

PERCEIVED CHANGE PROCESSES IN AN AFFECTIVE SYSTEMIC COUPLES  
THERAPY

by

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### Abstract

This study was designed to discover empirically derived categories of couples change processes in an integrated affective systemic couples treatment from the couples perspective, and to refine Greenberg and Johnson's (in press) theoretical model of change processes in the light of these processes.

An exploratory and descriptive technique, the critical incident technique, was used to collect critical incidents or descriptions of change events from the perspective of each partner of 21 couples who had experienced significant change in a brief affective systemic couples treatment vis à vis a wait-list control group. These incidents were then analyzed by means of a categorization methodology, the data analytic component of which is called Latent Partition Analysis (LPA).

The five empirically derived categories of change processes that emerged from LPA were named (1) emotional experiencing leads to change in interpersonal perceptions, (2) the disclosure of feelings and needs, (3) understanding, (4) taking responsibility for experience, and (5) validation. Given the exploratory and descriptive nature of this study, these processes constitute an initial model that needs to be tested using appropriate methods of

verification.

Of the five empirically derived change processes, the first change process, which indicates that often clients report that emotional experiencing in their partners modified their perception of their partners, would seem clinically to be the most compelling. Because, unlike the other four processes, the first change process is not discussed in the literature, it would also seem to constitute the most interesting change process as possible new knowledge. Finally, an interview questionnaire, which indicates that partners perceived the expression of feelings to be important in change, lent support to the role of emotion in couples change; the five empirically derived change processes were compared with Greenberg and Johnson's (in press) theoretical model of change processes in order to produce a revised theoretical model.

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## Introduction

There is considerable evidence that marriage has a profound impact both negatively and positively on human well-being. On the one hand, there is evidence that marital disruption is a significant stressor with a greater incidence of psychiatric admission, motor vehicle accidents, physical illness and alcoholism occurring during or after marital separation (Bloom, Asher, & White, 1978). On the other hand, there is evidence that healthy relationships help people adjust to the stresses and transitions of life. For example, Rosow (1967) has found that depth of intimacy correlates positively with a persons's ability to adapt over the lifespan.

Because of the impact of marriage, and because currently one marriage in three ends in divorce (Adams & Nagnur, Statistics Canada, 1981), it would seem important to further knowledge in the field of marital counselling so as to tend and care for the institution of marriage more effectively.

There are two branches of research that pertain to the field of marital counselling. The first, outcome research, is concerned with furthering knowledge concerning the effectiveness of marital counselling (i.e., whether or not change occurred). The second, process research, is

concerned with furthering knowledge concerning the actual events that occur in counselling (i.e., how change occurred).

While it is valuable to know in a global sense whether or not marital counselling is effective, once this is known, it is vital to have a knowledge of how couples change or couples change processes because with this knowledge it is possible to specify the interventions that facilitate change via these processes. Without this knowledge, little is known of how a particular outcome is produced let alone how to expedite its occurrence. Therefore, it would seem important to further knowledge concerning couples change in couples counselling.

The general purpose of this thesis is to further knowledge concerning couples change in relation to a particular approach to couples counselling that its authors, Greenberg and Johnson (in press), have designated an integrated affective systemic approach. This approach is one of a number of affectively oriented integrative approaches that have emerged in the literature since 1981. Johnson and Greenberg (in press) have tested this approach empirically and have found it to be effective in increasing marital adjustment and intimacy, in facilitating improvement in target complaints, and in facilitating the attainment of relationship goals.

The role of affect in counselling is recognized as an important issue in current psychotherapy literature. Authors such as Mahoney (1980) and Fincham and O'Leary (1982) suggest that the role of affect in therapeutic change is the issue of the current decade, as the role of cognition tended to be the issue of the 70s. Therefore, limiting this study to an integrated affective systemic approach in which the role of emotion is central to change is highly relevant.

There is currently some outcome research on couples counselling providing empirical evidence of its effectiveness (Jacobson, 1978; Gurman & Kniskern, 1981; Johnson & Greenberg, in press). However, the current state of knowledge concerning how couples change in affectively oriented integrative marital therapies is limited to theory that is based on clinical observations rather than on empirical investigation.

