

LONG-DISTANCE MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS DURING THE WAR: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS FOR PRESERVATION

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Abstract: The article is devoted to the study of the peculiarities of long-distance family relationships during the war (on the example of Ukrainian families during the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine) and the identification of the main challenges and prospects for the development of such relationships. The key provisions of symbolic interactionism are used as the theoretical and methodological basis, in particular, those directly related to family relationships, as well as those that have been applied in the practice of family counseling. The main conclusions are based on the results of an empirical study conducted by the authors using a qualitative methodology: in-depth interviews with women who were forced to leave their husbands and homeland to save their children from war (n=8). It is noted that family identity, family roles, and the quality of relationships (interactions) between spouses are inextricably linked. It is proven that typical problems in the relationship of spouses separated by war are the following: lack of physical intimacy; unwillingness to communicate; problems suppression; problems exaggeration without real evidence of their existence. It is pointed out that spouses whose level of marriage satisfaction was low before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine mostly use the strategy of avoiding conflicts and/or ignoring existing problems faced by the marriage partner and never use the strategy of cooperation. It is concluded that the quantitative and qualitative indicators of interaction between spouses (frequency and duration, positive or negative connotations, etc.) are the main factor that influences how long-distance relationships unfold in the context of numerous stressors created by the war.

Keywords: family; family and marital relations; spouses; husband and wife; symbolic interactionism; identity; role; full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine; war conditions.

1 Introduction

A family is one of the most important institutions of society which determines social stability, ensures the process of socialization, and provides the ability to reproduce the population in new generations. At the same time, the family is a small social group considered the most stable and cohesive among all other social groups. Throughout their lives, people are members of a large number of different groups: friends or peers, classmates, employees, etc. At certain periods of their lives, they either join or leave these groups. However, the family is one of those social groups that an average person is a member of throughout whole life.

Since this article is devoted to long-distance marital relationships, the main part of it will clarify and clearly distinguish between "family" and "spouses." In the introduction, we consider it necessary to note that, according to the UN infographic, there are 78% of households in the world that are based on marital relationships formed by a married couple. Among these households: 38% are married couples with children (including unmarried adult children who live together with their parents); 27% are married couples with or without children who live together with other relatives; 13% are married couples without children who live separately from other relatives [15].

Different nations at different times have held different views on the family and its well-being, on the role of the family in society, and the place of a person in the family. These views have transformed throughout human existence. However, the above data shows that despite the dramatic social changes and transformations that have taken place and continue to take place, people, in the vast majority, still want to form families and live in one. This desire has not only an emotional component (love, a sense of closeness, etc.), but also a rational, pragmatic one, which consists in meeting the various needs (both vital and social) of its members. From ancient times to the present, it has been the case that those who have a family have the best prospects of receiving support (moral, material, and any other

kind). At the same time, the family is not only a small social group but also a complex social phenomenon. People and their relationships form this phenomenon. Therefore, throughout the entire cycle of its existence, each family faces not only typical, predictable, expected problems, conflicts, and crises (the crisis associated with the initial distribution of family responsibilities and the establishment of common "rules of the game"; the crisis associated with the birth of the first child; the midlife crisis; the crisis of the "empty nest," etc.), but also atypical ones - those that occur under the influence of unexpected events, random situations, etc. [26, p. 136]. As a rule, such unexpected events, which, among other things, are globally widespread and destructive, are wars or natural disasters.

Ukrainian society is currently experiencing a full-scale war, and Ukrainian families are facing atypical, complex, and extremely difficult problems. One of these problems, which should be considered extremely difficult, is the problem of married couples' separation due to wives going abroad to protect their children. To consider this problem and find ways to overcome it is the very subject this article is devoted to.

2 Method

As a theoretical and methodological basis, we used the key provisions of symbolic interactionism, in particular those formulated by E. Burgess, W. Waller, and R. Hill regarding family relationships, as well as those that were later used in the practice of family counseling [40]. In addition, we referred to the scientific works of modern scientists who have studied family interaction, including the following: M. Markova, M. Savina, S. Sliuser, I. Shynkarnko, etc. [6: 19; 27; 29; 33] We also used the concept of the "distant family" introduced into scientific usage by Ukrainian scientists H. Wagner, N. Holovan, Y. Goshovsky, and others [12; 13; 39].

The empirical basis of the article is the results of a study conducted by the authors. Using the method of in-depth interviews, the authors interviewed eight Ukrainian women refugees from the war who were married but were forced to leave their husbands and go abroad (in particular, to Germany and Poland) to preserve the mental and physical health of their children.

3 Results and Discussion

The study of the family involves interdisciplinary analysis. That is why universities in the United States, Canada, Australia, and most European Union countries have interdisciplinary faculties that, in addition to teaching students, are engaged in family studies [9; 14]. American scientists D. Klein (University of Notre Dame, USA) and J. White, who works at the University of British Columbia, conducted an in-depth analysis of various approaches to family studies (using the method of expert survey), based on which they identified eight main ones, that were also divided according to the principles of holism/individualism and statics/dynamics [16, p. 51] (see Table 1).

