

THE NEGOTIATION OF MEANING IN COUPLE RELATIONSHIPS

by

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The Negotiation of Meaning in Couple Relationships

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ABSTRACT

This study examined partners' experiential memories of significant events that occurred during particularly difficult interactional sequences of a couples psychotherapy session. The overarching purpose of the study was the discovery of the meanings clients attach to particular interpersonal events in therapy. The interactional events that were examined were episodes of interpersonal resistance between partners in a couple relationship. A theoretical framework integrating autobiographical memory, family systems, and attribution theories permitted examination at multiple levels of analysis. Three groups of couples (stuck, unstuck, and midrange) were differentiated on the basis of an attributional scale and aspects of the emergent theory. The initial construct of stuckness was derived from the work of the Milan group. Experiential memories were accessed using a stimulated process recall procedure immediately following the couples therapy session. The transcripts of these interviews, and other data sources, were subjected to a grounded theory analytic strategy. This analysis yielded a substantive, informal theory which has as its core category the construct of reflexivity. This interpretation of reflexivity encompasses three dimensions: the individual partners, couple relationships, and the couple-therapist triads. The core concept of reflexivity is examined and discussed with respect to the degree to which it extends other current conceptualizations within the psychotherapeutic literature. The concept of interpersonal resistance developed in this study was given a preliminary review. These conceptions of reflexivity and interpersonal resistance are compared to those of the Milan theory. Finally, the implications of the findings for theory and practice are explicated. The results yield an understanding of individual partners' agenic ability, couples'

ability, couples' reconstructive resources during particularly difficult interactional sequences, and facilitative therapeutic factors which assist partners to disclose important information about themselves, their relationships, and their experience of therapy.

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FOREWORD

The ideas examined and developed in this dissertation are ones that have been with me for a long time. I have been involved in working with children and families since 1974, and since 1981 I have engaged in this work as a clinician. Over this period of time I became increasingly interested in more serious problems, particularly those most critically affecting children. Theories that adequately bridge the perspectives of the individual and the family are few. Often one dimension is emphasized at the expense of others. Perhaps the most profound discovery I have made during this journey is also the simplest. Human problems are complex. We are likely to be vulnerable to making grave errors in our work unless this complexity is respected. During these years in the field, I had become increasingly frustrated with both the research and theory in the literature, and its relationship to practice. It was at the height of my frustration that I chose to return to school.

My hope in pursuing further study was to begin to address the interface between the individualistic emphasis found in traditional psychological writing, and the group emphasis found in the literature on families. While this undertaking sounds rather grand, I merely hoped to initiate this work in a modest way within the context of psychotherapeutic practice.

There are other themes in the work, as well, including questions of what is considered to be health and illness, deriving benefit from previously wrought theoretical and empirical work, bringing a conceptual focus into clinical practice, recognizing the centrality of peoples' affective experiences yet the paucity of method to capture this living vibrancy, and attempting to encompass theory-building and theory testing while attempting to avoid the pitfalls of both. I will leave to reader to discover these and other related threads of the work.

This work would not have materialized without the invaluable contributions from many other people. Most importantly the clients and counsellors of Family Services of Greater Vancouver provided invaluable opportunities for learning, and generously gave of themselves and their time. My committee provided generous emotional support and timely, pragmatic suggestions. And to friends from my work and social life, I am forever indebted. Without their continuous encouragement and caring I would have been unable to accomplish this work.

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background To The Problem

One of our most frequently expressed desires is for human connection a connection that transcends the isolation of the personal, and in which the thought of oneself is inextricably bound up with the thought of another (Bloom, 1993). In Western society, marriage and sustained couple relationships are the primary vehicles for achieving intimacy. The self is felt to be most meaningful when it is part of a larger whole, in relationship with something beyond itself. Bowlby (1969) maintains that attachment behavior in adults is an essential feature of our humanness and plays a vital role in our lives from birth to death. It is generally acknowledged that the growth and development of human beings are intrinsically linked to the capacity for intimate relationships.

There is considerable evidence to suggest that intimate relationships facilitate good health (Berkman & Breslow, 1983; Gottman & Levenson, 1992). Lowenthal and Haven (1968) analyzed life histories and noted that those who were happiest and healthiest in later years were those who were or had been involved in close personal relationships. Some researchers have suggested that the key to productive, autonomous, and satisfying lives is the depth of intimacy experienced with others (Lowenthal & Weiss, 1976; Roseon, 1967).

Marital and family problems constitute a significant proportion of all mental and emotional disorders (Bloom, Asher, & White, 1978). Marital conflict has been linked to family violence (Davidson, 1978), parent-child relationship dysfunction (Minuchin, Rosman, & Baker, 1978), a range of deleterious effects on

children (Hetherington, 1988; Rutter, 1971), individual psychopathology (Bateson, Jackson, Haley, & Weakland, 1956) including depression (Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974), suicide, and homicide (Bloom, Asher, & White, 1978) as well as increased mortality from automobile accidents and disease (Bloom, Asher, & White, 1978). Marital problems can have profound ramifications when the difficulties extend beyond the unhappiness experienced in the married state

Despite the frequency of marital breakdown and the problems that can arise from unhappy relationships, people continue to enter and commit themselves to intimate dyadic unions. The couple unit continues to be the preferred context for the gratification of intimacy needs. Consequently, it is important to gain deeper understandings of what constitutes healthy and nurturing couple relationships as well as how to repair and revitalize flagging ones.

Unresolved interpersonal conflict is often one of the key factors influencing marital unhappiness and dissolution (Gottman & Krakoff, 1989; Gottman, 1993a). While interpersonal conflict is an inevitable part of human relationships, when the conflict becomes resident within the intimate bond between partners, they can experience a loss of control, general dissatisfaction throughout their daily lives, and a lack of resolution for relationship issues (Guerin, 1982). Some researchers indicate that there may be subgroups of distressed couples, some which will eventually divorce and others which will not (Biglan, Hops, Sherman, Friedman, Arthur, & Osteen, 1985; Gottman, 1993b).

Conflict is an inevitable product of partners' efforts to define their relationship (Gurman & Kniskern, 1978). Conflict is not necessarily pathological or destructive. Rather, it can provide the fuel for the growth and development of individuals and couples. Through conflict, individuals can state their views, air their differences, and work toward mutual and satisfactory solutions. The

resolution of conflict can assist in the stabilization and integration of the individuals-in-relationship. On the other hand, marital conflict can be dysfunctional when it results in psychological or physical harm, diminishes trust, or becomes chronic (Gottman, 1993a). Those couples who are unable to resolve conflict risk engaging in negative interaction cycles (Watzlawick, Bavelas, & Jackson, 1967) or chronically hostile ways of relating (Gottman, 1993b). Negative interaction cycles can become self-perpetuating (Greenberg & Johnson, 1984).

Intense unresolved conflict in couple relationships inhibits the development of intimacy. Increasingly, couples are seeking assistance in resolving their relationship problems. Over the past twenty years, marital therapy has become one of the most significant methods of intervention. However, psychological research on marital therapy has been less than helpful in identifying treatment components that are integral to the resolution of marital problems (Greenberg, 1986a, 1986b; L'Abate, 1983).

Research on the process of family therapy represents a relatively recent endeavor (Pinsof, 1989). Since the 1960's researchers have been concerned with the problem of determining adequate methods and measures for the exploration and testing of processes of individual and family therapy. Although these efforts have not produced a coherent body of substantive knowledge, there has been some success in articulating conceptual frameworks and methodological criteria to guide both individual psychotherapy and family process research (Gurman, 1988; Rice & Greenberg, 1984). Greenberg and Pinsof (1986a) define process research as the study of interaction between the patient and therapist systems. They suggest that the goal of process research is to identify the change process in the interaction between these systems. Process research covers all of the behaviors and experiences of these systems within

and outside of the treatment sessions, which pertain to the processes of psychotherapeutic change.

Pinsof (1989) has extended this definition to encompass family therapy process research by specifying a focus on the interaction between therapist and family systems which incorporates both individual and collective levels of functioning. This definition does not depend on who is directly involved in treatment. Marital or couples therapy is included as a subclass of family therapy

Traditionally in the field of psychotherapy, research methodology has been grounded in the positivistic tradition of reductive science. Research on differential treatment effects has failed to yield conclusive results. No one therapeutic treatment has proven to be greatly superior to any other over time for any particular set of problems (Smith, Glass, & Miller, 1980; Stiles, Shapiro, & Elliott, 1986). As well, attempts to link client traits to therapy outcome have yielded disappointing and inconsistent findings (Gurman & Kniskern, 1981). Despite the search for real understanding of therapeutic events, there is very little in the psychotherapeutic research literature that increases our knowledge about complex and rich interactions in the therapeutic context. As Martin has noted, with the factors studied in psychotherapy research accounting for only 25 to 30 percent of the variance in psychotherapy outcomes, the most significant findings from this work may be the extreme prevalence of individual differences and the enormous indeterminacy potentially attributable to human will and agency (Martin, 1994).

Increasingly, concerned researchers and clinicians are seeking a new type of research paradigm that will permit intensive analysis of the structure of therapeutic interactions, as well as more appropriate methods for verification of processes of change. These developments have coincided with a paradigm shift

in the social sciences and with the emergence of general concerns about psychology as a science of human behavior and experience (Hoshmand, 1989)

B. An Alternative Research Paradigm

Researchers of psychotherapy are searching for a research paradigm capable of incorporating a variety of ways of knowing. Some researchers provide convincing arguments for the recognition of clinicians' tacit knowledge and the use of rigorous empirical observation (Elliott, 1986; Rennie, Phillips, & Quartaro, 1988; Rennie, 1992; Rice & Greenberg, 1984). Others advocate rational-empirical strategies which use both across situation theoretical models and intensive observation of particular in-therapy performances (Pascaul-Leone & Sparkman, 1978). A variety of new research strategies arising from different philosophical positions has emerged for the intensive analysis of psychotherapeutic processes. Many of these approaches share a common focus on the identification and in-depth analysis of recurring change events in the psychotherapy context. The particular alternative paradigm that serves as an overarching framework for this study has been described as a discovery-oriented approach to significant change events in psychotherapy (Elliott, 1986) and this framework is informed by the central tenets of social constructionism. A fundamental assumption of this alternative paradigm is that the psychotherapeutic process represents largely uncharted territory, with current psychotherapeutic theory offering little guidance. There are four further assumptions of the discovery-oriented approach.

The first of these arises in relation to the choice of perspective adopted during the research process. Discovery-oriented research often focuses on the phenomenological perspectives of the client and/or therapist as significant

sources of information. In particular, clients are the consumers of psychological help, and their psychotherapy experiences are important and have consequences. Specifically, when clients are viewed as active participants in psychotherapy, their experiences and internal decisions made within psychotherapy are of potential value. Researchers require good descriptions of client's phenomenological experience before theories of uncharted territory can be mapped.

The second assumption is that phenomenological data are more illuminating when anchored to specific behavioral events. Particularly informative are methods which connect client or therapist psychotherapeutic experiences with observable events during actual psychotherapy sessions (i.e., client or therapist verbal or nonverbal behaviors) by means of an Interpersonal Process Recall procedure (Elliott, 1984; Kagan 1975).

A third assumption is that it is important to focus on significant change events. These episodes in psychotherapy are moments when something of personal importance is occurring or changing for the client in some critical way. Often, these episodes have important consequences for the client's understandings and actions.

The fourth assumption is that significant events should be studied comprehensively because these episodes are infrequent and highly complex. Elliott focuses intensively on significant events through the use of comprehensive process analysis which relies on a series of in-session process measures (Elliott, 1984). Other strategies, such as grounded theory analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), can be used to yield fine-grained descriptions of meaningful therapy events. In the current study both of these strategies are utilized, and are informed by an overarching social constructionist framework. The choice of analytic tool depends on the goal of the research endeavor.

Potentially, data derived from various intensive methods can assist in understanding psychotherapeutic change, and providing guidance to therapists who seek effective interventions.

In fundamental ways the discovery-oriented approach incorporates inductive processes of inquiry which often culminate in, rather than begin with, hypothesis testing. Thus, verification comes toward the end of the inquiry process, after a deeper understanding of focal therapeutic events and experiences has been obtained. Of critical importance are the theoretical foundations, background, and experiences of the researcher. As much as possible these theoretical perspectives must be explicated and bracketed, where necessary, to enable phenomenological analysis. It is important that these theoretical influences do not become a bias and delimit the scope of the findings. Thus, the meanings of significant events in couples psychotherapy sessions may be more idiosyncratic than they are common across partners. Partners' meanings of psychotherapy events may reflect unique life stories or purposes. Nevertheless, to the individual involved in the particular interpretations, these meanings represent the essence of their lived experience.

C. Potential Yield of a Discovery-Oriented Strategy

Some key issues that remain unresolved after years of psychotherapy research are reflected in questions such as: "What would we find out if we asked clients to point to significant moments of change in couples therapy?" "How would they describe particular moments of significant change?" and "Does this significant event constitute or suggest a phenomenon such as a critical event in therapy that may occur across clients?"

Can research arising from an alternative research paradigm, one that emphasizes discovery and deep description, yield meaningful answers to these questions? One of the challenges of psychotherapy process research is related to the nature of psychotherapeutic phenomenon. These phenomena present unique problems of access and measurement, and require extensive interpretation. Although a discovery-oriented research strategy will not solve such difficulties, it is developed and employed in full knowledge of them. Thus, client understandings and experiences are viewed as central, and therapist and observer perspectives can be woven into contextual networks to be interpreted. Perhaps most significantly, the client is viewed as an active and intentional agent in the change process. Not only do clients have particular reasons for their actions in certain circumstances, but their actions are seen as the products of their interpretations of their experience. When researchers wish to examine the impact of particular interventions or understand what compels a client to act one way as opposed to another, they must grasp the meanings that particular events have for individual clients. However, it is also the case that certain internal objects of interest (processes/ structures/ mechanisms) may operate outside the awareness of individual clients, and may influence their behavior. In these instances, external observers or therapists may provide perspectives that supplement the phenomenology of clients' experiences and perspectives. Clients are the ones in whom change takes place, and their perspectives of psychotherapy are important. Nevertheless, it is not assumed that clients are completely aware of what they're experiencing (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977), or are able to verbalize all of their understandings (Rennie & Toukmanian, 1992). As well, clients may identify events unrelated to specific planned interventions as memorable and relevant. Nevertheless, Rennie & Toukmanian (1992) note that

participant self-reports provide a check against the reification of constructs that can arise from an external view of the phenomenon.

Perhaps the most important potential yield from the discovery-oriented research paradigm is the uncovering of client experiences in psychotherapy sessions. This focus permits an in-depth examination of the interpretations of individual clients and their agentic capacity during the change process. The identification of new factors and relationships in the context of psychotherapy may provide maps that can enhance understanding of this uncharted territory.

Within this alternative paradigm and its approach to research, relationships between process and outcome can be described in a more systematic and fine-grained manner, supplemented by the perspectives of therapist and observer. Whether the connections of process to outcome, or small outcomes to broader and more general outcome are simple or complex, each study that deepens understanding of change phenomena advances comprehension of psychotherapeutic change. Questions about which therapist interventions facilitate the unfolding of clients' insight and understanding can be asked. When client and other-identified significant psychotherapeutic events are examined, information about which therapist behaviors facilitate client's understanding and agency in particular situations with reference to particular problems may be very relevant to therapist training and supervision.

In-depth analysis of psychotherapy events may yield richer understanding of therapeutic change process for researchers. More provocative and appropriate questions about therapeutic change may emanate from such enhanced conceptualization.

D. Marital Relationship Impasses

To date most discovery-oriented research strategies have been applied to individual clients in therapy with a focus on client experiencing (Elliott, 1984; Rennie, 1992, 1994), and key events (Greenberg, 1984; Mathieu-Coughlan & Klein, 1984). While this literature is of potential value to researchers and clinicians working with families, there are factors unique to family and couples therapies that require particular attention, such as the greater interactional complexity. As well, family therapy is a relatively recent enterprise, and there is a serious lack of adequate theoretical concepts to guide both clinicians and researchers. While various models of practice exist, most incorporate concepts that are difficult to operationalize and often focus on therapeutic interventions without differentiating the type of clients for whom, or problematic situations for which, the interventions may be most beneficial.

In response to these problems Gurman (1988) calls for the identification of components of family treatment that are common across theoretical approaches. One such element may be what frequently is described by theorists and clinicians as "client resistance." Despite the recognition of the phenomenon of client resistance in individual therapy, very little has been said about resistance within the couple system in marital and family therapy. There is no agreement among family theories with respect to particular classes of relationship events. Each theory or clustering of theories emphasizes their own key concepts without reference to similarities or differences with other conceptions, and most fail to identify aspects of the theory that are incomplete. The following discussion will review the notion of resistance within couple relationships as it is identified or described by a variety of particular psychological theories.

The class of theories described as "multigenerational family therapy" derives key concepts from the psychoanalytic tradition of Freud, and emphasizes past unresolved emotional issues which are believed to be transmitted generationally. Bowen (1976) describes couples that experience relationship stalemates as enmeshed or emotionally fused with each other. This situation is believed to arise from inadequate emotional differentiation from partners' families of origin. Bowen describes the constellation of an emotional triangle in marital therapy, where partners attend to the therapist rather than each other. However, he does not address the ways in which partners might begin to engage more directly with each other.

Another grouping of theories derives its central concepts from the more general psychodynamic approaches. The conceptualization of intimate relationships arises from the notion of powerful affective bonding believed to take place between infants and their parents (Bowlby, 1969). Emotional ties between marital partners are interpreted as an attempt to achieve the proximity, safety, and nurturance of the ideal child-parent relationship. It is assumed that when these developmental needs of the child are not met, they remain latent until an intimate relationship provides the adult with an opportunity to resolve the loss and despair of past, unmet emotional needs. Siegal (1991) proposes that partners are profoundly influenced by their unresolved emotional conflicts with their parents when they choose a marital partner. Spouses that experience severe problems in their relationships are re-enacting past unconscious conflicts. They create intense projective identifications in their intimate relationships. Through this process, the partners seek each other as containers for feelings or undesired aspects of themselves. Couples that experience extreme distress tend to blame each other, experience their interaction as traumatic, and tend to escalate their competition for need gratification.

Theories derived from the behavioral approach to marital therapy borrow their key concepts from social exchange theory (Thibault & Kelley, 1959). Essentially, couples are conceptualized as establishing quid pro quo contracts with each other as they continuously negotiate the responsibilities and rewards of the relationship. Relationship stalemates are interpreted as the escalation of conflict due to partners' employment of coercive tactics in efforts to modify each others' behavior in the competition to achieve favorable exchanges (Jacobson & Margolin, 1979). This theory, as is common with many behavioral theories, consists of numerous parametric definitions of the core concepts of marital distress, but does not provide an adequate conceptual elaboration of this idea. Implicit in these definitions are assumptions about what constitutes healthy intimate relationships. The terms marital adjustment and marital distress actually encompass various operational definitions, but are often used interchangeably throughout this literature. Integrative mapping of conceptions of marital distress to the in-therapy behaviors of couples has not been accomplished.

The theories designated as family systems theories emphasize notions of interaction between family members, focusing on patterns and sequences of interpersonal behavior. The idea of describing individuals in relationship to each other as systems developed from various interpretations of General Systems Theory (von Bertalanffy, 1968) within applied psychology. Such interpretations spawned a number of family therapy theories, each stressing different aspects of relationships as systems.

Several writers in this tradition have discussed their own interpretations of the emotional impasses that can occur between marital partners. In particular, structural theorists (Haley, 1976; Minuchin & Fishman, 1981) view couples as structurally interconnected with each other, and emphasize the concept of interpersonal boundaries. Derived from this central conception of family structure

are other concepts of hierarchy, power, and coalitions. According to this perspective, some couples become overly involved emotionally with each other. This over-involvement is interpreted as enmeshment, or the presence of overly permeable individual boundaries. Alternatively, other couples are viewed as emotionally disengaged with each other. This type of distance is interpreted as due to the presence of rigid and impermeable boundaries. While structuralists discuss the notion of "engagement" in therapy, this term is used to describe the active participation and alliance of individual partners with the therapist, rather than emotional engagement between partners. According to the structural theorists, resistance in the family is a result of its structure, and must be addressed so that the family can make changes. In other words, resistance to therapy must be overcome, before engagement in the therapeutic process can proceed.

Friedlander, Heatherington, Johnson, and Skowron (in press) have recently extended this notion of engagement to the interpersonal interactions between family members within the therapeutic context. After identifying examples of successful and unsuccessful "sustained engagement" between family members, they conducted qualitative analyses of the interpersonal dynamics differentiating these events. These patterns of interaction were examined in concert with particular therapeutic interventions that targeted the disengagement. The resulting conceptual model of sustained engagement identifies four therapeutic factors believed to be important in the resolution of relationship impasses: (a) recognition of personal contribution to the impasse, (b) communication about the impasse, (c) acknowledgement of others' thoughts and feelings, and (d) new constructions about the impasse.

Another group of theorists who have addressed the notion of relationship impasses or "stuckness" is the group led by Mara Selvini-Palazzoli. The

theoretical model of the Milan group incorporated the ideas generated by the Mental Research Institute (MRI) in Palo Alto California during the late 1960's. This model was influenced by direct clinical practice with severely distressed families having a psychiatrically diagnosed child. The theory, described in the 1978 publication, Paradox and Counterparadox (Selvini-Palazzoli, Boscolo, Cecchin, & Prata, 1978a) made several knowledge claims. The most notable claim is that some couples/families are unable to step out of "stuck" interaction patterns of which they are unaware. These patterns constitute the underlying reasons for the resistant behavior of these families/couples. The Milan group explicitly focused on such relationship stalemates, and planned interventions intended to disrupt the stuck interactional patterns. Although members of the Milan group presented clinical material on videotape and in print, they did not study the features believed to be common to the resistance of families. Rather, the Milan group became known for its paradoxical interventions targeted at unravelling particular family "knots."

E. Rationale For The Current Study

There currently exists a considerable gap between clinical research and practice in psychotherapy, especially with families and couples. Contributing to this gap is the complexity of the phenomena of interest. Until recently, most studies have not considered the interrelated complexity of individual cognitive and affective processes, the relationship context, and broader social contextual factors that influence the construction of personal and shared meanings in couples/family therapy. An increasing number of interpretive studies of clinical practice seems to hold promise for clinicians seeking pragmatic and effective

strategies for assisting family members to deal with their problems. Some researchers of clinical practice have advocated theory development that is closely linked to the clinical phenomenon of interest (Rennie, 1992; Rennie, Phillips, & Quartaro, 1988). Greater understanding of couples' resistance within the context of psychotherapy sessions may assist in the development of adequate theoretical conceptions of psychotherapeutic change in intimate relationships. As well, the identification of factors that assist some couples successfully to resolve their differences may hold promise for more effective clinical work with distressed couples and families.

This chapter has provided general background to an empirical discovery-oriented study of particular in-session events in couples' therapy. The researcher's own theoretical framework is particularly important, since the researcher mediates the data that subsequently forms the grounded theory. Key influences of my theoretical orientation to practice include Existential-Philosophical theories, family systems theories, and cognitive theories. The theoretical framework of this study integrates conceptions drawn from psychological work on autobiographical memory and attribution theory, and incorporates a systems' perspective on couples' relationship problems, derived from the Milan group. The three theoretical areas of autobiographical memory, attribution theory, and the Milan group's interpretation of family systems theory are discussed in more depth in literature reviews in chapter two. This conceptual foundation is broad enough to examine individual, contextual, interactive factors and relationships among them. In this context, a systems perspective refers to a theory of communication based on a model of human relationships as systems (Watzlawick, Bevelas, & Jackson, 1967). This network of understandings provides a context for the core concepts and terms of the study.

The overall purpose of this study is to gain a greater understanding of meanings that couples give to particular interpersonal events when they are stuck in negative interactional sequences within the context of a psychotherapy session. Five goals of the current study are:

- 1) The discovery of partners' interpretations, memories, and meanings during a couples psychotherapy session.
- 2) the identification of significant events within particular segments of couples therapy sessions which are expressed as partners' experiences, interpretations, and memories
- 3) a comparison of couples that are stuck in their resistance to each other and those that are not, with respect to the interpretation of significant psychotherapeutic events,
- 4) the analysis of significant psychotherapeutic events across couples and the determination of common themes, and
- 5) the development of a tentative model generated from the empirically emergent themes, and comparisons with the concepts and propositions of the Milan model.

To achieve the purposes of the study, an overarching discovery paradigm, informed by the assumptions of social constructionism, is adopted for the inquiry. The specific method of data collection involves the utilization of a stimulated process recall (SPR) procedure (Elliot, 1984; Kagan, 1975). The purpose of the SPR procedure is to capture information about participants' memories for, and the subjective meaning and impact of, events in couples therapy. It enables the researcher to locate significant moments of therapeutic change described by participants. While particular videotaped segments of the couples' therapy sessions were selected by the researcher, it is not assumed that these episodes are necessarily significant for clients. Rather the segments are utilized to

stimulate partners' memories of the sessions, and to gain access to particular interpretations of events that they considered to be personally significant. A grounded theory strategy for data analysis is employed to interpret partners' construals of significant psychotherapeutic events. This strategy yields a theory that is grounded in the phenomena under investigation.

The particular focus of interest is resistance between individual partners in couples therapy sessions. More specifically, the research study will examine the recurrent and troublesome interactions between marital partners, and the relationship between particular kinds of interpretations and partners' resistance in psychotherapy sessions.

In this study several counsellor-couple triads participated in a therapeutic session that attempted to employ some key conceptual and procedural characteristics of the Milan team approach to therapeutic intervention. Participating counsellors made use of a consulting team in their analysis of significant in-session events and the creation of suitable interventions. Where appropriate, positive reframe interventions were integrated with other interventions. The session followed the five part format developed by the Milan group (Selvini-Palazzoli et al, 1978a). Following the therapy session, each spouse participated in a SPR interview with the researcher that focused on in-session events that partners found to be memorable and meaningful within segments which potentially represented particularly difficult interactions between partners. A grounded theory framework (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used for the analysis of these data. Using the inductive analysis of this method, observed behaviors are analyzed as potential indicators of phenomena to be explicated conceptually (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The resulting conceptual model is described, discussed, and examined critically.

CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The primary focus of this study is the exploration of the relationship between individual partners' interpretations of significant events in couples therapy and the interpersonal resistance between partners. This chapter encompasses three literature reviews that provide background to the current study. Previous work that contributes directly to the study is critically reviewed with attention given to both content and methodology. This work provides a foundation for understanding the way that the current study aims to advance relevant theoretical conceptions and methods of inquiry.

A. A Social Definition of Memory

The first literature review, *A Social Definition of Memory*, explores the definitions and conceptions of memory that are particularly salient to current research purposes. These conceptions encompass understandings of peoples' lived experiences in their everyday lives. This framework allows for a view of memory as constructive, ongoing, and involving the incorporation of couples' shared and individual idiosyncratic understandings of relationship events.

1. The Notion of Ecological Validity

At the opening address of a conference on memory, Neisser raised a concern about the ecological validity of memory research: "If X is an interesting or socially significant aspect of memory, then psychologists have hardly ever studied X" (Neisser, 1978, p.4). He proceeded to challenge researchers to ask

the 'important questions' related to the function of memory in its ecological context, including the pragmatic problems and concerns of everyday memory. In response to claims by laboratory psychologists of the generality and lawfulness of memorial processes, Neisser argued that the concept of memory requires fundamental revision, from a view of the human mind as containing numerous detached and independent faculties, to a view derived from mind and memory in context.

What we want to know, I think is how people use their own past experiences in meeting the present and the future. We would like to understand how this happens under natural conditions: the circumstances in which it occurs, the form it takes, the variables on which it depends, the differences between individuals in their uses of the past (Neisser, 1978, p. 13).

2. Functions of Memory

What are the functions of memory in various contexts of everyday life? The relevant literature suggests several multiple uses, some of which are as follows:

- a) Memory of the past defines the self, as well as creating expectations of the future relating to self (Shotton, 1990; Robinson & Swanson, 1990).
- b) Private and shared recollection provide a connection with others (Middleton & Edwards, 1990).
- c) The public record shapes individual understandings, although it is not often experienced directly (Connerton, 1990). This record provides an interpretation of social events that often serves as a point of reference for social discourse.

d) Daily remembering assists in efficient everyday activity, whereby surface details may not be remembered but "meanings" may be salient (Middleton & Edwards, 1990).

e) Memory is an intellectual activity in itself, as in the acquisition of knowledge (Martin, 1994).

Acknowledging the multiple functions of memory, Neisser suggested that researchers ask fundamental questions that are relevant to pragmatic concerns, and that these questions be guided by theories of human nature, social life, and relevant contextual phenomena. The challenge is to shift from testing hypotheses concerning memory processes and situations in artificial experimental contexts to understanding memory as a primary tool in everyday living (Neisser, 1978). Neisser proposes that the key to the structure of memory is not memory traces, or representations in the head, but characteristics of things remembered. These categories are not mental but environmental.

3. Memory within a Systems Framework.

The study of memory utilizing a systems perspective has been suggested previously (i.e., Sinnott, 1989). This view locates the individual within social and environmental systems. Things remembered by individuals may simultaneously be constituted within the public record, within a relationship description, and as significant aspects of personal experience. Thus, research questions concerning everyday, experiential memory encompass several nested systems.

Some argue that individual and social memory cannot, in fact, be separated. These commentators suggest that participants in a society create shared memories. Without this shared memory, participants in a society cannot share experiences or assumptions necessary for communal existence (Cole,

1990; Connerton, 1989). These shared experiences are viewed as the reference points for the development of a sense of self, and a sense of social belonging.

Once mind and memory are seen as extending beyond the 'individual situation' to encompass both the cultural milieu and the 'body politic', other dichotomies fall too. The notions that psychological content can be strictly separated from process, or that science can be strictly separated from history by its reliance on the experimental method, come in for pointed sceptical scrutiny. (Cole, 1990, p.viii)

Thus, rather than studying memory as the exclusive property of individuals, or focussing solely on the situational factors influencing individuals' memory, there is a shift to considering remembering as inherently a social activity (Middleton & Edwards, 1990; Wertsch, 1985).

The integration of a systems perspective with a social conception of memory allows for a framework where memory is recognized as existing simultaneously within the individual and within the social-cultural context. Both of these levels of analysis are important and cannot be reduced to one or the other.

The family systems approach contributes to a perspective which emphasizes the processes of information exchange among intimate networks of people. The emphasis is on the context of any personal event. The shift from intrapsychic to interactional factors involves a focus on organization, relationships between people, and interactional patterns that take place over time. Marital conflict is understood as repetitive interpersonal sequences which inhibit the growth and development of partners in their relationships. The family systems framework places these episodes of cyclical behavior within the wider context of ongoing behavior. Negative interaction sequences are conceived as a

symptom of ineffective problem resolution strategies, and as communication acts in themselves. These negative sequences can be maintained over time by each partners' reactive response to the other. While this perspective emphasizes patterns of behavior, it does not provide adequate conceptions of individual's cognitive, affective, and experiential processes, the unconscious, or the structural organization of the mind.

A social conception of memory contributes a perspective of individuals as they interact in their social context, selectively integrating data relevant to the self, shaping and modifying these data, and making choices about actions. This perspective is not necessarily inimical to the development of idiosyncratic understandings and agential capacities of individuals within social networks. Rather, it generally is understood that individuals' experiences in the social world will be diverse, and that commonalities in social contexts will underdetermine personal theories and systems of belief (Martin, 1994).

An integration of a family systems perspective and a social conception of memory brings together two significant vantage points of interpersonal behavior: social interaction and individual experience and interpretations in social contexts. This framework permits questions about how couples construct particular versions of events during their everyday interactions.

4. The Role of Memory in Communication

With this shift of perspective, communication can be perceived as the practice of reconstructing and creating shared memories. Social memories are variable. This variability means that negotiation or contest is the core activity of arriving at common views. The common view gives a sense of belonging. There is an ongoing retelling of social, cultural, and personal stories. This narrative

provides a context of meaning that orients people in relation to the past and the future.

Shared social remembering extends beyond the sum of each person's perspective. It becomes a basis for individual remembering. In the contest between varying accounts of shared experiences, people reinterpret and discover features of the past that become the context and content for what they will jointly recall and commemorate on future occasions (Middleton & Edwards, 1990).

The tension between continuity and revision of the past occurs as part of the pragmatics of everyday communication. It manifests in arguments about plausible accounts of who is to blame, be acknowledged, thanked, or trusted.

The 'truth' of the past is always, at least potentially, at issue. It is not to be found unambiguously deposited in some objective record or archive, nor yet as infinitely malleable in the service of the present. It obtains neither as 'fact' nor 'invention,' but as an epistemological enterprise, created in dialectic and argument between those contrary positions (Middleton & Edwards, 1990, p.9).

In this study, I do not talk exclusively of an individual memory or a social memory. Rather, memory is seen as both "in" the individual, and "outside" in the social context. These conceptions are interdependent. The concern is not with how individuals' internal mental processes represent past experience, but with how people construct versions of events and memories of these in ordinary conversation.

A focus on discourse takes people's accounts of the past as pragmatically variable versions that are constructed with regard to particular communicative circumstances (Middleton & Edwards, 1990). Descriptions vary depending on the pragmatic purpose, and the interpersonal, social, cultural context.

The goal of research focused on conversation or discourse as a component of memory, is to understand how people represent their past and construct versions of events when they talk about them. The activity of reconstruction can have an impact on individuals who are remembering. Middleton and Edwards (1990) utilized a discourse-analytic approach to the study of parents' conversations with their children about past shared events. The researchers concluded that parents use these opportunities to emphasize particular events as significant by accessing childrens' recall of their emotional reactions, and focusing childrens' attention to particular cues, such as contextual markers. These researchers hypothesize that children acquire shared ways of talking about things, shared references and evaluations, and various versions of experience.

The foregoing considerations emphasize that there is no neutral input to individual memory. It is the nature of the original event that is frequently at issue. Thus, versions of the past include both the idiosyncratic cast of individual memory and the conversational shared construction of past events. Some key concepts proposed by Alexander (1988) will be used to facilitate the examination of individual memory of relationship events, and shared understandings of relationships by partners. These concepts are family constructs and family cognitions, and will be explicated later in the chapter. There are clearly many other ways to operationalize the abstract ideas central to these conceptions. Nevertheless, these constructs can help to focus some of the research questions to be explored in the present work. For instance, do couples spontaneously discuss and describe their shared relationship beliefs? Do couples that are stuck in negative and repetitive interpersonal patterns differ from unstuck couples in their memory for, or abstract understanding of their relationship patterns? Can memories of shared relationship events be reconstructed in such a way as to

shift the emotional meaning ascribed to them? One potentially promising perspective for understanding the significance of partners' particular interpretations of relationship events is through the study of attributions.

B. Attributions Within Intimate Relationships

The following literature review examines support for a view of attributions as interpersonal events that have consequences in intimate relationships. This framework provides the foundation for a conception of couples' resistance that incorporates relationship attributions as a distinctive feature.