Therefore, there is an evident need to investigate empirically couples change processes in an integrated affective systemic approach. In addition, because theory, if it is to guide our research and practice of couples counselling, must stand the test of empirical investigation, there is also an evident need to refine clinically based theory pertaining to this approach by empirical investigation.

This study's general purpose of furthering knowledge of couples change in an integrated affective systemic approach will be accomplished via two objectives. The first objective is to obtain a description of couples change processes from the couple's perspective; the second objective is to refine Greenberg and Johnson's (in press) theoretical model of change processes in the light of these change processes. The rationale for the first objective is that accurate description provides the basic knowledge that is necessary for realizing the other purposes of science--prediction, control, and explanation (Borg & Gall, 1983). Because the investigation of the processes of couples change is a new area of research, it is important that this description be exploratory in nature. The type of research design used in relation to this objective, therefore, is a descriptive and exploratory design.

The procedural steps involved in this objective are (a) collecting data of couples change events via a method called the critical incident technique, (b) identifying empirical categories of couples change processes from this data via a method of data analysis called categorization methodology (the data analytic component of which is called Latent Partition Analysis), and (c) describing these categories substantively.

The second objective of this study, refining Greenberg and Johnson's (in press) theoretical model of couples change processes, borrows the idea of using empirical investigation to inform model building from the rational-empirical methods of task analysis (Greenberg, 1984). This objective involves comparing their model of couples change processes with the categories of change processes derived from this study's empirical analysis in order to refine, modify, or clarify their model.

These objectives are of both theoretical and practical significance. On a theoretical level, empirically derived categories of couples change processes in an integrated affective systemic couples approach and a refined theoretical model of how couples change in this approach have the potential to contribute to empirical research and theory construction. For example, the empirically derived change processes, which constitute an initial model of change processes that needs to be tested using other methods in order to claim validity and generalizability for the model, have the potential to contribute to empirical research. And, on a practical level, empirical categories of couples change processes in an integrated affective systemic couples approach and a refined theoretical model of how couples change in this approach have the potential to contribute to the development of more effective couples



counselling.

## Literature Review

As indicated in the introduction, the current state of knowledge concerning couples change in affectively oriented integrative marital therapies is limited to theoretical ideas or assumptions about the process of couples change that are based on clinical observations rather than on empirical observation. These ideas underlie five affectively oriented integrative approaches to couples counselling that have emerged since 1981.

These approaches are (a) Feldman's (1982) integrative interpersonal-intrapsychic approach, (b) Wile's (1981) individual oriented systems approach, (c) Gurman's (1981) integrative marital therapy, (d) Pinsof's (1983) problem-centred therapy which is inclusive of couples counselling, and (e) Guerin's (1982) approach which is predicated on stages of marital conflict.

This chapter will identify (a) the salient theoretical ideas about the process of couples change in these approaches, (b) the ideas about the process of couples change that Greenberg and Johnson's (in press) integrative affective systemic approach shares in common with these approaches, and (c) the new ideas about the process of couples change that Greenberg and Johnson contribute.

The first salient idea about the process of couples change in the five approaches is an emphasis on both the intrapsychic and the interpersonal dimensions of change. Perhaps Gurman (1981) articulates this idea most clearly when he states that effective marital therapy does not set up an artificial dichotomy between individual change and relationship change.

A second salient idea about the process of couples change in the five approaches is the integration of various psychotherapeutic orientations in order to bring about change. While Gurman (1981), Feldman (1982), and Pinsof (1983) emphasize explicitly, and Guerin implicitly, the integration of psychodynamic, systemic, and behavioral orientations, Wile (1981) integrates the psychodynamic and systemic orientations. A rationale for the integration of orientations is that change on multiple levels of psychological experience leads to more effective outcomes (Gurman, 1981).