Table 1: Differentiation of theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of the family as a social phenomenon

Principles of theorizing	Statics	Dynamics
<i>Individualism</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The theory of exchange and rational choice ▪ Role theory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Symbolic interactionism ▪ Feminist theory
<i>Holism</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Functional approach ▪ Conflictological approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Systematic approach ▪ Bioecological approach (development of the family life cycle)

The principles of holism and individualism determine at what level - individual (microsocial) or general social (macrosocial) - theorizing will be conducted.

The principles of statics and dynamics determine which family phenomena the researcher focuses on, whether they are relatively stable structural, functional, and value components or processes of development.

Later, the authors identified three criteria for the selection and/or evaluation of theoretical and methodological approaches used by scientists in the study of the family: 1) the level of analysis: individual (dyadic) or supra-individual (group, institutional); 2) the source of existence and functioning of the family: intra-family (endogenous) or external to the family (exogenous); 3) time: in static approaches, social processes and cause-and-effect relationships are relatively independent of time, while in dynamic approaches, time is an important variable [16, p. 57].

According to the above scheme, our study of long-distance marital relationships in wartime is localized at the individual level of analysis (spouses as a dyad); it studies marital relations (or rather their quality) as the main prerequisite for the existence of a family (even despite the impact of (exogenous) war conditions); it takes into account the criterion of time since the duration of distancing is a factor that affects the quality of marital relations.

Obviously, for our study, individualistic approaches have the greatest explanatory potential, and in particular, we focused on symbolic interactionism, which views family relationships as social interaction through the prism of family identities and roles, role expectations, etc. In the main part of this article, we will present a more detailed justification for the use of this particular approach.

As for modern research on family and family relations, all the problems and issues studied in this aspect can be divided into the following groups: 1) axiological and sociocultural - the study of family values and relationships based on them (O. Stoliarchuk, O. Bondarchuk, S. Didenko, M. Korolchuk, O. Yermusevych, L. Orban-Lembryk, L. Pomytkina, K. Sedykh Z. Kisarchuk, L. Korobka, etc.); 2) legal - studying the legal basis for the existence and functioning of the family (M. Baschuk, Y. Solonenko, O. Khromova, M. Polishchuk, S. Pogrebniak, etc.) and the study of the principles of legal regulation of family relations (L. Krasyska, A. Kolodii, M. Koziubra, O. Skakun, etc.); 3) sociological - problems of young families, family socialization and upbringing, issues of family structure and social fictions, etc. (M. Lukashevych, E. Libanova, N. Chernysh, M. Holovatyi, O. Rubliuk, I. Chekhovska, A. Vasyliiev, O. Romanenko, O. Protas, O. Vyshnevskiy, I. Trubavina, B. Kovbas, V. Postoviy, V. Kostiv, Z. Kyianytsia, G. Bezv, T. Fedorchenko, etc.); 4) psychological and psychotherapeutic - research on family problems, conflicts, etc. related to the personal and psychological characteristics of family members (S. Vaskivska, P. Hornostai, N. Poviakel, A. Spvyakovska, M. Hryshchuk, I. Chorna, R. Popeliushko, G. Rosynsky, M. Markova, V. Kozrya, O. Buriak, L. Shestopalova, etc.)

Our study of long-distance marital relationships in war is interdisciplinary, but it primarily addresses psychological (specifics of interactions between husband and wife) and sociological (re-distribution/distribution of social roles, non-conformity/conformity with role expectations, etc.) issues.

The study of families in wartime is the subject of research by American sociologists E. W. Burgess and J. H. S. Bossard, who state that war affects the social and family behavior of both men who fight and women who stay at home. According to scientists, these changes hurt marriage (causing an increase in divorce) as well as influence the birth rate [2, p. 21; 4, p. 9]. A group of American researchers, including J. J. Schwab, J. F. Ice, J. J. Stephenson, K. Raymer, K. Houser, L. Graziano, and others, based on their research, conclude that the wars of the twentieth century had a comprehensive (direct and indirect) impact on the family. The main factors of this impact were the following: grief

over losses, separations, etc.; the need for civilians to adapt to military life; the need for the military to adapt to peaceful life; and the growing role of women in the family and society. These scholars emphasize that the main negative consequences of these factors were the increase in the number of divorces. In addition, they draw attention to the negative impact of post-traumatic stress disorder on family well-being and emphasize that war accelerates changes in family life that could have taken decades in peacetime [28, p. 132]. In other words, if any negative processes have begun in the family, even those that are latent and do not spill over into conflicts and quarrels, if spouses have begun to morally distance themselves from each other, if tacit distrust has arisen, etc., then this process of slow family disintegration can last for decades and may not even necessarily lead to divorce. However, when a couple finds themselves in a radically new environment, which is also characterized by a high degree of stress, it activates all family processes (both negative and positive), brings all problems to the surface, and changes in marital relations occur much earlier than would have happened under normal social conditions.

