as important considerations if one is to have a successful working relationship with one's spouse. One subject reported that "our strong commitment to personal growth is the aspect which has been most beneficial in our work together". In discussing problems from working together, one individual said "both of us are engaged in our own journeys of personal growth and development" and any problems which arise are utilized as "a way of learning about ourselves and about relationships."

Formal learning experiences appear to have played an important role both in some of these subjects coming to work together in the first place and in maintaining their ongoing growth. For at least two of the couples, working together was preceded by formal studies together. One couple at least indicate that they pursue formal learning times regularly: "Being aware there is a need for stimulation and new ideas,... two or three workshops or conferences in this field are attended each year."

Several subjects recommend that it is important to be open to learning and growth and some also recommend structuring formal learning times such as workshops. Their advice includes comments such as: "Be open and prepared to grow as an individual ... Be ready to learn"; "Be willing to learn from each other"; "Be on your own journey"; "Learn about your values, expectations and visions for your relationship and how these variables affect your modes of interaction". They

also advised that counsellor couples make sure to "spend time participating in workshops on communication, dealing with conflict, etc.", and to ensure "that there are built in plans for ongoing education either as individuals or as a couple".

Communication (including sub-themes: resolving problems, debriefing and consulting, and self-disclosure)

The issue of communication appears to have broad implications for married counsellors working together. Many mention it as a part of what they teach and model for their clients. This is generally considered positive; however, one subject also suggested that it may sometimes be a disadvantage for clients to be exposed to their patterns of communication. Communication is also mentioned as the main way in which any problems which arise when working together are resolved. Some subjects indicate that working together affords opportunities for addition types of communication which improve their relationship in general. The themes of learning, modelling, being a real couple, and the couples' relationship often appear to be associated with that of communication. "As a couple teaching marriage enhancement it has forced us to look at our own communication patterns and to develop, add and stretch in these areas. Sometimes what worked for us did not necessarily work for other couples so we had to develop a variety of other communication patterns, test them and offer them to our participants".

A sub-theme under the general heading of communication is that of working out, negotiating, and resolving problems as they arise. Advice for

example includes: "Be prepared to be open and to work out all the problems and feelings that are triggered as a result of working together". One commented that few problems arise when working together because they "tend to resolve our personal and relationship problems as they come up". Another commented that while some disagreements arose with regard to workshops but that "ongoing negotiations prevent this from becoming a major issue" and recommended that others considering working together "learn to negotiate".

Another sub-theme under the general heading of communication is debriefing and consulting, the special communication which married co-therapists engage in as professional colleagues. Some subjects said that being married to their spouse is an advantage because they are "easily available to each other for consultation etc." This ties in to the issue of work-home overlap since these subjects stress the need to time limit this type of interaction to avoid allowing this type of communication to take to take too much home time while intimacy is neglected.

Another concept or sub-theme related to communication is that of the self-disclosure and sharing. Some indicate that working with their spouse is an advantage for clients because it allows for "better disclosure for therapists/clients" and the counsellors "could use self-disclosure appropriately". Another subject advised that married co-counsellors "be ready to 'get personal' when client asks... but be sure each of you agree on what the boundaries and share-able topics are!"

Plan ahead and set up structures

Planning ahead and setting up structures for dealing with problems appears

to be one way of keeping things under control. A general need for planning is mentioned as well as some specific issues to plan about in advance. These issues also arise as general themes in their own rights.

These issues are mentioned primarily under advice to others thinking of working together: "Don't take supervision/consultation times for granted. Make sure to schedule these in a professional manner"; "Plan, Plan, Plan"; "Have a 'no fault' clause in your agreement so that either may choose to discontinue working together without penalty, and plan to set days for discussing the state of the working partnership"; "Always have something to look forward to"; and "Discuss strategies and responsibilities before you start".

Some of the respondents indicated that they also follow their own advice. They said that they make plans related to how they will deal with problems, for example: "we built in from the beginning that problems which arose interpersonally... would be dealt with at the first opportunity". They also referred to plans for continuing education and for personal and holiday times. Subjects also talk about needing to schedule times to talk about issues arising at work. For example: "We are beginning to set 'business meetings' at work in an attempt to avoid the problem [of bringing work home]"; and "We agreed that I would take care of 'the books' and office details, and we would schedule time to confer about the functional things as we did for case consultation."

One respondent, who recommended against working together, has a caution related to planning structures. He said, "to work out a structure which can be sustained over a long-haul is very difficult."

The couples' children

While only five of the subjects mention their children in discussing working together, this may be an important consideration for those married counsellors who have young children. One factor which may indicate that this issue is important is that both husband and wife in two couples raise the topic of how children impact their working together. These couples appear to agree that children create additional demands which can interfere with working together. One subject indicated that she chose to limit their work together because "much of [their] work was done on weekends and [they] have children with demands for time". They indicate that having children requires additional planning for looking after the children and "leaving children with babysitters". One couple who have done play therapy with children encountered problems with jealousy: "the only personal problems stem from our children who resented being with sitters while we 'played' with other children".

The impact of children on the married co-counsellors may depend upon the age of the children. The other individual who mentioned children indicates that her children are older, teens and young adults; rather than presenting an impediment to their work together she said that these children played a positive role in the couple's relationship by offering opportunities for them to pursue "a harmonious family life". This appears to be an important part of the foundation from which this couple is able to reach out to others.

Shared dreams, interests, and values

At least five of the subjects indicate that shared dreams, interests and

values are part of their reasons for working together or part of their reward for working together. Some indicate that they shared a dream of working together in a counselling type of situation. Others had a shared interest in a specific area which led to their working together: "We both have a special attraction to working with couples. We deeply believe that it is possible to have a meaningful and fulfilling marriage." One individual indicated that working together enhanced their marriage because their "goals and dreams are common". Another subject commented that one of the advantages for counsellors working together is an "increasing area of shared interest".