1. Definitions and Theoretical Perspectives of Attributions

A substantial literature exists on couples' attributional processes. Attributions within couple relationships can be defined as the causal explanations that spouses provide for events in their relationships (Baucom, Epstein, Sayers, & Sher, 1989). The various frameworks utilized in observing these processes have led to different research emphases and theories. Researchers have tended to emphasize either persons or their environment in the explanation of human behavior. There are three predominant theoretical positions reflected in the literature on marital attributions.

- a) The first position represents the person side of the person-environment dichotomy. Researchers in this tradition propose a trait approach where people are viewed as differing on continuous, stable trait dimensions which determine their behavior (Doherty, 1982).
- b) The second position represents the other side of the person-environment dichotomy, emphasizing the impact of situations on persons. Theorists

supporting a situationist approach view behavior as a function of external situational constraints (Jones & Nisbett, 1972).

c) The third position represents an attempt to reconcile the person or situation dichotomy. The central tenet of this position is that the dichotomy is unnecessary and undesirable because behavior is the outcome of the interaction between persons and situations (Kelley & Michela, 1980).

Each of the three theoretical positions examines part of the total picture. In a recent review of relevant literature, Bradbury and Fincham (1990) note that much of the research on marital attributions addresses the explanations spouses give for marital events and the relationship of these explanations to marital quality, but that attributions typically have not been studied as interpersonal behavior. Researchers have tended to treat spouses as passive recipients of stimuli rather than active creators of their own experience. In order to view couples as active creators of their experience, a framework is required that integrates the three positions described above, and promotes a view of attributions within a dynamic and interactive relationship context. Within this framework, couples may be viewed as negotiating key attributions that have significance for their relationship (Watzlawick, Bavelas, & Jackson, 1967).

2. The Function of Attributions in Communication

Although researchers have disagreed about the role that attributions play in couple's relationships, all have noted the apparent importance of partners' private beliefs about their relationship (Doherty, 1981a; Heider, 1958; Thompson & Snyder, 1986; Weiner, 1986). Much research activity has focused on identifying the causal dimensions that differentially influence marital satisfaction. These dimensions include locus of control, blame, intent, responsibility, globality,

and controllability (Camper, Jacobson, Holtzworth-Monroe, & Schmaling, 1988; Fincham & Bradbury, 1987; Holtzworth-Monroe & Jacobson, 1985; Kyle & Falbo 1985; Lavin, 1987).

Studies emphasizing broad general attribution dimensions, or single attributions have yielded some information about the nature of the relationship between marital conflict and attributions. One of the most consistent findings across many studies is that distressed spouses tend to rate causes of negative partner behaviors as global and stable (Creamer & Campbell, 1988; Fincham & Bradbury, 1989; Lavin, 1987; Ross & Sicokey, 1979; Thompson & Kelley, 1981) Researchers also have noted that causal attributions for relationship events serve to maintain or even initiate marital distress (Fincham, 1985; Fincham, Beach, Baucom, 1987; Holtzworth-Monroe & Jacobson, 1985; Kyle & Falbo, 1985). Distressed spouses, compared to non-distressed spouses, are likely to see negative partner behavior as blameworthy, intentional, and reflective of selfish concerns, and to assume that these characteristics represent enduring, global attributes of the partner (Fincham & Bradbury, 1987). Yet, it appears that the relationship between marital conflict and spouses' attributions is not direct. Rather, numerous factors seem to interact in mediating the attribution process in close relationships (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990; Thompson & Snyder, 1986)

In fact, some researchers have suggested that couples may develop a general sentiment or shared definition of the relationship that overrides specific negative or positive events (Lavin, 1987). Also, other individual difference variables, such as psychological reactance, may contribute to private attributions that occur within the couples' relationship (Brehm & Brehm, 1981). Within a systems framework, these differentiations of individual, private attributions and shared relationship definitions function in an interdependent manner.

Scholars have made several recommendations in previous work in the area for the study of couples' attributions within the context of interpersonal behaviors. In sum, couples' attributions should be examined as they correspond to specific relationship problems, rather than as global measures of satisfaction or conflict. There also may be several levels of attributions to be considered, including specific cognitions about the partner and the particular problem definition. Important mediating variables may include overarching shared understandings of the relationship, general sentiments about the relationship, and individual differences between the partners.

C. Family Systems Theory and Autobiographic Memory

The following section reviews some central premises of family systems theory, and focuses specifically on the Milan team's interpretation of couples' interactional problems. The creation of meaning in intimate contexts is conceived as arising from both social interaction, and individual cognitive and affective experience. A framework which integrates both of these areas is proposed for the study of partners' memories and interpretations of events during a couples psychotherapy session.

1. Theories of Families and Therapy

One common goal of marital therapy across many theoretical orientations is the resolution of negative interactional patterns between partners. Attention to patterns of conflict is the core concern of marital systems therapy. Steinglass (1978) describes a systems approach as characterized by attention to organization, to relationship between parts, to the whole as greater than the sum

of parts, to patterned interactional sequences, and to an emphasis on context. The central premise of general systems theory is that a system cannot be understood adequately by a reductive focus on its component parts. The whole entity is viewed as being greater than its additive parts.

Although family and marital systems theories have incorporated some of the broad principles of general systems theory, it is not the case that all are direct descendants of this theory. A number of family systems theories have evolved with a wide range of adherence to, and deviation from, the language and logic of general systems theory. Communication theory is one version that has derived directly from general systems theory (Gurman, 1978).

Most family systems therapies share some understandings about couples' interaction. Marital systems are conceptualized as similar to cybernetic systems, in which the generating concept of causality is circular rather than linear, and complex interlocking feedback mechanisms and behavior patterns repeat themselves in sequence. Individuals' symptoms serve as homeostatic mechanisms which regulate the couples' transactions (Gurman, 1981). The concept of homeostasis is an organizing principle in family systems theory. In marital therapy, the couple that achieves equilibrium is seen as resisting or counteracting forces that threaten this equilibrium. The notion of circular causality is interpreted to mean that each partner's behavior is viewed as a reaction or adjustment to the behavior of the other. The behavior of the couple system is conceptualized as a complex series of interactions. The symptoms of partners are seen as both system-maintained and system-maintaining, and individual problems are perceived as an outgrowth of marital-family disturbance. Thus, marital conflict is a reflection of difficulties in interaction rather than an indication of individual intrapsychic disturbance. Partners' symptoms are assumed to have interpersonal meaning and to function as communication acts.

For change to occur, both the individual and the couple system must change (Gurman, 1981).

The multi-disciplinary group at the Mental Research Institute (MRI) in Palo Alto California has studied family interaction from the perspective of communications theory. The central focus of communication theory is the interactional behaviors of family members, which are viewed as a type of input and output. Inner processes such as the structural organization of the mind, thoughts, and feelings, and the unconscious, are disregarded and considered unimportant. Fisch, Weakland, and Segal (1982) note that their intention was not to create a comprehensive theory of human nature, human existence, or the mind, but to develop a theory based on the observable interaction and communication of family members.

As well, the MRI group subscribes to a pragmatic criterion when different interpretations of events are in contention. They maintain that all perspectives of human behavior are interpretations and hence there is no single truth. Some views are simply more useful or effective in accomplishing particular goals. The MRI group asserts that there are two orders of reality. The first deals with physical properties of objects and our perceptions of them, while the second is concerned with the attribution of meaning and value to these objects. Most human problems involve the second type of reality.

Watzlawick et al (1967) maintain that communication in marital systems is not pathological unless it involves sequential patterns of interaction. Jackson (1965) believes repetitive patterns of communication reflect a rule about the nature of a marital relationship. In the early years of marriage two people bargain to work out the rules that will govern the nature of their relationship. Jackson refers to the marital quid pro quo as the initial bargain that is struck between partners. If the marriage contract is flexible, the couple may do well, but if the

agreement is too rigid they may risk escalating conflict and repetitive disagreement.

Essentially, the MRI group focuses on the symptoms or reactive interactional cycles of behavior that have developed between partners. Negative interactional patterns within the marital system are assumed to have interpersonal meaning, or to function as communication acts. It is presumed that one person cannot change unless the system changes. While communication therapists do not deny the existence of motivation, intentions, or agency, they believe these are not directly relevant to the conceptualization and treatment of marital disorders.

The Milan group adopted the ideas of the MRI group and gradually developed their own understandings of family and marital therapy. Selvini-Palazzoli was joined by Boscolo, Cecchin, and Prata. Together they began to use a team approach in their treatment of families. The Milan group (Selvini-Palazzoli et al, 1978a) recommended that clinicians think broadly about family systems in terms of content, reciprocity, effects of behavior or beliefs, and behavior patterns that are cyclical.

The Milan team's assumptions about truth are similar to those of the MRI group. Statements are considered to be pragmatically true when they are useful in facilitating constructive change with clients. Usefulness is judged on the basis of the responses of the family and the generation of constructive change by the family. As well, the therapist focuses on the clients' strengths, and positive rather than negative aspects of the problem.

The Milan group differs from the MRI group in several ways. The Milan team assumes that the symptom is functional, while the MRI group does not. As well, Milan therapists incorporate team discussion and hypothesizing about the function of symptoms. The MRI group eschews inference entirely. With

reference to the context of the problem, the MRI group construes context narrowly, while the Milan group places no constraints on what is considered to be contextual. More than many groups of family therapists, the Milan group stresses the capacity of family systems to change on their own. In other words, the Milan team tends to see systems as operating in a process of continuously changing interconnectedness, fluctuation, and discontinuous transformation (Tomm, 1982). The Milan therapist assumes the family system, even while apparently stable, is in a continual process of change. Systems can develop "stuck" points, and it is the therapist's task to identify these points. Stuck points indicate that particular ideas, meanings, or beliefs are tangled together (Cronen, Johnson, & Lannamann, 1982). Intervention is focused on the introduction of new associations in order to free the system so that it might continue to change spontaneously. The next section will explicate the Milan team's conception of these relationship impasses.

2. The Milan Interpretation of Couples' Relationship Impasses

Milan theorists use the concept of stuckness to refer to couples and families that want aspects of their lives together to be different, seek help for these problems, and yet are unable to interact differently despite the usual efforts of counsellors. The symptom is believed to serve an important relationship function, while simultaneously endangering the well being of one or more family members. Further, when these interpersonal relationships deteriorate individual family members can exhibit serious problems in their daily functioning. Family members tend to blame each other overtly or covertly for their relationship problems, and expect other members to change rather than themselves.

Particular relationship understandings evolve over time and serve to perpetuate family and couple functioning.

Milan theorists assert that a symptom or repetitive problem in a relationship may have meaning or perform a function within the marriage, and thus may constitute an interactional rule (Selvini-Palazzoli et al., 1978a). For example, one partner may be overspending as a way of communicating indirectly with the other. At a second order level of interaction, this might be interpreted as the partner expressing feelings of neglect to the other. Frequently, this second order level of meaning is not discussed between the partners. Often, couples define their relationship problems in terms of linear causality and first order meaning. In other words, partners claim to be reacting to the others' behavior, rather than recognizing the simultaneous influence of their behavior on their partners' reactions. To extend the illustration, the partner that is overspending may explain this behavior as a response to unreasonable financial constraints imposed by the other. In this way, the overspending partner explains personal behavior as a direct effect of the partner's pre-existing, causal communication. This is interpreted by Milan theorists as a linear, unidirectional, and deterministic explanation of the event. The other partner may choose to explain his or her attitude toward the expenditure as a direct effect of the partner's pre-existing irresponsibility with respect to limitations. These arguments can regress to continuous, automatized, linear chains of behavior. Often, couples' attempted solutions to their problems are generated by such logic.

In contrast, some couples discuss both the content (first level) and the relationship (second level) aspects of communication in a way that recognizes the mutual and simultaneous nature of their communication. For example, the overspending partner may acknowledge feeling cared for when the other notices an attempted change in behavior. Or, the partner may express genuine concern

for the behavior of overspending and discuss shared responsibility in the situation. This example demonstrates a circular type of causality where communication is conceptualized in terms of feedback loops, so that event A is connected to event B, which is connected to event C, which is connected to event A. It makes no sense to say event A precedes event B (and thus is determined solely by it) because one might arbitrarily choose any point of interaction as the starting point. Bracketing an interactional sequence is referred to as punctuation. It becomes problematic when individuals conceive of themselves as only reacting to, rather than also contributing to interactional behavior.

The next section integrates aspects of psychological research and theory relating to autobiographic memory with a family systems perspective on psychotherapeutic change.

3. Memory and Family Systems Theory

The role of individual cognitive processes is not described adequately by the family systems theories discussed above, yet cannot be dismissed. This point is particularly significant when one considers the proposition made by communication theorists that individuals within a human system confuse the content and relationship levels of communication. These theorists contend that family members cannot step outside the interactional context to meta-communicate about it, because it is believed that such a perspective cannot be generated from within the system (Watzlawick, et al, 1974). Thus, couples are immobilized or stuck in their interactions with each other. This premise does not seem to acknowledge the possibility that individuals have the capacity for

agential activity, including the construction of unique solutions. In part, this perception may arise from these theorists' disregard for all inner processes.

This study is concerned with the function of individual autobiographical memory within the context of an intimate relationship. As noted by Robinson and Swanson in their review of such research, a functional perspective of autobiographic memory predicts that social development, memory development, and inferential thought about others should be closely interconnected (1990). Autobiographical or episodic memory is distinguished from other types of memory because it is essentially memory for information related to the self.

Autobiographical memory may fulfill several social functions: It may permit the construction of a self-history, provide a causal model for the interpretation and prediction of others' behavior, and permit a sense of shared experience with others (Robinson & Swanson, 1990). As well, it forms the basis for the veridicality or consistency of an individual's constructs across situations. This reference to the self narrative, and to the self in relation to others, provides a potential framework for individuals' attribution processes. In this sense, autobiographical memory provides an expansion of couples' punctuation of events to include the cognitive/affective experience of each partner. Other theorists have proposed that partners' autobiographical memories are related to a social conception of memory (Cole, 1990; Shotter, 1990).

Memory is most often considered an individual faculty. However, some writers contend that there is a collective social memory (Connerton, 1989; Neisser, 1978). The question of where the phenomenon of memory is most operative is frequently debated. For the purpose of this study, memory will be explored at both the levels of the couple system and the individual experience, with the caveat that there are other possible conceptualizations of memory. Within this framework, meaning is seen as arising from individual experiencing,

and from negotiation between members of the system. Memory, as such, influences our experience of the present based upon our knowledge of the past.

We experience our world in a context which is causally connected with past events and objects, and hence with reference to events and objects which we are not experiencing when we are experiencing the present. And we will experience our present differently in accordance with the different pasts to which we are able to connect that present. Hence the difficulty of extracting our past from our present: not simply because present factors tend to influence- some want to say distort- our recollections of the past, but also because past factors tend to influence, or distort, our experience of the present. This process, it should be stressed, reaches into the most minute and everyday details of our lives (Connerton, 1989, p.2)

4. Shared Understandings and Individual Experience

Client understandings and the core activities of psychotherapy can be interpreted in various ways depending upon the particular foundational premises that are embraced by the researcher. When the client is valued as an active being with the creative capacity to represent the environment, not merely to respond to it, there are important implications for the role of the therapist.

Kelly (1955) suggests that clients perceive their worlds through transparent patterns or templates which they create, and then attempt to fit over the events of which the world is composed. Sometimes a particular template provides a better fit than others. At other times, a poor fit may be better than nothing at all. These constructs or patterns are essentially ways of construing

the world which enable the client to chart a course of action. Further, Kelly suggests that clients' personal investment in, or dependence on, the larger system can be so great that the creation or adoption of a more precise construct is neglected. Instead, the client may repeatedly test a favored construct against a variety of events.

Interpersonal events occur within the social domain. A singular event may be construed differently by individuals of various backgrounds. The range of any individual's construct of an interpersonal event is limited by the particular personality of the interpreter, his or her range of experience, and by problems of interpersonal relationships. Often, the value of a construct is contingent on its pragmatic convenience for the client.

Kelly (1955) asserts that personal constructs are always potentially subject to review or replacement since there are alternative constructions available from which to choose. In other words, there is no need for clients to hem themselves in by their interpretations of circumstances, or as a result of their particular biographies. However, it is possible for clients to be relatively unaware of the perceptions that guide their actions. People are not necessarily articulate about the constructions they place on the world. Some constructions may not be symbolized by words. They can only be revealed in action. For this reason, Kelly advises therapists to take account of clients' subverbal patterns of representation and construction.

For the purposes of this study, two central concepts require further description. These concepts provide one potential explanation for the way in which partners of intimate relationships develop individual and shared understandings of their relationships. These concepts are (a) family construct, and (b) family cognitions.

Family constructs refer to jointly held beliefs that reflect agreement about

the order and meaning attributed to relationship events. The couple is believed to construct a type of schemata or paradigm for organizing information relevant to the family system (Alexander, 1988). However, by nature, these constructs tend to be at a higher order of abstraction than most beliefs, are less accessible to consciousness, and are less amenable to change. These constructs may vary in their level of specificity, but essentially they are general in nature and affect the interpretation of a broad range of relationship events. Family constructs are beliefs that constitute the definition of the relationship. For example, a couple may claim to value equality in their relationship, or they may say that they are a close family. Problems arise from a lack of fit between interpretations of behaviors and constructs. Although potentially there may be much lack of fit at this interface, when behavior is interpreted as inconsistent with constructs it is more likely to become a problem.

Couples that experience repetitive, conflictual problems often differ strongly in their individual interpretations of their relationship definition. A pattern develops where each partner disputes the interpretation of the other of what is to be understood as, for example, closeness or equality. An ongoing escalation of rejection and attempted redefinition is fuelled by the actions of both partners. What is at issue are propositions of how to live with each other, and how to interpret behavior within the relationship. With escalating conflict, these propositions become more rigid and constrained. Each partner seeks control of some aspects of the relationship definition. For example, a wife may interpret the shared construct that, "We support each other," to mean that she expects her husband to share with her the details of his daily frustrations. Her husband may interpret support as keeping his problems to himself, and giving his wife advice when she talks about her own frustrations. These differences in behavioral interpretations of the family construct lead to partners' cognitions about

relationship events. These cognitions will be referred to as family cognitions and are defined as individual partners' beliefs about each other and other family relationships within the system. These cognitions can be verbalized and are conscious. Examples of family cognitions, with the couple that define their relationship as equal but are arguing about how to practice this equality are: "She doesn't appreciate what I do to help out," or "He has responsibility for those chores, so I should not have to remind him."

Cognitions are maintained by ongoing behaviors and interactions. As the conflict escalates, or becomes habitual, less flexible cognitions may arise such as, "He's a jerk," or "She doesn't care." At this point the family construct is seriously challenged, because the negotiation of its meaning has become stuck.

The relationship between family constructs and family cognitions is thought to be one of interdependence (Alexander, 1988). Partners' cognitions influence and can create new family constructs. For example, partners may modify a shared construct of equality of their relationship after clarifying that this does not mean a 50% split of duties, but refers to the principle that chores will not be defined as the sole responsibility of either partner. The construct of equality is further elaborated by the cognitions of the partners. The essential characteristic of a family construct is that it is shared. When it is no longer shared, the definition of the relationship is challenged. With more polarized and reactive family cognitions, the continuation of the relationship itself may be at risk. The problem definition arises from these disparate family cognitions.

5. The Construction of a Problem.

The problem definition is derived from the specific cognitions of each partner, and serves as an explanation or description of their conflict. It usually

identifies a particular behavioral sequence that is presented as proof that their implicit contract (relationship definition) has been breached. Partners may or may not be in agreement about the description of their problem. This agreement or lack of it may be interpreted as meaningful by either or both partners. The problem definition is linked to the way that each partner experiences the relationship. Blaming and rigid problem definitions can negatively influence the partners' perceptions of the relationship definition. On an existential level, the relationship definition expresses the perceived or experienced relation of the self to the other and confirms each person's view of self vis-a-vis the other person (Laing, Phillipson, & Lee, 1966). The problem definition often provides an impetus for change and revision to partners' experience of the relationship. Particular problem definitions may or may not reflect spouses' more thoughtful assessments of the nature of their difficulties. Problem definitions often provide clues to propositions of how to live with each other that are in contention as partners struggle to define their relationship.

6. Summary

This chapter has provided a review of three substantive areas that form the background for the current study. The social conception of memory encompasses a view of memory as constructive, experiential, and incorporates the process of partners developing shared understandings of relationship events. When a family systems framework is integrated with a social memory perspective, partners' interpretations of patterned sequences of interpersonal resistance in couples psychotherapy can be examined.

A review of attributions within intimate relationships provides support for the view of attributions of blame, locus of control, and responsibility, as

interpersonal events that have interpersonal consequences in intimate relationships. These attributions are advanced as a central feature of couples' relationship stalemates.

Finally, the specific family therapy theory of the Milan group (Selvini-Palazzoli et al, 1978a) is integrated with a conception of autobiographical memory. The Milan model of psychotherapy provides a theoretical basis for the examination of couples' resistant interactional sequences. Access to individual partner's idiosyncratic interpretations of these events is facilitated by the concept of autobiographical memory.

The review of the content and methodology of past work in these areas provides a basis for understanding the particular ways the current study aims to improve upon previous theoretical conceptions and choice of methods. Specifically, significant events in couple's psychotherapy sessions will be examined with couples that are designated as stuck, unstuck, or mid-range with respect to their relationship attributions. A grounded theory analysis is conducted of stimulated process recall and observational data of different kinds of memories, experiences, and reactions to a Milan-informed psychotherapy session. One of the major purposes of this endeavor is to develop appropriate conceptual understandings from the clients' perspective of couples' relationship stalemates. These understandings provide the basis for a critical review of the Milan groups' conception of stuckness.

CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

A. Grounded Theory Analysis

The grounded theory approach of Glaser and Strauss (1967) constitutes the central analytic method adopted for the purposes of this particular inquiry. This method holds promise for research in psychology and education because it provides a way of examining complex, highly interpretive phenomena in naturalistic settings. The primary goal of grounded theory analyses is the creation of analytic abstractions and constructions which may serve the purposes of description, verification, and/or generation of theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). When this method is employed for the purpose of theory development the resulting grounded theory is informed by the particular theoretical orientation of the researcher. Care is taken to ensure that these theoretical foundations do not present a bias, thus limiting the scope of the theory. In this study, a Stimulated Process Recall (SPR) method of data collection was combined with a grounded theory analysis in the hope that useful theoretical interpretations relating to the central purposes of the study would emerge. The SPR method was used to provide access to the personal memories, experiential meanings, and perceptions of participating couples. These data then were subjected to grounded theory analysis.

Glaser and Strauss developed the grounded theory approach to qualitative research in the 1960's because they were concerned about theorizing in sociology that was too removed from primary data. They developed a systematic method of developing theory which is grounded in the phenomena of interest. Although this approach has been described in a series of publications (Glaser,

1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), the particular interpretation of grounded theory which was adapted for this study is found in their earlier work. Rennie (in press) has noted that the earlier sources outline the general principles of grounded theory development without specifying the particular procedures. Thus, it is incumbent on any particular researcher to devise procedures which are compatible with personal styles, purposes, and contexts. This approach to the data permits the researcher to remain faithful to the phenomenon itself, and to develop a description that reflects the essence of participants' lived experiences. Thus, the researcher attempts to stay as close to the data, or participants' lived experiences as possible, while utilizing rigorous data-centered methods of analysis.

Briefly, the grounded theory approach adopted in this study emphasizes the inductive generation of theory, rather than theory verification. Once phenomena of interest are identified, all components (i.e. single lines, sentences, and pieces of text) of an initial data set (i.e. interview transcripts, archival information) are compared, and common themes are conceptualized. Initially, these commonalities are described conceptually in ways which often incorporate the language of the respondents so as to ensure valid representation of the primary data. Each meaning unit is assigned to as many categories as possible, in an effort to preserve the conceptual richness of the focal phenomena. During this activity, the researcher records ideas and thoughts concerning the emergent theory in the form of memos which are kept separately from the developing categories. This strategy is intended to keep the conceptual coding of meaning units close to the data, while preserving a record of the researchers' own metacognitive assumptions and processes. As the conceptual model becomes increasingly elaborate, new data sources are chosen for the purpose of further explicating the theory. When new data no longer contribute elaborated

conceptual description, the categories are considered to be saturated. At this point, the theoretical memos are studied to assist in the development of overarching abstract conceptions capable of integrating the lower level grounded conceptual units. A primary or core category is developed which encompasses all other descriptive and conceptual categories. The final model is often hierarchical, with each higher order category subsuming the lower categories and descriptive units. At this point, all significant relationships among the categories and the data, and between conceptual categories are evident.

Although the constant comparative method keeps the researcher close to the data, it is acknowledged that the investigator mediates the analytic process. As a consequence, different investigators may develop somewhat differing theories. Nevertheless, Glaser and Strauss (1967) maintain that the systematization of the constant comparison method ensures that any two versions would vary more in regard to the scope of the theory rather than in its essential character and credibility. Naturally, the particular theoretical lens of each researcher would influence the theory, however the authors do not explore or describe the degree to which different lenses may contribute to different conceptions. Rather, they caution against permitting theoretical preferences to bias the theory in a way which limits the scope of the findings.

By combining a stimulated recall method with a grounded theory analytic method, within a theoretical framework which incorporates social constructionist assumptions, it was hoped that useful theoretical interpretations relating to the central purposes of this study would emerge. In particular, the overarching purpose of the study is to gain an understanding of the meanings that partners in intimate relationships derive when they are stuck in negative interactional sequences within the context of a psychotherapy session. The five specific goals of the study are:

- a) the discovery of partners' experiences, memories, and interpretations that are anchored to specific videotaped sequences of a couples therapy session,
- b) the identification of significant events within particular segments of couples therapy sessions which are expressed as partners' experiences, interpretations, and memories,
- c) a comparison of couples that are stuck in their resistance to each other and those that are not, with respect to their interpretations of significant psychotherapeutic events,
- d) the analysis of significant psychotherapeutic events across couples, and the determination of common themes and,
- e) the development of a tentative model generated from empirically-emergent themes and comparisons with the concepts and propositions theory of the Milan model.

Together, the SPR method of data collection and the grounded theory analysis allow for potential realization of the study goals. While Glaser and Strauss (1967) acknowledge the influence of the researcher's own conceptual and experiential maps in the mediating the emergent theory, they do not discuss the nature of this type of awareness. The following section suggests one particular conception of this awareness.

B. Reflexivity

There are several ways in which reflexivity, or the willingness of a researcher to examine personal assumptions and biases, is relevant to this study. At the level of theory, researchers must become aware of, and contemplate their own orientations to knowledge and its acquisition. Through

reflexivity, the benefits and constraints of a preferred style of inquiry can become clear to the researcher. Optimally, other choices and their potential strengths can be entertained. While conducting the study, the researcher must find ways to facilitate personal reflection on the inquiry process, a process that can result in sound methodological decisions throughout the course of the study.

Reflexivity during the course of this study was aided by keeping a journal of my experience of the research process. Thoughts, concerns, and decisions about the research process were recorded, along with any shifts in emphasis with respect to the research questions. For example, the pragmatic difficulties of conducting clinical research in a community agency included the unforeseen event of the clinical director leaving the agency two months into the data collection phase. One consequence of this event was that there was no management of the research process from inside the agency. As interest in the study dwindled, and therapists procrastinated in following through with the sessions, it was necessary to devise alternative strategies to ensure that the research process would continue. By spending more time with therapists in discussing their cases, and providing support for their work, I was able to increase therapists' commitment to follow through with the study. At the same time, this event probably prevented the attainment of a larger sample size, one that might have permitted additional forms of analysis and interpretation. Nevertheless, I hypothesized that the counsellors were particularly fearful of showing their clinical work to each other, and began to address this concern as unobtrusively as possible. I monitored my own strategy of empowering the counsellors throughout the research process in my journal. This led to a request by the counsellors for a "debriefing" of the research process, because they felt that some powerful learning had taken place. (This material constitutes a followup study to the dissertation.) Perhaps the most significant events for me

were my ongoing conversation with the research journal with regard to my frustrations, confusion, and later the employment of empowering strategies. I recall my excitement as the counsellors responded, and began to take more risks in revealing their work with each other.

Reflexivity is particularly important when conducting clinical research in therapeutic settings. With a focus on patterns of meanings that evolve between participants, researchers must recognize that their methods of inquiry inevitably influence the overall process of meaning creation and its report. For example, during the SPR procedure, some subjects appeared to focus inwardly on their ongoing and developing thoughts and feelings evoked within the session, as well as those generated by the SPR procedure itself. Numerous clients commented on the impact of reviewing taped sections of their counselling sessions, and often became entranced by their second order internal observations. Given the rapport I developed with participating clients during the SPR procedure, participants spontaneously asked for advice or revealed their uncertainty and distress in other ways. While I attempted to use these opportunities to gain greater clarity about, or probe more deeply, matters relating to the inquiry, it sometimes was important simply to acknowledge participants' struggles. I was continually amazed at the types of personal disclosures partners made to me in their interviews. My perspective of my own role as a researcher changed significantly. I realized the privileged position I held by virtue of being a researcher. Partners appeared to use the opportunity to tell me about things they experienced in their sessions which they had not previously disclosed to their therapists or partner. These events strongly affected me, and generated further reflections about the inquiry and its purposes.

C. The Research Procedures

There were four phases to the study. The goals and the associated tasks are incorporated in descriptions of each phase of the research. For a visual representation of the study procedure, refer to Table 3:1 below .

Phase 1

A community agency in a large Canadian metropolitan area agreed to participate in the research study. This agency, Family Services of Greater Vancouver has offices in Vancouver, New Westminister, and Richmond. A wide variety of counselling and educational services are offered. The counsellors that participated in this study work in the Family Therapy Department, and provide a wide range of therapeutic services to individuals, couples, and families. All clients are voluntary and self-referred.

Prior to the commencement of the study, I met with interested therapists for one half-day to discuss the study procedures, ways of engaging participants, eligibility criteria, and positive reframing interventions. Care was taken not to reveal the specific research purposes. Therapists were encouraged to think about potential cases by grasping the conceptual distinctions presented with respect to stuck and unstuck couples.

Eight therapists identified couples on their caseloads that met the research criteria and obtained their consent to participate in one of the couple-therapist triads in the study. A total of eleven couples agreed to participate. For further description of the Sample criteria refer to Table 3:2. Therapists were encouraged to bring two cases into the study, preferably a stuck couple and unstuck couple. Ideally, the couples would be matched on the inclusion criteria but differ on relevant attributional factors. As well, therapists were encouraged

to participate as members of the consultation team which would offer assistance to other therapist-couple triads. Those couples and counsellors that agreed to participate in the study read, and signed Informed consent forms (Appendixes H,I).

Once counsellors had identified potential cases, they discussed the case with me to ensure that couples met the study's selection criteria. Next, the counsellor was given instructions for the administration of the Relationship Attribution Measure (RAM 1), and I assessed the couple's score. At this point, the couples were designated as belonging to stuck, unstuck, or midrange groups. Those couples whose combined scores on the RAM 1 were 480 and above and met the other study criteria, were defined as belonging to the stuck group. Those couples whose combined scores were 288 or below were defined as belonging to the unstuck group. Scores between 288 and 480 on the RAM 1 defined the mid-range group.

Subsequently, a therapy session was arranged that involved the therapist-couple triad, the consultation team members, and myself. Immediately prior to this session, I met briefly with each couple, described the research process, obtained their written consent, and administered several pencil and paper instruments. Partners independently completed a Descriptive Demographic Data Sheet (DDDS-A, Appendix F), and a Target Complaint Inventory (TCI, Appendix D). Next, the counsellor-couple triad participated in the counselling session.

Phase 2

All couples' therapy sessions were videotaped. In each case, a consultation team observed the session on a TV monitor in another room. Every

session conformed to the following five part format. This format represents a modification of that used by the Milan group (Palazzoli et al, 1978).

1. The Pre-session: Immediately prior to the interview the therapist provided background information and relevant problem descriptions to the team. As well, the therapist clarified the way in which she/he would like to have the team's assistance. This took two basic forms: (a) suggestions with respect to understanding particulars of the psychotherapy session, or (b) suggestions for the therapist with respect to appropriate interventions. The pre-session discussion was between ten to twenty minutes in length. It occurred simultaneously with the couple's completion of the pre-session instruments.
2. The Interview: The therapist and couple engaged in a regular session while the consultation team and I observed on a video monitor. This part of the session ranged from thirty to fifty minutes in duration.
3. The Inter-session: The therapist joined the consultation team and discussed understandings and interventions with respect to the particular case and session. Counsellors were encouraged to use their own clinical judgement in determining interventions. Where appropriate, the therapist was encouraged to incorporate a positive reframe into the Intervention phase of the interview. With respect to suggestions by the team, therapists were urged to select useful ideas, if they wished, and either (a) tie the ideas together thematically, or (b) present differing ideas one at a time, permitting discussion of each idea with the couple. This part of the session ranged from ten to twenty minutes in duration.
4. The Intervention: The therapist returned to the session with the couple. In all cases, some form of intervention was delivered. Therapists tended to spend time exploring new ideas with couples, and pursuing partners' perceptions with respect to the interventions. This part of the session ranged from fifteen to twenty minutes in duration.

5. The PostSession: After the session , the therapist and team members engaged in a concluding discussion about the case. This part of the session was brief, ranging from five to fifteen minutes.

On most occasions, the consultation team consisted of two, three, or four, of the primary therapist's colleagues. In one case, a single colleague provided the consultation. Although I observed the sessions in the same room with the team, my involvement was limited to clarifying protocols. During the session I privately noted points where significant change events appeared to be occurring, as well as potentially important transition points during the interview. Several sources of data assisted me in choosing these segments including the therapist's description and pre-session discussion of the case, partner's TCI responses, my theoretical framework and clinical experience with couples. The key influences informing my theoretical orientation to practice includes existential/ phenomenological theories, family systems theories, and cognitive theories. The purpose of choosing these segments was to stimulate partner's memories of the session, rather than to chance upon the most significant moments for respondents. Thus, I attempted to select as many segments as possible that met my criteria for selection, in order to increase the possibility that one or several of these segments would remind partner's of their own significant reflections during the psychotherapy session. This task was critical to carrying out the Stimulated Recall Procedure (SPR) following the intervention session.

Phase 3

Both partners were asked to complete the Experiential Memory Questionnaire (EMQ, Appendix A), and the Session Questionnaire (SQ, Appendix E) prior to participating in separate SPR interviews. With four individual partners interfering factors arose which could not be controlled, and it

was not possible to follow this order. In these cases, partners participated in the SPR interviews first, and completed the EMQ and SQ questionnaires afterwards. Although this procedural order was less desirable, in some cases it was better than either permitting a time lag before SPR procedure and instrument completion or risking not getting the information at all. The SPR procedure and the key questions are described in Appendix B. Responses to the stimulated process recall procedure were audiotaped, then transcribed after the sessions.

Upon completion of the SPR procedure and the instruments described above, a one-month follow-up appointment was made with each couple. The number of therapy sessions in which the couple participated between the experimental session and the follow-up was recorded.

Phase 4

Approximately one month later I met with each couple and explored any concerns they had about study participation. Although no issues or concerns were expressed, there was considerable interest in the findings of the study. A summary of the results will be mailed to each couple.