A third salient idea about the process of couples change in the five approaches is an emphasis on conflictual interactional cycles involving the dimension of intimacy as the focus of change. Wile (1981, p. 80), for example, identifies three universal conflictual patterns or couple states (i.e., withdrawn, mutually accusing, demanding-withdrawn), the common effect of which is

alienation (i.e., an absence of intimacy). Because Wile (1981, p. 68) believes that these conflictual patterns of alienation offer the possibility for intervention, he intervenes to change them. Feldman (1979), together with Pinsof (Feldman & Pinsof, 1982), identify a problem maintenance cycle of nonproductive marital conflict which serves the function of regulating intimacy in relationships. They intervene in these cycles in order to increase the level of intimacy in relationships. Guerin (1982) identifies a pursuer-distancer synchrony in terms of a five-step interactional sequence, and intervenes on the basis of an assessment of a couple's position in this five-step sequence. Perhaps because of his concern with emphasizing the intrapersonal dimension as well as the interpersonal dimension, Gurman (1981) places less emphasis on conflictual interactional cycles involving the issue of intimacy than do Wile, Feldman and Pinsof, and Guerin. However, the focus of assessment in Gurman's approach is conflicts involving issues of power and control, independence-dependence, or closeness-distance.

A fourth salient idea about the process of couples change in the five approaches is the primary role of emotion in couples change. Wile (1981, p. 85), who begins with the assumption that symptomatic behavior in couples is an expression of the deprivation of legitimate needs,

interprets the behavior of both partners in terms of understandable underlying feelings and needs. Through this intervention, Wile helps partners to accept and to express important feelings and to have these feelings acknowledged by each other. In fact, Wile (1981, p. 112) thinks that the alienation that characterizes distressed couples reduces to the one basic factor of partners' inability to accept and express important feelings and to have these feelings acknowledged by each other.

That emotion figures in four of the eight assessment-intervention steps in Pinsof's (1983) approach indicates that emotion plays a primary role in his approach. Underlying the role of emotion in these four steps is a core affective assumption called the "action facilitation theory of emotion" which asserts that human emotions function as facilitating factors in problem-solving. In step three, emotion identification, the therapist identifies the inhibited, adaptive emotions and the expressed maladaptive emotions associated with the problem solution process, and hypothesizes how the emotional response process needs to be modified. In step four, adaptive solution identification and implementation, "the therapist may label and heighten the emotional response that will give the adaptive solution affective power and genuineness and/or suppress the emotional responses that block the adaptive solution"

(Pinsof, p. 26). Finally, if the implementation of the adaptive solution in step four is not successful, the therapist assumes that there is a block, and in steps six and seven identifies and explores respectively the catastrophic expectations and fears that constitute the block so as to remove it.

The role of emotion in Feldman's (1982) approach involves reducing the *narcissistic vulnerability* (this term denotes a weakness or deficiency of the character structure along a continuum) of spouses which he hypothesizes engenders dysfunctional marital conflict. Feldman does this by heightening the spouse's conscious awareness of feelings of narcissistic vulnerability (and in particular, feelings of hurt) using the methods of emotional awareness training and dream work.

Although the process of couples change that Guerin (1982) proposes varies with each stage of his four-stage classification of marital conflict, the role of emotion in the process of couples change is most apparent in stage three. Guerin classifies in stage three couples who present clinically with severe marital conflict. He hypothesizes that couples in this stage occupy the lower end of a progression of feeling states that leads from expectation to alienation. Consequently, his goal is to encourage one or both partners to risk being vulnerable again. He does this

by walking the partners, in individual sessions, back up through the progression, eventually getting them in touch with their anger and hurt, their disappointment, and finally their expectations.

Because Gurman (1981) thinks that the experiencing of aspects of the self or the partner that are blocked from awareness is fundamental to the change process, he implicitly gives a primary role to emotion in couples change. Elsewhere, Gurman (1978) states that the expression of feelings serves to define relationships at the metalevel of communication, and that the expression of negative feelings is often an important part of the change process.

That these approaches give a primary role to emotion in couples change does not mean, however, that they disregard the role of cognition and behavior. Whereas Gurman (1981), Pinsof (1983), and Feldman (1982) include explicitly the role of both cognition and behavior (and, Guerin, I think implicitly), Wile (1981) focuses very little on behavior concentrating more on cognition. However, while all these authors include cognition and behavior in their approaches, the role of cognition and behavior are generally secondary to the role of emotion in their approaches.