Ukrainian scholars have been studying the impact of the first stage of the current Russia-Ukraine war, which was centered in Donbas, on the overall socio-demographic situation in the country as well as on the Ukrainian family. The staff of the M.V. Ptukha Institute of Demography and Social Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine analyzed in detail the state of the Ukrainian family during this period as follows: changes in family functions, problems and risks of its development in modern conditions, socio-demographic characteristics, financial situation and living conditions of families in Ukraine, and the state and prospects of state family policy [7]. The results of this analysis are presented in "The State Report on the Status of Families and Ways of Implementing the State Family Policy by the Results of the 2014-2015 Years". The problems of Ukrainian families that have arisen as a result of military operations in Donbas, the main factors of family destruction, etc. are considered in the National Report "Policy of Integration of Ukrainian Society in the Context of Challenges and Threats of Events in Donbas" [23, p. 78]. In general, the list of these factors fully confirms the conclusions drawn by American scholars, including the fact that the war accelerated the processes of disintegration of families, the situation in which was not good before, and significantly united and strengthened relations in those families that were strong before the war and based on the principles of partnership, equality, mutual support, and trust.

The Ukrainian family in the context of Russia's full-scale invasion has become the object of attention of such domestic Ukrainian scholars as S. Aksyonova, N. Markova, S. Savina, L. Sliuser, I. Shynkarenko, and others [1; 19; 27; 29; 33]. E. Libanova, O. Pozniak, O. Tsymbal, and others study the scale and consequences of forced migration of the Ukrainian population as a result of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation, including for the modern Ukrainian family [17].

On the whole, an analysis of scientific discussions and publications on the problems of the modern family, the Ukrainian family in times of war, etc. shows a high interest in these issues on the part of representatives of the scientific community, in particular sociologists, psychologists, and researchers of demographic processes. At the same time, the analysis of scientific papers and publications shows that there is a certain lack of empirical research on family relationships in times of war and there is no empirical research specifically on long-distance marital relationships.

Considering the above, the purpose of this article is to identify the peculiarities of long-distance family relationships during the war and to outline the main challenges and prospects for the development of such relationships.

Since this topic is insufficiently studied, given the almost complete absence of empirical research on the relevant issues and the lack of developed and tested tools for studying long-distance family relationships, in our study we turned to a

qualitative methodology (in-depth interviews), which allows identifying motivational aspects of behavior, personal expectations and perceptions, individual attitudes, etc. Qualitative research is aimed at studying a wide range of manifestations of an object and does not track its quantitative patterns but rather focuses on revealing cause-and-effect relationships. One of the advantages of the in-depth interview method we have used is that it allows respondents to express themselves freely, which helps to reveal their inner values and feelings.

Theoretical and methodological principles of the study of marital relations

In defining the theoretical and methodological foundations of our study, we believe it is appropriate to begin by clarifying the categorical and conceptual framework. Let us start with the broader concept of family. The most common definition of a family is one that characterizes it as a system of mutual relations between husband and wife, children and parents, as a small social group in which all members are interconnected by parental and/or marital relations, mutual moral responsibility, and a common household. At the same time, attention is focused on the general social significance of the family, which is to meet the social need for spiritual and physical reproduction of the population [32]. An analysis of the special reference literature shows that the general social significance of the family is emphasized in almost every definition of it, regardless of the authors, publications, and their sectoral affiliation. Therefore, one can often find definitions of the family as a "social mechanism of human reproduction" formed by a group of people whose members are united by mutual assistance, moral responsibility, and a common household. This mechanism is based on the relationship between spouses, their children, and parents [30; 31].

For some time, there was an opinion that the main feature of a family was a legally registered (in most cases, of a life duration) marriage of a woman and a man, which was created for the birth and upbringing of children [3, p. 21]. This definition is now considered outdated, as it does not include those couples who, for example, are officially married and do not have children, as well as those who are in a civil marriage and have children together, nor does it include elderly spouses who have adult children living separately, as well as unisexual partners living together.

Given the current reality and the great diversity of families, the English sociologist A. Giddens offers a fairly broad definition, considering the family as "a part of the society of people who support each other economically, socially, and psychologically, and whose relationships are based on such components as affection, care, and love [10, p. 177]".

Thus, the family is based on the joint activities and households of people who are united by the ties of kinship, parentage, and spouses, have a common life, ensure the continuity of generations, provide support for all family members, and socialize children. The "non-family" population includes those who play the role of a parent but are not married or have a legal or de facto marriage without children. The term "family group" is used to refer to all these fragmented forms of family [21, p. 21].

Without denying the limitations of the classical interpretation of the family as a small social group based on marriage, we will be guided by this interpretation in our study since we are studying marital relations, and spouses by definition are a couple of people (usually a man and a woman) who are married.

In addition, in our study, we use an individualistic approach, which involves studying the family as a small social group that has most of the following characteristics [25, p. 60]:

- A voluntary union of two people (usually a woman and a man);

- A common household and everyday life, common property, and material assets;
- The presence of moral unity;
- The presence of intimate and sexual contacts;
- Childbearing and subsequent upbringing and socialization of children.

The subject of our attention is spouses (married couples as a dyad) and interpersonal relationships in this dyad. The married couple is the "core" of the family, and general statistical classifications of family composition are based on the addition of children, parents, and other relatives to this "core".