Table 3:1

A Visual Representation of the Research Procedures

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase
a) Counsellors sign consents/complete DDDS b) Counsellor has each couple complete RAM c) Researcher assigns couples to stuck/unstuck/midrange groups based on RAM scores and checks on willingness to participate d) Clients sign consents e) Couples of all groups assigned to same treatment condition f) Clients fill out DDDS & TCI	a) Therapy session conducted by counsellor, following 5-part format of Milan team: i) Pre-Session ii) Questioning session iii) Intersession iv) Intervention(s) delivered by counsellor v) Post-Session discussion	a) Researcher has each partner complete the EMQ b) Researcher conducts the SPR with each partner c) Researcher has partners complete RAM & SE d) Researcher makes follow-up appointment with couple	a) After approximately 1 month, researcher debriefs couple and refers to appropriate resource if necessary b) Researcher pulls name for raffle prize and informs couple

D. The Pilot Study

Prior to the commencement of data collection, one therapist-couple triad at Family Services of Greater Vancouver participated in a pilot study. The couple scored in the mid-range of the RAM, and the therapist described the couple's interactions as unstuck, although the couple was experiencing intense distress

with one particular issue. The couple and counsellor noted that they were making good progress in regular therapy sessions.

This session permitted the identification of an ambiguous phrase in the Target Complaint Instrument (TCI) instructions, and it subsequently was amended. It became clear that the SPR was potentially a very time consuming procedure. Most significantly, the potential of the SPR procedure to elicit powerful, emotional responses from participants became evident, as did its ability to yield an impressive amount of data directly relevant to the purposes of the study.

E. The Sample

The sample was comprised of 11 couples currently in couple counselling with Family Services of Greater Vancouver. Participants were recruited by their counsellors after ensuring their potential eligibility with regard to the following criteria for participation.

1. Couples must have participated together in a minimum of three therapy sessions to a maximum of 10 sessions.
2. Couples must have a history of living together for at least two consecutive years and are currently cohabiting.
3. Couples must define their central relationship problem as one of communication/ intimacy.
4. Clients must consent to the research procedures (i.e., completing test forms, videotaping, audiotaping, SPR interview, and team observation/consultation).
5. Counsellors must identify eligible couples as belonging to one of two types:
(a) partners that appear to be stuck in a pattern of blaming each other, particularly with reference to aspects of the relationship definition; or (b)

partners that appear to negotiate meaning fairly successfully together, particularly with reference to the relationship definition.

The following exclusion criteria were used to screen potential subjects:

1. Clients must not have immediate plans for divorce or separation.
2. Clients must not have serious personality problems, or be suffering from serious psychopathology such as schizophrenia.
3. Partners must not have current substance abuse problems.
4. Partners must not have engaged in incidents of physical abuse with each other within the last two years.
5. Clients must not be seeking treatment for serious physiological problems such as some forms of sexual dysfunction.
6. Also I attempted to differentiate therapist variables from couple variables with respect to the notion of stuckness. Admittedly, a clear differentiation of these variables is not possible, nevertheless some demarcation was necessary. I asked therapists to differentiate between those couples where they felt that they were stuck in the work with the couple, and those couples where the couple themselves appeared to be stuck in their interactions with each other. As well, I chose to exclude cases where therapist and couple triads had an extensive history together and possibly shared particular understandings about the relationship. As a final measure, therapists were asked to contribute two cases, each one from a different group of couples, to balance other therapist factors that might potentially influence the stuckness of couples.

Table 3:2

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria of Sample

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Established triads of therapist-couples that have had a minimum of three sessions and a maximum of 10 sessions together. -Two types of patterns: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) those couples that appear to be stuck in a pattern of blame with each other, usually regarding their relationship definition (b) those couples that appear to negotiate meaning fairly successfully together. -Couples that define their central relationship problem as one of communication/ intimacy. -Couples that have been living together for at least two years. -Couples are willing to consent to research procedures (i.e. videotape, audiotape, SPR interview, instruments, team) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Clients with serious characterological problems and/or are suffering from serious psychopathology (i.e. schizophrenia) -Partners must not have engaged in incidents of physical abuse with each other within the last two years. -Partners with current substance abuse problems. -Partners seeking treatment for childhood sexual abuse, or other similar trauma as the presenting problem. -Partners seeking treatment for serious physiological problems such as some forms of sexual dysfunction. -Those couples that have plans to separate or divorce in the near future. -Situations where the counsellor is stuck in the therapeutic work with the couple.

Demographic data about the clients were collected, including length of time living together, length of marriage, duration of current problems, perceived saliency of current problems, and degree of satisfaction with counselling services to date. A visual description of the characteristics of the sample is found in Table 3:3 below.

To facilitate the sample selection, the family therapists were given a copy of the inclusion/exclusion criteria above, and had access to the videotaped preparation session. This preparation session entailed a description of the criteria for sample selection, conceptual dimensions of stuck and unstuck couples, the general procedures of the study, and the ways in which the counsellors might use the consultation team. The following process was discussed and agreed upon, in which counsellors would contact me to discuss potential cases. I assessed cases with respect to the eligibility criteria, RAM scores, and the conceptual dimensions of the "stuckness" of each couple. When a decision was made to include the case, the counsellor acquired verbal permission of the clients to proceed, and administered the RAM.

Table 3:3

Sample Composition and Characteristics

Characteristic	Unstuck group	Mid-range group	Stuck group
Number of couples	4	4	3
Years married	2.5, 3, 13, 5.5	18, 8, 4, 12	4, 21, 4.5
Problem Saliency (low, 1- 10, high)	3, 6.5, 3, 7	4.5, 5, 7, 6.5	8, 6.5, 4
Problem Duration (yrs)	2.4, 3, 3, 2	2.5, 5, 2.5, 10	4, 3.5, 7.5
Counsellors			
Experience (yrs)	5 - 13	5 - 12	1.5 - 7
Satisfaction with Counselling	Favorable	Neutral/Favorable	Favorable

No. of Sessions between

Interview and Followup 0, 0, 0, 1 1, 1, 1, 1 0, 1, 1

The approach adopted for the sampling procedure differed from that of a classic grounded theory method. The grounded theory approach to sampling is based on the anticipated theoretical relevance of each case, as well as of each class or group of individual cases. Glaser and Strauss refer to this strategy as theoretical sampling, whereby the process of data collection is guided by the emerging theory (1967). The ongoing data analysis reveals conceptual dimensions which can be examined most profitably by the careful selection of cases which will best illuminate these dimensions. Thus, the emerging theory continuously informs the selection of cases.

In contrast, the current study did not mix data collection with data analysis. A strategy similar to the modified induction technique of Bogdan and Biklen (1982) was utilized in the development of a description of the focal phenomena. The data and conceptualization upon which this strategy was employed were my own clinical experience and the notion of stuckness proposed by the Milan group (Selvini-Palazzoli et al, 1978a). This strategy entailed the development of a rough definition of the phenomenon. Particular types of relationship attributions were considered to be a critical component of these events (i.e. blame, responsibility, and locus of control). The Milan group also suggest that these couples engage in repetitive interactional patterns, and focus their attention upon the actions of their partner rather than the couples' intimacy issues. This definition was compared with potential cases, as counsellors consulted and described aspects of each one. Subsequently, the

definition became elaborated and modified over time in this manner rather than through the theoretical sampling technique of Glaser and Strauss (1967).

When it was ascertained that a couple's relationship problems met the conceptual definition, they were assessed against the other study criteria. The researcher made a decision about their inclusion and asked the therapist to administer the RAM (Appendix C, protocol in Appendix J) to the couple, and subsequently I assessed the couples' scores. This strategy was employed in order to assess their degree of interpersonal resistance and to ensure that adequate comparison groups of unstuck, stuck, and mid-range couples were created.

The evolving rough definition of interpersonal resistance or "stuckness" assisted in the selection of cases, while the attributional measure differentiated the particular group to which each couple was assigned. This type of data collection was not random, but purposeful and congruent with the goals of the study. Cases for all three comparison groups were selected simultaneously throughout the data collection process. The inclusion of all three comparison groups assisted in augmenting the scope of the theory, and determining whether characteristics of categories were exclusive to a particular group or differed in degree across groups.

The Relationship Attribution Measure (RAM) is a new instrument devised by renowned attributional researchers, Fincham and Bradbury, (1992). It consists of eight relationship event items rated across three attributional dimensions (blame, responsibility, and causality). Respondents assess each event on two ratings per attributional dimension (see Appendix C). In this study, the measure was used to assess relationship attributional scores of each couple unit. It was hypothesized that in situations where both partners blame each other, the couple's score would be at the high end of the scale. Each partner

would score at a level of five (i.e., a strong attribution of agreement for the blame, responsibility, and control to the partner) or above, on two out of three attributional dimensions for all eight stimulus events. This response pattern produced a combined score of 480 or above. This cutoff score was adopted to identify stuck couples who were experiencing difficult relationship stalemates.

In a similar fashion, the unstuck group of couples was considered to be those partners who infrequently engage in mutual blaming behavior. These couples would score at the low end of the attributional scale. Couples with a non-blaming pattern were conceived to be those who rarely attribute blame, responsibility, and control to their partners for relationship events. This non-blaming pattern was represented by a score of level three (i.e., disagree somewhat) on two of the three dimensions on all eight stimulus events. A couple in the unstuck group produced a combined score of 288 or below.

The mid-range group was hypothesized as encompassing couples where one partner blames the other, or they blame each other but to a lesser degree than stuck couples. Couples whose combined scores fell between 288 and 480 were considered to constitute the mid-range group. This comparison group was included for the purpose of broadening the scope of the theory. The inclusion of these data permitted an examination of whether interpersonal resistance in couples can be conceived as a phenomenon exclusive to stuck couples, or whether it is more a matter of degree of difference across groups. When a number of groups that vary on an important dimension are included in a grounded theory analysis, the fullest development of relevant categories is achieved.

This broader representation of the important dimensions across groups assists in generating as many properties of the categories as possible, and assessing the interrelationships among properties and categories. This type of

comparative analysis is enhanced by including a greater number of groups, whereby the relative value of the various indicators for each group can be more completely understood when examined across groups. In other words, the relative merit of a particular indicator increases when it is discovered to exist or differentiate across group categories and properties. A broadly scoped indicator can be assumed to contribute in a significant way to the emerging grounded theory.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) indicate that after five to ten cycles of data analysis no new categories will be generated by additional data. At this point the categories are described as saturated. A more extensive theory may have evolved with additional data, however pragmatic constraints of conducting research within a community agency intervened, and data collection was concluded prior to complete saturation of categories.

F. The Therapists

A total of thirteen family therapists participated in the research project. Therapists participated in one or more ways: as a member of the couple-therapist triad, as a member of the consultation team, or both. Three therapists participated in two couple-therapist triads. Five therapists participated in one couple-therapist triad. Thus, a total of eight therapists brought couple cases into the study. Five therapists chose to participate solely as consultation team members. A summary of this information is presented in Table 3:4.

Table 3:4

Therapist Participation in Couples Research Sessions

Therapist-Couple Triad	Reflecting team only	Both triad(s) and team(s)
8	5	8
Total No. Participating therapists = 13		

The three therapists who participated in two couple-therapist triads chose one case each from two of the three groups of stuck, mid-range, and unstuck couples. Of these cases, there were three from the stuck group, two from the mid-range group, and one from the unstuck group. The five therapists who participated in one couple-therapist triad chose three cases from the stuck group, one from the unstuck group, and one from the mid-range group. This information is summarized in Table 3:5 below.

Table 3:5

Number and Type of Cases Contributed by Therapists

Number of Therapists with 1 case	Type of Case
5	Stuck = 2 Unstuck = 1 Midrange = 2
Number of Therapists with 2 cases	Type of Case
3	Stuck = 1 Unstuck = 3 Midrange = 2
Total no. cases = 11	Total stuck cases = 3
Total no. therapists with cases = 8	Total unstuck cases = 4
	Total mid-range cases = 4

A total of thirteen therapists participated as members of the observing team and provided consultation to the primary therapists. A total of two to three colleagues formed the consultation team in all but one interview.

Twelve of the therapists had a minimum of a Master's degree in counselling psychology or clinical social work. One therapist who participated as a consultation team member was a graduate student in a clinical social work program. Three of the therapists had approximately two years of counselling

experience, the rest had an average of six years post-graduate counselling experience. Most of the therapists, except for two, had been counselling couples for a minimum of two years. Table 3:6 summarizes the years of educational and clinical experience of the therapists.

Table 3:6

Educational and Clinical Background of Therapists

Masters degree	Bachelors degree or Graduate student	Clinical Experience (in years)	Couples Therapy Experience (in years)
12	1	1 = less than 2 (yrs.)	2 =>2 (yrs.)
		3 = 2-3	11 = ≤2
		1= 3-5	
		4= 5-7	
		4 = 7	

The theoretical orientation of therapists was reported as predominantly family systems theory, with various additional interests and influences derived from feminist theory, narrative ideas, object relations theory, strategic approaches, and brief solution oriented therapy. Five therapists reported additional specialized training in either multi-generational family therapy or narrative therapy. Clearly, therapists represented a broad variety of theoretical

orientations to practice. The diversity of theoretical orientations was viewed as a positive factor for the development of a grounded theory of psychotherapy.

In anticipation of the study, therapists attended one half-day of preparation which included discussion about conceptually distinguishing stuck and unstuck couples, sample criteria, the research process, the structure of the five-part interview, acceptable interventions, and the role of the consultation team. The researcher encouraged therapists to conduct the therapy sessions in their usual manner, and to use the consultation team for assistance. Although no training or formal preparation occurred, the researcher spent several hours every Tuesday morning for a month at the agency in order to address therapists' concerns, questions, and provide support with reference to study participation. All therapists participated voluntarily.

G. The Interventions

Therapists were encouraged to conduct the couple therapy sessions in their customary style. Therapists could use the consultation team in several ways. They could ask for feedback in order to achieve an enhanced understanding of the case, and/or to assist in the design of particular interventions. The consultation team was instructed to be responsive to the particular request of the primary therapist.

Therapists were asked to use positive reframe interventions when they felt it was appropriate to do so. They were encouraged to trust their own clinical judgement when deciding on the method of intervention with each couple. Only those therapists that routinely used these interventions chose to incorporate them in the couples counselling session. Each of these therapists differed in the way that they integrated reframes in their interventions.

Two independent raters agreed that positive reframes were employed in eight of the eleven sessions. (The validity check of interventions is described more completely in Chapter Four.) Positive reframes were never used exclusively in any session. Rather, therapists combined other types of strategies or questions into their interventions with couples. Positive reframes were incorporated as interventions with three couples of the stuck group, three couples of the unstuck group, and two couples of the mid-range group.

Although it was not assumed that a positive reframe is a necessary and contingent condition for the resolution of couples' entrenched relationship stalemates, the strategy was incorporated on the basis of the claims of members of the Milan group. Essentially they assert that families get stuck in knots, and require a jolt in the form of a paradoxical intervention in order to regain stability. Thus, positive reframes were used, where appropriate, in order to discover whether this type of intervention was interpreted as significant by clients.

Those counsellors who chose not to incorporate positive reframes constructed other interventions which fit the unique situation of each couple and incorporated themes discussed in the session. Every consultation team functioned uniquely. At times, particular team members felt strongly about the employment of specific interventions and urged the primary therapist to adopt a favored strategy. At other times, the team was most responsive in meeting the primary therapist's request for assistance.

H. The Physical Setting

Couples' therapy sessions were conducted at either the Vancouver or New Westminister offices of Family Services of Greater Vancouver. Interviewing rooms with videotaping equipment were used for the couples' sessions. In the

Vancouver office a Hitachi CCD-II 2300 A camcorder with a RCA Performance Serial 4-head video system VCR was used. As well, two AKG-D905 microphones and a Boss BX40 channel mixer assisted in the recording and monitoring of the sessions. In the New Westminister office, a Sony camcorder and camera CCDSX410 and a Sony VCR SLV 4948F were used. The researcher supplied Sony Ed T-120 VHS standard tapes to record sessions.

During the SPR procedure, a Sony microcassette-corder, model M-440V was used to audiotape the interviews. The microcassette-corder used TDK MC 60 microcassettes. Video-playback of the counselling sessions was accomplished using a RCA Colortrak stereo tv monitor in the Vancouver office. For video playback, a Sony television monitor K19TS20 and VCR SLV494HF was used in the New Westminister office.

I. The Couples

1. The Stuck Group

Couple 1. This husband and wife are in their early twenties. They had been living together for seven and a half years, and married for four and a half years. They said that their problems arose early in their relationship. These problems were described as continuous conflict, unresolved anger, and competition for control. In general, the research counselling session focused on specific episodes of conflict, the way in which each partner was thinking and feeling about these episodes, and identified changes that they had made in handling these kind of stalemates. Both partners say they had made progress, but acknowledged that they need to continue to work on these episodes with the assistance of their counsellor.

Couple 2. The female partner had been married previously and brought her two children into the new family. The male partner had never been married. Early in the relationship the couple had two more children. Both partners sought marital therapy because they were experiencing escalating conflict, and anticipated separating if they could not resolve their differences. Partners blame each other for the problems, and claim that there is a lack of intimacy in the relationship. The research session began with a review of the most recent relationship events and focused on their different perceptions. Partners frequently disqualified each other, and the therapist during the session. The therapist attempted to redirect them to matters on which they agree. The session ended with partners reluctantly acknowledging that there are a few strengths in their relationship.

Couple 3. This couple had recently separated although they continued to be significantly involved with each other. They had been married for twenty years and were continuing to raise three children. The session focused on their thoughts and feelings about their relationship since the separation. During the session, the female partner avoided engaging with her husband. The male partner sought his wife's attention and approval. The therapist encouraged each partner to disclose private thoughts about their individual personal development since commencing therapy. Close to the end of the session the female partner discussed her recent decision to acquire computer training. She indicated that she was beginning to feel more positively about herself. As well, she said she feared losing the personal gains she had acquired. Most significantly she confessed to being uninterested in any sexual relationship. Her husband said he was relieved to hear this disclosure. He claimed that he experienced her preoccupation as rejection. He felt less responsible for the rejection. At the end

of the session, the partners acknowledged that they will continue to have a friendship.

2. The Unstuck Group

Couple 1. This couple had been married for thirteen years and have three children. They claim that their difficulties began approximately three years ago. While they are generally content with the relationship, they experience conflict about financial matters and outside activities. The counselling session focused on each partner's perspective on these problems. During the session, the couple interacted with each other, clarifying matters which were unclear. The therapist prompted the partners to think about the way they have solved problems like this in the past. The couple acknowledged that they are better able to appreciate each other's view, although they have not resolved their current difficulties. They were respectful to each other, and frequently laughed together. The therapist reframed their struggle as an effort to balance each other's needs.

Couple 2. This young couple had been married five and a half years and have one child. They claimed that their problems began two years ago. They describe their problems as the way that they communicate with each other. Often they experience episodes of intense conflict. The counsellor focused on the needs that both partners bring to the relationship, as well as their feelings toward each other. They acknowledged that they have made progress in their efforts to listen to each other. Yet, they continue to have difficulty in validating each other. The counsellor used a metaphor to refer indirectly to the couple's fears which may dominate the relationship. The couple favorably responded to

the metaphor, and engaged in further exploration of these feelings. The couple were optimistic and excited about their progress by the end of the session.

Couple 3. This couple had been together for five years, married for two and a half, and have one child. They claimed that their difficulties arose approximately two years ago. They describe their problems as stress related to work and living far away from family support. As well, the female partner discussed the difficult transition from a career to caring for her child full-time. The counsellor reviewed the preceding session and conducted a review of the intervening relationship events during this period. Both partners were optimistic about the way they generally work together to balance each other's needs and their responsibilities. Conflict arises when their needs and responsibilities clash. At these times, each partner feels misunderstood by the other. During the session, partners directed questions to each other to clarify their own understandings, and were supportive. The counsellor asked them to elaborate similarities and differences in their relationship goals. By the end of the session, the couple had created a mutually agreed upon vision of intimacy which they expressed in the form of a metaphor.

Couple 4. This couple were in their late forties. The female partner was previously married, and subsequently raised two children on her own. The male partner had never married or had children. While this couple have been together three years, they have been separated several times for a variety of reasons.

During the session, the counsellor explored each partner's view of the relationship difficulties. Further, the counsellor asked them to clarify the specific aspects of the relationship that each of them wishes to change. The partners were attentive and respectful towards each other. They tended to talk together a

lot during the session, in response to the counsellor's questions. The counsellor acknowledged and validated their differing views of their relationship. While they remained concerned about their differences, they recognized the strengths of the relationship.

3. The Mid-Range Group

Couple 1. Although this couple has been together for twelve years and married for eight, they claim that their problems began ten years ago. They have two children. The partners describe their problems as encompassing unsatisfactory communication, differing goals, and a lack of emotional and physical intimacy. The counsellor explored each partner's perceptions of the relationship problems. There was covert blaming and indirect anger expressed by the female partner. The couple engaged in verbal conflict, but appeared to be detached. The couple was unresponsive to the therapist's efforts to have them focus on their own thoughts and feelings about the relationship. Partners disqualified the counsellor's efforts to have them engage with each other, and they appeared fatigued and defeated. (This couple scored just below the cutoff for the stuck group.)

Couple 2. This couple had been together thirteen years, and married for twelve. They have two children. Their problem is described as difficulty communicating when they differ on important issues. The counsellor encouraged each partner to discuss personal perceptions of a recent conflictual event. Immediately, the female partner began berating her husband because he did not deal with a situation in the way that she preferred. Her husband became more quiet and withdrawn, as the counsellor and female partner tried to explore the

reasons for his behavior. Then, the counsellor changed direction and began asking the male partner about his feelings in the session, with the two females "ganging up on him." He began to discuss his feelings more openly, and began to explore the difficulties he was facing. The session ended with the wife expressing frustration with the lack of resolution on the matter.

Couple 3. This couple has been together for eight years and married for four years. They have no children; both of them are busy in pursuit of educational and professional goals. They describe their problems as a lack of communication and intimacy with each other. The counsellor explored the couple's current complaint of the conflict about household chore responsibilities. The counsellor asked each partner to define their expectations for change in behavioral terms. The male partner became more engaged in problem solving. The female partner resisted the counsellors efforts to engage her in this discussion, and she began criticizing her husband. He became confused, and sought clarification of her concerns. By the end of the session the male partner expressed that he was ready to address the problem.

Couple 4. This couple married soon after they met approximately two years ago. The male partner had been married previously. The female partner is considerably younger than her husband. She moved from the parental home to the marriage. The partners describe their problems as conflict which arises from working together and living together. The counsellor facilitated an account of each person's view of the problems, and validated their feelings. At the same time, the counsellor reframed their differences as opportunities for enhanced growth and intimacy. By the end of the session, partners were listening as each

other talked with the counsellor. The couple appeared to be encouraged by the therapist's positive outlook.

J. Instruments and Measures

1. Demographic and descriptive data sheet (DDDS)

This instrument was used to gather basic identifying information from both clients and counsellors. These data sheets were coded and separated from the rest of the data. Clients completed responses about the number of years together/married, their ages, the duration of current relationship problems, the number of couples sessions to date, amount of previous therapeutic assistance received, the saliency of current problems, and the degree of satisfaction with current counselling.

Counsellors responded to questions about the highest level of education attained, number of years of practicing counselling, number of years with current agency, theoretical orientation, types of commonly used interventions, and number of years of couple counselling experience.

2. Experiential Memory Questionnaire (EMQ)

This measure was developed for this study and is based on similar questionnaire formats developed in other experiential memory research (Elliott, 1986; Kagan, 1975; Martin et al, 1986). This particular questionnaire is a three-item, open-question, pencil and paper instrument. The measure was designed to probe the content of clients' memories of their therapy session, the particular saliency of these memories to the clients, and the meaning clients attributed to particular memories (see Appendix A).

3. Stimulated Process Recall Procedure (SPR)

This procedure was conducted after the intervention session. It was carried out by me with each partner, in turn, and took place after the EMQ had been completed by each partner. I replayed the videotape of the couple's session in order to elicit client cognitions at various points during the session. These segments of the session were chosen by myself, and were selected on the basis of the clients' target complaints (TCI) and my clinical judgement of episodes where interpersonal resistance between partners was occurring. Partners were asked what they found to be significant, what specific thoughts they had about their partner and relationship, and their perception of the purpose of specific parts of the intervention. These responses were audiotaped and transcribed for analyses.

4. Relationship Attribution Measure (RAM)

The RAM (Fincham & Bradbury, 1992) consists of 8 hypothetical relationship events and 6 response items which are rated across 3 attributional dimensions. The RAM is a brief, easy to administer pencil and paper test. (Appendix C). It was normed on a population of 130 married couples. The attributional dimensions reflect those conceptual distinctions made in the marital attribution literature (Fincham & Bradbury, 1992). The RAM distinguishes among the three dimensions of causal, responsibility, and blame attributions. The author claims it has clear construct and discriminant validity, although there are no published studies of its use with clinical populations. It also has concurrent validity with the Marital Adjustment Test (Locke & Wallace, 1959).

Validity on attributional items was achieved when composite subscales were formed for each of the three types of attributional dimensions. This was accomplished by summing response scores across the dimensions within each of the 4/8 vignettes that pertained to each type of attribution. The composite scores

of the three attributional subscales for both husbands and wives were reported as highly reliable: alpha's (indicators of internal consistency) for wives were cause=.91, responsibility=.90, and blame=.89; alpha's for husbands were cause=.91, responsibility=.94, and blame=.93 . The RAM is thus internally consistent, and exhibits adequate test-retest reliability over a 3 week interval.

In this study, the spouse is described as "partner" rather than "husband" or "wife," which is different from the terms adopted in the published instrument. The reason for this difference was that the administration of the test was made easier, since one form could be used with all partners, with the adoption of a generic term. The single term of "partner" could be used because gender differences were not a central focus of this study.

This is a new instrument with some limitations. Its discriminant validity has not been well tested in applied clinical settings. As well, the instrument does not exhaust all attributional dimensions relevant to close relationships. Finally, responses may reflect stable traits of the respondent, his or her current state, as well as the reality of partner behaviors, rather than attributional dimensions alone.

The 8-item RAM yields a range of possible scores between 48 - 288 points. When partners' scores are combined, a range of scores 96 - 576 is possible. The cutoffs used to define groups of couples in this study are based on the combined scores of partners, because the couple is the unit of interest. For example, where both partners blame each other, they may both score on most items at a level of 5 (agree with blame/responsibility attributions to partner) or above. If both partners scored at a 5 or above on the two examples of the three attributional dimensions on all eight stimulus events, their individual scores would be approximately 240 or above. Combined scores for both partners would be approximately 480 or above. This type of pattern would represent relatively high

blame by both partners. Thus, stuckness is defined as a combined score of 480 and above.

Unstuckness was construed in a related fashion, and defined in this study as combined scores of 288 and below. This distinction is achieved by assuming that individual partners score at the level of 3 (disagree somewhat) on the two examples of each of the three dimensions across all eight stimulus events. This pattern of responding would yield individual partner scores to a maximum of 144. Thus, unstuckness represents a pattern of low blame by partners in the couple dyad. The numerical distance between cutoffs for stuck and unstuck couples differentiates these groups quantitatively. The cutoffs are skewed slightly to the upper end of the range of the instrument, because it was assumed that all couples in therapy have significant problems, and thus are more likely to exhibit attributions of blaming than couples in a nonclinical population.

5. Target Complaint Instrument (TCI)

The TCI (Battle, Imber, Hoehn-Sarec, Nash, & Frank, 1966) was used to develop criteria for measuring change based on the clients' problem definition. Clients' ratings of the severity of presenting complaints were taken prior to and following the intervention session. The TCI is a brief pencil and paper instrument that asks respondents to identify three problems, and then to rate each of them according to severity on a five point scale. Before the session, clients were asked to give a description of three problems, prioritize them, and rate the degree of severity of each problem. The use of the treatment complaint format as a criterion of improvement has been recommended by Waskow and Parloff (1975). Others have noted that the scales are sensitive to change, not offensive to clients, and easy to administer (Battle et al, 1966). (Appendix E)

6. Session Questionnaire (SQ)

This instrument is a brief pencil and paper test which is modeled on a similar instrument developed by Lee, Rossiter, Martin and Uhlemann (1990). It was developed to probe cognitive reactions to paradoxical interventions. Clients were asked two brief questions about their satisfaction with their counsellor during the session, and their satisfaction with their counsellor's particular suggestion for change. It was administered one time only, after the session. Responses are coded on a 7-item Likert scale. (Appendix E.)

K. Data Analysis

1. The Constant Comparison Method

Central to grounded theory analysis of qualitative data is the constant comparative method of simultaneous coding and analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The constant comparative method assists in the development of theory that is integrated, consistent, and close to the data. The purpose of this inquiry is the discovery of theory, rather than the testing of specific hypotheses. The constant comparison analytic method was applied to the data.

There were five sources of data: (a) transcribed SPR interviews, (b) EMQ responses, (c) the SQ data, (d) TCI responses, and (e) the research journal with the theoretical memos. The primary source of data consisted of 22 individual SPR interviews with marital partners that had just completed a couple's therapy session. The inquiry consisted of responses to selected re-played segments of the couple's session. The SPR procedure was conducted immediately after the session with all couples except for one. The exception was the case of one couple where there were delays of two and four days. Kagan's (1975) technique

of Interpersonal Process Recall was adapted for the purpose of this inquiry. Elliott (1986), Rennie (1992; 1994; in press), and Rennie et al (1988), have reported using this method, and modifying it for their particular research purposes.

Particular segments from each of the therapy sessions were selected for SPR review by me while I observed each session. The basis for my selection of these segments was my judgement that they constituted potentially significant episodes in connection with a couple's relationship problems. The information that influenced my judgement included the couples' TCI responses, the therapists' descriptions of the couple and their problems, and my clinical experience with couples. My theoretical orientation to practice provided an overarching framework. Briefly, my orientation to practice includes three major influences, existential-phenomenological theories, family systems theories, and cognitive theories. In the selection of SPR playback episodes particular attention was given to situations where couple's interpersonal resistance was indirectly or directly addressed, or episodes where couples engaged in or resolved conflict.

These videotaped segments were typically two to three minutes in length. As many as nine and as few as three segments were chosen from each couple's session. On average, five segments of videotape were chosen for each couple. During the SPR interview, both partners were shown the same segments but during separate interviews. These interviews were approximately 30 to 50 minutes in length. The interviews were transcribed and produced 160 pages of material. The transcripts of the SPR inquiry were the principal data to which the grounded theory analysis was applied, with videotapes of the same sessions serving as context.

After these data were analyzed, responses to the Experiential Memory Questionnaire (EMQ) were incorporated into the grounded theory analysis.

Responses to the Session Questionnaire (SQ) and the Target Complaint Inventory (TCI) also were incorporated into the interpretation of the grounded theory, where relevant (Appendix L). Data derived from the SQ were used in the interpretation of clients' perceptions of session outcome. Finally, the researcher's theoretical memos, written parallel to the evolving theory, were reviewed. The steps of the data analysis are described visually in Table 3:8 below.

The constant comparative method consists of the activities of data collection, open categorizing, memoing, the parsimonious determination of the core category, sorting memos, and transcription of the theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The following account will describe the specific procedures that I engaged in throughout the constant comparison process.

The initial task was to ascertain the central features of the phenomena of interest. When one uses a theoretical sampling procedure, subjects are chosen on the basis of their similarity with particular features central to the phenomena, in order to maximize the possibility that key categories will emerge from the data. A grounded theory sampling procedure was not employed in this study. However, the analysis was approached as if such a sampling procedure had been employed.

Two major decisions were made prior to conducting the analysis. These decisions revolved around the choice of a meaning unit, and the selection of particular constant comparison strategies.

The choice of meaning unit was line by line analysis of the text, as recommended by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Throughout the analysis, individual concepts were selected on the basis of contextualized meanings. As much as possible, the language and meanings of the respondents was preserved. Each meaning unit was assigned to as many categories as possible. This strategy is one of open categorizing (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The purpose

of this method is the preservation of nuances of meaning in the data. For an example of the open categorizing phase of coding the SPR transcripts, refer to Table 3:7.

At regular intervals, larger chunks of text were examined in order to assess whether the smaller units adequately captured the respondent's core meaning or purpose. In some chunks of text, more than one potential meaning could be derived. Where the meanings of the larger text were not adequately captured by the smaller meaning unit codes, these larger units were coded and these codes added to the analysis.

The second major decision concerned the choice of constant comparison strategies. Initially, I developed a plan about how to approach the analysis of the data. The first step was to decide on the order I would use in analyzing individual cases and groups of cases so as to enhance my theoretical understanding of partners' interpersonal resistance. The groups of couples were analyzed in the following order: stuck, unstuck, and midrange. The transcripts of partners defined as belonging to the stuck group were analyzed first since the focus of interest was the interpersonal resistance between partners in a psychotherapy session. Once these were analyzed, transcripts of couples that were defined as unstuck were examined independently of the other groups. These transcripts were selected at this time in the analytic sequence because they potentially represented the opposite end of the spectrum of interpersonal resistance. Finally, transcripts of couples defined as belonging to the mid-range group were analyzed. The inclusion of a mid-range group permitted an examination of whether interpersonal resistance is a phenomenon that occurs uniquely within a group of distressed couples, or whether it is something that all couples experience to a greater or lesser degree. The within group analysis permitted the identification of important similarities in the data related to particular

theoretical dimensions, as well as the identification of a few key differences. Each meaning unit was compared with all previous units generated from the same group, as well as with meaning units generated from other groups, but coded in the same category. For example, clusters of meaning units that were descriptive of interpersonal conflictual episodes were compared with all other meaning units within the category. Some of these clusters were identified by cluster labels such as "blaming partner," "avoidance of responsibility," "competition," and "negative thinking." The overarching category encompassing these dimensions was initially conceived of as "resistance," although it was later re-conceptualized as "self-protective responses to meaning creation." The analysis of all the data in the stuck group generated dimensions of the key categories and their basic properties.

Each meaning unit (line of transcribed discourse) was coded on a sticky memo. Individual meaning units were coded and sorted into as many categories as possible. Categories were re-organized when it seemed as if they represented dimensions of other categories. The emerging theory, its categories and properties, were preserved on micro-computer software, Microsoft Word 5.0 word processing program, and entitled "The Stuck Group".

Table 3:7

An Example of the Coding of SPR Transcripts

Text:

Line 1 M: ...obviously, it did strike me at one point...to think tonight as

Line 2 to why she's feeling better the last couple weeks. Because as she says I'm going

Line 3 to school and I feel better from that...so she's treating me better. And
 Line 4 during the summer it wasn't that good...so maybe I'll try to encourage her

Analysis:

Line 1 -Partner silently focuses on own inner processes during session
 -Partner's tracks own feelings and thoughts about partner

Line 2 -Partner focuses on spouse's behavior
 -Impact of partner's behavior on feelings/thoughts about self
 -Examines Partner's interpretation of own behavior

Line 3 -Considers impact of Partners feeling/thoughts on self
 -Partner tracks couples' problem
 -Partners interprets spouse's behavior
 -Partner examines spouse's role in couple's problems

Line 4 -Partner tracks couple's problem
 -Partner interprets spouse's role in couples' problems
 -Partner considers own potential behavioral response
 -Partner engages in inner problem solving
 -Impact of own thoughts/behavior on partner
 -Evaluates couple's problems negatively
 -Implicit blame of partner for couple's problems

The same procedures and notation systems were employed independently with the unstuck and mid-range groups. These analyses were transcribed separately on the word processing software program.