However, that these approaches give a primary role to emotion in couples change does not mean that they view the role of emotion uniformly. Wile (1981) takes an insight

approach to emotion. He thinks that the therapist's task is to increase couples' awareness of underlying feelings through interpretation. Gurman (1981) and Guerin's (1982) view of emotion is predicated more on an actual experiencing of emotion than on an interpretation of emotion. Because Pinsof (1983) heightens the emotional response in order to give the adaptive solution affective power, and because Feldman (1982) says the objective of dream-work is to help spouses fully experience their feelings, they view the role of emotion most explicitly in terms of an experiencing of emotion.

Although these approaches emphasize both the intrapsychic and the interpersonal levels of change, because they give a primary role to emotion in the process of couples change, these approaches assign a more fundamental place to intrapsychic change than to interpersonal change. Gurman (1981), for example, stresses the spouse's experiencing of aspects of the self or the partner's self which are blocked from awareness. Wile's (1981, pp. 110-113) initial intervention is to clarify each partner's position by exploring the feelings and motivational meanings that underlie the behavior of each. Feldman (1982) stresses the reduction of spouses' feelings of narcissistic vulnerability initially by means of empathic responding and as therapy progresses by means of emotional awareness



training and dream-work. Guerin (1982) begins his counselling of couples in a stage three level of marital conflict by meeting individually with each partner and helping them to deal with the range of feelings along the expectation-alienation continuum. And, Pinsof (1983) identifies and heightens the adaptive emotional responses of individuals to problems, and explores individuals' inner blocks that prevent them from implementing successful solutions.

Consistent with their giving a more fundamental place to intrapsychic change than to interpersonal change, these approaches also give a more dominant role to psychodynamic theory than to other theories. For example, Gurman (1981), while not subscribing to any particular psychodynamic view, advocates a selective use of psychodynamic concepts. The concepts of collusion, projection, and experiencing of blocked areas of awareness figure largely in his selective use of psychodynamic concepts. Wile (1981, p. 5) espouses a psychodynamic view that he calls ego analysis in order to distinguish it from the psychoanalytic view of psychodynamics. Wile's (1981) ego analysis emphasizes the legitimate needs and deprivations that underlie symptomatic behavior. In emphasizing the identification and removal of blocks that have their roots in catastrophic expectations and fears, Pinsof (1983) follows a Gestalt view of

psychodynamics. Because Feldman (1982) uses concepts--such as narcissistic vulnerability, narcissistic rage and anxiety, and projective identification, he leans toward a psychoanalytic view of psychodynamics. Guerin (1982), who is a Bowenian, stresses the psychodynamic concepts of projection and self-focus, and the expectation-alienation progression.

However, although the intrapsychic dimension of change is more fundamental in these approaches than the interpersonal dimension, they do connect the intrapsychic dimension to the interpersonal dimension. Gurman (1981), for example, discusses the danger of leaving individually focused work unconnected to the marital interaction. Wile (1981, p. 81) states that his ego analytic form of psychodynamic reasoning keeps leading back to the couple situation. The connection between the intrapsychic dimension and the interpersonal dimension is implicit in the other three approaches as well.

Greenberg and Johnson's (in press) integrative affective systemic approach shares in common with these approaches an emphasis on the following salient ideas: (a) change on both the intrapsychic and interpersonal dimensions, (b) integrating orientations (Greenberg and Johnson's approach integrates the psychodynamic and the systemic orientations), (c) conflictual interactional cycles

involving the dimension of intimacy as the focus of change (although in Greenberg and Johnson's approach conflictual cycles pertain principally to the intimacy dimension, they also pertain to the power dimension), and (d) the primary role of emotion (Greenberg and Johnson's approach stresses the actual experiencing of emotion).

Given that Greenberg and Johnson's (in press) approach shares in common with the five other approaches these salient ideas about the process of couples change, the theoretical indebtedness of their approach to the other approaches is evident. Because their approach shares in common with Wile's (1981) approach (a) an integration of the psychodynamic and systemic orientations, (b) an emphasis on the roles of emotion and cognition (but not behavior) in the process of change, and (c) the interpretation of conflictual interactional cycles in terms of underlying feelings and legitimate needs, Greenberg and Johnson's approach is most indebted theoretically to Wile's approach with respect to the process of couples change.