Given these ideas about family and spouses, as well as the fact that we study marital relationships (as social interactions), we will use symbolic interactionism as the theoretical basis for our study. The main provisions of this approach are formulated in the works of social psychologists G. H. Mead, C. Cooley, and G. Bloomer. A little later, in the article by E. Burgess, "The Family as a Unity of Interacting Personalities," the directions of application of this approach were outlined in the sociology of the family [4]. The scientist emphasized that the commonality of fate and customs influences the patterns of family interaction throughout history. These established patterns, as well as the current concepts of "self" and "others," provide motivation and allow individuals to interpret the reverse reactions of others. W. Thomas and D. Thomas formulated the famous Thomas Theorem: "If people define situations as real, this situation becomes real in its consequences." Thus, if, for example, a wife attributes some bad intentions to her husband (or vice versa), this "reality" will be involved in how the spouses communicate with each other. Attributing bad intentions increases the likelihood that the wife and husband will have a conflict [37, p. 91].

W. Waller, using symbolic interactionism, described the process of destruction of marital solidarity, increasing alienation, and, ultimately, the emergence of a situation that leads to divorce. Based on the scientific achievements of Waller, his follower R. Hill argued that family crises and conflicts are not just a response to certain difficulties or problematic situations, but the so-called "response of definition" – that is, the way the spouses see the possibility of solving the problem (by immersing themselves in a crisis or conflict) [40, p. 111]. An objective definition of a problem situation offered by an impartial observer or a cultural definition supported by a particular social community or group will be less important than a subjective definition "constructed" by the family. Often, families who have the resources to cope with problems such as illness or job loss become stressed because they define such situations as "insurmountable".

According to the postulates of symbolic interactionism, the real community of married life exists not as a result of any legal concept or formal contract, but as a result of the interaction of a wife and husband. For example, the aforementioned E. Burgess defined a family as "an association of interacting individuals," and later this definition acquired a slightly different emphasis: "an association of interacting identities". He viewed family and marital roles as dynamic and believed that if one of the family members suddenly changes the pattern of fulfillment of his role, it can lead to changes in the role patterns of other family members [4].

The application of symbolic interactionism to family studies involves the use and operation of the following concepts (ranked from the micro to the macro level): 1) identities; 2) roles; 3) interactions; and 4) context. These concepts can only be divided analytically; in practice, they are closely interrelated.

Identity is the subjective acceptance of a role by each family member and its individual meaning. For example, a husband's role can be identified as a "sexual partner", "financial provider", etc., while a wife's role - as a "husband's secretary", "manager", "mistress", etc. To find out the individual content of the family role, it is enough to ask, for example, "What does it mean for you personally to be the wife of this particular man?" [18, p. 130].

According to S. Stryker's concept, identities (self-identifications) are arranged in a hierarchical order according to the importance of the respective roles for the person who performs them. For example, for a woman who identifies herself with a wife, the role of a "lover" (sexual partner) may come first, followed by "mother" (disciplinarian), and then "friend" (business partner, advisor, etc.). Stryker argues that the more meaningful a role is to a person, the more often he or she "presents" themselves in that role. For example, people who attribute great significance to their parental roles are more likely to mention that they are parents when they are introduced to other people. Those who attribute great importance to their professional roles are less likely to present themselves as "good", caring parents and more likely to present themselves as "good", reliable "income earners" of the family. A person sometimes chooses and masters an important role for himself or herself contrary to the opinion of others (for example, a woman adopts a child against the wishes of her relatives, and a man officially registers a marriage with a woman who has several children, rejecting the arguments of his friends) [35, p. 200].

According to the followers of symbolic interactionism, the real motive for behavior is the desire to maintain positive self-esteem. In family studies, self-esteem has been considered an important variable for understanding the causes of family violence. A person with low self-esteem may use violence against a marital partner to maintain self-confidence. At the same time, the abused spouse either also has low self-esteem or self-esteem decreases as a result of suffering from abuse [5, p. 43; 26, p. 133].

Roles can be defined as certain patterns of behavior that are shared in society and/or certain social groups and are expected of the holders of certain social statuses. Thus, fulfillment of a role (husband, wife, mother, etc.) is a pattern of behavior accepted in society. Consequently, there are certain role expectations. When there is a lack of resources to fulfill roles to the fullest (relevant to expectations), role tension arises. This is especially true in situations where a person performs many social roles, as well as when expectations for one role contradict or conflict with expectations for another role (for example, when there are simultaneously high professional requirements and requirements to be "a good mother") [24, p. 269].

Self-presentation in everyday life (identity politics and role performance) involves verbal and non-verbal interactions. Society is structured in such a way that, for a mentally healthy person, both his/her identities and his/her respective roles will only matter to interact with other people or groups successfully. Thus, dating and courtship are in some sense a "drama" involving a "game" between two people, each seeking to create the desired impression and, at the same time, to evaluate the partner and the partner's perception of themselves.