Next, comparisons were made across groups. Initially, the data generated by the stuck group was compared with that of the unstuck group. Then, the results of that analysis (stuck/unstuck) were compared with the data of the mid-range group. Comparisons between groups maximized and minimized both similarities and differences in the data. The comparison of the two most diverse groups, stuck and unstuck, led to the recognition of fundamental uniformities in the data across both groups. At the same time, this comparison contributed to the dense development of properties, the integration of categories and their properties, and limited the scope of the theory. The comparison of more similar groups (i.e., stuck/unstuck comparison results with the midrange group) assisted in verifying the usefulness of a category, establishing its basic properties, and clarifying the conditions for the scope of a category. The process of constructing categories is described for a couple of each group in Appendix K.

Differences between groups were sought prior to examination of their similarities. This strategy increased both diverse and similar data across categories, and generated a new round of coding, open categorizing, construction of categories, and reorganization of categories and their properties. Further, the comparison of groups generated the researcher's regular notation of ideas about the emerging theory. These notes were separated from the conceptualization of categories. The emerging theory, generated from the analysis between the stuck and unstuck groups, was preserved in a word processing program on a micro-computer (Microsoft Word 5.0, word processing software).

Similar coding and constant comparison procedures were employed with the data of the mid-range group. New cycles of coding meaning units on sticky memos, open categorizing, construction of categories, and reorganization of categories and their properties occurred. Additional theoretical memos were created. Very few new categories emerged, and several cycles of data analysis led to the saturation of categories. Most significantly, the inclusion of the mid-range group data assisted in clarifying the conditions and parameters of the various conceptual categories. Overall, the scope and integration of the theory was enhanced by the inclusion of the mid-range group data.

Participants' responses to the Experiential Memory Questionnaire (EMQ) were entered into the analysis using the same procedures described above. No new categories were created from this analysis. However, these data served to provide support for the interpretation of particular aspects of the grounded theory. The Session Questionnaire (SQ) data were coded independently of the grounded theory. These data are referenced with respect to their convergence or divergence with the interpretation of the grounded theory, and are most relevant to clients' perceptions of session outcome.

Finally, my theoretical memos were examined and these ideas contributed to the selection of the core category, and provided support for the organization of the theory as a whole.

Table 3:8

Data Analysis Procedures

Method	Data Source	Purpose
Constant Comparison	SPR transcripts of Stuck couples	Within group analysis
Constant Comparison	SPR transcripts of Unstuck couples	Within group analysis
Constant Comparison	SPR transcripts of Mid-range couples	Within group analysis
Constant Comparison	Coding transcripts of Stuck and Unstuck groups	Across group analysis
Constant Comparison	Coding transcripts of Stuck-Unstuck analysis (above) with Unstuck group	Across group analysis
Constant Comparison	EMQ	Integration or accommodation of concepts
Constant Comparison	SQ	Within and across group comparison

Constant Comparison	TCI	Within and across group comparison
Constant Comparison	TCI, SPR, EMQ	Triangulation
Analytic abstraction	Research journal and Theoretical memos	Generation of core category
Analytic abstraction	Core category, and other categories and their properties	Generation and reconceptualization of the grounded theory

L. Validity

1. A Grounded Theory Interpretation of Reliability and Validity

Grounded theory has been criticized in regard to its credibility and generalizability (see Hoshmand, 1989; Rennie et al., 1988). There are four central issues related to the reliability and validity of the approach. Specifically these issues are: (a) a lack of objectivity by the researcher, (b) the status of self-report data, (c) the lack of generalizability, and (d) the emphasis on theory generation rather than verification.

The concern with the lack of objectivity of the approach refers to the role of the researcher as a mediator of data. This issue arises from traditional positivist conceptions of objectivity and subjectivity. The problems related to the subjective influence of the researcher include both researcher bias, and the replicability of results.

In regard to researcher bias, Glaser and Strauss (1967) recommend that the investigators suspend their theoretical preferences and biases in order to be open to themes arising from the data. Further, they suggest that detailed and

precise description of procedural details, transcription rules, and notation systems be documented in order that the construction of the theory might be assessed. As well, examples from the data can be presented with the interpretations and conclusions in the finished report.

Grounded theorists are less concerned with the notion of researcher bias, as they accept the premise that all observation, including that in hypothetico-deductive designs, is theory-laden (Kuhn, 1970). The primary concern is the adequate representation of the data, and the fidelity of description. Discovery-oriented approaches, like grounded theory analysis, stress the quality of awareness of the researcher and the systematic method of discovery as factors integral to validity. The researcher's conceptual lens is an acknowledged component, and strategies are suggested by Glaser and Strauss to manage these views. The central concern is to prevent the limitation of the scope of the theory by virtue of the researcher's theoretical biases.

The researcher is expected to be committed to a dialectic exchange of views within a community of scholars as a means of identifying and addressing personal bias. The validity of research within this view is contingent on the skills and sensitivities that the researcher brings to bear on the activity of knowing. Validity is assessed, in part, on the basis of the personal and interpersonal understandings rather than the choice of method alone (Hoshmand & Martin, in press; Reason & Rowan, 1981). As well, the warrant of the pragmatic yield of the study permits a more critical measure by which to determine validity.

Grounded theorists' adoption of a constructionist approach influences their perception of the concern for replicability of results. They maintain that no two studies will be the same when different researchers conduct them, because researchers have differing backgrounds, experiences, beliefs, values, and conceptions. By traditional standards of generalizability, if a study cannot be

replicated and the same results obtained, then the theory cannot be supported. Grounded theorists contend that within a constructionist framework strong replicability is not possible. When other researchers replicate a grounded theory study, they are likely to find both similarities and differences with previous work. The degree to which there is agreement is thought to constitute an empirical domain worthy of rigorous testing.

There are reasonable strategies that researchers can employ to increase the likelihood that their own and others' understanding may overlap. The grounded theory researcher must take care to ground conceptualizations in the data. This grounding is contingent on the clarity and explicitness of the procedures, the comprehensiveness of understanding of the phenomena that the researcher brings to the work, as well as the strength of the rhetoric of the study. When research is based on a pragmatic warrant, the choice of method can be evaluated against its human and social impact, as well as against the usefulness of conceptual understandings.

Although many psychological investigators seek ways of accessing deep structure of human meaning, those centrally concerned with traditional definitions of validity have expressed concerns about the limitations of verbal self-report data. Critics (e.g., Nisbett & Wilson, 1977) are concerned with cognitive distortions of memory, a priori causal explanations of events, and different cognitive levels of processing. However, regardless of the method used to access deep meaning structures, one can never be assured that the verbal material is representative of psychological realities. When the focus of interest is human beings and their experiencing, there is increased uncertainty with respect to both the method and the yield of the study. Nevertheless, when one is interested in the experience of partners in a marriage, the most valid reports are the meanings derived from the subjects themselves.

It is incumbent upon grounded theory researchers to be critical with respect to their own interpretations of data. While, for purposes of explicating personal experience, respondents' accounts do not require external validation, the researcher utilizes the constant comparative method in a transparent fashion. A variety of methods may be employed to compare perceptions of the contextual or convergent validity of the study. Evidence from other sources may be incorporated in the analysis, depending on particular purposes and goals of the research.

Concern with the generalizability of grounded theory analyses relates to the replicability of the research findings. The constant comparison method replicates the findings of subjective idiographic events across individuals. The results yield a description of some commonly experienced phenomena. The grounded theorist is interested in acquiring a thorough familiarity with these phenomena. Theoretical sampling assists in the delineation of the parameters and scope of the theory. As well, negative case and discrepant case analyses may be included to assist in the refinement of theoretical understanding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Hoshmand, 1989). The lack of generality of the theory is seen as a trade-off for rich data with contextual validity. This does not seem an inappropriate yield when the purpose of the study is theory generation.

A final concern with respect to validity is the emphasis on theory development as opposed to verification. Frequently, grounded theories are not subject to rigorous testing, but are accepted as de facto conclusions (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). There is a need for increased attention to the compatibility between the research purpose and the method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Hoshmand, 1989). It may be helpful to address the conjectured gap between theory generation and verification. Grounded theory of psychotherapeutic practice can be exposed to systematic theory-testing by a variety of methods,

with the method continuously reformulated in response to the emerging theory. The work of Rice and Greenberg (Rice & Greenberg, 1984) provides good examples of research programs that move between discovery and verification of conceptual, theoretical frameworks.

2. Validity of SPR Procedure

Few researchers would disagree that an interview process influences to a greater or lesser degree the nature of the data collected. There are two distinct perspectives about the role of the researcher in this type of inquiry. Elliott (1986) cautions researchers and recommends that a position of minimal activity in the interview be adopted on the grounds that even minimal cues may serve to lead the respondent, and bias the data. This perspective reflects assumptions that human behavior can be described objectively, and that the researcher's influence can be controlled.

This study adopts a perspective congruent with a social constructionist approach. Proponents of this position claim that human understanding and experience does not exist as a separate entity apart from social interaction. Within the context of the SPR inquiry, clients are assumed to construct their accounts in response to their experience and expectations of the situation.

I adopted a role of minimal participation in the interview aside from communicating the purpose of the inquiry, a description of the process, and clarification of the research procedures and intent. For example, at times it was important to ask participants to differentiate between those events they experienced during the couples' session and those that were elicited by the inquiry itself. While this stance was satisfactory in most cases, at times it was necessary to become more active to help the respondent to share personal

feelings and thoughts. At other times, clients struggled to bring their inner experience into expression. When a participant appeared to be unable to verbally represent their experience, I provided a minimal prompt. When participants required assistance to guide their recall, I relied upon the questions outlined in Appendix B. However, as much as possible respondents were encouraged to discuss aspects of interviews which were most personally meaningful.

At times it seemed as if respondents were experiencing so much that it was not possible for them to put much of this into words. At other times, it appeared as if respondents chose to keep some aspects of their experience private. Although these interviews are perceived as necessarily co-constructed, the researcher attempted to stay out of the way as respondents shared their most memorable and significant perceptions of the couples' sessions. Sometimes respondents sought reassurance or recognition of their experience from the researcher. I tried to use these moments to access to deeper meanings. However, there were instances when it was important to provide a simple acknowledgement of a client's experience.

3. Validity of Interventions

I and a second independent rater conducted a validity check on the interventions in all of the videotaped psychotherapy sessions. I have 13 years post Masters degree clinical experience working with couples and families. My orientation to practice has been influenced by existential-phenomenological theories, family system theories, and cognitive theories. The second rater has 20 years of similar clinical experience subsequent to a Masters degree. Her

orientation to practice has been influenced by existential and family systems theories. The raters used the following definition of a positive reframe as a guide.

Positive connotation, or reframing, as defined by the Milan group takes the form of a summary statement of the family's current dilemma, but differs somewhat from the prevailing problem definition (Tomm, 1984). The behavior of everyone in the system is connected in the explanation, and behaviors defined by the family as problematic are redefined as neutral or positive. It is not the symptomatic behavior per se that is positively connoted, but its relationship to other important behaviors. The cognitive connections made in the intervention often suggest alternative solutions and possibilities for change.

For example, to say to the overspending partner of the imaginary couple discussed in Chapter Two, that "It is a good thing that you overspend" is not likely to yield a useful result. A potentially therapeutic reframe might be, "It is a good thing that you overspend....it is good because it makes your partner pay attention to things in the relationship...when that happens attention is focused on the relationship, and the two of you begin to talk....you talk about your feelings about the relationship and each other...and there is more talking now than before...this can help create the opportunities for more intimacy and understanding between you...and this may permit you and your partner to become more involved in a way that you have not been previously...." As well, reframes must be plausible and incorporate information derived from the interview. The issues and behaviors contained in the reframe must be relevant to the couples' particular life situation.

I provided the second rater with a brief description of the couples, their problem definitions, and the events of each session. The raters evaluated each of the 11 research sessions independently, noting the cases where positive reframes occurred and cases where other types of interventions were used. Of

the eleven cases, the raters agreed on the interventions used in all but one case. Several discussions ensued until consensus was reached. This case was included in the analysis.

Raters noted that each counsellor delivered positive reframe interventions according to their own particular working style. Often, these interventions were interspersed with other interventions. Clearly, the positive reframe interventions practiced in this study have only mild similarity with those of the Milan group. For example, positive reframes varied in the degree to which they were elaborated, the level of specificity adopted, and the centrality of the issue (indicated by the TCI) chosen for reformulation.

4. Accuracy of Transcription

A second independent rater with no background in clinical work in psychology checked the accuracy of the transcription of the SPR interviews. The rater randomly chose three audiotaped interviews, selected five-minute segments from each tape, and compared audiotaped interviews against the transcribed material. In each case, the transcription materials were assessed as accurately reflecting the audiotaped interviews.

5. Validity of Analysis and Interpretation of the Grounded Theory

Most commonly, grounded theory analyses are acceptable on the basis of adequate empirical grounding of codes, with the recognition of the mediating influence of the particular researcher's perceptual map in the generation of the theory.

To assist in achieving the goals of this study, a second analysis of the SPR transcripts (with the videotapes of the research sessions serving as context) was conducted by a co-analyst. This re-analysis provided a validity check of the categories of the grounded theory. The two analyses were compared for the purpose of achieving a more elaborated understanding of the phenomenon under study.

The re-analysis was conducted by a therapist with a MSW and 8 years of counselling experience. Her orientation to practice has been influenced by family systems and narrative theories. I provided instruction for conducting the grounded theory analysis. In the end, the methodology chosen for the validity study drew upon Rennie's (in press) modification of Glaser and Strauss's constant comparison method (1967). This modification entails the selection of larger chunks of text as constituting the meaning units, and abstraction of the meanings into a category or categories. This approach to analysis differed from my own because the size of the meaning units were substantially larger, and the co-analyst effectively skipped the coding stage.

The protocols for the analysis were identical to those I used. Each group was analyzed separately, and in the following order of stuck, unstuck, and mid-range. Comparison was conducted of the stuck and unstuck groups, and the results of this analysis were compared with those from the mid-range group. The results of the validity study yielded a grounded theory expressed in the form of a hierarchical table, which incorporates a core category and three other descriptive categories and their components. While the similarities between the two analyses are identified, particular attention is given to an examination of the differences which possess potential for modifying current conceptualizations. Finally, the results of this comparison will be referenced in the fifth and final chapter, and integrated into a review of the extent to which the notion of

reflexivity is a new one and the way in which the findings inform relevant counselling theory and practice.

The two analyses are similar with respect to three key elements; a) the choice of the core category of reflexivity, b) the recognition of the significance of the therapist's contribution to partners' revised understandings, and c) the development of an Outcomes category which incorporates the impacts of both the therapy and the SPR inquiry.

The analysts' definitions of reflexivity, and perspectives of the phenomena as a whole, differ. The co-analyst defines reflexivity as individual partner's self-awareness and agency. Within the context of couples therapy, the individual partner creates personal meaning through internal and external means. Through discussion with the therapist, the individual partner arrives at an enhanced understanding of themselves and their circumstances. The co-analyst developed a category entitled "Partner's Perception of Relationship with His/Her Partner" and it does not contain any code pertaining to meaning creation which may occur between partners. Instead, a model is presented whereby each individual partner is engaged intensely with the therapist, and focuses primarily on their own inner conflicts and dilemmas.

My analysis, on the other hand, views both partners as participating in meaning creation. The model describes both individual meaning creation, and meaning creation which occurs within the context of a three way conversation. The way that partners interact with each other in psychotherapy is perceived as having important implications for the development of shared understandings and resolution of conflictual issues. Shared understandings evolve from personal disclosures of thoughts and feelings on salient issues within the psychotherapy session.

These differences encouraged me to consider the extent to which relationship and intimacy issues can be perceived as self issues. And while I recognize that I had been influenced by my own perceptual emphasis on interpersonal interaction, I was able to conceive of a category which more completely represents the individual partner's exploration of self within the context of the psychotherapy session. When I examined the influences which led me to perceive (and subsequently code) the transcripts with a bias toward interaction, I recognized the potency of my own interaction with the partners prior to the research session, the additional information provided to me by the instruments, and the effect of viewing the couples' sessions at the time they were occurring. I became aware of the difficulty I would have in coding transcripts without this context which assisted me in deciding whether a particular interaction represented an individual or a couple problem.

One of the other major differences between the two analyses was the way in which discourse relevant to the therapist was coded. The co-analyst incorporated a category entitled "Client's Experience of Therapist's Operations." Various therapeutic operations were coded according to three components; operations bearing on the client - in - identity, operations bearing on the client - as - agent, and operations bearing on therapist in relation with client/partners. I coded responses with respect to partners' comments on the total therapeutic milieu. Within the category entitled "Partner's Experience of the Therapeutic Context," there were three components: safety, validation and acknowledgement, and other relationship factors. When I reviewed codes within the validation and acknowledgement component (i.e., T. encourages P.'s to disclose; T. recognizes accomplishments) I realized that this material could have been coded in a similar fashion to that of the co-analyst. One of the pre-conceptions which has influenced my interpretation of this material is the

assumption that any discourse that occurs in psychotherapy has an impact on all participants that are present. Thus, I tended to focus less on how the therapist's individual operations were construed, than the effects of these operations with all conversational participants. Within the context of couples psychotherapy, when one partner observes the therapist and spouse interacting, I assume the partner is not outside the range of therapeutic or conversational influence. The observing partner may be very active in the listening and thinking process with respect to the personal significance of the issues under discussion. These conversations and actions are viewed as communicative acts, with potential relevance for the understanding of relationship issues.

Perhaps equally, the goals of the current research project influenced my perception and interpretation of the data. If the research purpose had been to examine the client's experience of the therapist's use of metaphor, I may have focused more exclusively on particular therapeutic operations. Rather, I focused on partners' interactions with each other, and the degree to which they were able to work together in psychotherapy to resolve their problems.

CHAPTER IV. RESULTS

A. Introduction: The Grounded Theory

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the grounded theory developed from my analysis of the SPR and EMQ data. The understandings constituted in the theory evolved from the analysis of transcripts of partners' stimulated process recall interviews and are influenced by my orientation to clinical practice. The videotapes of couples' sessions served as the context.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) note that there are many ways to present the grounded theory. There are two main problems in conveying the credibility of the discovered theory to colleagues. The first problem is how to communicate an understanding of the overall framework and its theoretical statements. This is usually accomplished by extensive description utilizing existing social science concepts, as well as emergent concepts.

The second problem is how to describe the phenomena of interest as vividly as possible, and to link the description with the developing theory. Often, researchers approach this concern by presenting data as evidence for their conclusion, thus indicating how theory is derived from the data. Since qualitative data do not translate readily to summary description, writers often quote directly from interviews, describe events and acts, and offer accounts of personal experience. In addition, some researchers use a codified procedure for analyzing data which permits readers to grasp how the theory was obtained.

The grounded theory developed in this study will be presented in an ordered sequence to show how data were coded, demonstrate the generation of first order categories and their properties, and describe the use of the analyses

protocols, the integration of the theory, and the choice of the core category. This strategy is intended to demonstrate the link between phenomena and the evolving theory. This approach addresses the second problem of presenting grounded theory.

The first problem of conveying the theory will be addressed by a description of the overall theory and its theoretical premises. This description will flow from the above-noted explication of the coding and construction of categories. The theory will be presented in the same order in which it was constructed. Initially, the researcher examined the transcripts, and considered the key conceptual aspects of the evolving theory. Two protocols for analysis were developed, each group would be analyzed independently to yield within group data, then comparisons would be made across groups. The order of the comparisons would be the stuck group with the unstuck, followed by comparing results of this analysis with the mid-range group.

The description of the developing grounded theory requires a vocabulary to describe the units of the analysis. Units range in scope from individual meaning units to the core category. While the theory is evolving and new cycles of coding are generated, the designation of the terms of property or category is relatively arbitrary. At times, properties become categories because other groups of meaning units or properties can be appropriately subsumed by the overarching conceptual label. At other times, categories become properties, as parallel yet distinct conceptual strategies evolve. When the association between the two or more descriptive categories is strong, a new overarching category label is generated, with the subsequent shift of a property. For a definition of the terms of meaning unit, meaning code, meaning cluster, property, category, and core category, refer to Table 4:1 below.

Table 4:1

Definitions of Levels of Conceptualization

Level	Definition
Meaning Unit	A line of SPR transcript
Meaning Code	A coded line of SPR transcript
Meaning Clusters	Individual meaning units which are grouped together on the basis of representing an important similarity or theme
Property	An elaborated collection of meaning clusters which share a common theme, and are represented by a more abstract conceptual label
Category	A key conceptual component which links a number of properties, and contributes important theoretical dimensions to the core category
Core Category	The overarching theme which is reflected throughout the theory, it's various categories and their properties, provides a consolidation and integration of the conceptual components

1. Within Group Comparisons

The Stuck Group. The analysis of SPR transcripts of couples was conducted using line by line units which generated small codes. Each meaning

unit was considered and several potential interpretations generated as a way of increasing the likelihood that a speaker's intentions would be preserved. (see Table 3:7). The transcripts produced by stuck partners were analyzed first. Quite rapidly, clusters of meaning codes were created, and grouped by similar themes and concepts. One of the first clusters included the following meaning units: male partner describes his mate as "misguided rather than evil," male partner describes partner as "limited intellectually and frivolous," female partner expresses fear that her "husband will misinterpret my intentions," female partner describes husband as "whining and it's not worth my attention," male partner describes wife's behavior in a neutral manner and within the context of their relationship difficulties, and male partner predicts wife's failure with respect to her educational endeavors. (These same codes were incorporated in other batches of codes which share core meanings.) This cluster was temporarily entitled Conception of Partner to reflect the shared theme. Some examples of larger chunks of interview text are provided below to illustrate this particular theme.

"Well, what I remember very specifically being struck by, umm..., how (partner).... and I've been struck by it before, especially in therapy sessions....that he remembers the problems way more vividly than I do. And that's sort of interesting because he doesn't engage with them as much as I do at the time..."

"He hasn't....don't know if let go is the right word....hasn't learned to live on his own. I still feel I influence a lot of....I find when I speak to him sometimes I don't tell him a lot of things....only

because I know what his reaction is going to be and I don't think we want to hear it. Or that will depress....."

"(Partner)'s not a real deep thinker on these things, she's sort of happy go lucky.....and, not that that is a bad quality. It's got its good aspects...."

"I remember thinking that as long as I'm doing what she wants then the marriage, it's going along fine.....sort of....almost as her lackey..."

All of the meaning clusters developed simultaneously, and no one cluster appeared to be centrally important at this stage of the analysis. The cluster entitled SPR Process included the following examples of codes: male partner expresses surprise about researcher's selection from couple's session for playback (i.e., perceived by him as important events), female partner comments that she understood counsellors' comments in a different way when listening to the playback than she had during the session, conditions of the SPR interview noted as anxiety-producing by male respondent, and female respondent cites SPR process as "a learning experience which is enjoyable." The following larger chunks of interview text illustrate this theme.

"Basically (the counsellor) was trying to figure out, like, what works with us, and what doesn't work with us. Like, what kind of techniques and that.... well, going back....it's kind of neat to look at these things and stuff, right? To get more insight on what's going

on and that. But also to....you know, see what kind of things are going on as far as counselling, you know...."

"And you know I must admit when I was watching the video and stuff I know we were being filmed and stuff so I was a little nervous..."

"...Well that is probably one of the major things of the interview was that bit right there..."

The Conception of Self category included the meaning codes: female partner responds to the question about her own feelings with an account of her husband's thoughts and feelings, female partner expresses guilt about enjoying academic life (husband disapproves), male partner claims his wife is responsible for his difficulties in contributing to the relationship, and male partner describes wife's job as one of taking care of his needs. While each meaning unit potentially has several interpretations, this group of meaning units reflected a theme of the respondent's view of self. The following examples of transcript text give further illustration of this category.

" I think sometimes people can do what they need to do to make things happen... But I don't waste time because I'm very shy and not that confident, and it seems that (partner) gives up quite easy..."

"...well I know that he's sort of blaming me and my school and I'm sort of feeling it's all on my shoulders..."

"...I've always needed... I've never lived alone, although I have kids so it probably doesn't count as living alone... But when we separated that's the first thing that really surprised me is that I like it. Okay? That was a very large surprise to me."

"...sometimes I won't say very much here. Like I just, it takes a little bit to get going. And then you know when I finally get to talk the session is over. I find that she (therapist) spends maybe more time talking to (partner) than she does with me..."

Some clusters became so expansive and elaborated that higher order conceptual labels were generated. These descriptions represented the development of the properties of categories. Within the stuck group, partners' responses were coded and grouped by three themes: Blaming, Negativity, and Self-justification. The Blaming theme included the following units: female partner blames husband for thinking negatively and thus influencing the outcome of the relationship, female partner acknowledges that her husband assists her "although he complains about it" and implies that he's not doing as much as he should, male partner sees his wife's unhappiness arising from "her lot in life", rather than their interpersonal problems, female partner implies husband is "crazy"; and male partner blames wife for his lack of "specialness" to her. The following discourse segments illustrate the blaming theme/category.

"....she doesn't intend evilness to me so I understand that also...I guess I kind of put up with it. Like many things she does, I, I

suppose a lot of people get frustrated and angry with her but I realize that, that her...she's not an evil person, so I don't feel that way. A lot of other people do....The problems she gets into I just sort of try to stay away from because that's the answer..."

"Frankly it was the same old shit for me. It's nothing I haven't heard before. It'sI kind of consider it whining....uh, I wish it would go away..."

Each property and category was developed using the method of building from small meaning units to meaning codes, and the generation of cluster, property, and category labels. An elaborated example of this process is described for each of the three groups of couples in Appendix K.

The properties of negativity and self-justification evolved in the same manner as the blaming component illustrated above. In the early stages, the three properties of blaming, negativity, and self-justification were grouped together under the category label entitled, Defensive Behaviors.

The remaining groupings of codes led to the construction of the following categories: Non-reflectiveness, Reconstruction of Meaning, Therapeutic Alliance, and Disclosure of Feelings and Thoughts. The latter encompassed two properties: (a) those disclosures made during the SPR interview, and (b) those made during the couples' therapy session.

The category of Nonreflectiveness captured the theme in partners' responses of a lack of self-examination and a persistent negative evaluation of the partner's behaviors. These comments appeared to represent a relatively concrete interpretation of events. Descriptions of actions were emphasized rather than interpretations of actions. The meaning codes of this category

included the following: female respondent is unable to recall any private thoughts and feelings that occurred during the session; partner(s) describe the conversation and actions that occurred during the session, rather than own thoughts and feelings; partner(s) are confused/unresponsive when asked about their private in-session experience (i.e., "...was I supposed to have any thoughts and feelings?"); respondents require frequent rephrasing of requests for their private "experience" in the counselling sessions; and female partner gives lengthy descriptions of past problems when asked about her in-session experience.

The following larger segments of discourse from the SPR interviews provide illustration of the Nonreflectiveness category.

"...I don't really remember....it was the same old stuff. But I don't remember... I was just sort of listen... Well...(laugh) I was probably doing exactly what he was accusing me of doing....tuning out! Quite frankly... Ah.... or bordering on that... so, yea..."

"...I was concentrating on what I was saying. Now there must've, in what was coming out, there must've been thoughts, but I don't remember any specific. I was obviously relating it to whatever had gone before, but I don't remember a specific thought... I actually find, during sessions, when we're in sessions, this is when I speak. I feel safe in saying anything I want. So I don't think I edit. I don't think... Now I may. But I don't think so. Actually, I think it's safe to say that as soon as we leave here we don't talk about it."

"...it's hard just thinking about what you're doing, I try to think, but it's hard some...you know a lot of the times to always be so aware of what you're doing."

The Reconstruction of Meaning category refers to codes that capture the re-interpretation or re-organization of evidence for the understanding of past events. For example, a female partner commented on the specific way that the counsellor's comment did not apply to a particular situation, and then indicated how it was appropriate to a more general view of the event. In another SPR interview, a male respondent reframed the meaning of couples therapy as a "tune-up" when things are "running a little rough in our relationship".

Exerpts from the SPR interviews provide extended examples of meaning units that reflect this theme.

"... Yea, so I started thinking, obviously when you've been together twenty-one years, we got two kids,.... whether you like or dislike somebody, you still have a relationship with them after that length of time... so yea,.... I think we'll end up friends. Because there was never... there hasn't been, I mean... you know, couples when they split up there's a lot of animosity. There's a lot of fighting. And we never did that, really. I mean, yes, there were some fights, constant ... but not real mean? We never used the kids, as, ah... I don't know... yea, more friendship there..."

"But, but before it would be a question of, of, do you still love me? And it was like, well, that maybe a little strong, but care is a good

word. Care sucks! But, I mean it does and it doesn't. Uninterested on the other hand, well uninterested is... it's just, that's kind of... you have to accept the other person for what they are. You can't go away and blame because of that sort of thing. It was very difficult, but I wanted to hear it. Cause I would've, after as much time,... that we've both put into this... It's good that terms are being defined, that the relationship is being defined rather than being in the mist, and everythng. Because you don't know. You think... you think all kinds of things because you don't know."

"I mean you go around doing things and you never really think well why am I doing this, what is the reason? Sometimes if I get in my closed off way, I feel guilty about it after, and go like I really didn't have to treat him that badly. Why did I do that, but I never do anything about it. I never go, well, once in a while I do, but not often do I say like I'm sorry I treated you badly."

Disclosure of Thoughts and Feelings refers to respondents' sharing their internal conversations within the SPR interview or the couples session. The following meaning codes contributed to this category: partner tells the therapist/spouse for the first time that she is uninterested in any intimate relationship; partner discloses in the session his sense of hopelessness about the resolution of the couple's problems; female partner discloses a pre-occupation with thoughts of a former lover; partner says he stays in the relationship because he cannot imagine living apart from his children; partner expresses his frustration with his inability to control the actions of his spouse; female partner says she habitually "tunes out" her spouse; female partner

discloses she's given up hope about the future of the marriage; and male partner acknowledges that his former strategies (i.e., blame, direct pressure, and guilt) were ultimately ineffective with his spouse.

Examples of the SPR text provide a richer understanding of this category.

"... But I've always needed... I've never really been alone. I've never lived alone, although I have kids so it probably doesn't count as living alone... But it's been something that's really surprised me... that I like it. Okay? This was a very large surprise to me."

"Ummm, I wanted to know what she (partner) was thinking about when she said it. Because to have to have been condemned or identified as one of the bad guys in previous sessions to now to have it, have it said that... (sobbing) To go from being a bad guy to a good guy..."

"Well, most of the problems in our relationship are based on what, how I react to certain things. Or my upbringing. Because I was, um, mentally abused. So I built up a lot of anger when I was younger. And, uh... you know, anything could set me off but then I'd be happy ten, ... five minutes later. So I, it all depends ...with, you know... it's up to me everything in our relationship. Like, if it wasn't for my anger or stubbornness I'd have a really good relationship."

The category identified as Therapeutic Alliance refers to the relationship between the partners and the counsellor. This category also included other more general comments about the counselling context. This conceptual label was considered to be a temporary one, since it was expected that some of the mini-themes contained within it would evolve into more complete properties or categories as the analysis progressed.

Several examples of meaning codes from this category are as follows: respondent expresses her satisfaction with "the fit" of the therapist-partners working relationship; male partner values the opportunity to hear his partner talk to the therapist, since "she talks better to her"; male partner explains that his partner listens to him when he speaks with the therapist; partner likes the experience of the therapist's support for his feelings when his spouse is unable to do this; and female partner says the counsellor's validation for the couples' progress toward their goals, "recognizing accomplishments", is very important to her.

The SPR interview text yields more descriptive examples of discourse which includes therapeutic alliance meaning codes.

"I just think she does a really good job and I'm really glad I found her because I remember we'd been to a few people before her and it, it just really didn't work. And uh, like a couple of times there, when work schedule didn't really work she always sort of managed to fit us in and that, but we were like... no, we don't want to see anybody else (laughter). Because things were going really well, and you know, and we'd gotten to a point where things were working and I didn't want to go and neither did he..."

"Like, I go to counselling because we were going to split up if I didn't. But first I did it for her, cause i didn't... like even I know myself, like some male friends of mine... 'Oh, I'd never to go counselling and all that stuff,' but then I started to like it because we could solve some problems there. And that's what counselling, I think is supposed to help you out with."

"And, it was more like you don't have to make the final decision right now. You still have time and space. And so,like (therapist) has, has done a lot of this, cause I... being what I am, concerned with time and the lack of time. Make time, make time work for you. Not just, not just do what I used to do. About being immediate. But find a way to develop, during that time... And I guess there's hope in that."

"I'd like to pursue that further, and uh, talk about it with (partner) and then maybe the next time with (therapist). Because, uh, as a husband... because sometimes you have to have a neutral person. Because (partner) won't listen to me. And I realize sometimes I won't listen to her."

A preliminary examination of the relationships between the categories was carried out. In two categories, more distinct properties were beginning to take shape. These categories and properties were: the Disclosure of Feelings with properties entitled In-session disclosures and SPR disclosures, and Defensive

Behaviors with properties Blame, Negativity, and Self-justification. Disclosures that were made during the counselling session were identified and/or expanded on during the SPR interview. Some respondents disclosed private thoughts and feelings about their relationships that they had not revealed during the session. At times these disclosures seemed particularly relevant to the couple's relationship problem, and the researcher suggested that the respondents share the information with others (i.e., counsellor and/or partner). At other times, respondents disclosed information that revealed aspects of their internal decision making processes.

The following excerpt of SPR text illustrates a disclosure which potentially has significant ramifications for the couple's relationship and the focus of their therapy sessions. This example is taken from the couple who scored just below the cutoff for the stuck group, and illustrates information relevant to the focus of the couple's therapy sessions.

"So....so... although I keep, I have this separate agenda all the time which is... now that our kids are kids, they're not babies, and we're freer... um, we can... I can start having myself a life. And the fantasies go on from there. About having this quite separate life and that it would solve a lot of the problems in the relationship. Because a lot of what we need from the relationship is space. You know, sort of a separate identity, and... I have all sorts of thoughts going through my mind. If we had a bigger house... separate houses...side by side duplex. That might be more the kind of solution I'm seeking..."

A brief preliminary comparison between the Conception of Partner and Conception of Self categories suggested some interesting differences. The Conception of Partner property was conceptualized in terms of many codes reflecting global and negative evaluations of the partner. Most of these codes addressed meaning units in which the respondent focused exclusively on the behaviors of the partner. The Conception of Self property revealed descriptions of the self that were derived from the comments or views of the partner/ or parents. These differences seem to suggest that partners of stuck relationships focus externally, and incorporate information derived from outside sources into their constructs of self and partner, rather than evaluate partner and self against an inner standard.