In contrast, some of those who do not work together much indicate that this is because of different interests or areas of specialization or a loss of interest in a previous type of shared work. They comment for example: "our interests are also somewhat different at this point in time". Not all shared perspectives lead to working together; when the counselling couple shares a therapeutic focus which is not compatible with working together, this shared interest or value may actually contribute to their not working together. One subject explains that while experiences working together have been positive, "we both tend to prefer individual therapy to group work. Co-therapy with individuals is not an approach we ascribe to -no benefits".

Client comfort

While mention of client comfort often occurs in association with other issues which are seen as responsible for the clients' comfort or lack of comfort, enough different individuals referred to this concept for it to deserve discussion as

a theme. Apparently, the comfort or discomfort of the clients is an important criteria for assessing the benefits or drawbacks of the therapy situation. Some individuals make a general comment about their clients' comfort such as: "clients feel more comfortable" without explaining this comment further. Others discuss the source of client comfort: "better techniques of self disclosure therefore clients feel more comfortable", "both clients felt 'represented' instead of one sex being 'ganged up on' by two of the opposite sex", and "women felt more confident to speak up when I was there". On the other hand, subjects indicate that clients may be uncomfortable if they "feel 'ganged up on'" or in specific situations, such as a group of female survivors of sexual abuse, where it may be more difficult to deal with having both sexes as part of the therapy team.

No problems/disadvantages

While it may not be a theme in the same sense as other themes which point to issues related to married co-counselling, it is interesting to note that the comment of not experiencing problems, negatives or disadvantages comes up in at least 8 of the questionnaire responses. In answer to question 9, some subjects indicate that they have experienced nothing which they would consider "problems". Under question ll, some comment that they see no disadvantages for the clients and others that they see no disadvantages for the therapists.

Question 8: How and why subjects decided to work together

Question 8 asks subjects how and why they decided to work with their spouse. All subjects answered this question; however, one respondent may have misunderstood the question as indicated by comments on loss of interest in the

type of work they did in the past without explaining their original reasons for working together. Another subject appears to have misunderstood question 10, which asks why they do not work together more, and instead gives reasons for working together; this response will therefore be included in the discussion of question 8.

The answers to the "how" portion of this question appear to be somewhat more sketchy than to the "why" portion. In a couple of cases it appears from their responses that the couple may have just started working together and found it a positive experience. In another case, the availability of clients was an important factor in their beginning work together. Two couples indicate that they worked together before they married and continued following their marriage. Some explicitly state that they talked about working together and planning issues; in other cases it appears from the context that discussion of the "why" of working together probably occurred prior to embarking on this endeavour. Two individuals indicated that the decision to work together was primarily left up to the more uncertain or reluctant partner. Shared education experiences also appear to have played a role in bringing some of the couples to a decision to work together.

Many of the themes outlined previously were raised by respondents with regard to the question of why work together. There appear to be a variety of reasons why subjects decided to work together. Nine of the subjects indicated that complementarity and team work are a reason for working with their spouse. The couples' enjoyment when working with each other is the next most common

theme, mentioned by 7 subjects. The theme of learning, growth and challenge appears as both a reason for working together and part of the "how" in coming to work together. Shared interests, dreams and values led some couples to choose this type of work. One individual commented that working together just seemed the "natural" thing to do because they like to spend a lot of time together.

Another reason for working together appears to be that the counsellors perceive needs that they are in a unique position to fill. For some this need appears to be conceived at a general level, as comments such as the following indicate: "we realized a lot of counsellors/teachers in the couple/marriage communication were divorced themselves. Few 'couples' were working as coleaders." Other couples appear to be responding to more specific individual needs. In some cases, respondents indicate that clients approached them and directly expressed their need or desire for the involvement of both spouses. "With the exception of a couple of cases, the client requested both of us". Other counsellors see specific needs without direct client requests: "We came to the awareness that some of our clients would be really helped by our partner's input." One man indicates that the need for co-counselling may be expressed either by the clients or the counsellors: "Generally these co-counselling sessions came about either at the request of the clients to be seen by both genders or my wife requesting assistance with a particularly difficult situation".

In looking at what they have to offer in meeting the needs they see, some indicated that working together is a good opportunity for modelling and others make general references to being a real couple and being able to draw upon and

share from their authentic experiences. A few also mention advantages g both male and female perspectives and other advantages of having two people present.

Once they began working together, positive feedback from clients appears to have reinforced this decision. Some respondents also indicate that the successes they have had working together provide support for their ongoing decision to work together.

Question 9: Problems and how they have been dealt with

Many of the above themes appear in answer to question 9, some as problems and others as solutions. Of the 21 subjects, 6 stated that experienced no significant problems working together and two others said there have been few problems. For some of these, there is no further comment in answer to question 9 than "none" or "no personal problems or professional of any real consequence". However, others appear to be reacting to the term "problems" and do discuss some difficulties which have arisen; rather than seeing these kinds of issues as negative, the subjects referred to them as challenges, "stretching experiences", and opportunities for personal and relationship growth. They comment for example: "I would not see any of the things we've grown through as problems." For those who do indicate that they experienced problems or difficulties of some sort in working together, 10 subjects referred to their differences and conflicts. Other issues raised include: work-home overlap, time issues, feelings and fears, competition, and financial issues. Of the above concepts, all but feelings and fears have been previously discussed. With regard to hurt feelings and fears, the

comments include: "one partner feeling the other took over at times; assumptions and fears that we made/had about each other" and "a misunderstanding occurring with feelings being hurt".

In discussing how they deal with their problems, subjects indicated that communication, resolving problems as they arise, learning and growth, and planning ahead are important. Two individuals referred to an adjustment period and another generally to changes occurring over a period of time. At a less general level, couples indicate that they have made specific changes as appropriate in response to a specific problems. For example, one couple adjusted their work hours to meet their children's needs better and other couples have set up specific times for "business meetings" or "brainstorming" to deal with work issues while avoiding the problem of bringing work home. Some subjects point to the strength of their relationship and to shared goals and values as foundations for limiting problems. On the other hand, one individual said that their problems had not changed, and could not because they are basic personality differences.