One of the significant achievements of the concept of E. Burgess (of the family as a community of interacting personalities) is the identification of five key dimensions of family relationships that must be coordinated for the normal functioning of the family: 1) "remoteness-closeness" of family members; 2) compliance with marital role expectations; 3) openness in discussing family problems; 4) boundaries of family life (open-closed); 5) biosocial aspects of family life (agreement on the meanings of "masculinity" and "femininity," etc.).

To study a family, it is important to study the context of its existence. Any interaction always takes place in a context. For example, a situation in which a husband is unaware of his wife's intentions to file for divorce is contextually different from a situation in which both are aware of it. Family relationships often require negotiation if the context changes [33, p. 11]. For example, a wife goes back to work after a break related to child-rearing, which requires negotiations on a new division of household chores, care for children, elderly parents, etc.

Thus, it is obvious that symbolic interactionism has significant heuristic potential in research in social psychology and

sociology, and it is used as one of the "combined" approaches in the analysis of intrafamily processes and family stress.

In our study of long-distance marital relationships, we used the basic thesis of symbolic interactionism that the family is a complex of specific social interactions, the basis of which is the relationship of a married couple. In addition, the notion of the importance of family (marital) identities and roles, as well as the context in which interaction between family members (in particular, between members of a married couple) takes place, was used as a basis for the development of our research tools (in-depth interview guide).

The processes of intrafamily change are inherent in all families, without exception. Some scholars identify six key events that change the line of relationships within the family and, in particular, between members of a married couple: starting a life together; conflicts with parents; the birth of a child; one of the spouses getting a new position; real estate purchase; forced separation. Thus, the focus of our research was on such an event as forced spousal separation, which is associated with the high danger of wartime conditions.

It is important to keep in mind that the family is perhaps the only social group that is able to adapt to a large number of events in a short time. If family members carefully refrain from discussing problems and pressing issues and are not ready for change, they are likely to find themselves in a difficult situation because they do not plan for change where it is needed. That is why the interview guide included questions that were intended to determine the respondents' subjective assessment of such parameters as: subjective feeling of "distance - closeness" and related experiences; compliance with marital role expectations; and openness in discussing family problems. These parameters, in our opinion, characterize the relationship with a marriage partner as successful or unsuccessful and demonstrate the readiness to adapt to changes associated with forced separation.

In the context of war, the problem of the so-called "distant family" phenomenon arises when its members are at a distance from each other for a long time. Domestic Ukrainian scholars (H. Venger, N. Holova, and J. Hoshovskyi) considered distant families through the problem of "migrant workers" [12; 13; 39]. However, nowadays, family separation has a completely different character, and this phenomenon needs to be comprehended. Wives who have gone abroad are forced to fulfill all family roles that were usually shared with their husbands on their own. The same goes for husbands who stay at home. Such role changes are caused by a radical change in the context of family and marital relations caused by the war and forced long-term distancing. A fundamental change in the context provokes not only a change in roles but also a rethinking of life values. Any crisis exposes all the hidden problems and shows what is really going on between spouses. As for the war, as the aforementioned American scholars have argued in their studies of the wars of the twentieth century, the context created by the conditions of war intensifies and accelerates all processes in the family, both positive and negative. Therefore, in our opinion, the study of long-distance marital relationships can reveal the key problems of Ukrainian families and determine the prospects for their solution (in which cases this solution will be possible and whether it will be possible at all). That is why such a study is relevant and important, because, given the large number of families that are forced to be "torn apart", it is necessary to understand the real complexity of the situation and to provide measures to reduce its negative consequences.

The results of an empirical study of marital relations at a distance in war conditions (on the example of Ukrainian families during the full-scale stage of the Russian-Ukrainian war)

To find out the peculiarities of long-distance marital relationships in the context of war, we conducted a series of in-depth interviews with married women who were forced to leave with their children as a result of Russian military aggression. We interviewed 8 respondents who are currently being refugees in

Germany and Poland. The respondents were selected randomly using the snowball method, i.e., each respondent recommended the next participant from her circle of friends, colleagues, relatives, or acquaintances. The selection of respondents and data collection were completed when we stopped receiving new answers to the questions (i.e., those that would give us fundamentally new insights into the subject of the study – the peculiarities of long-distance family relationships).

The interview guide included two sets of questions: the main and secondary ones. The main block had 8 questions that clarified the following: the length of staying abroad and plans to return home; subjective feeling of distance or/and closeness with the husband (despite the objective distance); family identity of the respondents and their family roles; transformation of family roles due to the separation of the couple; coherence of marital role expectations and, accordingly, the presence or absence of role tension; openness in discussing family problems. During the interviews, if necessary, answers to the main questions were clarified by additional questions to improve their (answers) informational content. The secondary block included a set of questions aimed at clarifying the socio-demographic, professional, and other characteristics of our respondents and their husbands.