The Unstuck Group. Next transcripts from the unstuck group were analyzed. As was the case with the stuck group, the groupings of the various codes developed simultaneously. Some groupings appeared to be very similar in theme to those developed in the previous analysis. Where appropriate, the same label names of codes were used. As coding of meaning units progressed, more generic descriptive categories evolved reflecting the increasing level of conceptual abstraction. The properties and categories derived from unstuck partners included; Therapeutic Alliance, Reconstruction of Meaning, Defensive Behavior (with a property named negativity), Disclosure of thoughts and feelings (with a property entitled SPR process, and a more expansive category coded as In-Session Disclosures), Conception of Self, Conception of Partner, and the SPR Process. Of note were the conceptualization of two new categories; Reflexivity and Conception of Relationship. Each of the categories are described below through the explication of their meaning units, and illustrative text examples derived from SPR interviews.

The Therapeutic Alliance category encompassed many codes. Several meaning codes, selected to provide a summary description of the category, are as follows: partner tells stories in the presence of the therapist; therapist validates partner(s) when spouse is unable to do so; therapist gives partners equal time; partner(s) experience positive feelings for the therapist; partner(s) support from the therapist; partner(s) experience positive feelings for the therapist; partner(s) do not attend to the therapist's intentions during therapy session; and partner(s) experience "safety" when dealing with intimacy issues in therapy. Some text examples below include therapeutic alliance codes.

"... In the counselling, there's been some high points and some lower points. More emotional and less emotional... But things have been pretty even... the dealing with the problems that could have been avoided..."

"... Just to step back and try to look at things a little more in a larger context, whether just the problem, and try to see... let us know we're... progress... well, it's good to get... just to get another viewpoint."

"I think (therapist) does an amazing job of that... I've never met anyone who could do that... see through things. She is a one man team behind the wall."

"I got to tell my story... I got to tell how I see things. That was good."

The Reconstruction of Meaning category was described, in part, by the following codes: partner describes "teamwork" when they are able to work together on issues and resolve them; partners engage emotionally during the session "feeling connected"; partner identifies new awareness in the session; partners seek clarification from each other; partners participate together in problem solving; partners share humor together; partners disclose directly to each other; and partners share responsibility for relationship problems.

The following examples of text have been taken from the SPR transcripts.

"I was happy to hear (partner) asking me do you feel as much at home as I do? Not just assuming that it was something that we shared and had the same feelings."

"I was a bit annoyed about the timing of things before the session (husband was late)... then when we got into the humor, it was immediately relaxed..."

"It flashed over me that does she understand what I'm saying? And does she understand how important it is to hear me. That it's not just listening, but am I being heard?"

The Defensive Behavior category included the following codes: partner claims she takes care of all her spouse's needs; partner interprets emotional reactions (of spouse) as pressure; partner avoids spouse's response; partner blames spouse; and partner(s) engage in self-justification.

Examples of the SPR transcript interviews provides further illustration of this category.

"There was a certain point where I felt he would probably be with what I was saying... I think at those times I gave some qualification... phrased things carefully."

"It really upset me and that's what we discussed... that I, I do believe that when his needs are expressed, they are always met in a positive way and I always do everything within my power to have those needs met. He just, he really needs to work on expressing his needs. Because, um, we... uh, you know, if there's ever a time where he says I really need to do this, I always just... just, you know, how quickly can I make this happen for you?"

"Does he really believe that I'm trying to project guilt onto him? Which I can honestly say that I never intended to do?"

"But I'm labelling him. I'm... it's an issue that we have. And... I have. My issue of blame. No, you're a bad guy because you can't express your feelings. So you're a bad guy because you're into such control..."

"I think I've gotten better over time. I'm a little more... I don't know... paying attention to what she says. I think there's a misunderstanding about it. Where I'm supposed to be, at what time. And what's supposed to be going on. And

my sense of what, how much time... is different. She really... gets frustrated. She expects me to be back at a certain time. To her, it's significantly longer. To me, it's not."

The Disclosure of Thoughts and Feelings category included two properties, In Session Disclosures, and the SPR Process Disclosures. The following codes were assigned to one of the two properties of this category: partner appreciates spouse's reaction to her disclosures in the session; partner appreciates spouse's disclosure in the session; female partner chooses to not disclose her private thoughts in the session, in the interest of protecting the relationship; partner tries to hear "what he wasn't saying"; partner expects spouse to "hear beneath my words" (SPR interview); partner examines own cognitive-affective processes during the session; and partner is sensitive to spouse's need to reflect (SPR interview).

The following pieces of SPR discourse containing codes from the Disclosure category.

"I was thinking about wanting it to be more a shared experience. That we make decisions together. That I didn't feel that (partner's) work decisions were imposed upon me. I guess that (videotape segment) did speak to a recent event. It had just come."

"It was nice to hear from somebody else (therapist) that we were listening to each other. So that was... you know... I felt good about that."

"Well, I was kind of impressed with the fact that, uh, he came out

and said what he did. It was like, uh, really open. Um, then... uh I didn't pay that much attention."

"During that whole break time, I was thinking, should we be sorting out all the problems? And then I thought, you know, going into more... as to understand more clearly. Then I thought , no. Sometimes when you take... it's a little bit light for a while... it makes it better. That's what I thought."

"When we talk about issues, it's like he... it's kept down because he can't quite deal with it. We talked in therapy about feelings, and how he had to put them inside. So I feel like analyzing... And I know that he can be... I think, uh, I just said that (partner) approaches life from a very controlled point of view. And, as I said, also because I think he had to. And I think letting go is very frightening for him. And I think its important for me to be more aware of that."

The codes of the next two categories, the Conception of Partner and the Conception of Self, are referred to in Appendix J, to demonstrate the analytical levels of conceptualization involved in the construction of the evolving theory. The Conception of Partner category includes the following codes: interpretation of partner's impact on self; feelings about partner (past, present, future); inner description of partner (i.e., attributions, ways of being, motivation); interpretation of partner's role in the relationship problems; perception of partner's disclosures in the session (and outside the session); perception of partner's response to own

disclosures (inside and outside the session); and conception of a bond, or relationship with partner (or lack of one).

Examples of the discourse of the SPR transcript interviews provides further elaboration of this category.

"She's a good communicator, and she gets in there and wants to be involved. And gets involved."

"And (partner)... oh shoot.. that's a lovely quality that I love and am attracted to. He's very open. He's Mr. Nice Guy..."

"He files all (details) painstakingly, organized, compulsive, painstakingly... um... And, sometimes things will take a long time."

"Well, there was a difference of opinion on... uh, we've had this before. She'll get real upset when people are critical. Criticize and she'll defend. And, I... well, told her, it's the way people are. And sometimes she takes it a little seriously. So, I just let her know that she's disagreeable. And she doesn't like that. Especially with her children. But I think sometimes people do encourage it so."

"If that's the case, then why is she always upset with me when I don't go out and buy a card or something like that. She's the type of person that buys cards for everything. Thank everybody with cards for everything. Thank everybody with cards, you know. She's very caring, very generous person in that way."

The Conception of Self category included the following codes: partner refers to inner sense of self, or not; feelings and thoughts about partner; feelings and thoughts about self; partner acknowledges impact of spouse's behavior on feelings and/or thoughts about self; partner acknowledges impact of own behavior on feelings and/or thoughts about self; and impact of partner's behavior on feelings and/or thoughts about partner.

The following examples of text encompass codes of this category.

"It is something that is significant for me because I have to be very assertive when these situations come up. Because it is so easy for me to take it so personally, to dissolve into tears, to back off... all those sorts of behaviors. So it crossed my mind that I'd best not fall back into that pattern."

"As a child of an alcoholic, I know just... you're (the therapist) going to come and say all these... I'm so controlling, this,that, and the other... And it's like, I hate to say this. I was waiting... it was really hard for me to accept (therapist's positive comment), I think."

"I feel as if I am still discriminating what I got from him. He said that 'my wife will be a fawning devotee'. I don't know if he really believes that... maybe he does. I guess in some ways that is totally understandable. Yet, I feel that I am being discriminated against here. It's kind of embarrassing to be perceived as weird."

"I feel as I'm labeled. Like when he said I'm loud... or, or that he's the rational one, you know. I don't want to be labeled the loud, emotional one. I, I admit that... um, I'm more emotional than he is and I'm probably louder than he is. But, uh... (laughs) I don't want to be the loud, emotional one."

The SPR Process category included the following codes: partner comments on the overlap between their EMQ questionnaire responses and the SPR videotape segments chosen for playback; partner's responses to the SPR interview itself (i.e., "fun", "wild", "multi-layered learning"); partner views therapist as a "learner" following the team consultation; and partner's reactions to a videotaped image of self.

Text segments derived from the transcribed SPR interviews provide further description of codes of this category.

"I think you... you've pinpointed... it's funny how you pinpointed things that I was thinking when I was filling out the questionnaire in the other room."

"I... I produce videos. It's an interesting tool for this kind of thing."

"It was quite interesting because the camera didn't bother me through the interview at all. It didn't bother me. I didn't even try to think that anyone else was watching or anything."

"You see things from a completely different way in a conversation if you're watching than if you're part of it. You know... it's definitely an interesting exercise. How you interact even with the counsellor, you know. How the whole session goes. Just in terms of from the person watching from the outside."

Examples of codes encompassed by the Reflexivity cluster label included: female partner identifies her own critical/blaming behavior toward her partner and re-considers it, female partner reflects on her contribution to the relationship impasse, male partner considers whether their different views constitute a "problem" and evaluates his feelings about this, male partner muses about the emotional impact of his statement to his partner, and female partner considers her options of approaching her husband about their problems. Review of all the meaning units of this category suggests there is support for a conceptual understanding of reflexivity that incorporates the intense awareness of aspects of one's experience, consideration of the experience which encompasses partner's thoughts and feelings, consideration of options, and evaluation of options that seem to be most appropriate to oneself. Several examples of text in which clusters of codes assigned to Reflexivity follow.

"...I noticed that I, at first, thought oh here he goes again with the camping thing again...(laughter). And then I stopped myself and said just listen to what he has to say.....Really listen, and not be judging and thinking he is just wasting time...."

"....I think she was sort of summing up about what some of the other questions had been, and was more thinking about the

question. I was thinking about our relationship. The camping thing....I was thinkingwell, what is it actually about camping that is.....so more, I think I was more involved in my own mind.....about that question I was thinking about our relationship..."

"Yea....just to step back and try to look at things a little more in context whether just the problem, and try to see....let us know that uh, that we're.....umhmmm...Progress....I guess we're the only ones that can really tell if progress is being made....it's been slow.....progression. And maybe go up a little, down a little. So maybe you lose sight of where you've been and where you're trying to get to....and where you are from the past."

The Conception of the Relationship was another new property that was created to capture the essence of a cluster of codes. These codes represented the theme reflected in the following examples: "our relationship has a dynamic tension which can go either way....," female partner comments on difficulty of assessing the changes that have occurred in the relationship over time, male partner comments that he wants to learn from his wife about the way she develops relationships, male partner notes the relationship between his stress and the stress in the relationship, and female partner counters husband's evaluation of the relationship with a differing interpretation. The full range of codes indicates that many partners view their relationships as an entity separate from themselves and which represents their attachment. The relationship is perceived as the repository of past and present experience, shared understandings about the bond of attachment, and provides a context for interpreting each other's behavior. As well, it is viewed as a place where each

partner is actively valued, or not, by the other. The following examples of interview text were coded as part of the Conception of Relationship property.

"It was particularly important to me.....the fact that we were able to stand back and distance from the relationship and each other as individuals and that was very.....I was encouraged...."

"...Well, we laugh and talk and...uh...it's a very stimulating relationship.....and uh,..we laugh and share understanding and intellectual companionship....."

"Different things come to mind....It's just part of our relationship, those difficultuh...It's just something that I've come to kind of accept. That there's going to be these misunderstandings. I hope that she would understand where I'm coming from..."

Mid-Range Group. Following the Stuck and Unstuck groups of couples, the SPR transcripts of the mid-range group of couples were analyzed. While the analysis of this material did not lead to the creation of any new categories, these data did contribute to an increased conceptual breadth of the existing categories. In a few instances, the increased scope of the category led to a reconceptualization of either the entire category itself, or its properties. Table 4:2 below gives a summary description of the categories and their properties for each group of couples.

The next section will address the expansion and reconceptualization of categories or their properties which occurred with the addition of mid-range group data. Examples of codes will be used to provide evidence for these changes.

Table 4:2

Major Categories and Their Properties for Stuck, Unstuck, and Mid-range
Couples

STUCK	UNSTUCK	MID-RANGE
Conception of partner	Conception of partner	Conception of partner
Conception of self	Conception of self	Conception of self
SPR Process	SPR Process	SPR Process
Defensive Behaviors:	Defensive Behaviors:	Defensive Behaviors:
a) Blaming	a) Negativity	a) Blame
b) Negativity		b) Negativity
c) Self-justification		c) Self-justification
		d) Avoidance
		e) Couple Dismiss Therapist
		f) Non-engagement
		g) Competition
Non-reflectiveness	Reflexivity	Reflexivity:
		a) Partner's own meaning creation
		b) Negotiation between partners (including non- reflexivity)

Reconstruction of meaning Therapeutic alliance	Reconstruction of meaning Therapeutic alliance	Therapeutic alliance: a) Safety b) Validation c) Other factors
Disclosure of Thoughts and Feelings: a) in SPR interview b) in the session	Disclosure of Thoughts and Feelings: a) SPR process b) in the session	Disclosure of Thoughts and Feelings: Outcomes category (SPR and Therapy) Meaning creation category

The most significant change entailed the reformulation of the Disclosure of Thoughts and Feelings category, with its two properties of In-session Disclosures and SPR Process Disclosures. Data that related to concerns with the Outcomes of therapy or the SPR process contributed to the new Outcomes category. This category was conceived as having two properties which were described as the Impact of Therapy, and the Impact of the SPR Interview.

The following codes provide a description of the properties of the Outcomes category. The Impact of Therapy contains the following codes: partner impressed by fit/lack of fit of therapist's/team's intervention; partner's view of therapist is altered (i.e., "learner"); partner anticipates the therapist's/team's interventions; partner expresses optimism about the resolution of the couple's problems; and partner responds to therapist's/team's

interventions. The SPR transcript examples provide further illustration of this category with mid-range couples.

"Mostly I'm always thinking about how we can live together and raise these kids. Because neither of us want to be single parents."

"When she (therapist) first proposed this whole thing was that... um... the benefit of it to us was that she was feeling stuck with us. And so that it would be beneficial to have different opinions of the counselling... where to go..."

"It's sort of tedious, I mean, you know I'm really tired. I've just come from working very hard. I've got kids at home waiting for me, and I don't... I mean... I guess it's like other people... maybe this is beneficial to me. But I know what I see is like a shorter session with (therapist)."

"I felt sort of sad when I realized, god damn, (partner) is the invisible one. And not only is he invisible, but I can't say that. We can't acknowledge that. That felt sad..."

The second property, the Impact of the SPR process included the following meaning codes: partner comments on significance of SPR segments selected, partner(s) becomes reflexive during SPR process, partner(s), and partner(s) influenced by SPR process (i.e., interesting, "learning", emotional).

The following excerpts of text from the mid-range group of couples provides further description of this property.

"...you know, it (SPR playback) evokes a lot of different memories of arguments and differences. It certainly brings back the feelings I was having..."

"I didn't know what he meant and I was trying to figure that out. And how it really... hearing it, well I did hear it. It's just that... how I respond now is different than how I responded then..."

"Yea... after the end I was trying to remember what he (therapist) said so I would have wrote it down as one of the phrases... but I couldn't remember it. But seeing it now... that's the phrase I was trying to remember..."

"... It's hard to remember right at that point...or this point... Um... It's hard to say.. I have a lot of different thoughts, I mean even going through this whole session there were different thoughts, positive and negative, and uh,I brought this up as positive because I was, I was, she was, she and I were agreeing so I was thinking positively at that point about her... and about us. But there were other times that I wasn't thinking positively about the relationship..."

The second major category which evolved from the Disclosure of Thoughts and Feelings category, was that of Meaning Creation. The codes which contributed to the formulation of the Meaning Creation category were identical or similar to those which had contributed to the In-session Disclosures property of the Disclosures of Thoughts and Feelings category. Some examples of these codes are as follows: partner is supportive/sensitive to spouse's reflections in the session; partner construes the in-session interactions from the basis of mutual understandings of the relationship; partners support each other's in-session disclosures; partners engage with each other; partners problem solve together; partners share responsibility for relationship difficulties; and partners support the relationship by not disclosing aspects of their private experience.

The following pieces of SPR transcript text provides further description of the Meaning Creation category with mid-range couples.

"I turned over the possibility that (therapist) was suggesting the possibility that we operate as a team and... I sort of played with that possibility. But it didn't really ring terribly true for me. It felt like... I mean because at the time I was also feeling this gulf, you know, between his experience and mine. And that we never talk about it really."

"We're (partner) is saying he's doing ninety percent (of the housework) Well, I guess that means that I am doing ten. And to a degree, I agree. Maybe eighty - twenty. Maybe its ninety - ten. Um... and his hopes about fifty - fifty... Sure I mean, in an ideal sense, yea, that would be my hope too. But I don't think its realistic. Or very probable."

"(Partner) has a hard time with positive comments. He has a hard time verbalizing positive comments about himself, you know. So I really feel good about... I really sensed he was able to receive the positive compliments in a little more open way. And not feel that he had to negate it or downplay it."

"She (therapist) asked the question about that, what he likes to do in his private time. Well, I think it's good for him to have his own private time. I think that's really healthy for all marriages, all individuals... to have some private time."

The Reflexivity category became increasingly differentiated by the emergence of two properties, which included Partner's own Meaning Creation, and Negotiation of Meaning (between partners). The later property included some meaning codes which were interpreted as the non-negotiation of meaning. (Many of these codes were also assigned to the category entitled Defensive behaviors.)

The first property, Partner's own Meaning Creation, of the Reflexivity category included the following codes: partner focuses internally (cognitive/affective/experience) during the session; partner does not disclose private thoughts and feelings; and partner observes spouse-therapist interaction.

The following examples of text were obtained from the SPR transcripts of interviews with partners in the mid-range group.

"I don't know about that... I mean how does that happen? Like what do you do to stop your anger? I mean how is that supposed

to occur? I mean like... I mean we talked, we talked about this stuff but there was no, no specific strategy in this whole interview that would allow (partner) and I to resolve this!"

"I'm like... I like an action plan. I'm tired of talking. I mean (partner) and I, we have discussions, you know, communicate when we sit down and have a discussion. And we talk about things and how we'd like them to be, and to improve things. And maybe things change for a short period of time. Maybe they don't change at all."

"It wasn't just that he was making insights. He was actually making a diff... making me think about what am I trying to do. I think that's so important."

"Well, when he said that, you know, when he was saying, 'well what's working... think about what's working'... I was actually thinking there isn't that much working. I was thinking to myself, you know... yea, there are things that are working but there is an awful lot that isn't."

"I was just, sort of listening... I was listening to what they're (therapist and spouse) saying. And it was fine because it all made sense..."

The second property of the Reflexivity category, the Negotiation of Meaning between partners, included the following codes: partner "tells stories" in

the session; partner experiences new awareness/understanding; partner discloses private thoughts and feelings in the session; partner supports spouse's disclosures; partners clarify understandings with each other; and partners communicate non-verbally with each other.

Several examples of SPR interview discourse provide a more complete description of this category.

"The first part when he says um, 'can I do that ('draw her feelings out of her') I don't know if I can do that'... Well, I feel like... well, if you loved me you would do that . Why are you fighting me?"

"Well, it's been important the last couple of sessions, because we've been discussing how we are different, and the ways that we perceive things are different. We think differently, we react differently and, and I've never really thought just how differently it is. And to try and see what he's thinking, or needing... so that whole thing has been sort of interesting. And I've been trying to sort of watch the different reactions and see how he is..."

"Sometimes if I get in my closed off way, I feel guilty about it after and go, like I really didn't have to treat him that badly. Why did I do that? But I never do anything about it. I never go, well once in a while I do, but not often do I say like I'm sorry I treated you that way. Just thinking about what you're doing. I try to think but its hard some... You know, a lot of the times to always be so aware of what you're doing."

Another transformation of a category entailed the expansion of the dimensions of the Therapeutic Alliance category. Codes were organized into three areas including Safety, Validation, and Other therapeutic factors.

The safety property included codes that reflected the theme of psychological safety: therapist creates a safe place for partners to discuss conflicts; therapist encourages individual partners to disclose their thoughts and feelings; therapist balances conversation time between partners; therapist assists with the couples's relationship problem (i.e., intervenes); and therapist recognizes each individual partner.

The following excerpts of transcript text provide more illumination of this category.

"I felt as if (therapist) recognized me personally by that question ... my feelings, my gender, my position. It made a big impact on me."

"I clearly thought (therapist) was moving towards recognizing both (partner) and myself individually, so that I could see and (partner) could see that it is two of us, not just one of us. To have us track this more as individuals. It was a specific intervention to get us to look at both our parts."

"Maybe (therapist) was trying to give him (partner) a feeling of safety, you know, that it must be difficult for him. Maybe recognizing that he may have felt pressured at that point."

"I think he (therapist) was... what was also interesting was that he

was asking me as an individual, what was... um, what the situation is now. What I would like it to be... And then he was trying to say well, was that realistic? ...And then he was allowing a resolution, a more realistic way. And with (partner) there, that was happening. It was part of the way the interview was going."

"But (therapist) explained one thing, which made me feel more comfortable right away... That (partner) would have to give some, and I would have to give some. And I said 'yes, you're right' ."

The property entitled Validation within the Therapeutic Alliance category, included the following codes: therapist validates partner when spouse unwilling or unable to do so; therapist supports changes; therapist encourages disclosure of private thoughts and feelings; partner experiences positive regard for therapist; and partners do not feel validated by therapist.

The property entitled Other Therapeutic Factors included the following codes: partner(s) do not attend to therapist's intentions; partner(s) view therapist as helping one/both of the partners; and partner(s) experience the therapist's interventions as helpful/not helpful.

The following examples derive from the SPR transcript interviews with mid-range couples.

"I couldn't really believe that (therapist) was taking a route away from this, and it seemed like she was letting him (partner) off the hook... I was disappointed that she let him off the hook."

"I think that as the explanation that (therapist) was giving progressed I became more confused. I was trying to, not connect them as individual issues, but make sense of the terminology and what she was actually saying so I didn't, so I found it a little unclear...yea... confusing."

"Generally in counselling, my experience, I mean I go in feeling I ought to have an agenda and I don't. And I'm quite unfocused. And I, and I generally feel like I ought to have a crisis.. and... something, and I don't. And then we sort of... I initially go through this feeling of I don't know why I'm here. And then we sort of drift over... and (therapist) focuses us in one direction, or we focus ourselves. I don't think it's always (therapist) who does it. And then it seems to take about half an hour until we get to a point when its getting a little more interesting, and then its time to leave."

One of the more interesting aspects of the mid-range group of couples is in respect to the category of reflexivity. This group differed in the sense that they did not show the clear pattern observed with the Unstuck group (i.e., partners are both relatively reflexive about themselves and their relationship) and the Stuck group (i.e., partners are both relatively nonreflexive about themselves and their relationship). Thus I decided to examine this group of couples in more depth with respect to this category. My assumption was that there may be a difference between partners in the reflexive perusal of their circumstances, and that this difference would show a bias in favor of female

partners' practice of reflexivity. The following section describes my examination of this group of couples.

Partner's Reflexivity. The mid-range group was distinguished from the other two groups by having less clearly defined patterns of reflexivity within the couples psychotherapy sessions. Data from interviews with these couples were examined with the goal of obtaining more information about factors which may influence the resolution of couple's relationship problems. Each couples' situation was reviewed with respect to my assessment of the reflexivity within the couples session, during the SPR process, and with respect to partners' responses to the SQ, EMQ, and TCI instruments. In all four cases, it appeared that one partner was more reflexive than the other. The reflexive partners included three males and one female. Their individual relationship circumstances revealed some potential explanations or factors that may influence the practice of reflexivity. There was a considerable age difference between partners with one couple. Although it is not assumed that age is necessarily associated with reflexivity, there appeared to be developmental differences between the partners. The wife had moved from the home of her family to the marriage. During the session, she unfavorably compared her husband to her parents. Her husband wanted her to be more expressive of her feelings and thoughts with him. She expressed her expectation that he "draw her out" with questions as her parents did, in order to access her thoughts and feelings. Her husband felt quite frustrated with this response, as his perception was that he took more responsibility for the well-being of the relationship than she did. Further, he expected her to take responsibility for expressing her feelings.

In a second situation, the husband expressed his frustration with his partner because she did not help him with the household chores and preparation of meals. His discussion of the issue indicated that he had thought about the

impact of his own position on his partner as he weighed various options for action. She expressed her belief that it was the man's job to be the primary breadwinner, and currently she was the primary breadwinner while he completed his doctorate degree. The male partner acknowledged that he felt badly that she carried the burden of financial responsibility. He shared the premise of traditional roles and responsibilities in marriage, and was unhappy with their current arrangement. The female partner was convinced that her husband should have been assuming responsibility for the family finances and did not examine her own experience in depth.

In the third case, the female partner appeared to be more reflexive. She discussed a family problem where she had tried a variety of solutions to protect her kids from someone they were both concerned about. She was frustrated because her husband did not provide her with support on this issue particularly when his mother is involved. She wanted him to be open with her about his feelings and thoughts about the problem. Although he expressed agreement about the solution, he resisted self-disclosure and insisted that she let him deal with the problem "his way." Eventually, he claimed that he was having difficulty with this issue, and did not understand his own struggle.

The fourth couple appeared to consist of a more reflexive husband and less reflexive wife. She seemed to avoid discussion of intimate matters, and redirected the focus to smaller contentious issues. Frequently, she indirectly blamed her husband for "victimizing" her in various ways. When the counsellor explored the incidents of "victimization" it became apparent that these are times when they overtly disagree about relationship issues. The male partner expressed his frustration with his wife's indirectness, and the difficulty of arriving at a resolution to their problems. Indeed, during the SPR process, the wife

indirectly indicated that she does not wish to remain in the relationship, and saw the "best solution" as living in side by side duplexes.

Clearly, the interpretation of these data must be made with great caution. I assessed individual RAM scores for each partner, but found that these scores did not correspond with my perceptions of degree of reflexivity displayed by these partners. While the RAM scores that were used to assign couples to groups (stuck, unstuck, mid-range) were based on the couple unit, rather than on individual scores of partners, this examination of partners' differences of reflexivity provokes questions about the nature of the relationship between relationship attributions and reflexivity. Nevertheless, from the perspective of the evolving theory, differences in partner's reflexivity is of particular interest.

The next stage of the analysis entailed the comparison between groups and was approached in the following order: the stuck group was compared with the unstuck group, and the results of this comparison (Stuck/Unstuck) were compared with the data generated by the mid-range group.

2. Comparison of Stuck and Unstuck Groups

The coded data and the categories and properties derived from the SPR interview data of each group were examined side by side. The transcripts of the interviews were also referred to when clarification of similarities or differences was required. Initially, a category entitled Non-reflectiveness had been created to encompass respondents' reports of not considering dimensions of relationship events beyond that of concrete action. When codes from the Non-reflectiveness category of the stuck group were compared with codes from the Reflexivity category of the unstuck group, I realized that these phenomena could be thought of as representing the opposite ends of a spectrum of Reflexivity. The following

examples from the interview text illustrate the Non-reflectiveness category of stuck couples.

"....I was concentrating on what I was saying. Now there must've in what was coming out there must've been thoughts, but I don't remember any specific. I was obviously relating it to whatever had gone before, but I don't remember a specific thought...."

"I like it when he talks positively because it's rare. So when he does get excited about something, I get happy for him and I like that feeling because it doesn't happen that often. So when it happens you get happy about it...."

The next few examples of interview text are illustrative of the Reflexivity category of unstuck couples.

"I thought that this is something that can cause tension between us. That it is something that is significant for me because I have to be very assertive when these situations come up. Because it is so easy for me to take it so personally, to dissolve with tears, to back off, all those sort of behaviors. So it crossed my mind that I'd best not fall back into that pattern."

"The way she could throw something out, that's what I see. Uh....and maybe we would discuss that....not necessary that she would say this is this.....it would just be a springboard to

discussion...just an overview of what's happened and where to go from here...."

Within the category of Reflexivity for unstuck couples, codes were described as follows: partner identifies own blaming behavior and considers how she can alter it, male partner struggles with whether their different views constitute a relationship problem, as he becomes increasingly aware of his own feelings. Examples of codes from the Non-reflexivity category for stuck couples were described in the following terms: female partner responds to question about her views by giving description of past troubles in great detail, respondent reports having no memory of thoughts and feelings during segments of the session.

When these codes were compared across stuck and unstuck groups, there was a clear difference between groups with respect to partners' disclosure during the SPR interview and partners' disclosure during the couples session. These groupings of codes were entitled Personal Meaning Creation and Negotiation of Meaning to reflect the central themes of the categories. The transcripts of the unstuck couples yielded many codes representing the disclosure that occurred within the therapy session, while the codes derived from the stuck group showed that very few of these codes were generated. Rather, the analysis of the accounts of these led me to generate many codes which were assigned to the category of Defensive Behaviors (including blame, negativity, and self-justification). In contrast, the analysis of the unstuck group resulted in the generation of many codes which were assigned to the Self Disclosure category. Since Defensive Behaviors seemed to be related to the overall theme of meaning creation, this category was renamed Self-Protective Responses to Meaning

Creation. Blame, Negativity, and Self-Justification components constituted some of the properties of this category.

Once more, the data were reviewed for differences. The category, Conception of Relationship was conceptualized as a category pertinent to the unstuck couples but not to the stuck couples. Both groups led the analyst to generate categories which were entitled Conception of Self and Conception of Partner. Since all of these categories seem to be related conceptually as involving some kind of internal template, they were grouped together under the overarching category of Personal Constructs. This notion of Personal Constructs is similar but not identical to George Kelly's Personal Construct Theory (1955). These templates potentially represent ways of construing the world which enable people to make sense of their environment and to chart a course of action.

The Conception of the Relationship component could not be conceived as a category because it did not occur with both groups. It was conceptualized as a property of the Partner construct, and described as Conception of Self-Other Connection (i.e., relationship) or lack of one. The integration of categories common to both groups contributed to the conceptual depth of the category system and extension of its properties. For example, the Conception of Self category that the analyst generated from the transcripts of the stuck couples consisted of clusters of codes including the following: female partner responds to question about her own feelings with those of her husband, male partner describes himself in his wife's words and from her viewpoint.

The Conception of Self category derived from the data of the unstuck couples entailed codes similar to the following examples: female respondent gives description of her perception of herself, male partner reacts to image of self on videotape (surprised that his feelings are apparent).

When the codes from both groups were examined together, higher order properties could be conceptualized which encompassed all the individual codes, yet depicted the themes more clearly. Some of these properties are described in the following examples: impact of partner's response on feelings and thoughts about self, impact of own responses on feelings and thoughts about self, and sense of /lack of sense of self.

The stuck and unstuck groups both generated categories entitled Therapeutic Alliance. These categories and their codes were compared for similarities and differences. The following codes were conceptualized as pertinent to the stuck group: male partner identifies the importance of the counsellor's validation when his partner is unable to do this, female partner expresses her fear /suspicion that the counsellor is more aligned with her partner, and male partner expresses his appreciation of the counsellor. Meaning codes derived from the accounts of members of unstuck group included the following examples: respondent notes that the presence of the counsellor tempers the partners' emotional intensity when dealing with issues, female partner comments that the counsellor's validation of her efforts helped her remain calm with partner when situation arose again, and female respondent expresses her affection toward the counsellor.

Integrating these codes led to the generation of more conceptually descriptive components which were capable of integrating all of the codes of both groups. The three major components that developed were entitled: Safety, Validation and Acknowledgement, and Other Relationship Factors. This process expanded and integrated the properties and components of the category of Therapeutic Alliance. The category had developed beyond the description of alliance to include other therapeutic factors. The concept that seemed to reflect

the expanded description most appropriately was entitled Partner's Experience of the Therapeutic Context.

The stuck and unstuck group analyses of the Disclosure of Thoughts and Feelings category (with the two components of SPR interview and couples' session) was examined. Some of these responses were a better fit for the reformulated Meaning Creation category. For example, a code assigned to the Disclosures category and the SPR Process component was incorporated into the Self Protective Response to Meaning Creation Component (i.e., partner does not engage with therapist and/or spouse). This code is described as follows: female partner admits she has a habit of "tuning him out"(partner). Once the codes that were assessed as fitting best in other categories were integrated, the remaining codes reflected a concern for the outcome of therapy or the SPR process. Earlier in the analysis, the Disclosures of Feelings and Thoughts category had been reformulated as an Outcomes category with the mid-range group data. I assessed whether the conceptual structure was suitable for the Stuck/Unstuck group data. When the Outcomes of Therapy component was expanded to include various other dimensions (i.e., of session, moment, course), a broader conceptual framework was adopted. The category was entitled Outcomes, with two components: Impact of Therapy (moment/ session/ course) and Impact of the SPR Inquiry.

3. Comparison of Stuck/Unstuck and Mid-range groups

Initially, the coding of the mid-range group data was examined for new categories. When it was ascertained that no new categories had been generated by the mid-range group, the codes were examined against the reformulated conceptual schema derived from the stuck/unstuck group

comparison. The purpose of this comparison was to assess whether the stuck/unstuck conceptual schema was adequate to absorb the mid-range group's codes into its existing categories, components, and properties.

One component was added to the Self Protective Response to Meaning Creation property to encompass several meaning units which described midrange partners' competition for the therapist's favor (i.e., respondent says his problems are more serious than those of his partner). As well, an additional descriptor was added to the Other Relationship Factors property to include a meaning unit where a midrange partner claimed that the therapist did not understand her problem. Most significantly, the comparison of the mid-range group with the stuck/unstuck group schemas permitted the parameters of the theory to be ascertained. While no new categories were generated, some minor modifications were made to properties which ensured that all of the data were adequately represented by the theory. As well, each of the major categories was also depicted within the mid-range group schema. The categories and their components represent fundamental uniformities across all three groups. This fact permits a more intensive understanding of the few important conceptual differences among the groups. At this stage of the analysis, with the incorporation of meaning units and generation of categories and their properties complete, the next step was to determine the core category.

B. Formulating the Core Category

Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggest that the choice of the core category is one of selecting the category with the most explanatory power for the theory. The categories and their properties must be integrally related to the meaning of the core category. One of the major goals of the study was to examine and

compare the interpretations of stuck and unstuck couples in regard to significant relationship events. Initially, I entertained the idea that relationship impasses might be identified by attributions of blame to one's partner. The purpose of this section is to review the factors which influenced the choice of the core category, and to examine the integration of this construct throughout the theory.