Question 10: If you currently do not work together with your spouse, or if you rarely work together, why not work together more?

Only 12 of the respondents wrote any answer to question 10. One of these indicated that the question had been misunderstood; that response was discussed under question 8 where it fit more appropriately. The mean percentage of time that the other 11 respondents to question 10 indicate they work together is 14% with a range of 0% - 25%. Not all of the respondents whose present percentage of time working together falls within this range answered question 10. This may

be due to different interpretations of the word "rarely" in the question.

Six of the subjects mention their full-time individual work as the reason they have little time to work together. Five bring up financial issues. Family demands, decrease in the client demand, different areas of interest, and decrease in interest in the type of work that they did together are also reasons mentioned for not working together much. Three of the respondents mention their enjoyment of their work together but the reasons for mentioning enjoyment appear to differ. One indicates that past enjoyment of working together makes them hope to do so again in the future. At least one of the others appears to be afraid that more work together might jeopardize their fun: "we have always kept working together as fun and not allowed ourselves to sacrifice that." None of the problems with differences and conflicts or work-home overlap were listed under question 10 as reasons for not working together more.

Question 11: Advantages and disadvantages of co-counselling/co-leadership for clients and married counsellors

Twenty of the respondents answered questions 11 and 12. The other individual gave no indication of why these questions were left blank. Most of the themes previously discussed were raised in answer to question 11. This is probably because question 11 is so broad in trying to look at both the advantages and disadvantages of co-counselling and co-leading for clients and the counsellors.

It is important to remember that all of the advantages and disadvantages listed for clients are from the perspectives of the counsellors and this may affect their validity. One of the respondents referred to this fact in suggesting that it

would be better to ask the clients about this issue. This individual also opted out of the question, expressing a hesitation to think in terms of advantages and disadvantages at all.

Respondents to this question generally point to more advantages than disadvantages for the clients who see the co-counselling or co-leading couple. The opportunity to observe modelling and role playing are mentioned as advantages for clients by 14 of the subjects. Eleven also referred to the fact that they are a real married couple, often in association with their modelling. Having both male and female points of view represented is considered an advantage for clients by 10 of the respondents; one individual points out that the specific type of issues being dealt with would determine whether this is an advantage. Having two counsellors, with their variety of perspectives and experience, was also listed as advantageous. Eight referred to clients feeling more comfortable seeing the counselling couple and 6 mention the clients' identifying positively with the counsellors. Other issues which are mentioned include: having counselling with a complementary team, learning in general and learning about communication specifically, the benefits of counsellors' self disclosure, and having counsellors who talk to each other more than other co-counsellors might. Some comments are general and the reason behind them is somewhat unclear, examples include: "clients 'move' faster"; "we are able to accommodate more people"; and "higher energy level". One individual also indicated that "the risk of sexual involvement is minimized".

Two of the subjects specifically state that they see no disadvantages for the

clients and 7 more list no disadvantages. Of those who do mention disadvantages for the client, higher cost is brought up most frequently. Possible discomfort with seeing two counsellors was mentioned by 3 subjects. Subjects also suggest that interpersonal problems or disunity between the counsellors will be obvious to clients and clients may be exposed to biases, modelling, and communication styles which are not positive for them to copy. Another possible problem is that clients may compare themselves negatively with their counsellors or be hurt by private jokes that they do not understand. One subject wondered about problems of confidentiality when the co-counsellors both work and live together.

Subjects also mention quite a few advantages of working together for the counselling couple. Several indicate that working together strengthens their relationship in a variety of ways, provides opportunities for learning and growth and allows them to work as a team. The fun of working together is listed as an advantage for counsellors by 6 of them. They also referred to the advantages of having time together and sharing a working experience, consulting and debriefing and unwinding together. Other issues which are mentioned include increased creativity, shared interests, understanding of the spouse's tiredness level, and better service to clients leading to a stronger business for the counsellors.

Two of the subjects state that they see no disadvantages for the counsellors and 3 more do not list any. The most commonly listed disadvantage for the counsellors is work-home overlap. Time issues are mentioned by 5 individuals and the financial costs of working together are raised by 4. Subjects indicate that competition can be a disadvantage as can a lack of united approach. Friction

may occur when expectations are violated. There may be negative effects on the couple's relationship and problems related to care for the couple's children sometimes arise.

Question 12: Advice to married counsellors thinking of working together

At a general level, the advice that subjects would give to married counsellors thinking of working together appears to be that they need to maximize the positive aspects of working together while trying to avoid the drawbacks.

Developing and maintaining a strong relationship and planning ahead are the themes which arise most frequently. Other clear themes include: avoiding taking work home, communicating well and resolving problems as they arise, working as a complementary team, balancing time demands so there is time together and apart, and achieving learning and growth individually and as a couple.

Some more specific types of comments include the need for each partner to know herself or himself and to be personally secure. Some subjects indicate that it is important to keep out of power struggles, conflicts, or competition and instead stress the need for unity and consistency. Related to the theme of planning ahead, they indicate that it is important to know why you are working together and to identify and share goals. Two individuals also referred specifically to the need to take holidays.

One subject's advice was quite different from that outlined above; instead of giving advice about how to work together most effectively, this individual

began to answer question 12 with, "My advice: NOT TO DO IT!" and went on to explain why. The reasons given included: high "risk of marriage burnout", financially low payback, difficulty working out successful structures, and marital dynamics intruding negatively into the work situation.

Variation in themes depending upon amount couples work together

Since the range of hours that couples in my study work together is broad, varying from 15 hours to approximately 10,000 hours, it seemed possible that there would be differences in the couples' experiences of working together depending upon how much they have done so. In order to assess whether there are differences among the subjects in my study I broke the subjects into three groups: "low" those who reported working together less than 200 hours (7 subjects), "middle" those working together between 300 and 1000 hours (6 subjects), and "high" those working together 1000 hours or more (8 subjects).

All of the themes discussed previously are mentioned by at least one of the subjects in each group with only two exceptions. Within the high group no one mentions their children, if they have any; and no one in the low group refers directly to competition or the need to avoid competition.