Before presenting the results of the analysis of answers to the main block of questions, let us describe some general characteristics of our respondents. All respondents are middle-aged (33-38 years old), married once, have at least 10 years of marriage experience, and have 1-2 underage children (ranged in age from 9 to 13). Since the survey was anonymous, we do not disclose the respondents' names, but for the convenience of presenting the results of the study, we will assign each of them a code: R1, R2,... R8. This coding of our respondents (R) also included their ranking by age, where R1 is the youngest respondent (33 years old) and R8 is the oldest respondent (38 years old). Four respondents have work (R1, R3, R5, and R6). Only one of them (R5) is employed as a highly qualified specialist in a research institution in Germany, has a high (in her own words, "full-fledged European") salary, and a two-year contract with this institution. The other respondents (R1, R3, R6) work in Poland as service staff (in restaurants and hotels). The other four respondents (R2, R4, R7, and R8) are in Germany as refugees supported by the host state and attend German language courses (this is their main occupation besides household chores and childcare). The children of all respondents study at schools in parallel: in foreign schools (full-time) and Ukrainian schools (distance learning).

At the time of the interview (May 2023), all the respondents, without exception, had been abroad for approximately the same period - from 24 to 26 months - that is, from the very or almost the very beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Before the invasion, all of the respondents and their families lived in the regions most affected by Russian aggression: Kharkiv city and Kharkiv region, Kherson, and Kyiv regions. All of their husbands are civilians and have not changed their place of residence (they live in their own homes in territories not occupied by the enemy). Four husbands (R1, R2, R4, R8) have stable jobs and "normal" (according to their wives) earnings. All other husbands (R3, R5, R6, R7) do not sit idly by and try to do something but do not have stable work and earnings as a result of the war.

Having reviewed the general socio-demographic and other characteristics of the respondents, we will now analyze their answers to the main set of questions. Taking into account the requirements set by periodicals for the length of scientific papers, we are not able to present the answers of each respondent to each question in this article. Therefore, in the course of presenting the results, we will generalize and present "typical answers," i.e., those that reflect the opinion of either all or several respondents, trying to cover answers with different connotations as well as those that reflect opposing opinions and points of view.

So, first, we asked about the subjective feeling of the duration of separation and its experience. Six of the eight respondents (R1, R2, R4, R5, R7, and R8) said that at first the separation was very difficult (approximately during the first year), but later it became easier because they "got used to" and "came to terms" with the situation. One of the respondents (R5) described the state of separation from her husband in particularly vivid terms: "...It was as if my skin was taken off. I felt naked and defenseless; everything and everywhere hurt, and it still hurts". The woman managed to cope with the separation by switching to other activities: looking for a job and then work itself, learning the language of the host country, volunteering, helping her child with studies, etc. At the same time, there were also respondents (R3 and R6) who noted that at first they were "scared to go to a foreign country", but quickly came to realize that it was much easier without a husband, "three times less housework", and that they did not need to cook, clean, or do laundry as much because the child did not need all of this in such a quantity. One of these respondents (R6) also said that her husband was very particular about the cleanliness of the house and constantly scolded her if she did not have time to clean something because of her high workload. Therefore, when she moved abroad, she was even relieved because she no longer had to "create perfect cleanliness" in the house.

Next, we asked the respondents about their plans to return home. The overwhelming majority of respondents said they would definitely return as soon as it became safe in Ukraine, particularly for their children. The answer of R5 was slightly different: "I would have returned home a long time ago, but I have a contract here and have to work on it. When the war broke out, I thought I would be unemployed, so I started looking for options abroad and very quickly found a project specifically for Ukrainian scientists, filled out the documents, and left for it. The project was designed for a year, so it recently ended. While I was on the project, I received money as a refugee. After the project was completed, the institution where I worked on the project offered me a full-time contract for two years. So I have to work under the contract until 2025... The only comfort is that I earn very well and help my husband and parents who stayed at home". The answer of respondent R3 was radically different from all the others: "It was hard at first. But later, I realized that I feel much more comfortable here in Poland. I am my own boss here, and I am happy with everything. Therefore, most likely, no matter what, I will stay here... If my husband still needs me after the war, he can come here to me".

We continued with asking the respondents whether they had lost their sense of moral closeness with their husbands and, if not, how they maintain this closeness. In this question, the respondents' answers seemed less homogeneous. R1, R4, and R5 continue to feel high moral closeness (due to constant interaction and many hours of communication by phone, mostly using video communication). R5 said that she and her husband began to communicate even more than when they lived together at home: "Before, we could come home from work and do our own things. And now it's like a kind of addiction: every evening we get in touch (via video call) and talk until the night, and we can't live a day without it." R2, R7, and R8 noted that after the first three to four months of separation, they did feel a certain distance. They usually complained of fatigue, depression, and an unwillingness to communicate with anyone, including their spouse and parents. R2 noted that over time, she began to suspect that her husband was cheating on her, that he no longer loved her as much as he used to, and that he realized that he could do things easily without her. That is why she avoids any long and frank communication with her husband, saying that "it makes her feel even worse". R3 and R6 answered in much the same way, indicating that even when living together in their home country, they did not feel any special moral closeness with their husbands, and separation did not change anything in this sense.

Thus, using the example of respondent R2, we found that Thomas theorem does work. In addition, we confirmed that the

way spouses experience separation is related to their previous (pre-war) experience of communication and interaction.