The categories, their components, and their properties were examined for evidence of an overarching theme or idea related to the central purpose of the study. The category entitled Reflexivity included three components of meaning creation. Upon reflection, I noted that Reflexivity was a concept that encompasses more than meaning creation. It also influenced respondent's conceptions of themselves, their partners, and their relationships. Particular conditions influenced the occurrence of reflexivity in couples in psychotherapy. These conditions are the Safety, Validation, and Relationship factors encompassed by the Therapeutic Context category. The last category, Outcomes, must also be linked clearly to the notion of Reflexivity in order for it to constitute a core category. The first component of this category, Impact of Therapy (moment/session/course) seems to be related to Reflexivity because unstuck couples found all components of the therapy to be memorable and significant. These differences between groups on memorability of the session were assessed by a comparison of EMQ data across groups (Appendix L). Unstuck couples identified many more memorable moments of the psychotherapy session, and were able to describe these moments in detail. Stuck couples tended to view the therapist as responsible for altering their problems. They were not involved in introspection about their own experiences, options, and actions. Overall, more reflexive couples were positive about therapy and its outcome, while less reflexive couples were more pessimistic about therapy and its outcome. This comparison between groups of

couples was facilitated by examination of the SQ data. More reflexive and less reflexive couples were compared with respect to the impact of the SPR inquiry through an intensive examination of SPR transcripts, and the research journal. Partners of unstuck and mid-range couples tended to find videotape segments personally significant, become reflexive during the SPR process, and were generally more positive about the process and outcome of the SPR inquiry. This comparison incorporated the analysis of EMQ and SQ data. Reflexivity was chosen as the core category, and meaning creation components were organized under the general heading of Meaning Creation.

1. The Core Category of Reflexivity

Perhaps the most fitting description of reflexivity for this study is one offered by Charles Taylor (1989). He describes reflexivity as the adoption of the first person standpoint whereby knowledge and awareness is always referenced to the self. It is more than being concerned about the state of one's soul rather than worldly success; it is when the dimension of one's experiencing becomes the object of attention. In other words, it is when we become aware of our awareness, experience our experiencing, and focus on the way the world is for us (Taylor, 1989).

The data analysis generated support for several emergent aspects of the reflexivity concept. These aspects included: an intense awareness of aspects of one's experience, consideration of the experience, consideration of partner's thoughts and feelings, consideration of options, and evaluation of one's experience and the available options.

The construct of reflexivity relates conceptually to each of the major categories in the grounded theory. Centrally concerned with reflexivity is the

category of Meaning Creation. During psychotherapy sessions, partners revealed that they disclosed or did not disclose their private thoughts and feelings. When they chose not to disclose, some partners were engaged in personal meaning creation: they reflected on inner processes, observed and processed the interaction between the counsellor and their partner, or evaluated their options to act. The disclosure of personal thoughts and feelings contributed to the negotiation of the meaning between partners about significant relationship events. Some partners also engaged in self protective behaviors: blaming, negativity, self-justification, denial, disengagement, and sabotage of the therapist's efforts. These strategies prohibited self disclosure and constrained the negotiation of meaning between partners.

Partners' experiences of the therapeutic context influenced partners' decisions to disclose their private thoughts and feelings in the session, and to engage with their partners in negotiating meaning together. Partners had particular experiences and conceptions about the therapeutic milieu. The experiences of safety and validation and acknowledgement in the therapy sessions assisted partners to engage in self-reflection and disclosure. When partners disclosed in couples therapy sessions, their inner experiences and conceptions about particular relationship events are communicated to the partner, and couples can engage in resolving differences which delimit their relationships. Shared understandings can develop between partners when they engage with each other. When partners are reflexive, they can experience their own feelings and thoughts, evaluate the personal significance of this experience, evaluate the potential impact of disclosure, and make decisions to disclose or not. When partners disclose and maintain a reflexive posture, they can verbally process their experience, integrate their partner's experience, participate in problem solving, and emotionally engage with their partner.

When partners do not experience the therapeutic context as safe or validating, they may disregard their partner and therapist, avoid participation in therapy sessions, and self disclosure. Other relationship factors include understandings of the goals of therapy, the therapist's role, perception of therapist's neutrality and competence. All of these may influence the occurrence of personal reflexivity and meaning creation in couple's therapy sessions.

The core concept of reflexivity is linked with the Personal Construct category. Partners that are reflexive have a sense of self. Their experience of the world and themselves is referenced internally. This internal referencing is one which encompasses their agentic abilities. Partners' experiences of their own experiencing permits consideration, evaluation, reformulation, and decision with regard to a view of the self, the partner, and the relationship. Reflexive partners maintain relatively flexible constructs of their partner that are responsive to the ongoing consideration of experience. When problems occur in the relationship, they are perceived as shared, and both partners tend to assume responsibility for their resolution.

Partners that are not reflexive do not have the same sense of an internal referent for their experience. Rather, constructs of self may be externally derived from parents, partners, or others. An internal awareness of experience does not occur. Instead, partners concern themselves with actions. Searle (1983) describes non-reflexivity as a state where the individual is not aware of doing, but instead is just doing. While thinking may occur, it is uninformed by awareness. Partners interpret relationship problems as a defect of their partner or themselves. They are unaware of their own capacity to create change. Often, the partner is expected to change. Non-reflexive partners do not have conceptions of a relationship as an entity in itself. Constructs of partners are relatively rigid, global, and negative. Relationship events are often interpreted

with reference to the constructs of self and partner. The taxonomy of the grounded theory is presented below.

Table 4:3

TAXONOMY OF CATEGORIES OF THE GROUNDED THEORY

Partners' Reflexivity (Core Category)

Main Category I: Meaning Creation

a) Personal Meaning Creation

- Partner silently focuses on own inner processes during session
- Partner observes and nonverbally processes interaction between therapist and partner
- Partner makes silent decision to disclose/ not disclose own feeling and thoughts

b) Negotiation of Meaning

- Partner examines own process (thoughts/ feelings/ behavior) verbally with therapist in presence of partner
- Partner tells stories in presence of therapist and partner
- Partner discloses thoughts and feelings in presence of therapist and partner
- Partner identifies new awareness in presence of therapist and partner

- Partner integrates new understanding in presence of therapist and partner
- Partner shows sensitivity to other partner's reflexivity
- Partner observes interaction with other partner from the meta-perspective of their relationship
- Partners engage emotionally with each other during the session
- Partners seek clarification from each other (i.e. thoughts, feelings, behavior)
- Partners participate in mutual decision making/ problem solving/ evolving a version of events
- Partners communicate non-verbally with each other
- Partners share humor with each other
- Partners disclose to each other
- Partners affirm/ support/ acknowledge each other
- Partners share responsibility (i.e., mutually plan and problem solve)

c) Self-protective response to meaning creation

- Partner blames spouse
- Partner engages in negative mind-set
- Partner justifies self (i.e., thoughts, feelings, behaviors)
- Partner avoids personal responsibility
- Partners compete for therapist's favor/ attention
- Partners join together in dismissing therapist
- Partner does not engage with therapist and/or spouse

Main Category II: Partners' Experience of the Therapeutic Context

a) Safety

- Therapist provides a safe place for the partners to engage with each other
- Therapist provides a safe place for individual partners to disclose thoughts and feelings in presence of partner
- Therapist accommodates/ recognizes partners' unique ways of being
- Therapist monitors and balances equitable conversation time with both partners
- Therapist intervenes with respect to the relationship impasse

b) Validation and Acknowledgement

- Therapist validates individual partners when spouse unable/ unwilling to do so
- Therapist recognizes/ supports individual partner's to change when spouse unable/ unwilling to do so
- Therapist recognizes accomplishments in couple's in-session work together
- Therapist supports partners in learning to look at self and relationship in thoughtful way
- Therapist encourages partners to disclose (i.e., thoughts, feelings, behavior)
- Partner(s) experience positive feelings for therapist
- Partner(s) do not/ do feel validated by therapist

c) Other Relationship Factors

- Partners attend/ do not attend to therapist "operations" and "intentions"
- Partners perceive therapist as attempting to help both/ one partner(s)

- Partner perceives the therapist 's role as responsible/ not responsible for fixing the problems
- Partners do not/ do experience therapist's efforts as helpful
- Partners feel that therapist does not/ does understand the problem

Main Category III: Personal Constructs

a) Self Construct

- Sense of/ or lack of sense of self
- Feelings and thoughts about partner
- Feelings and thoughts about self
- Impact of partner's responses on feelings and thoughts about self
- Impact of partner's responses on feelings and thoughts about partner
- Impact of own responses on feelings and thoughts about self
- Impact of own responses on feelings and thoughts about partner

b) Partner Construct

- Inner referent/description of partner (attributes of behavior, disposition, ways of being, motivations) in past/ present/ future
- Interpretation of partner's impact on self
- Affect experienced for/about partner (past/present)
- Interpretation of partner's role regarding the relationship's problems (i. e., impasse) and its strengths
- Perception of partner in regard to their disclosing/.not disclosing in-session/out side of session

- Perception of partner's acknowledgement/validation (or not) of own disclosures in-session/outside of sessions
- Conception of self-other connection which constitutes a relationship schema or not

Main Category IV: Outcomes

a) Impact of Therapy (moment/ session/ course)

- Partner responds to team's/therapist's interventions (emotional/ new disclosures/ action strategy/ recognition of accomplishments)
- Partner appreciates/ doesn't appreciate experience of team/therapist intervention
- Partner impressed by fit/ lack of fit of team's consultation/therapist's intervention
- Partner views therapist as "learner" through consultation
- Partner fears/ anticipates team's consultation/therapist's interventions
- Partner feels optimistic/pessimistic about the resolution of couple's problems (moment/session/course)

b) Impact of SPR Inquiry

- Partner indicates selected segments are personally significant/ non-significant
- Partner responds on two levels of reflexivity (i.e., in-session, during SPR process)
- Partner kaleidascope across time, or not
- Partner expresses anxiety/ anticipation/ interest about research (videotape/ audiotape/ observing team)

- Partner discloses experience of Inquiry (i.e., thoughts, feelings, "learning")
- Partner anticipates research findings (personal significance, general significance)

The relationship between reflexivity and the Outcomes category was explicated earlier, with reference to the SPR, EMQ, and SQ data. A summary of this comparison is briefly described herein. Reflexive partners viewed the impact of therapy (moment, session, course) as memorable and personally meaningful. As well, they expressed positive feelings about the process of therapy and its outcome. Reflexive partners were congruent in their assessments of the SPR process and its outcome. They found many videotape segments to be memorable and significant, engaged readily in reflexive activity during the process, and were positive about the process and outcome of the inquiry.

The non-reflexive partners found fewer aspects of the therapy (moment/session/course) to be memorable or personally meaningful. Rather, partners were pessimistic about the outcome of the course of therapy. Generally, non-reflexive partners did not engage reflexively in response to the videotape segments, found fewer SPR segments to be memorable and significant, and focused on negative aspects of their partner's behavior. It is interesting to note that despite these aspects of their experience, non-reflexive partners often expressed the view of having learned something from observing the videotapes and participating in the inquiry.

The grounded theory yielded no specific information about any particular therapist operation for any group of couples. Clients do not seem to attend to the moment by moment intentions and operations of their therapists. Rennie (1992) has commented on this aspect of clients' experience of therapy, and notes that

clients' tend to focus somewhat exclusively on their own processes and problematic issues during psychotherapy sessions. When the therapist intervenes with respect to relaying an understanding of the client's struggle or changing the perception of the problem, clients appear to incorporate these operations into an overarching construct of the therapeutic relationship. The findings of this aspect of the study are consistent with those of Rennie (1990).

Throughout this section the core category of reflexivity was examined with respect to the other major categories in order to assess the conceptual integration of the theory. This process entailed communication of the theory's overall framework (see Table 4:2) and the triangulation of the SPR, EMQ, and SQ data. The following section summarizes this informal and substantive theory's key propositions with respect to the core category.

C. The Theoretical Propositions of the Grounded Theory

An examination of the themes derived from partner's interpretations of significant psychotherapeutic events has contributed to the following theoretical notions. Those partners that experience serious relationship impasses tend to be non self-reflexive with their partners in therapy sessions that focus on their difficulties, engage in self-protective behaviors, have self constructs which refer to external authorities, do not disclose relevant private thoughts and feelings, and thus negotiation of meaning between partners is constrained.

On the other hand, partners that experience relationship problems but are not immobilized by these difficulties are reflexive about their problems in couples psychotherapy, have self constructs which are internally referenced, disclose relevant private thoughts and feelings, and negotiate shared understandings of events which are consistent with their relationship constructs. Further, safety,

validation, support, adequate understandings of couples therapy, confidence in therapist competence, and a relationship with the therapist are important factors that influence the psychotherapy experience for partners. Several tentative key theoretical propositions and related speculations follow. It is important to recall that these propositions are not formal, but represent a summary of the most significant findings of the core category of a substantive, informal grounded theory.

(1) Reflexivity of both partners differentiates couples that experience serious relationship impasses from those that resolve their problems.

(2) Self disclosure of partner's thoughts and feelings about significant relationship problems assists in the resolution of relationship impasses. It is interesting to consider the significance of both the disclosure of partners' private thoughts and feelings as well as when partners choose not to disclose in the interest of resolving relationship problems. An important question that this proposition raises are the factors that partners consider when they decide whether or not to disclose their private thoughts and feelings in couples psychotherapy sessions.

(3) Couples that experience relationship stalemates focus their attention on the actions of their partners, rather than interpretations of their relationship difficulties. The significance of this difference is not thoroughly developed within the theory. In future studies it will be important to assess whether a focus on a partner's actions is derived from particular beliefs (conscious or unconscious) about the partners' roles in intimate relationships. In other words, when one partner expects their spouse's to behave in a particular ways to reflect either

their role or duty to the marriage, the partner may become confused or angry when this behavior doesn't occur. This raises the possibility that partners of stuck couples possess more rigid constructs about self and other than partners of unstuck couples.

(4) Serious relationship impasses are characterized by both partners' self-protective behaviors (i.e., blame, negativity, denial, avoidance, and self-justification).

(5) Partners that are experiencing serious relationship impasses have self constructs that are derived primarily from external sources, partner constructs that are rigid and negative, and tend to refer to their relationships as a "fact" of being married or a member of a couple. In relationships where both partners are reflexive, each partner tends to have self constructs that are internally derived, and neutral and flexible partner constructs. These couples develop relationship constructs that serve as reference points of past and present mutual understandings, assist in the interpretation of interpersonal behavior, and represent the active valuing of each partner for the other.

(6) The theoretical significance of reflexivity is important in the development of adequate conceptions of intimate relationships. Not only do partners think about themselves and their relationships differently, but they engage in very different processes when relationship problems occur. The examination of interpersonal resistance, or relationship stalemates, provides a description of one end of the spectrum of reflexivity as an interpersonal behavior. Equally important is an elaborated conceptual description of reflexivity in unstuck or healthy

relationships. This definition should be expanded through future exploratory work with non-clinical populations.

D. Summary

This chapter reported on the development of the grounded theory, its major categories and properties, and selection of the core category. Several tentative theoretical propositions arising from the core category were identified, and consideration was given to particular areas in future study. The next chapter will revisit the goals of the study, compare the theoretical propositions of the study to those of the Milan group, discuss various conceptions of reflexivity and interpersonal resistance, examine the implications of the study's results for theory and practice, and identify the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This final chapter will compare the study goals with the outcomes, examine the conceptions of reflexivity and interpersonal resistance developed in the study with other relevant work in the area, discuss the implications for theory and practice, and identify the limitations of the research as conducted.

A. Discussion of Results

The main purpose of the study was to increase understanding of meanings that couples give to particular interpersonal events when they are stuck in negative interactional sequences within the context of a psychotherapy session. Specific attention was given to the interpersonal resistance between partners, and the relationship of this resistance to partners' interpretations of these episodes. The study goals were described as follows:

- 1) The discovery of partners' interpretations, memories, and meanings, in a couples psychotherapy session,
- 2) The identification of significant events within particular segments of couples therapy sessions which are expressed as partner's experiences and memories,
- 3) A comparison of couples that are stuck in their resistance to each other and couples that are not, with respect to their interpretations of significant psychotherapeutic events,

- 4) The analysis of significant psychotherapeutic events across couples and the determination of common themes, and
- 5) The development of a tentative model generated from the empirically emergent themes, and a comparison with the theoretical conception of stuckness of the Milan group.

The first study goal was facilitated through the use of a Stimulated Process Recall (SPR) procedure, the Experiential Memory Questionnaire (EMQ), the Target Complaint Instrument (TCI) and the Session Questionnaire (SQ). I selected a number of interpersonal events (average of 5 events) that occurred during the session when partners appeared to be resistant to each other. Partners were encouraged to respond to these selected segments of videotape, by identifying those events which they perceived as being most meaningful to them. They were asked to elaborate the meanings they ascribed to these events. Sometimes during the SPR procedure partners indicated that they did not remember their thoughts or feelings as being significant in relation to a pre-selected videotaped episode. At these times, I chose another pre-selected videotaped segment of the session, to facilitate the partners' selection of personally meaningful and significant events. The partners also completed the EMQ, TCI, and SQ measures which provided additional sources of data for the analysis of significant events in couples psychotherapy.

The second study goal was assisted by the administration of the SPR procedure, EMQ, and SQ which elicited partners' memories and interpretations of significant events during the couples psychotherapy session. These responses were transcribed and submitted to grounded theory analysis. The

subsequent theory suggests that some events of a couples therapy session are particularly memorable and important to partners.

The third goal of the study entailed a comparison of stuck, mid-range, and unstuck couples and their interpretations of significant events during couples psychotherapy. The couples were differentiated into groups on the basis of their scores on the RAM, an attributional measure. A comparison of the memories and interpretations of these groups of couples was conducted using grounded theory analysis. The analysis of partners' interpretations of significant events in a couples psychotherapy session resulted in the construction of the conceptual model in Table 4:2. The grounded theory suggests that these groups of couples differ in their memories and interpretations of significant events in therapy. Stuck couples tend to have partners who are not reflexive with each other about their interpersonal problems, while Unstuck couples tend to have partners who practice reflexivity with each other during the therapy session. These differences may have important implications for the resolution of interpersonal problems in couples psychotherapy.

The fourth study goal involved the analysis of significant psychotherapeutic events across couples, and the determination of common themes. The grounded theory analysis led to the construction of a conceptual model, and the recognition of common and divergent themes across couples. Most importantly, couples indicated that the nature of the therapeutic experience can facilitate or inhibit the resolution of couples' interpersonal problems. Partners identified the conditions of safety, validation, and the therapeutic relationship as influencing their ability to disclose important feelings and thoughts during the couples therapy session. Further, the theory suggests that partners are always engaged in meaning-making, despite the presence or absence of interpersonal resistance. The presence of pre-existing beliefs

predominantly derived from external sources that bear upon partner's relationships was suggested as an area for future research activity.

The fifth task of the study will be addressed in the following section. A comparison of the informal and substantive theoretical propositions arising from the grounded theory will be compared with those of the Milan model.

B. Comparison of Core Concepts and Propositions

The Milan model of family therapy proposed one conception of couple's interpersonal resistance in psychotherapy. The Milan concept of stuckness refers to couples and families that want aspects of their lives together to be different, seek help for these problems, and yet are unable to interact in alternate ways despite the usual efforts of counsellors. The symptom serves as an important relationship function, yet it also seriously endangers the well-being of one or more family members. Further, there is an inhibition of the normal developmental growth of the family and its members that can result in pragmatic problems with respect to functioning in society. Family members tend to blame each other overtly or covertly for the relationship problems, and expect other members to change rather than themselves. Particular relationship understandings evolve over time and serve to perpetuate family and couple dysfunction.

A comparison of this definition with the conceptual notion of couple's interpersonal resistance in psychotherapy sessions that was developed during this study shows both similarities and differences. The Milan team developed its definition of stuckness from work with a population of families that had more serious psychiatric disturbances than those that participated in the current study. One of the Milan criteria for treating families included a history of

unsuccessful results with other therapies. The presenting complaint often was related to severe disturbance (*i.e.*, psychosis) of a child. In contrast, the current research study did not draw on a comparable population. Rather, couples presented with complaints of communication difficulties, intimacy issues, and problems resolving interpersonal differences. Severe psychiatric disturbance was screened out during the sample selection process.

Both conceptions of relationship impasses identify three attributional dimensions which characterize couple's behavior: blame, responsibility, and locus of control. In addition, the current study identified other self protective behaviors including denial, negativity, avoidance, and self-justification. While the two theoretical notions identify relationship understandings as factors contributing to the stuckness or impasse, they do so in different ways. The theoretical propositions of the Milan group state that the relationship understandings or "rules" perpetuate the interactional stuckness. The term, relationship understandings, is not defined in a way that permits a thorough evaluation of this claim. However, one can infer from the Milan approach that the purpose of these understandings for partners is to avoid confronting conflict-laden intimacy issues between partners. The understandings or relationship rules are expressed in the pattern of interaction. A family member acts as the symptom bearer, the other members participate in deflecting attention away from the interactional problems of the parents, and no one directly addresses the underlying conflictual issues.

The grounded theory suggests that couples experience relationship impasses when both partners are non-reflexive with each other in their psychotherapy sessions. These partners focus primarily on the actions of their spouse (*i.e.*, an external focus), rather than considering a variety of ways of understanding the relationship problem (*i.e.*, an internal focus). Knowledge and

awareness are experienced in relation to the self, but mediated by two conceptual schemas: the self construct, and the partner construct. Self understandings of nonreflective partners have primarily been given by the culture, rather than elaborated on by the person. Nevertheless, they are incorporated into a person's self understanding to some degree. Conceptions of partner often incorporate particular attributes which are linked directly to the perpetuation of the couple's problems. Relationship understandings have not developed between partners; rather, each partner expects the other to conform to her/his unconscious or unstated needs.

Thus, the most significant factor that differentiates couples in relationship stalemates from those that are not is the core concept of reflexivity. When both partners are reflexive in their psychotherapy sessions with respect to themselves and their difficulties, they behave in ways that minimize or prevent relationship stalemates. The definition of reflexivity referenced in this study incorporates the idea of an intentional and "radical" experiencing of one's experience. Perceptions of the world are evaluated against an internal reference point. Reflexivity encompasses awareness, but is more than self awareness. It includes self agency, evaluations of options, and inner processing. Reflexive partners develop a relationship construct which they refer to as a third entity. It incorporates shared understandings about the way partners choose to live with each other, and provides a framework for the interpretation of relationship events. This view of reflexivity differs from traditional psychological concepts of awareness and insight, as well as with other notions of reflexivity. These differences are examined in following sections..

The notion of stuckness or relationship impasses that developed during the study explicitly conceptualizes this interpersonal resistance between partners as a quality that ranges across a continuum from reflexive to non-reflexive. The

Milan conception of stuckness is exclusively concerned with the non-reflexive end of the continuum, as if it constitutes a discrete interpersonal state. Although, there is no direct statement that stuckness is construed as a state, it appears to be an implicit assumption of the Milan theory.

One of the Milan group's theoretical propositions is that couples/families are unaware of the relationship rules that influence their interactive behavior. While the interpretation of "relationship rules" is unclear, the implication that partners are externally focused rather than internally focused and reflexive is compatible with the grounded theory conception. If this external focus is understood as representing an individual partner's orientation across interpersonal domains, nonreflexive partners may have unconscious scripts for intimate relationships or expectations of roles that are externally derived and unexamined. These scripts would be expected to influence the behavior of stuck couples in intimate relationships. On the other hand, scripts may be conscious but unexamined. Partners may accept as truth, the notion that men or women in marriages are expected to act in circumscribed ways. When the authority of this information is unquestioned, partners may be unaware of their own ability to change the rules to fit their own circumstances. The theoretical understandings of the current study do not incorporate an assumption that partners are either unaware or aware of their expectations about relationships. Rather, it is suggested that partner's pre-existing constructs have not been perceived as significant and have remained unexamined. As well, nonreflexive partners do not consider their own understandings about intimate relationships and the couple's current difficulties.

The final claim of the Milan group to be examined here is the proposition that couples/families are unable to step out of particular repetitive and entrenched interactional patterns. The implication of this proposition is that the

unconscious/unexamined material and repetitive pattern work together to keep the couple/family from addressing its interpersonal difficulties. This assertion does not acknowledge the possibility that clients are capable of resolving their problems even when they are ambivalent about the process of doing so. While couples/families may not be able to imagine how their relationship problems can be resolved successfully, they may act in ways that prevent the termination of their relationship or reduce the pain and hostility of their conflict. The Milan group's exclusive focus on interaction and subsequent lack of recognition of cognitive-experiential factors, clients' agentic capacity, or the implications of socially constructed understandings, leads to this kind of perspective. The notion of reflexivity permits a more flexible view of the resolution of relationship impasses. While couples may continue to be non-reflexive about their intimate relationships and remain stuck, their potential ability to become reflexive and resolve relationship problems is recognized.

Several informal, substantive theoretical propositions of the current study flow from the relationship assumed between reflexivity and personal constructs. The type of schemas that partners develop, and through which they examine the world, are important. When partners evolve self constructs that are adopted uncritically from external sources, they tend to experience more serious relationship stalemates. Partners that develop self, partner, and relationship constructs through a reflexive process, tend to have less serious relationship difficulties. The opportunity to review past experiential memories that are significant to one's understanding of self/partner/relationship enable partners to create schemas that are more flexible, personally meaningful, and useful. Psychotherapy is one context where partners may reflect on their experiential memories, be supported in their creation of new understandings, and resolve interpersonal difficulties. The central difference between the two theories is with

respect to their conceptualizations of partners' potential capability of becoming active creators of their own experience, and actively resolving their problems within the psychotherapy session.

C. Reflexivity of Partners, Couples, and the Therapist-Couple Triads

Previous discussion of reflexivity in this study has focused on the how it constitutes the core category of the theory. As well, a summary was provided that identifies some of the theoretical differences arising from propositions derived from the core category of reflexivity in comparison to propositions of the Milan theory. However, a more complete description of reflexivity, as it was developed in this study, is required.

Selections of SPR transcripts of partners' thoughts about their psychotherapy sessions illuminate some of the central elements of reflexivity.

"I remember thinking that I was happy to hear (partner) asking me did you feel as much at home as I do? Not just assuming that it was something that we shared and had the same feelings because he felt so in his element. That I would also feel so fulfilled by camping. And...I noticed that I, at first, thought okay here he goes with the camping thing again (laughter). And I just stopped myself and said just listen to what he has to say. Really listen, and not be judging and thinking he is just wasting time. Or he's just raving on...you know, realizing it is important to him."

"I can't remember if (therapist) took us back there, or if (wife) brought it up about whatever took us back from where we had

started from. And how things are different now...We were talking about (partner's) depression. Which is initially what we came to counselling about....It's sort of like a running dialogue that changes and opens up into things and goes off onto other tangents and different things..."

"I just sort of think, you know, things are just sort of going along and we're doing pretty good. But as far as him (partner)? I always find out different things about him every time we come here. Like he's not the most talkative guy. I mean you get him and me in a room together and he's not really going to say too much. He's going to find something else to do. So when we come here, it's like he's got someone to talk to, and he's not really talking to me so I hear all these things I never really knew about him and that. So it helps in that way. It's just he calls her the referee (therapist) or whatever...(laughs). So, uh.... it works that way because I find out a lot of stuff about him. And, like stuff, maybe he's afraid to communicate to me? Maybe he's afraid of what I might say, or maybe make fun of him? I don't know."

"Well, I think it goes... we, we, we just don't listen to each other well. Because we start... we both try to figure each other out, quickly too, because we know we only have so much time... um, It...it's very similar to the conversation we'll have when we get in the car to drive away. On an emotional level... I, I guess, really I guess it's because we're talking to each other, as opposed to (therapist). Funny, because when I was watching it, I think I was

talking to her (therapist), I think I was talking to them both... or not... I'm not sure... Ummmm... But I think (wife's) heard it all before. But, again, it's been so fragmented, so... uh... it's kind of... with, with the third person (therapist) there, you kind of feel like even, you know,... with the third person there you know somebody's listening because you know somebody hasn't heard it before. And, ummm.. it just kind of, you feel like it's just okay to say it... um, what's the word I'm looking for. It's ... you sort of... you're sort of confirmed that what you're saying is okay to say. When (wife) and I talk about it, you don't get that same confirmation because there's other issues involved."

These excerpts, and the remainder of the transcripts reveal that reflexivity is something that can be understood as occurring on several levels: a) as a component of an individual partner's self experiencing, b) as an influence on the way couples experience each other, and c) as a facilitative condition within the psychotherapy context.

Reflexivity with individual partners can be understood as involving two aspects of covert experiencing. The first can be thought of as inner processing, while the second reveals a substantive issue. The discourse excerpts above illuminate some of the qualities of reflexivity at all levels: the individual, dyad, and couple-therapist triad.

When partners are reflexive about their relationships in psychotherapy they are aware of their own experiencing, can experience their own thoughts and feelings in a focused way, evaluate their individual experience with respect to the substantive issues, consider options for action, locate preferred choices, and

monitor their own processing activity. When couples are reflexive with each other within the context of psychotherapy they can choose to disclose personal feelings and thoughts in relation to significant relationship events. The grounded theory provided some evidence of this process, because unstuck couples created relationship constructs. Reflexive couples may choose not to disclose personal feelings and thoughts that they assess as being potentially destructive, or irrelevant, to the relationship. Disclosure of particular thoughts and feelings with respect to significant relationship events led to the development of partners' shared understandings about the relationship.

The activities of the therapist assisted in creating conditions which facilitated the practice of reflexivity within the psychotherapy session. Partners' trust of the therapist assisted in providing psychological safety in the couples' session. Trust is enhanced by clear therapeutic goals, a sense of therapist competence, and neutrality or lack of bias with respect to the partners. Safety, validation, and acknowledgement experienced in the therapy session contributed to individual partners' willingness to engage in self disclosure. When aspects of individual partners' experiences of particular relationship events are disclosed, and partners maintain a reflexive posture, they can verbally process their experience, integrate their partners' disclosures of experience, engage emotionally with each other, participate in problem solving, and construct shared understandings. Reflexivity occurs within the context of particular relationship circumstances, and particular substantive issues of couples in the psychotherapy sessions.

The context of the first two excerpts reveals the inner thoughts of a male and a female partner in relation to their experience of the couples psychotherapy session. The young woman is struggling with the transition to her new role as a full time mother, and the subsequent changes that have taken place between

herself and her husband. At the same time, her partner has assumed the role of sole provider for the family, and has been feeling stressed with difficulties at work. One of the times that the couple think that they work well together is when they go camping. During the research session, both partners acknowledged the positive changes that they have made, and the ways that they have become more supportive to each other in managing their new responsibilities.

The context of the third excerpt reveals that within the psychotherapy session this young woman hears her partner talk to the therapist in a new way. She wonders whether she might engage in behaviors that actively prevent him from talking to her in this way. At a later point in the session she realizes that she "shuts him down" because she is afraid he will reveal something negative about her that will cause her pain.

The context of the fourth excerpt consists of a young male partner and the way the conversation changes between partners when the therapist becomes involved. His inner thoughts reveal the sense of permission and confirmation he experiences when he tells his story to the therapist for the first time. He notes that other couple issues interfere in his partner's ability to listen to him. During the couples' session, the young man reveals his feelings of guilt which arise from an earlier period of the relationship when he felt he was unavailable to his partner. The female partner makes frequent mention of this period of time and the hardships she bore as a consequence.

The transcripts of the 22 partners showed similar evidence of episodes of reflexivity. Not only do partners experience reflexivity, but they are able to provide accounts of practicing reflexivity within the context of their intimate relationships, and to identify the therapeutic components which facilitate their in-session reflexivity.

Individual partners differed with respect to their practice of reflexivity in the research psychotherapy session. It may be the case that some partners did not feel safe with the therapist and/or their partner, which inhibited their reflexivity. On the other hand, some partners may not know how to reflect on their interactive conversations and behavior. One young woman expressed the view that it was not necessary nor her responsibility to share her inner experience with her partner. If he wanted this kind of conversation, then he would have to "draw it out of me." She explained that her parents treated her this way, and she expected her husband to do engage in the same strategy. She described herself as a "shy" person, thus other people are expected to help her express herself if they wish to know what she thinks. This self-description, and its potential ramifications, were unexamined by the young woman.

The practice of reflexivity also varied across couples. Some partners spent much of the session engaged with each other as they examined their relationship difficulties, guided by infrequent questions or utilizing the assistance of the therapist as needed. Often these partners responded to the therapist's questions by turning to each other to learn of each person's experience, and to clarify understandings.

Individual partners monitored their own experience, disclosing when they felt it was appropriate to do so, and abstaining from disclosure when they anticipated that the disclosure would harm themselves, their partner, or the relationship. While unstuck couples were more self-disclosing, they showed evidence of the same kind of monitoring and evaluation of their experience as other groups of couples. Partners made reference to a sense of what was "right" for them, when reviewing options for action which encompassed both the construct (or description) of themselves, their construct of their partner, and the factors bearing on the particular circumstances and relationship prior to making

disclosures. For example, a male partner decided not to disclose his dissatisfaction with his partner's response about a more minor issue during the psychotherapy session because he appreciated her overall efforts to work together to resolve their problems.

Each research psychotherapy session varied with respect to the practice of reflexivity within the therapist-couple triad. At times, some partners were able to engage in reflexivity while conversing with the therapist. One female partner noticed that her spouse conversed in a different manner with the therapist, than when speaking with her. As she began to think about how these conversations differed from each other, she examined her own previous responses to him, and realized she participated in constraining their conversations.

Partners were active in their sessions with respect to the therapists' participation, as well. Partners indicated that they monitored the therapist's conversation and actions, which had an impact on their sense of psychological safety. This safety was described as a sense that partners would not be damaged by revealing intimate aspects of their experience. As well, recognition and validation of individual partners, and other aspects of the therapeutic relationship were described as important factors influencing couples to engage reflexively with each other. When partners experience the efforts of the therapist as unhelpful, sense that the therapist does not fully understand the problem, perceive the therapist as responsible for fixing the problems, or believe the therapist is not attempting to help both partners, the experience of psychological safety is limited. Despite these concerns and their potential ramifications for the session, partners do not disclose their dissatisfactions to the therapist. Rather, they tend to make second order assessments of the situation which take priority over these concerns. For example, one woman spoke at length about her irritation with the lack of direction she experiences in the counselling sessions.

However, she concluded her complaint by indicating that she often felt sorry for (the therapist) because she perceived the job as a difficult one. Rennie (1992, 1994b) suggests that clients defer to their therapists based on their desire to protect the therapeutic alliance, and thus to work productively on their own issues. The power resident in the therapist's position and knowledge, and the clients' desire to resolve their problems contributes to an imbalance of power in the relationship. This relationship imbalance and the clients' deference to the therapist emphasizes the need for therapists to exercise good judgement and sensitivity when deciding whether or not to address potential disjunctions in the client's experience (Rennie, 1994c). Clearly, this task becomes more complicated when one considers the complexity of couples therapy.

Therapists are further challenged in couples therapy to distinguish between individual partner's deference or nondisclosure with the therapist, and partner's nondisclosure with each other. At times partners appeared to be resisting the efforts of the therapist but later indicated that they were most concerned with avoiding disclosure to their partner. This situation is made more complex when couples develop pre-existing covert /overt agreements to not discuss certain aspects of their relationships with the therapist. In the circumstance where the therapist pursues one of these taboo areas, both partners may engage in self-protective behavior.