However, given this theoretical indebtedness, Greenberg and Johnson (in press) contribute new ideas about the process of couples change. These ideas pertain to (a) their field conception of couples change that emphasizes the interaction of the intrapsychic dimension and the environment, and (b) their view that an experiencing of

emotion is essential for change.

Greenberg and Johnson's (in press) field conception of couples change is based on Gestalt therapy in which the focus is on what is occurring between the organism and the environment at the contact boundary. They delineate this conception as follows:

In couples therapy, therefore, change can occur by changing the conditions which organize a particular form of contact between people, be it by changing one person's experience and perception, by changing the context, that is the other partner's position and pattern of responses, or most likely by changing both simultaneously and in a reciprocally determining fashion.

Because this field conception emphasizes the interaction of both the intrapsychic and interpersonal dimensions of change, it represents an advance beyond the other approaches which assign a more fundamental place to the intrapsychic level of change than to the interpersonal level.

Greenberg and Johnson's (in press) view of the role of emotion in couples change is that the experiencing of emotion is essential for change to occur. They state this view as follows:

Although purely conceptual reframes of underlying emotions may be initially helpful in this therapy as

advanced organizers of experience or as educational interventions, it is only when the person fully experiences what was simply 'talked about' that change is achieved.

Greenberg and Johnson (in press) state that the expression of emotion produces change because in interpersonal interaction affect is a primary signalling system which serves a communication function from birth. They express this view as follows:

The expression of fear and vulnerability, besides evoking compassion, also communicates analogically that "this is not an attack" and often represents a major change in position in the interaction by that person, especially if the prior position was either blaming or withdrawing.

Because none of the other approaches maintain that an experiencing of emotion is essential for change, this view of the role of emotion is a new contribution. For example, neither Pinsof (1983) nor Feldman (1982), who view the role of emotion most explicitly in terms of an experiencing of emotion, consider an experiencing of emotion to be essential for change. Pinsof indicates this when, in the fourth assessment-intervention step, after identifying and directing the patient system to implement an adaptive solution to its presenting problem, he says that

"additionally, the therapist *may* [italics added] label and heighten the emotional response that will give the adaptive solution affective power" (p. 26). Feldman (1982) indicates this by omission; that is, by not specifying that an experiencing of emotion is essential for change. In other words, for Feldman (1982) and Pinsof (1983) an emotional experiencing is preferred but not considered essential for change.

Greenberg and Johnson's (in press) conceptual framework for their view of the role of emotion involves two intrapsychic change processes in which emotional experiencing plays an important role. The first process is acknowledging previously unacknowledged biologically adaptive primary emotions. With respect to this process, a distinction is made between primary adaptive emotions on the one hand, and secondary reactive or instrumental emotions on the other hand (Greenberg & Safran, in press). Primary adaptive emotions--such as fear, pain, anger, and joy--that were previously not dominant in individuals' organization of their experience, are adaptive because they provide information which enhances problem solving by helping people to define themselves more clearly, by increasing motivation for problem solving, and by helping spouses communicate their needs more clearly. The expression of primary emotions is particularly adaptive if there is a difference

between the expression of primary emotions and earlier expressions because this provides new information in the relationship.

However, because secondary reactive emotions such as defensive anger are secondary to more primary underlying biologically adaptive experiences such as fear, and because instrumental emotions such as manipulative crying are expressed to make impacts on others, Greenberg and Johnson (in press) think that these emotions can disrupt problem solving, and therefore do not encourage them.

The second intrapsychic change process in which emotional experiencing plays an important role is the accessing and subsequent modification of state dependent cognitions. This process refers to certain core cognitions, cognitive-affective sequences, and complex meanings that were learned originally in particular affective states, being much more available for inspection and modification when that state is emotionally reexperienced (Greenberg & Safran, in press).