To find out the respondents' identities, we asked them to characterize themselves with three nouns. It is noteworthy that for all respondents, the first two positions were necessarily represented by family identities: all of them (except R5) had the identity of "mother" in the first place, and only R5 first characterized herself as "wife", then as "mother", and the third identity was related to her profession and occupation. Respondents R1, R2, R4, and R7 put the identity of a wife in the second place after the identity of a mother, and respondent R8 put the same identity in the third place. Respondents R3 and R6 did not identify themselves as wives at all. In addition to the identity of "mother", R3 mentioned herself in second place as a refugee and in third place as a daughter. Respondent R6 mentioned her professional identity in the second place and her national identity ("Ukrainian") in the third place.

Taking into account the advice and developments of representatives of symbolic interactionism, we tried to clarify the marital identity of the respondents and therefore asked them, "What did it mean to you personally to be your husband's wife (before the full-scale invasion)?" Here we have a wide variety of answers: R1, R4, and R7 said that they were "partners, assistants" for their husbands; R2 said: "I am like a little child for my husband"; R3: "housewife, cook, etc."; R5: "lover, partner, friend"; R6: "mother of his children, his nanny, cleaner, breadwinner"; R8: "mother of his children, friend".

As we can see, the identities indicated by the wives fully reflect their relationships with their husbands. This is especially true for R2, R3, R5, and R6. For example, R2 said that she unreasonably suspects her husband of infidelity. It was clear from her story that she was dissatisfied with her husband's behavior but could not do anything about it. Perhaps this kind of helplessness, as well as other incidents of marital life, lead her to believe that she is like a "child" to her husband (by the way, her husband not only works steadily in the war conditions but also holds a high managerial position). The high morality and intimacy of the relationship with her husband are reflected in R5's identity as being a "beloved" one and a "friend". It is not surprising that R3 and R6, who have rather "cool" relationships with their husbands, were overwhelmed with household chores and responsibilities while living together and, in some cases, suffered from complaints and insults from their husbands, indicating those related to household life as their marital identities.

We also asked the respondents how their marital identities had changed: "What does being your husband's wife mean to you personally NOW?" The identities of the vast majority of respondents have not changed, but the identity of "partner" has come to the fore among all the others. R2 remained a "child" for her husband, and R5 did not lose her identity as a "beloved" one. R3 and R6 noted a radical change in marital identities: all those related to housework disappeared from their lists, R6 remained only "the mother of his (her husband's) children", and R3 described herself as "the woman with whom he (her husband) is married and has joint property". In other words, the last two cases clearly show a line of deterioration in relationships that started before the full-scale invasion.

There was also no unanimity of opinion regarding the redistribution of family roles. Respondents R1, R2, and R7 noted that it was difficult to adapt, as they had to solve all issues (including organizational ones) on their own. The opinion of these respondents is reflected in the answer of R2: "When my daughter and I lived at home, we had the following rules: I was responsible for "small things" within the walls of our house, and my husband was responsible for "big things" outside these walls. So he earned money, paid for all utilities, took care of the cars (we have two), solved issues with repairing things that broke down, chose and bought computer and construction equipment, and so on. Here, abroad, I have no husband, and I have to do everything myself". Respondents R4 and R8 noted that there were no particular changes in their family roles and that men still provide the financial basis of existence and help in any way they

can. Respondents R3 and R6 said they were relieved by the "role unloading" that had occurred, as they did not have to "look after their husbands". Of all the respondents, R5 again stood out, emphasizing that namely during the separation her husband took on the responsibility of monitoring the education of his son and daughter, who study in parallel at a German and Ukrainian school: "Earlier, before the full-scale invasion, my husband did not worry much about the children's education. I was in control of this issue myself, attending parent meetings, and so on. Now I control their education in the German school, and he takes care of their education in the Ukrainian school... He does lessons with the children, explains the educational material to them in Zoom, or communicates with teachers...".

At the same time, all respondents, without exception, noted that the role set of their husbands has changed quite significantly: all of them have to perform household duties that were mainly assigned to women in peacetime. The opinion of all the respondents is reflected in the answer of R7, which we have chosen to illustrate as a typical one: "Life has become much harder for men. First, there are problems with work and the constant search for income. Secondly, all the household chores are on him. He cooks for himself now and does the laundry... I'm not sure if he cleans the apartment (laughing), but he definitely washes the dishes because I check them (laughing again). He even planted a vegetable garden at the dacha - potatoes, cucumbers, and zucchini. And he takes care of it himself...".

Thus, it can be stated that family identity, family roles, and the quality of relationships (interactions) between spouses are inextricably linked. For example, a respondent who characterized herself primarily as a "wife" and a "beloved" one for her husband (and only then as a mother) notes the constant close communication and high moral closeness with her husband, despite the long separation and distance. Those respondents who did not recall themselves as wives at all said that they did not and do not feel moral closeness with their husbands and communicate with them only when it is urgent, in case of some domestic or financial issues, etc. The connection between identity and roles is also evident. For example, those respondents who did not recall their identity as a wife not only do not feel role tension due to the redistribution of roles but even experience a certain "role unloading".