To summarize the foregoing discussion, the core category of reflexivity is conceptualized as encompassing three interrelated dimensions of meaning creation within the context of couples therapy: the partner, the couple, and the therapist-couple triad.

The following sections will examine the notions of reflexivity and interpersonal resistance as they relate to other extant theoretical and empirical work. The conceptual and therapeutic implications of the grounded theory's

conceptualization of reflexivity will be examined as it relates to the theoretical framework of the study.

D. Conceptions of Reflexivity

There are references to the notion of reflexivity in the philosophical and applied psychological areas of literature. I will briefly review several key notions of reflexivity derived from the field of counselling research. Next, I will elaborate a few conceptions of reflexivity arising from the philosophical literature. The theory of the Milan group and the grounded theory are compared with respect to their notions of reflexivity and interpersonal resistance. Finally, the conceptual and therapeutic implications of the extended notions of reflexivity and interpersonal resistance are discussed.

What is this quality that occurs with individuals, couples, and couple-therapist triads, and is reflected throughout the categories of the grounded theory? This quality has been referred to as reflection (Grossman, 1990), awareness (Nelkin, 1989), inner self awareness (Smith, 1989), metacognition (Slife, 1987), agency (Rennie & Toukmanian, 1992), consciousness (Churchland, 1984), reflexivity (Rennie, 1992; Taylor, 1985, 1989), reflected awareness (Dulaney, 1991), among other descriptors. Conceptualizations of this phenomenon are as varied as the descriptors themselves. Most frequently however, such terms are interpreted as representing inner structures of an individual mind.

Clearly, when one considers meaning creation within a psychotherapeutic context a broader conception is required in order to incorporate and represent the multifaceted and dynamic qualities of meaning creation that arise from individual

partners, evolve within their significant relationships, and are potentially modified and extended in psychotherapy.

In contrast to many traditional psychological constructs which isolate the individual or a substructure of mind as the phenomenon of interest, the current study developed a broad-spectrum notion of reflexivity. This construct was not conceptualized as representing an inner mind or outer social process. Rather, reflexivity is interpreted as a dynamic interactive process simultaneously involving the individual and their social, cultural, and interpersonal context. Shared understandings can be created by participants engaged in discourse in psychotherapy in relation to events that are significant to them. These understandings may be represented in the cultural or historical context through particular conventions, norms, mores, as well as the experiential and psychological realities of participants. Thus, reflexivity provides a bridge which mediates traditional notions of the independence of the individual and social experience. The creation of meaning, however, is inevitably social and nondivisible: it necessarily involves the experiencing individuals, their verbal and nonverbal interactions, the social, cultural, interpersonal context, and pre-existing experiences and understandings.

Many authors that have contributed their particular interpretations of reflexivity or a reflexivity-like process to the applied psychological literature. The conceptions that will be reviewed herein were developed by Slife (1987), Martin (1994), and Rennie (1992).

Slife (1987) refers to metacognitive functions of the mind as the acknowledgement of the mind's ability to reflect on itself, and its ability to reflect on its reflecting. Cognition and metacognition are perceived as representing different domains of mental functioning. Metacognition is "meta" or "beyond" cognition. Presumably, the mind processes information from the environment,

however the manner with which it does this processing (i.e., organizing, preserving, attributing meaning) is the mind's contribution through metacognition. Slife (1987) suggests that these mental contributions are derived from previous environmental input, and thus the mind can be thought of as preserving environmental information. This preservation function can influence present understanding of environmental stimuli. This conception of reflexivity is a relatively common one frequently referenced in the psychological and educational literature. It is one which emphasizes the reflexivity of the individual, and separate components of mental functioning, in the same way that the traditional notion of memory is viewed as reservoir in the head. In this model, it is unclear whether individuals are perceived as being agenic and acting intentionally, however. The following research specifically emphasizes these aspects of individual functioning. Not only are psychotherapy clients viewed as agenic, they are capable of covertly reviewing options, and adopting one principle over another in the management of action.

Rennie (1992) developed a grounded theory of significant events in psychotherapy reported by psychotherapy clients, and based on a review of entire psychotherapy sessions. His conception of reflexivity is grounded in empirical data which reflect episodes of active, agenic self awareness of psychotherapy clients. Rennie (1992) suggests that in the pursuit of personal meaning, clients become aware of their own experiencing. They observe both the way they process information, and their experiences in relation to substantive issues. Rennie adopts a view of reflexivity as a inner experiencing of the self, as a means of encompassing both clients' heightened self-awareness and their activity in creating personal meaning. This formulation of reflexivity emphasizes the individual experience of significant therapeutic events. It distinguishes between the formation of intentions and the conversion of intentions to action.

Rennie (1992) notes "It is in the indeterminacy of reflexivity that the individual has choices, and hence the possibility of control over change."

The notions of clients agenic awareness during reflexive episodes, the acknowledgement of options, and the monitoring of disclosures produce a profile of clients as active creators of their own experience. In this way Rennie (1992) suggests that the psychotherapy process provides a forum for meaning creation, which occurs as the client reflects on their own experience during discussion with the therapist. This conceptualization of the client as an active creator of their own experience provides an important counterbalance to conceptions of reflexivity that emphasize components of an individual mind or alternatively the interactional context.

In another theoretical piece, Martin's conception of a reflexive self evolves from a type of autobiographical memory or self theory (1994). He develops a perspective of human actions and experience as socially derived, and both individually and collectively represented. The vehicle that permits this relatively nondualistic account is episodic memory nested within a social developmental perspective, with a particular emphasis on the role of language. In this framework, psychotherapy is conceived as "...a unique form of conversation that attempts to alter the personal theories" of clients in reference to themselves, others, and their circumstances (Martin, 1994). These personal theories are acquired through participation in intimate, social, and cultural conversations. The implications of this conception are that particular self-relevant aspects of therapeutic conversations are retained by episodic memory and influence the reformulation of client's self theories. This reformulation simultaneously influences the clients experience and understanding of themselves and their social world. The reconstruction of the past within current memory constitutes the meaning creation process. Although Martin does not explicitly discuss

reflexivity, his ideas are congruent with a construct of reflexivity which emphasizes the individual within their social context. While Martin claims that the revision of personal theories is potentially ongoing, it is not exactly clear how individuals exercise their agency and intentionality in the meaning creation process, and thus transcend the social roots of their self theories.

Martin and his colleagues have conducted empirical work which provides some support for a model of memory mediated psychotherapeutic change. Martin (1987, 1992) provides accounts of personal theory revision which take place during and after clients participation in psychotherapy. In these situations clients have shown increasingly complex, integrated cognitive representations of their problems. Further, Martin describes circumstances where clients were able to recall specific psychotherapeutic events in detail (Martin, 1992; Martin, Paivio, & Labadie, 1990; Cummings, Hallberg, Martin, & Slemon, 1992; Cummings, Martin, Hallberg, & Slemon, 1992). These recalled events were initially categorized, and later organized into two task areas: a) enhancing client's personal awareness, and b) revising personal theories. In a study conducted by Martin, Paivio, and Labadie (1990), the relative contributions of clients and therapists to the therapeutic events that clients recalled accurately following psychotherapy sessions revealed that it was therapists' discourse that distinguished significant events from matched control events from the same therapy sessions.

The philosophical writers, Rom Harre (1983) and Charles Taylor (1985, 1989) have developed social developmental conceptions of the self which are nondualistic and incorporate environmental and individual dimensions. Both authors cite social, historical, and cultural influences as significantly contributing to the early understandings and development of the self. However, their

conceptions of a developing self differ with respect to the way an individual transforms and is transformed by their own self creation process.

Harre (1983) has developed a stage theory which strongly favors social influences in the elaboration of a theory of the self. Initially an individual adopts particular social and cultural forms. In the beginning these forms assist in organizing the individual's experience. Over time, the individual transforms, shapes, and modifies the socially derived forms. Eventually, the individual may express the products of private transformational processes in the public sphere. In turn, these products may constitute a unique contribution and become incorporated into shared practices, knowledge, or conventions. Essentially, the self is understood as constituting a theory of significant, self relevant experiences: a type of living autobiography. These self theories are the source of reflexive powers and agency. Harre claims that "reflexivity is the magic ingredient by which persons are created as self-conscious, self-controlling, and autobiographically aware beings" however he believes that this occurs by acquiring the local version of the theoretical concept of the self.

Taylor (1985, 1989) describes the development of a self as a more active dynamic, creator of experience. The internalization of self relevant discourse begins the development of the self. Particular valued self descriptions are measured against social and cultural moral standards. Memory of previous selves can be accessed and re-experienced simultaneously with an emergent self in the context of dialogue and conversation. Reflexivity is understood as constituting an active awareness of one's own experiencing in dialogical contexts. Self understanding is derived from self relevant discourse. Aspects of an individual's self theory is represented both internally and constituted in their actions. Individuals may develop a self from socially derived origins through

other dialogical possibilities and thus the self evolves beyond the original dialogical forms. In this sense, Taylor's view of the self is a transcendental one.

The foregoing work provides a range of conceptualizations associated with the notion of reflexivity. Reflexivity is variously interpreted as constituted within the individual, between the individual and their social, cultural, and interactional context, and as a critical aspect of personal change in psychotherapy.

The current study extends the parameters of the notion of reflexivity to couples psychotherapy sessions, and specifically to interpersonal resistance between partners. The Milan group's notion of stuckness provided an initial rough definition of interpersonal resistance. This theory will be revisited with the purpose of ascertaining the degree to which a conception of reflexivity is articulated in the work. This notion of reflexivity will be compared to the one developed in the study, in order to assess whether the current conceptualization modifies, supports, or extends the Milan conceptualization.

E. The Milan and Grounded Theory Conceptions of Reflexivity

While most of the Milan groups' written work emphasizes family problems, case studies, and particular intervention strategies, they make reference to "metacommunication" which can be understood as a type of reflexivity (Selvini-Palazzoli et al, 1978a). Specifically, they note that there are several levels of communication: a) first order or content, and b) second order or relationship aspects. When couples become stuck interactionally, the symptom is assumed to be functional, or have meaning. The meaning of the symptom for the couple may represent unconscious or unexamined material, nevertheless it indicates that some aspect of the relationship is out of their control.

The therapist assists the family in therapy, utilizing an observing team behind a one way mirror. This team aids the therapist by generating ideas and hypotheses regarding the meaning of the symptom, and potential interventions. The truth of the interpretations is considered to be relative, with the primary focus of the treatment team as the pragmatic resolution of the problem. The team, in effect assists the therapist to be more reflexive in their therapeutic approach.

Couples that are not stuck are described as being capable of metacommunicating. These couples discuss both the content or first order, and relationship or second order levels of their problems in a way that recognizes the mutual and simultaneous nature of their communication. These couples can be considered to be reflexive: they are aware that they both contribute to as well as react to each other. While these couples are considered to be stable in their interactions with each other, rather than stuck, they are nevertheless assumed to be in an ongoing process of change and development.

The foregoing discussion indicates that the notion of reflexivity is not an entirely new one to the Milan model. The therapist, team members, and couples behave in ways that represent an interactional interpretation of reflexivity. However, important aspects of an individual's ability to act intentionally and to covertly ponder the relative benefits of pursuing one course of action rather than another are not a part of this conceptualization. The treatment team's understandings of client problems are stressed, and the team assumes an expert position with respect to the resolution of the couples' difficulties. Their task is to create powerful interventions targeting the interactional knot, which may potentially unravel the knot, permitting the couple to spontaneously return to healthy development.

The conception of reflexivity developed by the grounded theory differs from the foregoing account in several critical ways. Partners in couple

relationships continuously monitored their own experience, reviewed options for action, and made decisions in the session about whether to disclose or not disclose to their partner and the therapist. Either course of action was perceived by clients as having important relationship consequences. While partners are members of systems, they are also individuals. Individuals are capable of acting on their intentions and choosing a preferred course of action. As well, they are simultaneously part of a relationship yet constitute a separate experiential world. While clients regard their therapists as having special status by virtue of their position or knowledge, they are not uncritical of the therapists' therapeutic approach, strategies, or interventions. They view themselves and the therapist as fallible people. They monitor the therapist's ability to recognize them as individuals, and to balance their attention to each partner in a fair and just manner. When clients feel psychologically safe, experience validation and acknowledgement, and have a trusting relationship with the therapist, they are able to be reflexive, and to make disclosures about important relationship events.

Partners also monitor the disclosures of their spouse. They evaluate whether they are making a serious effort to address relationship problems, to support each other, and to work cooperatively with the therapist. They observe whether their partner engages in self protective behavior during the session. And finally, partners consider their spouse's behavior and their own second order evaluations of themselves, the partner, the relationship, and the therapist. These factors are evaluated amidst others as they form intentions, and make plans. This notion of reflexivity extends that of the Milan group beyond the dimension of the therapist-couple triad and couple dyad, to include the dimension of the individual partner.

F. The Notion of Interpersonal Resistance

The Milan notion of stuckness was initially utilized as a beginning core construct of partners' interpersonal resistance in psychotherapy. Stuck couples, according to the Milan definition, were those who blame each other for relationship events, think about their problems in a linear fashion (i.e., A causes B which causes C, and so on) and do not talk about the way they communicate with each other. These couples engage in repetitive and negative interactional cycles.

The core category of the grounded theory has been described as reflexivity, or episodes when partners recall being intensely focused on their own experiencing during a couples psychotherapy session. Videotape segments of couples' psychotherapy sessions were selected by the researcher on the basis of markers potentially indicating interpersonal resistance. The categories representing clients' experiences during these particular segments of their couples' psychotherapy sessions reflected evidence of reflexivity. However, clients are not always reflexive. At times they are not aware of their own activity but are caught up in the action (Searle, 1983). Reflexive awareness lapses into episodes of nonreflexivity, and returns again to reflexivity as a continuous and ongoing stream of human experience.

One of the categories that emerged in the analysis of partners' transcribed interviews was entitled 'Self Protective responses to Meaning Creation', and had originally been described as 'Resistance.' While transcripts of all 22 partners produced some of these codes, the 6 partners of couples constituting the Stuck group contributed the majority of these codes. This

category seemed to be best represented by the notion of self-protection rather than resistance because these were episodes where clients either aware or not aware of their reasons for actions. Some partners recalled being concerned that the efforts of either the therapist or partner to engage them in discussion, would lead them to reveal inner thoughts and feelings. This type of revelation was considered to be "dangerous."

Most definitions of resistance encompass reference to unconscious material (Masterson, 1981; Boszormenyi-Nagi & Ulrich, 1981). Nevertheless, many present day accounts of resistance also incorporate conscious objection by the client to various dimensions of the therapeutic process (Ellis, 1983; Rennie, 1994b).

While partners' responses indicated that some selected episodes actually did capture times when they experienced ambivalence, anger, or a desire to avoid the therapist or their partner, there is no way to acquire client confirmation about episodes that potentially represent examples of their unconscious conflict. On the other hand, in contrast to these results partners in unstuck couple relationships were able to address their relationship difficulties by assuming a reflexive posture.

A preliminary review of the returns of the Self Protective Responses category indicates that partners of stuck couples were very reluctant to share inner material that made them feel particularly vulnerable. At times, these partners cooperated with each other to divert the attention of the therapist or to dismiss the therapists' comments with respect to the relationship. More frequently, partners of stuck couples choose to act in ways which perpetuated emotional distance between themselves and their spouse: this was something which was sometimes acknowledged, although not reflected upon. At times partners were aware of the reasons for their actions, and at other times they were

not. As noted previously, some partners expressed concerns about the therapeutic context as influencing their perceived ability to self disclose. Related factors that appeared to delimit partners' reflexive participation in therapy sessions included: understanding the goals of therapy, the therapist's role, and perceptions of the therapist's neutrality and competence. Other responses indicated that partners' constructs of themselves, their partners, and their relationships influenced their decisions to protect themselves, or not disclose. When partners have constructs that are primarily borrowed from their social or interactional context rather than examined in a thoughtful way and reconstructed, they appear to expect their partners to meet their unstated or unconscious needs. Regardless of the reasons given by partners, it is clear that in the context of either a poor relationship alliance or an extremely difficult relationship situation, they are unwilling/unable to reflect on their experience or be open about it. Partners who acted in self protective ways were perceived as influencing the meaning creation process. All behavior in the therapy sessions constituted communication. Whether partners choose to disclose their own thoughts and feelings or to blame their spouse for relationship problems, they potentially influenced both their own and other's understandings.

The foregoing discussion is not a claim that what partners report as wanting is the same as what they need. Nor is it a claim that what partners report is necessarily parallel to what they actually experience. The preliminary returns of this category must be interpreted with caution. While it is possible that the selected episodes actually represented moments when partners engaged in resisting each other, it is also possible that they did not. Yet, people are not aware of their own unconscious reactions. Further, people are not always reflexive. Nevertheless, the returns of this analysis suggest that stuck and unstuck couples deal with their interpersonal conflicts differently. Nondisclosure

between partners can arise from both conscious intentional reasons, and apparently unconscious and unexamined motivations. When couples experience more intense difficulties in their relationships or poor therapeutic relationships, they have greater concern about their vulnerability in making disclosures to their partner in psychotherapy.

The following section will examine the implications of the revised understandings of couples' interpersonal resistance and reflexivity in couples psychotherapy with respect to the theoretical framework of the dissertation, and in relation to psychotherapeutic practice.

G Implications of the Extended Conceptions of Reflexivity and Interpersonal Resistance

Rennie (1992) has argued that given the centrality of reflexivity as clients' experience of psychotherapy, theories of psychotherapeutic change must begin to incorporate the notions of clients' intentionality and agency. In the current study, the core category of reflexivity has been extended along three dimensions : the individual partners' experience, the couple, and the therapist-couple triad. Essentially, reflexivity is displayed in therapeutic episodes of more in-depth meaning making with individuals, couples, and therapist-couple triads, and these episodes are perceived by clients as being significant.

Several theoretical implications arise from this re-conceptualization of reflexivity. In regard to the Milan notion of reflexivity, this study's extended notion of reflexivity suggests that it is important to incorporate the dimension of individual partners' reflexivity, and their inherent intentionality and agency. Not only can individual partners potentially change their understandings and experience of themselves, their partners, and their relationships, but couples can

step further inside their own interactions to examine them in a fuller, more focused and purposeful way.

An extension of the Milan notion of reflexivity would require recognition of the following points:

- a) The reasons clients given for their actions are important and should be considered.
- b) Sometimes partners choose not to change and have reasons for this decision.
- c) Sometimes partners choose not to change and are not aware of their reasons for this decision.
- d) Clients, by virtue of their own experience and opportunities for reflection of their inner constructs, may not know that it is possible for them to alter their own understandings and experience of themselves, their partners, and their relationships.
- e) When clients obtain the knowledge that they can potentially change their experience they may not know how to begin to do this.
- f) Clients may choose not to disclose important information about their experience of the therapist, therapeutic strategies, or goals of the session/course of therapy, and this nondisclosure may inhibit the disclosure between partners of important relationship events.
- g) Clients may choose not to disclose relevant information about themselves, their partner, or relationship, with or without conscious reasons for this action, because they feel dangerously vulnerable.

At the beginning of this study a conception of shared or social memory was proposed which incorporated individual experiential or autobiographical memory. This framework was proposed for the purposes of encompassing both

the person and their social and interpersonal context in the construction of meaning.

The implications of the extended notion of reflexivity developed in this study are that these episodes mark clients' active creation of new understandings of themselves, their partners, and their relationships. This reflexive process is a very active one. It provides some explanation for what is considered to be significant. Taylor's (1985, 1989) developmental definition of reflexivity was adopted, which suggests that people differ with respect to the degree to which they have adopted their understandings of themselves from the culture or other external authorities, and have examined and developed more fitting self descriptions. This account permits the evolution of a transcendental self; a self theory that extends beyond understandings derived from the culture to more fully represent the creative emergent self.

The theoretical implications of this elaboration of reflexivity within a framework of social, autobiographical memory, are that accounts of events are variable across individuals, and are related to the individuals' past experiences, understandings of self and other, context, purposes, and social opportunities for reflexive examination. The individual partners' constructs of themselves, their partner, and their relationships must be viewed as evolving, and having the potential to become elaborated over time within the psychotherapy context. As well, partners' self, other, and relationship constructs may be relatively unexamined with respect to significant relationship events, and may contribute to a "lack of fit" with different aspects of partners' experiences and actions. Thus, it is important to consider that some interactional behavior or action, may be generated with reference to these constructs, and thus reflect unexamined experience. Further, partners' constructs and experiences in the world may be expressed in their causal explanations of relationship events. Thus, attributions

that arise in relation to episodes of interpersonal resistance between partners, may be perceived as representing particularly rigid self and other constructs.

The returns of the study suggest implications for the practice of couples psychotherapy. Couples, and each partner, are capable of engaging in reflexivity within the psychotherapeutic session. Clients tend not to disclose their dissatisfactions about their therapist or the process within the session, yet they require certain therapeutic conditions in order to make disclosures about significant relationship events. With the inherent power inequity in the roles of therapist and client, it is incumbent on the therapist to monitor potential disjunctions between clients' covert experience and their statements, and to develop ways of asking about clients' experiences throughout the process of therapy. The therapist influences the meaning creation process, and interaction between partners. It is important that therapists examine their own preconceptions about therapy, the roles of therapist and client, and develop sensitivity to the unique experiences of each individual and couple. The value of clinicians' own reflexivity about their practice cannot be underestimated. Colleagues may provide assistance to particular clinicians' reflexive practice through observation, consultation, and thoughtful discussion.

Partners choose to disclose or not disclose their experiences of significant relationship events with respect to their partner and the relationship. When therapists take responsibility for asking about their clients' experience, and are mindful of their agenic capacity, they can assist in developing strong relationships and facilitative conditions which promote reflexivity between partners. Therapists may contribute to the creation of new understandings of relationship events with their clients by creating opportunities for partners to feel supported, safe, develop trust, and focus their attention on the way the world is for them. While there are many reasons partners may choose not to disclose, when there is interpersonal

resistance between partners, these reasons are important. Issues of vulnerability or perceived risk can be addressed with clients. In some cases, it may be important to meet with partners individually for a few sessions. However, in this event it is important to carefully contract with the couple in order for the therapist to maintain a balanced position with the partners, address confidentiality concerns, yet also facilitate the couples' goals with respect to their relationship.

While the Milan theory suggests that strategic interventions targeting hypothesized nodal points may jolt couples who appear to be stuck in their interactions and thus potentially eliminate the problem, the results of the current study suggest that this strategy is unlikely to be successful with stuck couples. Those couples with more serious relationship problems are more likely to benefit from getting in touch with the experience their own experiencing, and to have the opportunity to examine and modify their own self, other, and relationship constructs.

When partners in couple relationship are viewed as active and intentional agents it becomes important to choose therapeutic goals and interventions which further empower clients, and facilitate an internal locus of control. By assuming a collaborative stance with clients, therapists can work to assist clients to gain control over troublesome aspects of their experience in ways that are consistent with the notion of agency. Given the unique experiential worlds, socio-cultural backgrounds, interpersonal contexts, and self theories of clients, it is not possible to generate prescriptions for practice. Rather, the foregoing discussion suggests general guidelines for a particular approach to therapeutic work with couples, which have been derived from clients' experiences of couples psychotherapy.

H. Limitations of the Study

One of the final responsibilities of the researcher is to note the limitations of an inquiry. Several concerns relating to the selection of the sample, the use of a new measure, and the parameters of the grounded theory will be discussed.

In this study, a discovery orientation and grounded theory analysis of partners' understandings of significant events in couples psychotherapy led to the construction of a theoretical model. Sampling procedures did not conform exactly to those used in classical grounded theory studies where the emergent theory guides the selection of cases. More pragmatic alternative methods were adopted in order to accommodate the study to the community agency's contextual constraints. In the event where time and resources were less important considerations, a theoretical sampling approach would perhaps have been a preferable strategy.

The Relationship Attribution Measure (RAM), a new measure, was used as one method of gauging the level of couples' interpersonal resistance with each other. It assisted in the selection and differentiation of couples for the purposes of this study. However, the RAM has not been used extensively with clinical populations, and its discriminant validity can be challenged.

Several further methodological concerns arise with respect to the practice of the SPR procedure. While I attempted to provide considerable latitude to participants in their selection of significant psychotherapy events, choices were somewhat constrained because videotaped segments were pre-selected and guided by my focus on interpersonal resistance in psychotherapy. Yet, it is not assumed that clients would necessarily choose the same episodes had they viewed the entire couples' psychotherapy session. (The EMQ and SQ data were used to provide further revelation of participants' significant psychotherapy

events). Further exploratory work on client identification of significant events may yield important information about clients' experience of couples psychotherapy. A comparison of reflexive and non-reflexive partner's selections of significant in-session events may yield further differentiation of significant episodes in couples psychotherapy. A comparison of individual partner's interpretations of significant events over the course of couples therapy also were not examined in this study. This type of comparison may assist in the conceptual elaboration of reflexivity and its role within the context of therapy outcome.

Another limitation of the SPR procedure is the difficulty of adequately interpreting and representing primarily emotional/experiential material that is expressed non-verbally during the psychotherapy session and SPR process. This limitation subsequently influences the theoretical model because it fails to incorporate particular affective factors (i.e., such as intense fear of self disclosure) which play a potentially important role in couple relationships.

The core category of the grounded theory is Reflexivity. One of the problems of using the SPR procedure is that the task requires participants to be reflexive. Respondents were asked to provide evidence of their reflexivity during the psychotherapy session as they reviewed the videotape. In response, they may practice reflexivity (i.e., become deeply involved with their own experiencing) in order to remember being reflexive. To minimize conflating the findings of the study with the inquiry process, participants were asked to discriminate the time frame of their recollections. Responses to this instruction assisted in differentiating participants' recollection of past and the construction of experience. While this strategy provided some protection against inflating the results, participants became deeply involved in their own processes, and appeared to forget the focus of the research. At times, it was possible to redirect

participants. Yet, there were instances when repeated redirections would have disrupted the flow of the inquiry. Thus, the reporting of partners' reflexivity in couples' therapy sessions in this study may be somewhat higher than would otherwise be the case. Nevertheless, reflexivity remains the central quality of partners' experience of couples psychotherapy sessions.

While the theoretical model suggests that the core concept of reflexivity may be an important quality differentiating partners with lesser or more serious relationship impasses, one cannot generalize these results beyond this sample. Participants were chosen from a clinical population of couples in psychotherapy for their interpersonal problems. Further exploratory work is needed with couples from both clinical and non-clinical populations and across a variety of settings, before we can begin to discern the role of reflexivity in the resolution of couples interpersonal resistance. The parameters of the grounded theory are limited to partners' experiences of one psychotherapy session. A broader and conceptually richer model may be derived from data generated during the course of therapy. Nonetheless, the grounded theory provides a schema which provokes further questions about the role of reflexivity in couples' relationships, the significance of particular therapeutic conditions, the meaning-making capability of individual partners, and the reconstructive resources of couples.

I. Conclusion

At the outset of this study, various psychotherapeutic theories were reviewed to assess whether their conceptual frameworks provided adequate explanations of couples' interpersonal resistance in psychotherapy. The notion of stuckness devised by the Milan group suggested that the attributions of blame, responsibility, and locus of control are important components for a conception of

partners' interpersonal resistance. In this inquiry, a grounded theory analysis of partners' experiences of a couples therapy session has contributed to an elaborated conceptual framework. The theory recognizes the significance of both partners' reflexivity in the counselling session and its implications for the resolution of relationship impasses. The core concept of reflexivity was conceptualized on a continuum, with the greatest reflexivity occurring among couples with the least interactional difficulties. Couples with more severe difficulties, or relationship impasses, displayed the least degree of reflexivity. The theory proposes that couples engage in problem resolution and the creation of shared understandings when both partners practice reflexivity, and when the therapeutic context provides favorable conditions for this practice. This emergent theory was developed from clients' reporting of their own therapeutic experiences. This study's conception of reflexivity was compared with other notions in psychotherapeutic and philosophical literatures, and with the notions of reflexivity and interpersonal resistance developed by the Milan group. The implications of the returns from this study are discussed with respect to both theory and practice. Implications in both of these areas stress the importance of clients' perspectives in the practice, discovery, and mapping of therapeutic process and change.

Clients experience problems within the broader context of their relationships. The generation of partners' experiences from one couples psychotherapy session does not adequately represent this relationship context. Partners have histories together, share understandings of a range of experiences, and develop overall sentiments about their attachments. While respondents did not talk explicitly about the emotional aspects of their attachments, it was portrayed through voice quality, physical posture, and the struggle to express deep inner feelings. These experiences are intensely

personal, and it may be that few methods can adequately capture the full meaning and salience of these phenomena. Yet, the reciprocal valuing, experiential richness, and vibrancy of couples' affective bonds are central to an adequate notion of intimacy.

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Appendix A

Experiential Memory Questionnaire

- I. Take a few minutes to relax, and to reflect upon the counselling session you've just participated in. Try to recall any parts of the session that you found to be significant. Briefly list as many of the exact words, phrases, sentences, and sensations that remind you of these events.

Experiential Memory Questionnaire (continued)

II. a) Try to recall the most important things that occurred. What exact words were spoken, or things were done by either you, your partner, or the therapist?

b) What special meaning or understanding does this event have for you?

Experiential Memory Questionnaire (continued)

III. a) Identify the next most important event that occurred. Again, try to recall the exact words, or actions, and whom was involved in this event.

b) Again, reflect upon the specific aspects which impressed you. What meaning or understanding does this event have for you?

Appendix B

Stimulated Recall Procedure

(This procedure will be audiotaped)

1) The researcher will conduct this procedure separately with each partner of the couple. The videotape of the session is used as the stimulus for client's own experiential memories. Several segments are chosen, however if the client does not recall memories of the session in response to one of the taped segments then the researcher will move to the next segment of videotape. Each partner will view the same segments of videotape. As much as possible partners are asked to a) distinguish between current thoughts and reflections and those that occurred during the session, and b) the time and events during the therapy session which occurred in relation to partners' meaningful thoughts, memories, and experiences, if any.

Immediately after viewing the videotape segments, the researcher will encourage partners to recall, as spontaneously as possible, their most meaningful experiences, memories, and thoughts. The following questions can be used as prompts, if necessary.

a) What do you remember as significant, if anything, at this point during the session?

b) What were your thoughts about your relationship at this point?

c) What were your thoughts about your partner at this point?

d) Did you have any thoughts about the purpose of this part of the interview? If so, what were your thoughts?

Appendix C

Relationship Attribution Measure

This questionnaire describes several things that your spouse might do. Imagine your spouse performing each behavior and then read the statements that follow it.

Please circle the number that indicates how much you agree or disagree with each statement, using the rating scale below:

	1 disagree strongly	2 disagree	3 disagree some- what	4 agree some- what	5 agree	6 agree strongly
<i>1) Your partner criticizes something you say:</i>						
My partner's behavior was due to something about him/her.(ie., the type of person he/she is, the mood she/he was in).						
The reason my partner criticized me is <u>not</u> likely to change.						
The reason my partner criticized me is something that affects other areas of our marriage.						
My partner criticized me on purpose rather than unintentionally.						
My partner's behavior was motivated by selfish rather than <u>unselfish</u> concerns.						
My partner deserves to be blamed for criticizing me.						

	1 disagree strongly	2 disagree	3 disagree some- what	4 agree some- what	5 agree	6 agree strongl y
<i>2) Your partner begins to spend less time with you:</i>						
My partner's behavior was due to something about him/her.(ie., the type of person he/she is, the mood she/he was in).						
The reason my partner spends less time with me is <u>not</u> likely to change.						
The reason my partner spends less time with me is something that affects other areas of our marriage.						
My partner spends less time with me on purpose rather than unintentionally.						
My partner's behavior was motivated by selfish rather than <u>unselfish</u> concerns.						
My partner deserves to be blamed for spending less time with me.						

	1 disagree strongly	2 disagree	3 disagree some- what	4 agree some- what	5 agree	6 agree strongl y
<i>3) Your partner does not pay attention to what you are saying:</i>						
My partner's behavior was due to something about him/her. (ie., the type of person he/she is, the mood she/he was in).						
The reason my partner does not pay attention to me is <u>not</u> likely to change.						
The reason my partner does not pay attention to me is something that affects other areas of our marriage.						
My partner does not pay attention to me on purpose rather than unintentionally.						
My partner's behavior was motivated by selfish rather than <u>unselfish</u> concerns.						
My partner deserves to be blamed for not paying attention to me.						

	1 disagree strongly	2 disagree	3 disagree some- what	4 agree some- what	5 agree	6 agree strongly
<i>4) Your partner is cool and distant:</i>						
My partner's behavior was due to something about him/her. (ie., the type of person he/she is, the mood she/he was in).						
The reason my partner is cool and distant with me is <u>not</u> likely to change.						
The reason my partner is cool and distant with me is something that affects other areas of our marriage.						
My partner is cool and distant with you on purpose rather than unintentionally.						
My partner's behavior was motivated by selfish rather than <u>unselfish</u> concerns.						
My partner deserves to be blamed for being cool and distant with me.						

	1 disagree strongly	2 disagree	3 disagree some- what	4 agree some- what	5 agree	6 agree strongly
<i>5) Your partner doesn't complete his/her chores:</i>						
My partner's behavior was due to something about him/her. (ie., the type of person he/she is, the mood she/he was in).						
The reason my partner doesn't complete chores is <u>not</u> likely to change.						
The reason my partner doesn't complete chores is something that affects other areas of our marriage.						
My partner doesn't complete chores on purpose rather than unintentionally.						
My partner's behavior was motivated by selfish rather than <u>unselfish</u> concerns.						
My partner deserves to be blamed for not completing chores.						

	1 disagree strongly	2 disagree	3 disagree some- what	4 agree some- what	5 agree	6 agree strongly
<i>6) Your partner makes an important decision that affects the two of you without asking for your opinion:</i>						
My partner's behavior was due to something about him/her. (ie., the type of person he/she is, the mood she/he was in).						
The reason my partner did not ask me is <u>not</u> likely to change.						
The reason my partner did not ask me is something that affects other areas of our marriage.						
My partner is did not ask me on purpose rather than unintentionally.						
My partner's behavior was motivated by selfish rather than <u>unselfish</u> concerns.						
My partner deserves to be blamed for not asking me.						

	1 disagree strongly	2 disagree	3 disagree some- what	4 agree some- what	5 agree	6 agree strongl y
<i>7) Your partner doesn't give you the support you need:</i>						
My partner's behavior was due to something about him/her.(ie., the type of person he/she is, the mood she/he was in).						
The reason my partner did not support me is <u>not</u> likely to change.						
The reason my partner did not support me is something that affects other areas of our marriage.						
My partner is did not support me on purpose rather than unintentionally.						
My partner's behavior was motivated by selfish rather than <u>unselfish</u> concerns.						
My partner deserves to be blamed for not supporting me.						