In order to explore whether there may be more subtle differences among the three groups, theme frequencies were put in rank-order and each group was compared with the others and with the rank-order of frequencies for all subjects using rank-order correlation coefficients (r_s). The rank-order correlation coefficients can be seen in Table 3. Correlations of the low group with the middle and high groups are not significant. All other correlations are significant

at P=.01.

Table 3. Rank-order correlation coefficients (r_s)

Group	Low	Middle	High	Total
Low	1.00	0.286	0.221	0.576
Middle		1.00	0.671	0.829
High			1.00	0.850
Total				1.00

As these correlation coefficients indicate, there is considerably more difference between the theme frequencies of the low group and that of the other two groups. The lack of any mention of competition or the need to avoid it is one large difference. Other differences include a higher percentage of people who said they experienced no problems and fewer who refer to differences or conflicts, work-home overlap or other time issues. The most obvious similarity across all three groups is that the theme of the counselling couple's relationship is mentioned by the most individuals in each group.

Discussion of Questionnaire Results

Relationships among themes

The themes which emerge from this study are very inter-related. In trying to describe these relationships, some appear to be hierarchical with the more general theme encompassing more specific themes or sub-themes. Other themes appear to be related more horizontally; the relationship being between themes with a similar level of specificity.

An apparent hierarchy is found in the general theme of the counselling couple's relationship as it appears to include more specific themes: enjoyment of their work together, work-home overlap, differences and conflicts, complementarity, and competition. The dual-counsellor couples' relationship appears to be significantly impacted by all of these more specific issues.

The theme of communication appears to have a number of sub-themes which describe more specific types of communication including: communication being taught and modelled for the benefit of the clients, communication of a professional nature including consultation and debriefing, and communication aimed at solving any personal problems of the counselling couple.

The two general themes of communication and the dual-counsellor couple's relationship are also related to each other, since communication is often suggested as the way to find solutions to any of the problems which threaten the couple's relationship. From another perspective, the quality of a couple's ability to communicate may be a measure of the strength of their relationship.

A less hierarchical relationship is also seen among the themes of

differences, competition, and complementarity. The subjects' comments on these themes provide a foundation for a hypothesis that competition and complementarity are two alternative, possibly opposite, ways of dealing with differences. It may also be possible to interpret the conflict which arises out of differences as an extreme type of competition. Support for this conclusion is sketchy, resting primarily on similarities in the descriptions of competition and conflict or disagreement. In one case the subject talks about competition leading to conflict at times: "Some competitiveness in that we both like to talk and perceive the other to take more presentation time than ourselves - sometimes leads to dissention!"

Relative importance of themes

The frequency with which a given theme is raised may not be a very reliable measure of its importance. In particular, themes which are mentioned infrequently may be more important than the frequency would suggest because the respondents may take them for granted and not mention them explicitly. However, it is possible to make some tentative conclusions about the importance of themes based on their frequency and their relationship to other themes. It is likely that those themes which are mentioned frequently by subjects are considered important by them. Those themes mentioned most frequently include: the couple's relationship, growth and learning, complementarity and team work, modelling, time issues, work/home overlap, enjoyment, being a real couple with real experiences, and communication.

In looking at these highest frequency themes, more seem to be related

primarily to counsellors and their relationship with each other than to the clients. The theme of the couple's relationship appears to be of central importance to couples who co-counsel or co-lead together. The fact that the counselling couple's relationship is mentioned more often than any other theme suggests that this is a very important issue. This conclusion receives strong support from the many other frequently mentioned themes which seem to be sub-themes related to the couple's relationship. In looking at the themes, almost all affect or are affected by the relationship of the co-counselling couple so that this theme takes a place at the centre of the experience of doing co-therapy with one's spouse. The counselling couples appear to be more concerned about how working together affects them than how it impacts their clients. This makes sense since advantages for clients are dependent in large part upon the counsellors' relationship. Subjects have indicated that the modelling from their relationship is an important advantage for clients and that when there are unresolved problems these provide negative model for clients. A strong relationship is essential if clients are to receive the potential benefits of married co-therapy.

The difference between the rank-order of themes for those who worked together less than 300 hours and those who work together more may reflect a difference in the importance or centrality of the themes depending upon amount of time spent working together. In this study, the couples who have not worked together very much did not mention competition and referred less to other problems including differences and conflicts, work-home overlap and time issues. There are several possible reasons for these apparent differences. Maybe the

early experience of working together is a sort of "honey-moon" period marked by less problems and conflicts. It is also possible that there are problems but the couple is not recognizing them or does not want to acknowledge them. On the other hand, these apparent differences may not be real; only further exploration will help to clarify this issue.

Literature revisited

Most of the themes which emerge in this study were present in the literature either on dual-career couples, coordinated-career couples, co-counselling, or dual-counsellor couples.

Many of the concepts from dual-career literature emerged within the questionnaire responses. The problems with time demands and the need to balance different types of activities contains elements in common with Rapoport's (1976) overload and social network dilemmas. Those couples dealing with arranging child care and dealing with their children's attitudes towards their working together appear to be facing one of Rapoport's role-cycling dilemmas. Their other dilemmas: normative and identity dilemmas do not appear to receive support in this study. Nadelson and Nadelson's (1980) comments that the dual-career couple can have a stronger relationship because of the opportunity to share more common ground and is supported within the questionnaire responses.

The issue of overlap between work and family life which coordinated-career couples such as the Bensons (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1971, 1976) and Kieren and Munro's (1988) dual-clergy couples experienced, also appears as a common problem for the dual-counsellor couples in my study. On the other

hand, the advantages of complementarity and mutual support which Kieren and Munro identify for the dual-clergy couple also appear to be experienced by many of those responding to the questionnaire.