We asked the respondents which family problems most often arise during the period of distance living, whether they are discussed with their husbands, and how they are solved. R5 said that the biggest problem was the lack of physical contact with her husband: "We have a problem that we cannot touch each other, lie down together, hold hands... This is a very big problem for us, and it is impossible to find a solution... Perhaps we somehow compensate for this by talking on the phone for many hours in the evening and at night via video... Although we meet about once a month in western Ukraine, it is not enough for us..." R2 noted that the main problem is misunderstandings due to her suspicion and jealousy. At the same time, she noted that this problem is usually solved by "negotiations": "I do not hide from my husband that I suspect him of something bad. Sometimes we even have whole phone scandals about it. Of course, he gets angry, but he is balanced and restrained, so everything ends with his assurances that I am wrong. This calms me down for a while..." R1, R7, and R8 focused more on domestic problems and issues: caring for elderly relatives who remained in Ukraine, caring for animals left with their husbands, problems with work and finances, health problems of family members, and problems with children's education. The women emphasized that even though they are not really able to help each other with a number of these problems, they definitely discuss them with their husbands, give each other advice, sometimes argue, and sometimes even cry together. It was quite expected that the answers of R3 and R6 would differ significantly from the others in this aspect. Let us summarize these answers in the words of respondent R6: "Somehow it happened that we have no common problems now, so there is nothing to discuss... He has his own problems there, and I have mine here. So we solve them

on our own. Everyone is alive and well; the house is intact, and thanks God for that". In our opinion, a sense of shared problems and a common desire to solve them is a special indicator of the resilience of Ukrainian families who were forced to separate because of the war.

In general, the results of our study allow predicting the further development of relationships in the families represented by our respondents, namely: R5 has no risk of losing her relationship with her husband; her stay abroad is currently forced (due to her work contract with the institution), however, if this contract did not exist, she would have reunited with her husband long ago, despite the fact that the war is still ongoing; R1, R4, R7 and R8 have adapted to the situation of separation as much as possible and, perhaps, a certain loss of the feeling of intimacy in this case is a protective reaction, but there is a risk that with time passing and the continuation of separation, intimacy will be lost more and more, which will negatively affect marital relations and may even lead to divorce; the relationship with the husband of respondent R2 is at risk, because in this case the Thomas theorem may work, the situation of "betrayal of the husband" artificially modeled by herself already has negative consequences (as if the betrayal really happened), and in the future it may also lead to a significant deterioration of the relationship. Respondents R3 and R6 have the most difficult prospects for maintaining marital relations: the nature of their interaction with their husbands is superficial and somewhat forced; they do not feel the need for this interaction at all (as their husbands most likely do); they do not have common topics for discussion; they do not have common problems (at least, they think that these problems are not common).

In general, our research has shown that typical problems in the relationship between spouses separated by war are as follows:

- Lack of physical intimacy, which negatively affects the strength of feelings. Emotions become passive (as evidenced by the answers of the vast majority of respondents, except for one);
- Unwillingness to communicate, concealing problems. This leads to frustration, hidden offenses, misunderstandings, and dissatisfaction with each other's actions (this problem was clearly manifested in the case of two respondents, and four other participants in our study showed clear signs of emotional "cooling" in their relationships with their husbands);
- Inflating the problem without real evidence of its existence (the effect of the Thomas theorem was clearly demonstrated by one of our respondents).

Based on the data obtained, it can be stated that, first, spouses who were satisfied with their marriage before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, while being at a distance, resort to a strategy of cooperation, as well as have mutual understanding and mutual support.

Second, couples whose marital satisfaction was low before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine tend to use a strategy of conflict avoidance and/or ignoring existing problems faced by the marriage partner and never use a strategy of cooperation.

In any case, the quantitative and qualitative indicators of interaction between spouses (frequency and duration, positive or negative connotations, etc.) are the main factors that influence how long-distance relationships unfold in the context of numerous stressors created by war. Therefore, if spouses feel that they are losing their relationship, they need to resume the frequency of interactions, try to communicate on any occasion and whenever possible, and try to maintain a constructive nature of interactions and communication. These are the prospects for maintaining long-distance relationships in times of war.

It should be noted that we also considered the problem of long-distance family relationships from the perspective of symbolic interactionism because this approach is used in family counseling. If spouses cannot cope with the loss of their relationship on their own but do not want to divorce and

understand the need to establish and further strengthen this relationship, they should seek the help of a family psychologist. Special counseling programs for married couples experiencing a relationship crisis or a crisis of interaction are aimed at identifying unrealistic or potentially dangerous perceptions that lead to emotional distancing and conflicts. At the same time, the work of a counseling psychologist is also carried out in the aspect of forming and emphasizing the similarity of expectations among partners, which is necessary for the successful distribution and fulfillment of family roles.

The prospects for further use of the results of our in-depth interviews are:

- 1) The creation of tools for quantitative research of long-distance marital relationships in wartime (for conducting an online survey of both women abroad and their husbands who stayed at home);
- 2) On this basis, the selection of psychological methods for family counseling for couples will help restore, strengthen, and maintain the proper level of relationships between husband and wife in those couples who have suffered or continue to suffer from forced long-term separation.

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Primary Paper Section: A

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