	1 disagree strongly	2 disagree	3 disagree some- what	4 agree some- what	5 agree	6 agree strongl y
<i>8) Your partner is intolerant of something you do:</i>						
My partner's behavior was due to something about him/her.(ie., the type of person he/she is, the mood she/he was in).						
The reason is intolerant with did not support me is <u>not</u> likely to change.						
The reason my partner is intolerant with me is something that affects other areas of our marriage.						
My partner is intolerant with me on purpose rather than unintentionally.						
My partner's behavior was motivated by selfish rather than <u>unselfish</u> concerns.						
My partner deserves to be blamed for being intolerant of me.						

Appendix G

Descriptive Demographic Data Sheet (B)

Today's date ___/___/___

Questions for Counsellors:

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

1) How many years of counselling experience do you have since your Masters degree?

2) What kind of specialized training or staff development, if any, has influenced your clinical practice?

3) What types of techniques do you use routinely in your practice?

- assist the clients in recognizing the salient aspects of a situation_____
- encouraging clients to recognize new awareness of the problematic situation_____
- give clients homework between sessions_____
- assist clients to reexamine values_____
- redefine/reword the client's stated problem_____
- elaborate upon the positive aspects of a client's problem_____
- point out other significant factors relevant to the stated problem_____
- create awareness of new options of understanding or behaving_____
- assist clients to recognize own internal reactions (i.e., feelings, thoughts, etc.)_____
- exploration/elaboration of client's strengths and resources_____
- instruct clients to behave in particular ways with respect to the problem_____
- instruct clients to indulge in more of the symptomatic behavior_____
- elaborate upon the negative aspects of a problem_____
- negotiate boundaries/ground rules for relationship behavior_____
- acknowledge the utility of client's problematic reactions but indicate the lack of other feasible alternatives available to the client_____
- differentiate client's reactions in the interaction between marital partners

4) What is your theoretical orientation to clinical practice?

Appendix H

Informed Consent Form for Clients

This consent form is to ensure that you understand the parameters of the study, to ensure that you are fully informed about the procedures, and any potential risks and benefits that may be involved. This Ph. D. research proposal has been approved by the Ethics Committee of Simon Fraser University.

Participation in the study will involve completing four pencil and paper tests prior to a counselling interview. All four of the tests are brief, and will take approximately ten minutes each to complete. Each member of the couple will respond individually on each test.

Next, couples will attend a counselling session that will be conducted by their regular counsellor. This session will last between one hour to one hour and forty minutes.

Each couple will be exposed to a particular counselling technique that has been claimed to produce positive effects. This technique is invisible, is not anticipated to be harmful, and is not identified for purposes of the study.

The counselling session will be videotaped.

Immediately after the counselling session each member of the couple will be asked to complete five pencil and paper tests. All five of these are quite brief. Each partner will also be asked to participate individually in a short interview with the researcher. This interview will be audiotaped.

Approximately one month after the interview the researcher will re-contact the participants and ask each partner to complete one brief pencil and paper test.

All test responses are strictly confidential, and will be destroyed upon completion of the study. No individual, or couple will be identified in the study results. Subjects may decide to withdraw their participation, partially or fully, at any point during the study.

The video and audiotapes will also be destroyed/erased upon completion of the study, and will be treated with the strictest confidence.

Upon termination of the data collection phase of the study, couples will be informed of the nature of the counselling technique that they received. As well, if

requested, the Researcher will meet with participants to debrief their involvement in the study.

Study results will be made available to all participants.

If couples would like to participate in this study, please indicate your consent with each partners' signature on the lines below.

Yes, I consent to participate in this Ph.D. research study;

Loraine G. McCulloch, M.S.W.
S.F.U. Faculty of Education,
Burnaby, B.C.
Contact: 734-7027

Appendix I

Informed Consent Form for Counsellors and Team Members

This consent form is to ensure that you understand the parameters of this study and to ensure that you are fully informed about the procedures and any potential risks and benefits that may be involved. This Ph.D. research proposal has been approved by the Ethics Committee of Simon Fraser University.

Participation in this study will involve counsellors that will either interview their own clients in a counselling session, or become a team member behind a one way mirror.

Counsellors in the study will be required to participate in a half day training session on the study protocol.

Counselling sessions will be videotaped. These tapes will be treated with strict confidentiality, and will be erased upon completion of the study.

Before the counselling interview, counsellor participants will be asked to complete a brief four item pencil and paper questionnaire.

All test responses are confidential and will be destroyed upon completion of the study. No individual will be identified in the study results.

Study results will be made available to all participants. If you would like to participate in this study, please indicate your consent with your signature on the line below.

Yes, I agree to participate in this Ph. D. research study;

Lorraine G. McCulloch,
S.F.U. Faculty of Education,
Burnaby, B.C.
Contact: 734-7027

Appendix J

RESEARCH PROJECT

Protocol for Administering the RAM

- 1.) Please ask your couple to complete the RAM independently, without consultation with each other.
- 2.) The instrument takes about 10 minutes to complete. It is comprised of 8 questions, with several responses which are rated according to a liekert scale.
- 3.) It is best if the counsellor is not familiar with the instrument. The brown envelopes contain two RAM forms, one for each partner. After the forms are completed they can be returned to the brown envelope.
- 4.) Please remind partners to answer every question. Some may wish to skip questions. It is better that they indicate some response rather than no response at all. Partners may indicate that they cannot relate to specific situations. They are to be encouraged to respond "as if" they were in those situations.
- 5.) After the researcher has a chance to examine the RAM responses, the researcher and counsellor can discuss whether to, and when, to proceed with the Intervention session.
- 6.) If you need more RAM forms please contact me, rather than photocopying. I have a stack of them available.
- 7.) Please ask clients to stay in the office to complete the form rather than take them home.

Thanks! I think we can have fun with this project! Please call if you have further questions.

Lorraine McCulloch
734-7027.

Appendix K

The Construction of Categories of the Grounded Theory**Generation of Codes from Meaning Units**

(from Couple #5, Stuck group)

W: Well, I remember thinking when she (therapist) says you don't expect this to last and

Line 1: Codes (1) (2)

(partner) goes I have my doubts....it sure sounds like the marriage is defeated

Line 2: Codes (3) (18) (2) (6) (15)

anyway...She (therapist) says you don't trust that, that you'll be happy for longer and he

Line 3: Codes (17) (2)

says no...so it feels a bit defeated.... to mention it, but....

Line 4: Codes (15) (2) (6)

I think sometimes people can do what they need

Line 5: Codes (2) (6) (8) (12)

to do to make things happen...But I don't waste time because I'm very shy

Line 6: Codes (16) (19) (13) (12) (22)

and, and, not that confident, and it seems that (partner) gives up quite easy

Line 7: Codes (15) (16) (3) (4) (25)

so.....the last part was significant.....

Line 8: Codes (15) (3)

....Just that we are temporarily happy but anything could happen

Line 9: Codes (15) (8) (3)

and I guess that, maybe that is the way it's always going to be or something....

Line 10: Codes (15) (21) (23) (25)

List of Codes:

- 1) Partner focuses on own inner processes
- 2) Partner tracks own feelings and thoughts about partner
- 3) Partner focuses on spouse's behavior
- 4) Impact of partner's behavior on feelings and thoughts about self
- 5) Examines Partner's interpretation of own behavior
- 6) Considers impact of partner's feelings and thoughts on self
- 7) Partner tracks relationship problem
- 8) Partner interprets spouse's behavior
- 9) Partner examines spouse's role in relationship problem(s)
- 10) Partner tracks own role in relationship problem
- 11) Partner interprets spouse's role in relationship problem
- 12) Partner considers own potential behavioral response
- 13) Partner engages in inner problem solving
- 14) Impact of own thoughts and behavior on partner
- 15) Evaluates couple's problems negatively
- 16) Implicit blame of partner for couple's problems
- 17) Partner recalls in-session events
- 18) Partner observes and processes therapist-partner interaction
- 19) Partner expresses own thoughts and feelings in-session
- 20) Partner refers to other historical moments in the couples' history
- 21) Partner expresses doubt or negativity about the outcome of therapy

- 22) Partner justifies self
- 23) Partner avoids personal responsibility
- 24) Partner describes private in-session thoughts and feelings
- 25) Expresses or shows lack of sense of self

Generation of Meaning clusters from Codes

In reference to Partner

- Interpretation of partner's impact on self
- Feelings about partner (past, present, future)
- Positive view of partner disclosing in the session
- Description of partner (attributes, attributions, ways of being)
- Interpretation of partner's role in relationship problems
- Partner's response to own inner description of partner
- Awareness of own impact (feelings and thoughts) on partner
- Concern about own influence on partner
- Concern about partner's expectations in the relationship
- Anticipates partner's rejection
- Responds to inner description of partner
- Labels partner
- Attributes power to partner in influencing self
- Perception of partner's obligations to self

In reference to the SPR Research Process

- Partner spontaneously discloses SPR incidents (selected by researcher) are same as those selected as memorable on EMQ
- Partner sees counselling session differently on viewing videotape
- Partner discloses inner thoughts during SPR process
- Partner is reflexive on two levels: in session and in SPR interview
- Partner is anxious about research process
- Fear of researcher's judgement in response to disclosures of in-session thoughts
- SPR videotape playback segments experienced as "enjoyable", "insightful", "fun"
- Partner "forgets" the SPR playback immediately after viewing it

In reference to Self

- Partner defines own feelings and thoughts in reference to partner's feelings and thoughts
- Partner assumes responsibility for relationship problems
- Partner accepts spouse's negative interpretation of own behavior
- Partner unable to identify own feelings and thoughts
- Partner expresses feeling unappreciated or unacknowledged by spouse
- Partner anticipates partner's rejection
- Partner attributes spouse with power to change self
- Concern about own influence on partner
- Interpretation of own role in couple problems
- Description of self

- Feelings and thoughts about partner
- Impact of own responses on feelings and thoughts about self
- Impact of partner's responses on feelings and thoughts about self

Generation of Properties from Meaning Clusters

In reference to Partner

- Interpretation of partner's impact on self
- Feelings about partner (past, present, and future)
- Inner description of partner (attributions, motivations)
- Perception of partner's role in relationship problems
- Perception of partner's disclosures in session
- Perception of partner's responses to own disclosures
- Conception of a bond with partner, or lack of one

In reference to Self

- Sense of, or lack of sense of self
- Feelings and thoughts about partner
- Feelings and thoughts about self
- Impact of partner's responses on feelings and thoughts about self
- Impact of partner's responses on feelings and thoughts about partner
- Impact of own responses on feelings and thoughts about self

In reference to the SPR Process

- Partner indicates segments are personally significant (or not)
- Partner responds on two levels of reflexivity (i.e., in-session, during SPR interview)
- Partner slides across time in their responses
- Partner expresses anxiety about interview process
- Partner discloses their inner experience of the SPR inquiry

Generation of Category labels from clusters of Properties

Schema or Conception of Partner

- Interpretation of partner's impact on self
- Feelings about partner (past, present, and future)
- Inner description of partner (attributions, motivations)
- Perception of partner's role in relationship problems
- Perception of partner's disclosures in session
- Perception of partner's responses to own disclosures

Schema or Conception of Self

- Sense of, or lack of sense of self
- Feelings and thoughts about partner
- Feelings and thoughts about self
- Impact of partner's responses on feelings and thoughts about self

- Impact of partner's responses on feelings and thoughts about partner
- Impact of own responses on feelings and thoughts about self

Impact of the SPR Process

- Partner indicates segments are personally significant (or not)
- Partner responds on two levels of reflexivity (i.e., in-session, during SPR interview)
- Partner slides across time in their responses
- Partner expresses anxiety about interview process
- Partner discloses their inner experience of the SPR inquiry

Generation of Codes from Meaning Units

(From couple # 11, Unstuck group)

H: .And it wasn't , it wasn't working, I figured there had to be another

Line 1: (7) (13) (17)

solution. I knew I was doing the wrong thing by sitting in there to start

Line 2: (19) (17) (13) (26) (27) (28)

with. So I guess that in itself, kind of made me frustrated to start with, I

Line 3: (28) (1) (7) (17) (19)

knew I should have been sitting outside the room or sitting, just, like I

Line 4: (1) (7) (29) (13)

ended up doing.... It really affects me when (partner) gets frustrated with my frustration,

Line 5: (2) (3) (1) (6) (7) (20)

...I don't like to feel that I'm inadequate and I don't think

Line 6: (3) (4) (25) (8)

I am but when she gets mad at me for getting frustrated that really bothers

Line 7: (3) (4) (14) (19) (7)

me because I feel she, I should be allowed...I should be allowed to get frustrated

Line 8: (4) (16) (28) (29)

sometimes...And then by her situation sometimes she, she gets frustrated with me which

Line 9: (7) (3) (6) (14) (17) (20)

makes me very angry, well I guess I shouldn't say angry, it just makes me more

Line 10: (3) (2) (1) (7) (8) (17) (29)

New Codes Added to List:

- 25) Partner expresses or indicates a lack of a sense of self
- 26) Partner examines own process with therapist and partner
- 27) Partner discloses thoughts and feelings in presence of therapist and partner
- 28) Partner expresses own feelings and thoughts about self
- 29) Partner examines own role in relationship problems

The Generation of Meaning Clusters from Codes

In reference to Partner's Reflectiveness

- Partner identifies and acknowledges own part in the relationship problem
- Partner reflects upon own struggles that influences the relationship problem
- Partner makes efforts to understand spouse's views and feelings
- Partner makes use of opportunity to sort out the relationship problem in therapy

- Partner elicits, is responsive, to partner's perspective
- Partner is sensitive to the impact of own behavior on partner
- Partner assesses own internal experience
- Partner discloses own feelings and thoughts to partner and therapist
- Partner integrates new understandings
- Partners engage emotionally with each other
- Partners orient to each other to resolve problems in the therapy session
- Partners support and acknowledge their spouse's experience
- Partners express caring for each other

In reference to a Conception of Partner

- Interpretation of partner's impact on self
- Feelings about partner (past, present, and future)
- Inner description of partner (attributions, motivations)
- Interpretation of partner's role in relationship problems
- Perception of impact of own behavior on partner
- Perception of partner's disclosures in session (and out of session)
- Perception of partner's responses to own disclosures (in and out of session)
- Conception of a bond with partner, or lack of one

In reference to a Conception of Self

- Partner defines own feelings and thoughts in reference to own inner experience
- Partner shares responsibility for relationship problems
- Partner defines meaning of own behavior, through reflectiveness, and partner's experience

- Partner identifies own feelings and thoughts
- Partner acknowledges impact of spouse's behavior on feelings/thoughts about self
- Partner acknowledges influence of own behavior on feeling and thoughts about self
- Description of self
- Feelings and thoughts about partner

Generation of Properties from Meaning Clusters

In reference to Reflectiveness

- Individual Partner focuses on own inner processes
- Individual Partner observes interaction between therapist and partner
- Individual Partner does not disclose own feelings and thoughts
- Partner examines own process with therapist in presence of partner
- Partner tells stories
- Partner discloses private thoughts and feelings in session
- Partner is sensitive to the impact of own behavior on partner
- Partner respects spouse's reflexive process
- Partner identifies and integrates new understandings in presence of therapist and partner
- Partners clarify thoughts, feelings, and interpretations of behavior
- Partners problem solve, make decisions together, evolve a version of events
- Partners engage emotionally with each other during the session
- Partners communicate non-verbally
- Partners share humor

- Partners disclose to each other
- Partners support and acknowledge their spouse's experience
- Partners talk about their relationship, and share responsibility for it

In reference to Partner Conception

- Interpretation of partner's impact on self
- Feelings about partner (past, present, and future)
- Inner description of partner (attributions, motivations)
- Interpretation of partner's role in relationship problems
- Perception of partner's disclosures in session (and out of session)
- Perception of partner's responses to own disclosures (in and out of session)
- Conception of a bond, or relationship, with partner (or lack of one)

In reference to Self Conception

- Partner refers to inner sense of self, or not
- Feelings and thoughts about partner
- Feelings and thoughts about self
- Partner acknowledges impact of spouse's behavior on feelings/ thoughts about self
- Partner acknowledges impact of own behavior on feeling and thoughts about self
- Impact of partner's behavior on feelings and thoughts about partner

Generation of Properties to Categories

Reflectiveness, or Personal Meaning Creation

- Individual Partner focuses on own inner processes
- Individual Partner observes interaction between therapist and partner
- Individual Partner does not disclose own feelings and thoughts
- Partner examines own process with therapist in presence of partner
- Partner tells stories
- Partner discloses private thoughts and feelings in session
- Partner is sensitive to the impact of own behavior on partner
- Partner respects spouse's reflexive process
- Partner identifies and integrates new understandings in presence of therapist and partner
- Partners clarify thoughts, feelings, and interpretations of behavior
- Partners problem solve, make decisions together, evolve a version of events
- Partners engage emotionally with each other during the session
- Partners communicate non-verbally
- Partners share humor
- Partners disclose to each other
- Partners support and acknowledge their spouse's experience
- Partners talk about their relationship, and share responsibility for it

Self Conception

- Partner refers to inner sense of self, or not

- Feelings and thoughts about partner
- Feelings and thoughts about self
- Partner acknowledges impact of spouse's behavior on feelings/ thoughts about self
- Partner acknowledges impact of own behavior on feeling and thoughts about self
- Impact of partner's behavior on feelings and thoughts about partner

Partner Conception

- Interpretation of partner's impact on self
- Feelings about partner (past, present, and future)
- Inner description of partner (attributions, motivations)
- Interpretation of partner's role in relationship problems
- Perception of partner's disclosures in session (and out of session)
- Perception of partner's responses to own disclosures (in and out of session)
- Conception of a bond, or relationship, with partner (or lack of one)

Generation of Codes from Meaning Units

(From Couple #8, Midrange group)

M:....I've pretty well said everything, well, said everything that

Line 1: Meaning units (1) (7) (17)

there was to be said on my side, the only thing on that particular piece of

Line 2: Meaning units (17) (19)

the tape, on, on, the particular moment there on feelings and thoughts and so

Line 3: Meaning units (17)

on....The only thing is I have another impression in my mind is that...to view

Line 4: Meaning units (1) (17) (7)

and to understand (partner's) point of view and feedback....I would like to see it

Line 5: Meaning units (3) (6) (24)

the way, I would like to know how, how,....how she comes to terms with her

Line 6: Meaning units (3) (2) (6)

behavior, and how does she feel? You know what I'm saying? How does she

Line 7: (16) (2) (3) (11) (9)

see this situation, that particular situation, and feelings, and revealing

Line 8: Meaning units (3) (6) (9) (2)

herself and so on. Like I said, nothing is black, I mean nothing is black

Line 9: Meaning units (2) (9) (11)

and white, and I wonder....I mean you can't just say one thing to one person

Line 10: Meaning units (13) (2) (3) (7) (8)

List of Codes: No new meaning codes generated

Generation of Meaning Clusters from Codes

In reference to SPR Research Process

- Partner comments on the "learning value" of the SPR videotape segments
- Partner expresses thought that research outcome is valuable to himself, and to others
- Partner notes videotape playback is "different" from the experience of being in the session

- Partner wonders what led him to participate in the research, since he is so exhausted at the end of the day
- Partner (s) disclose private in-session thoughts during SPR process
- Partner (s) reflect on two levels: session, and SPR stimulated reflexivity

In reference to a Conception of Self

- Partner expresses difficulty/ is confused about identifying own thoughts and feelings
- Partner (s) discuss impact of own responses on feelings and thoughts about self
- Impact of partner's responses on feelings and thoughts about self
- Affect or description generated about self
- Feelings and thoughts about partner
- Partner defers to spouse's description of self
- Partner references to inner sense of self

In reference to a Conception of Partner

- Partner acknowledges spouse's strengths
- Partner describes spouse in a negative and narrow way
- Partner express thoughts and feelings about partner (past and present)
- Perception of partner's role in relationship problems
- Perception of partner's impact on self
- Partner angry because spouse has changed
- Partner's response to disclosures made in the session
- Perception of partner's willingness to disclose, or not, in or out of sessions

-Perception of a "relationship", which has changed over time

Generation of Properties from Meaning Clusters

In reference to the SPR Research Process

- Partner values/ does not value SPR process (i.e., "learning value")
- Partner anticipates positive research outcome (for self/others)
- Partner(s) disclose private in-session thoughts during the SPR process
- Partner(s) reflect on two levels; therapy session, SPR provoked reflexivity
- Partner notes qualitative difference of viewing tape from in-session experience
- Partners time slide in the memories of relationship/session events

In reference to a Conception of Self

- Partner expresses difficulty/ is confused about identifying own thoughts and feelings
- Partner (s) discuss impact of own responses on feelings and thoughts about self
- Impact of partner's responses on feelings and thoughts about self
- Affect or description generated about self
- Feelings and thoughts about partner
- Partner defers to spouse's description of self
- Partner references to inner sense of self

In reference to a Conception of Partner

- Inner referent, or construct, or partner (i.e., description, attributions)
- Thoughts and feelings about partner (past and present)
- Perception of partner's role in relationship problems
- Perception of partner's impact on self
- Partner's response to disclosures made in the session
- Perception of partner's willingness to disclose, or not, in or out of sessions
- Perception of a "relationship", which has changed over time

Generation of Properties to Categories

Impact of the SPR Research Process

- Partner values/ does not value SPR process (i.e., "learning value")
- Partner anticipates positive research outcome (for self/others)
- Partner(s) disclose private in-session thoughts during the SPR process
- Partner(s) reflect on two levels; therapy session, SPR provoked reflexivity
- Partner notes qualitative difference of viewing tape from in-session experience
- Partners time slide in the memories of relationship/session events

Self Conception

- Partner expresses difficulty/ is confused about identifying own thoughts and feelings

- Partner (s) discuss impact of own responses on feelings and thoughts about self
- Impact of partner's responses on feelings and thoughts about self
- Affect or description generated about self
- Feelings and thoughts about partner
- Partner defers to spouse's description of self
- Partner references to inner sense of self

Partner Conception

- Inner referent, or construct, or partner (i.e., description, attributions)
- Thoughts and feelings about partner (past and present)
- Perception of partner's role in relationship problems
- Perception of partner's impact on self
- Partner's response to disclosures made in the session
- Perception of partner's willingness to disclose, or not, in or out of sessions
- Perception of a "relationship", which has changed over time

The Triangulation of TCI responses, SPR segments, and EMQ data

Stuck Couples

<u>TCI responses</u>	<u>SPR segments</u>	<u>EMQ data</u>
Couple #1		
Female Partner (FP):		
(a) Partner will not confront conflict	(a) Therapist (T) explores MP's claim that relationship problems have improved, but he expects deterioration. T explores with MP his views of what led to the improvements.	(a) T's metaphor of the couple's situation, "(FP's) ship has just sailed while (MP's) ship is dry-docked.
(b) Partner doesn't understand me; won't accept my explanations		(b) General sense that MP doesn't acknowledge her child care responsibilities as work.
(c) Partners squabble like children		(c) General sense of guilt that FP makes MP's life miserable.
(d) Partner denies other's feelings		(d) Anger with MP's comment that school is "partytime" for her.
Male Partner (MP):		
(a) Partner complains and rides me	(b) T explores FP's report that she is feeling better. She is taking courses and doing well, which she attributes to feeling better about herself. She appreciates MP's help with child care, while she attends courses.	
(b) Partner lacks genuine affection	(c) T leaves room for team consultation	
(c) Partner keeps messy house	(d) T discusses ideas from consultation with couple, which essentially constitutes a positive reframe. They discuss "fit".	
	(e) T conducts further examination of the intervention, and ways the couple might "give to each other, in order to receive."	
		MP:
		(a) Discussion with T about MP's sense that his wife is treating him better.
		(b) T's consultation about the "lost specialness" partners have experienced, and ways of recapturing it.
		(c) T's exploration of this issue with him, and MP's decision to create a goal for his own self development, and stated desire to be more positive of wife's goals.

Couple #2

FP:

- (a) Partner's anger; short temper.
- (b) Partner getting angry with me with no apparent reason.
- (c) Partner being unfair, always wants his own way.

MP:

- (a) Own anger, from childhood abuse.
- (b) Own difficulty communicating in relationship
- (c) Own feelings about the anger.

FP:

- (a) T reviews couple's sense of their progress toward goals. FP discusses at length, her sense that she has "rights" and her own opinion about things now.
- (b) T consults with the team.

- (c) T. acknowledges couple's progress, and reframes their concern about "differences". Partners discuss the "fit" of these ideas with their current understandings.

MP:

- (a) T's recognition of changes they've made was appreciated.
- (b) T's view that they make their differences "work for them."
- (c) Own nervousness about being videotaped.

- (a) During review (at beginning of session) FP realizes she still has fears, even though things are good. "I need to face things I'm afraid of."
- (b) T's recognition that she has faced one of her fears which led to confrontation and she handled it well.
- (c) T acknowledges the couple's accomplishments.

Couple #3

FP:

- (a) Couple's communication.
- (b) Own anger.
- (c) Own indecision about the future of the relationship.

MP:

- (a) Couple's communication.
- (b) Future of the relationship.
- (c) Lack of a sexual relationship.

FP:

- (a) MP discusses with T his dilemma of how to support FP's personal development. T explores MP's feelings about FP's changes. MP states his fear of losing the relationship.
- (b) FP discloses her lack of interest in any sexual relationships, at this point.

MP:

- (c) T explores the implications of FP's feelings for this relationship.
- (d) T consults with team.
- (e) T acknowledges the work of each partner in their own development, and asks them how this progress translates to the relationship context. Relationship is defined broadly by T, and includes friendship.
- (f) T explores with the couples how they might redefine their understanding of their relationship based on their current personal situations.

FP:

- (a) After consultation with the team, T claimed that "a relationship between you is hopeful", and included friendship as a potential outcome.
- (b) T suggested that the couple does not need to make a decision about the future of the relationship immediately.

MP:

- (a) T's suggestion that while they sort out the type of relationship they want, they can continue to work on themselves.
- (b) T's comment about whether or not a final decision about the relationship is necessary.
- (c) T's suggestion that MP focus on self development presently.

Midrange Couples

<u>ICI responses</u>	<u>SPR segments</u>	<u>EMQ data</u>
<p>Couple #1</p> <p>FP:</p> <p>(a) Communication between partners (b) Incompatible domestic styles (c) Lack of shared goals</p> <p>MP:</p> <p>(a) Inability for open and meaningful communication in the relationship. (b) Lack of physical intimacy. (c) Partner's criticism.</p>	<p>(a) FP discusses her difficulty dealing with MP's mother, and his refusal to intervene.</p> <p>(b) Partners take turns describing how they deal with MP's mother. T reframes their separate but complementary strategies as "teamwork".</p> <p>(c) FP discusses her hopeless of getting along with MP's mother; her lack of expectations of him for support.</p> <p>(d) MP describes the partner's separate lives, and how joint activities require much organization.</p> <p>(e) T consults with the team.</p> <p>(f) T discusses three ideas, presented as metaphors for the relationship difficulties.</p> <p>(g) FP's response to the "fit" of these ideas.</p> <p>(h) MP's response to the "fit" of these ideas.</p>	<p>FP:</p> <p>(a) Liked one metaphor which "fit" the couple's problems; partner's visibility and invisibility. (b) T's feedback from team gave hope that the couple can work together. (c) Own recognition of their different views of the relationship problems, and their different priorities. (d) Appreciated being able to talk about the Mother in law problem.</p> <p>MP:</p> <p>(a) Appreciated new ideas from team consultation. (b) Own sense that the discussion of mother is irrelevant to the couple's issues, and frustration experienced with partner. (c) The couple's issue of dispute was relevant, but not enough time to pursue adequately. (d) Parnter's shift in expectations of self is positive. (e) Laughing with partner during the break, while team consulted with T.</p>

Couple #2

FP:

- (a) Partner withdraws when he's upset.
- (b) Partner avoids his feelings; doesn't share them.
- (c) Partner assumes he knows her feelings without asking her.

MP:

- (a) Communication, resolving conflict.
- (b) Conflicts with own family, influence on couple relationship.
- (c) Money management conflicts.

FP:

- (a) FP discusses with T the couple's recent attempts to deal with their conflict involving MP's mother. She recognizes MP's positive changes.
- (b) FP discusses her thoughts and feelings about the issues involving MP's mother.
- (c) Both partners discuss how they have dealt with MP's mother in the past, their different strategies, and their views about the resolution of the current problem.

MP:

- (a) T's exploration, after consultation with team, about MP's experience of being "pressured".
- (b) T's exploration with MP of various strategies he might employ with mother.
- (c) Appreciated T's exploration of different ways each partner expresses themselves.
- (d) Recognition of own ambivalence about becoming a better communicator; the vulnerability of disclosure.

- (a) Discussion about own views about issue involving MP's mother.
- (b) Conflict between partners in the session "worth it" as the price of change.
- (c) Partner's disclosure that he get angry when she takes responsibility for him.
- (d) Partner's agreement that they must reach a decision about the (mother) issue soon.

Couple #3

FP:

- (a) Own temper.
- (b) Lack of intimacy.
- (c) Indirect communication between partner and his family.

MP:

- (a) Limit setting with partner, and others.
- (b) Inequality in sharing household tasks.
- (c) Lack of intimacy.

FP:

- (a) T's explores their responsibilities and priorities.;examines conflict cycle.
- (b) MP's discussion of his difficulty in setting limits; T assists him in operationalizing a limit setting goal.

(c) T consults with the team.

(d) T explores FP's responses to MP's "pleasing" behavior.

(e) T discusses with partners their reactions to a team member's comment which constituted a positive reframe.

MP:

- (a) T's exploration of the issue of setting limits, and assistance in clarifying a goal.
- (b) T's exploration with FP of her reactions to own "pleasing" behavior.
- (c) During the same segment, MP noticed he answered T's question to FP.

Couple #4

FP:

- (a) Anger, hostility, and problems.
- (b) Sex and love life.
- (c) Problems arising from working together as well.

MP:

- (a) Sex.
- (b) Time for each other.
- (c) Financial security and the way own worries affect partner.

FP:

- (a) T explores the way the couple dealt with a recent conflict, and their differing reactions to the conflict.

- (b) FP discusses how she handles anger. T explores ideas of intimacy and separateness.

- (c) T consults with the team

- (d) T shares ideas of team and discusses how the ideas "fit" or not with partners. T discusses with couple how they can achieve separate time; how they can acknowledge their different ways of being.

- (e) T encourages each partner to discuss how each worries about the other; how they acquired these ways; and the influence of these behaviors on each other.

MP:

- (a) Conversation about time alone and FP's agreement that this is a necessary part of the relationship.

- (b) T's exploration of their differences.

- (c) Realization that his discussion of financial worries bothers FP.

- (a) T's mirroring of her points, made her feel understood.

- (b) MP's question of whether he needs to learn to "draw out" her feelings made her angry and upset.

- (c) Discussion of how each can spend time alone.

Unstuck Couples

ICI responses

SPR responses

EMQ data

Couple #1

FP:

- (a) Conflict over own (time) involvement in a religious/spiritual organization.
- (b) Own failure to keep good financial records.
- (c) Partner expects too much and becomes intensely angry.

MP:

- (a) Partner's lack of concern about financial problems.
- (b) Partner does not show her commitment to our family values (time away).
- (c) Partner must balance religious commitment with family life.

FP:

- (a) T explores with FP her views about her involvement in the spiritual/religious organization.
- (b) T facilitates discussion between partner of how they deal with this identified problem. MP shares his views on the issue.
- (c) T consults with team.
- (d) T shares positive reframe with the couple, and discusses how it fits or not.
- (e) T explores with the couple the way that they balance independence and intimacy in the relationship; past and current strategies.
- (f) T explores with MP the influence of "history" on the current view of the problem.

MP:

- (a) Partner's recognition of the influence of "history" on his views of the problem.
- (b) T's discussion of independence/intimacy balance in relationship.
- (c) Partner's recognition of couple's progress in last few years in resolving conflict.
- (d) Partner's comment about self felt like labeling (during his talk with T).
- (e) T explored partner's views of the spiritual/religious issue.

MP:

- (a) Own thoughts about unobtrusiveness of the team.
- (b) Partner acknowledged past and present problems.
- (c) T's exploration of the role "history" plays in current view of the problem.
- (d) T's exploration of own views of the problem.

Couple #2

FP:

- (a) Problems resolving conflict
- (b) Not enough time together
- (c) Financial insecurity

MP:

- (a) Own need to understand FP's reactions to my behavior.
- (b) Problem listening to FP without getting defensive.
- (c) Problem controlling own feelings when FP doesn't listen.

FP:

- (a) T reviewed with the couple the positive steps FP reported for the couple in handling a recent conflict.

- (b) T explores with MP the way he expresses his needs in the relationship. How do they attempt to meet each other's needs?

- (c) T consults with the team.

- (d) T explores with the couple the role "guilt" plays in their relationship.

- (e) FP talks at length about own guilt, and the various things that trigger it.

- (f) T examines with FP her attribution to guilt for the things she does for MP. FP decides that she does many things out of love, rather than guilt.

- (a) T's recognition of their progress.
- (b) Partner's description of her, which is interpreted negatively.
- (c) T's exploration of the role guilt plays in their relationship.
- (d) T's exploration of a "guilt-free" relationship.

MP:

- (a) T's exploration of how get own needs met in relationship.

- (b) T's exploration of role of guilt in the relationship.

- (c) T's exploration of partner's views of a "guilt-free" relationship.

Couple #3

FP:

- (a) Loss of freedom and own dependency.
- (b) Feeling trapped at home.
- (c) Inequity of household duties.

MP:

- (a) Partner's homesickness.
- (b) Own work stress.
- (c) Partner's childhood experiences and their influence in relationship.

FP:

- (a) Couples discussion of their move to Vancouver, and the positive changes.
- (b) FP's discussion of ways she's changed, and ways she perceives the relationship has changed.

- (c) MP stating that he's noticed she's happier, and that pleases her.
- (d) T's feedback following the team consultation. Importance of "teamwork" metaphor.
- (e) Own sense that security can be created in the present.

MP:

- (a) Own discussion with T of work stress.
- (b) T's feedback from the team, and the metaphor for teamwork "fit".

- (a) T explores couple's conflict resolution strategies. Each partner discusses own ways of dealing with conflict, past and present.

- (b) Partners discuss ideas presented by therapist following team consultation. The team recognizes their accomplishments; provides a metaphor for "teamwork"; and wonders about how this metaphor could be realized in the relationship.

Couple #4

FP:

- (a) MP's passive aggressiveness.
- (b) Sex life.
- (c) Own reactivity.

MP:

- (a) Differing perspectives which influence the relationship.
- (b) Own future job insecurity.

- (a) T explores with couple the way they discuss FP's concern about passive-aggressiveness. Their views about this issue are discussed.

- (b) T consults with the team.

- (c) T acknowledges the strengths of the relationship, and how much has been achieved.

- (d) The couple discuss their difficulties in acknowledging their progress.

FP:

- (a) Partner's willingness to explore the passive aggressiveness issue.
- (b) Exploration of own stresses, and the ways these influence the relationship.
- (c) T's recognition of the couple's progress.
- (d) T's exploration of own concern about MP's passive aggressiveness.

MP:

- (a) Own worry about partner, when she shows her distress about her worries.
- (b) T's recognition of their progress.
- (c) Own recognition of ways the couple have progressed.