Greenberg and Johnson (in press) develop a practical framework for their view of the role of emotion in couples change by delineating the objective and methods of an emotionally focused therapist. The objective of an emotionally focused therapist is to access and validate unacknowledged feelings underlying partners' interactional

positions in conflictual cycles. The therapist does this by helping partners to focus their attention on new experiences of themselves, and in particular, on primary adaptive feelings--such as sadness, fears, and unexpressed resentments--in order to expose clients to new aspects of the self.

The emotionally focused therapist accomplishes this objective by means of methods from gestalt therapy and client centred therapy (Greenberg & Johnson, in press). From Gestalt therapy, the therapist uses the techniques of asking questions, making suggestions, and attending to nonverbal cues as expressions of inner experiencing. From client centred therapy, the therapist uses new developments such as the technique of evocative responding. This technique involves recreating experiences by vividly evoking the stimulus situation and the subjective response to it, and then exploring the partners' idiosyncratic experience of the situation. As well, the therapist may use images and metaphors to heighten and clarify partners' emotional experiencing.

Having established that what distinguishes Greenberg and Johnson's (in press) approach from the other approaches with respect to the process of couples change is their view that an experiencing of emotion is necessary for change, and having described the conceptual and practical framework of



this view, their conception of how the experiencing of emotion leads to change will be described:

In summary, change occurs in this approach by a deepening of experience which brings new aspects of self into focal awareness and into the interaction. Specific interactional behaviors are positively reframed in terms of these underlying emotional states, which then lead to change in the sequence of interactions.

Essentially, then, in their theory of couples change emotional experiencing introduces new information into the couple system. When the therapist reframes conflictual interactional behaviors in terms of this new information, change occurs in the interactional cycle. For example, in the case of a conflictual interactional cycle pertaining to the intimacy dimension, framing a partner's distancing to mean that the partner is afraid rather than noncaring or indifferent produces change in both the partner's view of self and the spouse's perception of the partner that alters their interactional cycle.

The idea that emotional experiencing leads to interactional change might suggest that Greenberg and Johnson (in press) propose a unidirectional theory of change. However, as indicated in their field conception of change, Greenberg and Johnson clearly conceive of change as

bidirectional or reciprocal. This means that just as a change on an intrapsychic level may lead to change on an interactional level, so also change on an interactional level may lead to change on an intrapsychic level.

Greenberg and Johnson (in press) articulate the complex and reciprocal relationship between intrapsychic change and interactional change via emotional experiencing in terms of a theoretical model consisting of five specific hypotheses of couples change processes:

1. An individual perceives himself or herself differently by bringing into focal awareness experiences not previously dominant in this person's view of self; for example, "I see and accept my vulnerability".
2. The spouse, upon witnessing the partner's new affective expressions, perceives the partner in a new way; for example, "I see your need for caring and contact rather than your hostility".
3. The individual's personal reorganization leads to different behavior in the interaction with the spouses; for example, "I now ask you for reassurance from a position of vulnerability".
4. The spouse's new perceptions of the partner lead to different responses; for example, "I comfort you rather than withdraw".
5. As a function of their partner's new behaviors, the

individuals come to see themselves in a new way; for example, "since I can fulfill your needs, I see myself as valuable and necessary to you".

As indicated in the introduction, the second objective of this thesis is to refine, modify, or clarify Greenberg and Johnson's (in press) theoretical model of change processes. This objective will be achieved by comparing the above processes with the categories of change processes derived from this study's empirical analysis.

## Methodology

### Subjects

The subjects in this study are among the 45 couples who participated in a research project, the Couples Problem Solving Project (Johnson & Greenberg, in press). Johnson and Greenberg selected 45 couples from a wider population of couples who responded to an article in the Vancouver Sun offering eight marital therapy sessions designed to help couples resolve marital conflict. The criterion for their selection was that at least one partner fell within the distressed range (i.e., less than 100) on the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976).

Once selected, Johnson and Greenberg (in press) assigned these couples randomly to two comparative experimental groups (an affective systemic treatment, and a cognitive behavioral treatment), and to a control group which also received the affective systemic treatment after a wait period.