Complementarity and team work ties in with the co-therapy literature as well, as a characteristic of good co-therapy. Authors writing about co-therapy also agree with subjects in my study about the advantages of two counsellors rather than one and of having two sexes represented. They concur with regard to the value of modelling and the need for a strong relationship between co-therapists. The need for growth and learning and the opportunity that co-therapy provides for personal growth are also issues raised by some of the co-therapy authors as well as by subjects in my study. Drawbacks or problems in the co-therapy literature which are also mentioned by some of the respondents to this questionnaire include the possibility of clients following unhealthy examples or of the counsellors failing to have a strong enough relationship.

Quite a number of issues which the subjects in my study raise are also raised in the literature on co-counselling couples. A few of the subjects referred to an initial adjustment period and to growth and change over time. While these comments do not support all of the individual stages or phases of co-therapy with their spouses which Lows (1975), Hoffmans (1981), Lazarus (1976), and Paul (1987), discuss, they do fit with a general concept of developing the co-therapy relationship over time. The emphasis on the importance of communication and resolving problems as they arise fit well with what these authors describe in their process of working together. The goal of complementarity is also common to

both the co-therapist authors and the couples in my study. The concept first raised by Bellville et al. (1969) that being an actual married couple adds an additional dimension of reality appears repeatedly in subjects' responses. My subjects also agree strongly with Hoffmans (1985) about the need to limit work-home overlap. Some subjects are in agreement with Lazarus's warnings that marital problems in the counselling couple's relationship will impair therapy and that clients may compare themselves negatively with their counsellors.

With regard to the issue of competition, which is raised by authors writing about dual-career couples, coordinated career couples, co-counsellors and co-leaders, and co-counsellor couples, the couples answering this questionnaire agree with the majority of the authors in these areas that competition is a potential problem and should be avoided. Many of the couples in my study also appear to consider competition to be the opposite of complementarity, as do many of the authors in these areas. There is no apparent support for Hoffman and Hoffman's (1985) suggestion that both competition and cooperation can be healthy. However, like the couples in Holmstrom's (1972) study, most of the couples in my study do not appear to consider competition to be a big problem in their own relationships. The attempt to determine the extent to which competition is a problem in the area dual-counsellor couples, or dual-career couples in general, is hampered by the fact that the term competition may be understood differently by different individuals in my study and by different authors.

Further support for the themes which emerged in my study is found in a recently published interview with Robert Goulding and Mary McClure Goulding,

a married couple who have done co-therapy together with groups for 20 years (Goulding & Goulding, 1991). Many of the themes which emerged in my study are clearly present in Gouldings' comments as well. They talk a great deal about their complementarity and team work. In order to be a good team, they believe that it is important to be equals and to share a belief system, but not necessary to do things the same way. They also talk about how co-therapy allows for two perspectives and lets them spell each other when one is tired or distracted, advantages which I have categorized under the theme of two counsellors being better than one. The theme of enjoyment is clearly present in Gouldings' comments. They mention the fun of co-therapy and their enjoyment in working together several times. Gouldings refer several times to differences in styles and how these can be used to complement each other. They also say that competition is a problem from time to time, but does not cause a serious problem because they take turns giving in. The importance of communication among co-therapists comes through in a number of ways. They talk about the importance of giving each other positive feedback and of explaining what you are doing so as you go along. They also stress the importance of dealing with problems openly and immediately after a group. Gouldings also talk about the benefits to clients in that they see a male and female role model in a relationship which shows that disagreements and differences need not lead to violence or divorce. While they do not refer directly to the fact that their relationship is real outside of therapy, this theme may be present their comments that clients "like to watch two people who have been together this long and who are able to argue and then laugh with

each other ten minutes later" (Goulding & Goulding, 1991, p. 207). In a discussion of hazards of co-therapy, Gouldings agree with several of the subjects in my study that dishonesty or other problems in the co-therapists' relationship will interfere with the effectiveness of their co-therapy and if unresolved suggest that the couple should work separately.

The importance of having and maintaining a strong relationship if a married couple is going to work together is also clear from Roller and Nelson's (1991) comments on the "special problems or vulnerabilities of lovers and marriage partners who enter into co-therapy relationships". Roller and Nelson are a married co-therapy team of 15 years; they present case studies of couples who have had negative experiences trying to work together. These case studies, provide examples of the types of problems which some of the subjects in my study warn about. They indicate that failure to deal openly and honestly with problems such as competition, jealousy, and other unconfronted feelings can destroy not only the effectiveness of the co-therapy but also the marriage.

Interview

In order to get feedback on the themes and relationships among themes derived from the questionnaire responses, an hour long interview was conducted with one of the couples who had returned questionnaires. In order to preserve their anonymity, I will call them James and Dawn. Approximately one week earlier they received a copy of the results section containing the themes and answers to the open questions so that they could familiarize themselves with these ahead of time. Both partners indicated that they had looked at the material, Dawn having read it more thoroughly.

Having previously read the themes, Dawn and James often classified their comments according to the themes. Both individuals offered opinions in the interview, often agreeing with each other or expanding on ideas the other introduced. The way that the couple built on each other's comments provided an example of their team work and complementarity. There was also much laughter during the interview, probably reflecting the enjoyment that this couple has in being together and addressing work issues together. It is easy to believe that this same enjoyment would be manifest in their co-counselling.

At the beginning of the interview, the couple indicated that all of the themes that I derived, including those that they had not mentioned in their questionnaire responses, do fit with their experiences. Talking to Dawn and James added depth and new dimensions to the themes outlined in the results section. It also suggests at least one possible theme that was not clear before. The discussion also provided support for some of my interpretations regarding

relationships among themes.

James and Dawn suggested that theme of the therapist couple's relationship is central in working together for a number of reasons. James pointed out that it is the therapist couple's relationship that makes co-therapy with one's spouse different from other co-therapy. They agree that a strong relationship is imperative if good therapy is to be done. They also agreed with some of the other responses to the questionnaires and married co-counselling literature that problems in the relationship will interfere with the therapists' effectiveness. Specifically, James said that if they are having problems, therapists may "project their problems onto the clients or use the clients as a way of battling with each other" or form unhealthy alliances with the clients. Dawn mentioned another situation which requires a strong relationship between married counsellors. She said that when doing marriage counselling the first inclination of the clients "is to try and split you up and make you as miserable and unhappy as they are". A weak relationship may be hurt by this pressure from clients.

Along with the need for a strong relationship, James and Dawn also stressed the need for the counsellors to be strong and competent counsellors individually. They recommended that dual-counsellor couples not try to work together when they are just starting out as counsellors because they need time to develop their individual styles and abilities. This need for individual strength may fit with some of the questionnaire comments about the need for self knowledge and individual growth. However, in this discussion it appeared more clearly as an important issue: possibly another theme in itself. Perhaps this theme of needing

to be strong and well trained as individuals was not clear in the questionnaire responses because it was assumed to be basic to all types of counselling.

In talking about the negatives of working together, several specific issues were raised. These were specific examples of work-home overlap, time issues, and client discomfort. A specific work-home overlap situation that they mentioned was that each may tire of work talk at a different time. Potential client discomfort may result if the client feels ganged up on or if the client is feeling overly challenged by seeing a couple who know the issues involved in marriage "too well". James drew a parallel between this last problem and cultural issues in counselling. He suggested that it is like individuals feeling uncomfortable seeing a counsellor from the same culture because sharing a cultural background can be too close for comfort, challenging their defenses too much. They also refer to the tendency of clients to try to split up the counselling couple; this issue was not clearly raised in the questionnaire responses but is a significant issue within the co-therapy literature in general.

Another issue Dawn and James raised was related to the theme of communication and specifically to the sub-theme of debriefing and consulting. They pointed out that dual-counsellor couples can become quite insulated or isolated because they rely on each other for consultation and feedback and may not develop much of a professional network. The other side of this issue, for those who work together directly, is that neither spouse is able to provide an unbiased perspective. Dawn advises that the problem can be avoided but said that to do so, "you have to consciously reach out for other people". This issue

may constitute a specific example of Rapoport's (1976) social network dilemma.

In summing up their specific comments about the possible drawbacks of co-therapy with one's spouse, this couple suggest that most issues are the same as for co-therapy with someone else, but they are intensified by the fact of being married to each other. James commented that "its all the same things that happen in individual [counselling]" at which point his wife interjected "except double" and he agreed that they are "more intensified".

Both James and Dawn reiterated that the theme of enjoyment or fun in working together is important and suggested that there may be more enjoyment for the co-counselling couple than for other coordinated-career couples because they work more closely together and work with people as opposed to projects or things. Dawn also mentioned a drawback to this fun aspect of working together; in working together with your spouse, she suggested that you tend to develop a similar sense of humour and when something is said or done in a session which both see as funny it may be very difficult to control inappropriate laughter.

I asked specifically about some of the themes which did not appear frequently but seemed likely to be important. Dawn and James confirmed these themes, they suggested that some things may not be mentioned because they are so basic that they are assumed. The themes of having shared values, interests, and goals, using self-disclosure, and debriefing or consulting, were mentioned in at least one of their questionnaires so they may over estimate the importance of these issues for others. However, James and Dawn suggested that these are so basic to a strong relationship and good counselling that they would be assumed by

those who do not mention them.

They point to the theme of their children's impact on the counselling couple as an example of an issue which they had not written about in their questionnaire responses because it was assumed. They related a similar experience to that of the other respondents whose children became jealous of their playing with other children. Dawn and James have a daughter who became upset when she realized that some of her old toys were being taken to their office to be used by other children. They dealt with this by taking her to their office and playing with her there. This illustrates the need to how their work affects the children of counsellors.

The need to control competition was also mentioned in our discussion although neither individual had raised this issue in their questionnaire responses. Dawn suggested that all counsellors will have a certain amount of competitiveness, having needed it to complete their training, however they will need to curb it if they want to work together. James and Dawn also pointed out that competition may take different forms, they mentioned for example that a couple may end up competing to see who can self-disclose more or over who clients are more comfortable with. They said, as many of the other respondents did, that developing complementarity and team work is the solution to competition and an essential factor for successful therapy.

I shared with Dawn and James my perception that complementing and competing are two alternative ways of dealing with differences and that the comments on the questionnaires suggest that differences themselves are not a

problem so long as they are dealt with to facilitate teamwork rather than initiating a contest. They agreed and further pointed out that there must be differences or there is no point in working together; "there's got to be differences or otherwise its the same person". Later, in discussing common values and goals, they further clarified that it is important to agree on "fundamental issues" while being free to differ in terms of personality, style etc. in order to model problem resolution and team work.

In addition to confirming the communication theme and related sub-themes which I had already identified, they commented about non-verbal communication, a type of communication mentioned directly by only one other subject. James commented, "I'm amazed that no one came up with themes like how to develop your personal sign language." Dawn responded, "That's a good idea, you know, because we do that" and gave as an example: "if I scratch my head it means like stop you've gone too far or things like that". This tied in with the theme of self-disclosure since the couple needs to clarify what things from their marriage are sharable and have a way of communicating about these within a session. It would be interesting to find out whether this type of non-verbal communication is important to other couples who counsel together.

In summing up general comments and perspectives, Dawn and James stressed the importance of the married therapists' relationship and their communication. They agreed that some clients would definitely benefit from seeing complementarity and communication modelled by married couple with a healthy relationship. They also confirmed that it is important to balance work

together with individual work and to keep professional and private roles distinct.

Finally, they confirmed my impression that the decision about working together is based more on issues related to the counsellors than to the clients. James said, "I think the effectiveness of working that way should really be highlighted because it is very effective when done well." With this potential for effectiveness clear, therapist issues rather than client issues become central to the decision about working together. Dawn summed up this idea by saying that, "you decided to do it [co-counsel together] because it was good for you; it was all very well and good if clients got something out of it but if you got more, well then that was great and then you'll go with it".

Conclusions

Answers to the basic questions of study:

What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a dual-counsellor couple working together?

The superficial answer to the question of the advantages and disadvantages of a dual-counsellor couple working together is outlined under the results section in answer to question 11. The general learning from that question and other parts of the responses which referred to the pros and cons of co-counselling with one's spouse is that there can be numerous advantages and there can also be significant disadvantages. Many of the potential advantages and disadvantages, such as having two people work as a team, having both male and female perspectives, and the potential for disunity in the team, are the same as those that non-married mixed sex co-therapists or co-leaders may face. Here I want to discuss primarily those issues which are unique to married co-counselling or co-leading.

Chief among the special advantages for clients of married co-therapists appears to be the fact that they are able to see a real marriage that works reasonably well. This confirms my initial expectations that the modelling of a real couple would be advantageous in co-counselling. The proviso needs to be attached that modelling from a real couple is only an advantage so long as the counsellors are strong enough in their relationship to provide a strong healthy model.

The main advantages and disadvantages that the dual-counsellor couple

may face are related to their relationship with each other. For a couple with a strong relationship and good communication and problem solving skills, it appears that working together may be a positive experience because it encourages them to further develop their skills. Apparently, this same challenge to explore their own relationship will face any dual-counsellor couple who attempt to work together. Some couples, perhaps because of less skills or greater differences, may see this as a disadvantage rather than an advantageous opportunity.

The negative impact that too much work-home overlap can have on the counselling couple's relationship also appears to be a significant potential disadvantage of working together. Time demands in general and the problems which can arise when time together and apart is not balanced can also be drawbacks to working together. While these time related problems appear to apply to some extent to most dual-career couples, whether they work together or not, they may present a greater potential problem for the dual-counsellor couple which works together. The fact that these issues are raised more by couples who have worked together more than 300 hours suggests that these problems appear more after couples have worked together for some time.

A specific potential advantage related to the counselling couple's relationship is that they may find that they have fun working together. I was surprised how many of the subjects in this study listed their enjoyment or fun together as a reason to work together, an advantage of working together, and something which needs to be consciously preserved. This was not a clear theme in the literature which I explored prior to this study. I had also not really thought

about the fun aspect when first contemplating the topic of married counsellors working together. It appears to be a common enough theme across my subjects to support the prediction that a dual-counsellor couple that enjoys being together in other situations is also likely to have fun working together.

What factors affect the process of working together?

How smoothly the process of working together proceeds appears to be affected by differences or problems between the counselling couple and how they deal with these. Differences of personality, style, and expectations appear to be common among co-counselling couples, although the extent of the differences may vary. These differences have a potential for creating conflict and need to be dealt with if the couple is to work together well.

Two main issues appear to be important in determining whether more of the potential advantages or disadvantages of co-counselling or co-leading together actually manifest themselves. These are the strength of the couple's relationship and their communication with each other. If the couple has a strong, healthy relationship and a good ability to communicate about differences and problems as they arise, it is likely that they and their clients will experience more advantages than disadvantages from their co-counselling. On the other hand, weaknesses in these areas will probably lead to difficulties working together and may make it advisable to discontinue the practice. The ability to anticipate potential problems and make plans for dealing with them also appears to be helpful in keeping potential disadvantages of co-therapy from showing up.

Consciously recognizing, and making plans to maintain, the positive aspects

of working together also appears to be helpful in optimizing these aspects. One important example of this appears to be recognizing and encouraging each others' contributions to the complementarity of the team. Another example is structuring in debriefing and consultation times and times for formal learning experiences such as workshops.

I wonder whether the small number of people who reported hurt feelings and fears related to working together can be taken to indicate that these feelings are experienced by only a few co-counselling couples. I suspect that this experience is more widespread and may have a greater impact on the process of working together than responses to this questionnaire suggest. In depth interviews may better address this issue; however, some people may be reluctant to discuss painful emotions or recognize the role that they play in their actions and decisions.

Why do dual-counsellor couples choose to work together to the extent that they do?

Even from this relatively small sample, it becomes clear that there is no one amount or type of work together which all dual-counsellor couples will be comfortable with. Issues such as the clients' needs and the many expected benefits for clients and counsellors appear to be instrumental in couples deciding to work together.

Many factors appear to be important in determining the limits of the amount of work dual-counsellor couples do together. Some of these factors appear to be primarily external to the counselling couple. For example, financial

drawbacks of working together are one major reason why couples in a private practice limit this type of work. The time constraints of individual full-time work are also given as reasons for not working together, although this leaves me wondering why couples chose the types of full-time work they did. I suspect that this is a multi-faceted question with part of the answer related to job availability and other financial realities and part related to more personal factors.

Personal factors appear to play a significant role in limiting time spent working together. Personality and style differences may be important issues for some couples; however most of the couples in this study appear to see these as things which they can learn to deal with. Hurt feelings and fears appear to be considerations for at least some individuals thinking of working with their spouses, although it is unclear how large a role these play. Work-home overlap and balance of time together and apart appear to be important factors in restricting the amount of time that couples work together. Different couples apparently have different comfort levels with regard to how much they can handle integrating work and home demands and how much time they like to spend with each other and alone. Each couple considering working together will need to discover the degree of work-home overlap, and the balance of dependence, independence, and interdependence, which is comfortable for them. Once they understand their comfort levels with regard to these issues, it is possible for dual-counsellor couples to choose a way of working together which is practical for them. For example, long-term co-counselling may be appropriate for those who are comfortable with quite a lot of work-home overlap and time together; leading

occasional weekend workshops may be preferred by others who wish to keep work and home more separate or who want more independence. It appears to be important that the dual-counsellor couple finding their comfort level with regard to these issues in order to maintain enjoyment in working together and not put undue strain on their relationship.

Limitations of study and suggestions for future research

This study lends itself well to discovering themes without putting unnatural constraints on the responses. However, as mentioned previously, because failure to mention a theme may not reflect absence of that theme in the individual's experience this study does not provide clear indications of the proportion of people for whom each theme is important or a part of their experience. The different numbers of people who mentioned different themes raises questions and hypotheses about co-counselling with one's spouse which call for future exploration, as raised in the discussion. The different frequencies with which themes are mentioned depending upon the amount couples work together suggests differences in the experiences of these two groups. In order to explore these hypotheses, it would be necessary to ask couples directly about themes they have not mentioned and about how important they consider each theme.

As one of the subjects in my study pointed out, if the advantages and disadvantages for clients of seeing married co-therapists or co-leaders are to be determined it is best to ask the clients this question. So far as I have been able to determine, this avenue has not been explored. This study raises some specific questions for clients to share their perspectives on. These include what factors

affect client comfort and identification with their therapists. As well, clients may have a different perception of how the strengths and weaknesses in their counsellors' relationship affect the counselling situation. For example, it would be interesting to find out whether they experience the modelling of a real couple with their inherent strengths and weakness as primarily comforting or confusing.

The question of the role of competition in working with one's spouse, in co-counselling or other endeavors, still calls for further exploration as well. While subjects in this study appear to agree that it is a potential hazard but not a large problem for them personally, the issue of competition was not raised directly in my questionnaire. When not directly faced with a question about competition, it is possible that some subjects may have failed to mention it or even avoided it. The definition of competition may also vary from one individual to another so that for some individuals the term carries more negative connotations than for others. As a result, some may describe their experiences using this term while others may choose a different term to describe similar experiences. In any concerted examination of the issue of competition, care will need to be taken to clarify the meaning(s) and associations of this term. In further exploration of the issue of competition in working with one's spouse, it would be interesting to see whether competition and complementarity are really two alternative responses to the couple's differences.

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Appendix I - Questionnaire

Married Counsellors' Perspectives on Working Together

RETURN TO:
Myrna Hiebert
Department of Educational Psychology
Room 6-102, Education North Building
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB
T6G 2G5

Please note that for the purposes of this questionnaire, the term "**working together**" may include any or all of the following activities when done with your spouse: co-counselling or co-therapy with individuals, couples, or families; or co-leading therapeutic groups, seminars, or workshops.

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. What was your age at your last birthday? ____ years.

2. Please indicate whether you are __ female
__ male

3. What training or qualifications do you, yourself, have for doing counselling?___

_____

4. What training or qualifications does your spouse have for doing counselling? _

_____

5. How long have you and your spouse been married? ____ years.

6. a) Have you ever worked as a co-counsellor, co-therapist or co-leader with your spouse? __ yes (please answer b & c)
__ no (skip questions b & c)

b) Please estimate the total number of hours in your life that you have spent working with your spouse in any of the above capacities. ____ hours.

c) Thinking back over the last year, estimate the percentage of your counselling time that you spent co-counselling, co-leading, or doing co-therapy along with your spouse. ____ %

LONG ANSWERS

Please answer those questions which apply to you as fully and completely as possible. If you need additional space, feel free to use the back of the page or to add additional pages.

PLEASE DO NOT DISCUSS THE QUESTIONS WITH YOUR SPOUSE BEFORE ANSWERING.

If you have never worked with your spouse as a co-counsellor, co-therapist or co-leader, please **skip questions 7-9 and answer questions 10-12.**

If you work or have ever worked with your spouse, in any of the above capacities, please **answer questions 7-12, skipping 10 if it does not apply.**

7. Describe the type of work you do/did with your spouse.

8. How and why did you decide to work together?

9. Have any personal or professional problems arisen from working with your spouse? If yes, please describe the problems as much as you wish to and then discuss what have you done about them.

10. If you currently do not work with your spouse in any of the ways outlined previously, **or if you rarely work together**, would you explain why you are not working with your spouse or why you do not work together more frequently?

Whether or not you work with your spouse, please answer questions 11 & 12.

11. There may be advantages and/or disadvantages of co-counselling or co-leadership for clients and for the married counselling team. Discuss what you consider to be, or might be, any advantages and/or disadvantages of working with your spouse.

Advantages/Disadvantages for your clients: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Advantages/Disadvantages for yourself and your spouse: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

12. What advice would you give to married counsellors who are thinking of working together?

Since answers on a questionnaire may be open to more than one interpretation, I would appreciate permission to contact you.

If you are willing to answer questions regarding your responses to this questionnaire, please fill in the following:

Name:

Most convenient time(s) to contact:

Address & telephone number:

Your confidentiality will continue to be assured.

PLEASE CHECK THE FOLLOWING AS APPROPRIATE:

___ I would like to receive a copy of the thesis based on this study.

Name:

Address:

___ I would like to receive a brief summary of the results of this study.

Name:

Address:

___ I am not interested in receiving information about the results of this study.

Thank you again for your participation in this study!

Appendix II - Form Letter

Date, 1990

Dear :

As I indicated in my telephone conversation with , I am working on a Master's thesis studying married couples where both partners are trained in counselling or related fields. I hope to be able to explore their perspectives about working together in counselling and related activities such as leading seminars, groups, and workshops. Whether you and your spouse have ever done this type of work together or not, your views are greatly appreciated. A variety of different perspectives is necessary if a balanced understanding of this topic is to emerge.

By returning this questionnaire, you are agreeing to the use of the data within it for my research. All information received from you will be dealt with so as to assure your confidentiality and anonymity. To this end, the number on your questionnaire has been temporarily associated with your name in order to keep track of which questionnaires have been returned. When the questionnaire is returned, the name-number code will be destroyed. You will notice that on the last page of the questionnaire there are places where you may put your name and address if you are willing to discuss this questionnaire with me further or are interested in receiving the results of the study. This page will be removed and stored separately from the rest of the questionnaire. At the conclusion of this research, all identifying information will be destroyed.

Please fill out your questionnaire separately from your spouse. While I hope you will be able to answer all questions which pertain to you, you have the right to omit any questions you wish. If you have any comments or questions regarding this study or the questionnaire itself, please let me know. You may telephone me at 431-1506 or write to me at the Department of Educational Psychology, Room 6-102, Education North, University of Alberta, T6G 2G5.

Please complete and return this questionnaire at your very earliest convenience. Thank you in advance for your assistance!

Sincerely,

Myrna Hiebert
Graduate Student

William Hague
Thesis Supervisor