The criterion used in selecting the 21 couples in this study is that they received the affective systemic treatment. Of the 21 couples, 13 came from the affective systemic experimental treatment and 8 came from the control group. The 13 from the experimental treatment were chosen on practical grounds (i.e., all who were available and

willing to participate). Because not all the couples from the control group were required to complete the sample, and because S. M. Johnson (personal communication, November, 1983) indicated that not all the couples in the control group received equally as effective treatments (their not having been assessed on an implementation check as the couples in the experimental group had), only eight couples from the control group, who were thought on the basis of an informal judgement to have received the affective systemic treatment as specified in Greenberg and Johnson's (in press) treatment manual, were selected.

The total means and standard deviations of the couples from the experimental and control groups on the main outcome variable, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), are presented in Table 1.<sup>1</sup> This measure, which was developed by Spanier (1976), consists of 32 items arranged into four subscales measuring dyadic concensus (13 items), satisfaction (10 items), cohesion (5 items), and affectional expression (4 items). It is considered at present to be the instrument of choice for the assessment of marital adjustment in terms of reliability and validity (Johnson, 1984).

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<sup>1</sup> Pre test scores on the DAS for the control group in Table 1 and Appendix A refer to post wait scores.

Table 1  
Group Total Pre and Post Means and Standard Deviations on  
the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS)

<i>Group</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Pre</i>		<i>Post</i>	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Experimental	13	93.46	8.98	112.15	10.77
Control	8	89.75	11.13	98.94	11.51
Combined	21	92.05	11.06	107.12	12.79

*Note.* The mean total score in Spanier's (1976) sample for married and divorced couples was 114.8 (SD 17.8) and 70.7 respectively.

Although conceptually Spanier suggests that the scale be considered a measure of the adjustment of the dyad as a functioning group rather than a measure of individual adjustment to the relationship, the pre and post total DAS scores of individuals as well as couples are presented in Appendix A.<sup>2</sup> This was done to facilitate the comparison of any particular incident with the DAS scores of the individual corresponding to it.

Johnson (1984) collected the following demographic data from the 21 couples used in this study: first, the mean for the number of years the couples had been living together was 8.24 (range: 1-24); second, there was an average of 1.75

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<sup>2</sup> The couple scores were computed by adding the male and female scores and dividing by two.

children per family (range: 0-4); third, three couples had been involved in previous marital counselling (14% of the total); fourth, 13 individuals (30.95% of the total) had been previously married before engaging upon their present relationship; fifth, the mean age of the partners was 35.69 years (range: 24-50); sixth, the median range of family income was 35,000-45,000 Canadian dollars per year; seventh, the mean number of years of education completed by spouses was 15 (this was defined as having completed a community college program or part of a degree).

#### **Treatment**

The subjects in this study received a brief therapy consisting of eight sessions of the integrative affective systemic approach (Johnson & Greenberg, in press). The frequency of these sessions was approximately one session per week over two months. Although the nine treatment steps of Greenberg and Johnson's approach will be presented below in a linear sequence, the therapy actually progressed in a circular rather than a linear manner. These steps are:

1. The delineation of conflict issues and themes in the core struggle.

In this initial step the therapist delineates conflict issues and describes attempted solutions. Each partner's perception of the relationship issues is explored and validated. This serves to establish a

positive therapeutic alliance with each partner. The therapist also begins to identify themes--such as control and separateness-connectedness--which are often the core issues in marital conflicts.

2. The identification of the negative interaction cycle.

Once the therapist is clear about how each partner perceives the relationship issues, the therapist identifies the negative interaction cycle or "dance" that the couple uses in relation to its issues. A pursue-distance cycle appears to be the most basic and frequently occurring interactional cycle in distressed couples. Therefore, the therapist identifies this as the core negative cycle.

3. The accessing of unacknowledged feelings.

Having identified the core interactional cycle, the therapist focuses upon accessing and validating the unacknowledged feelings underlying the partners' interactional positions in the problematic cycle. The therapist does this by attending to partners' emotional responses at the periphery of awareness such as vulnerabilities, fears, and unexpressed resentments. The therapist uses various techniques drawn from gestalt therapy and client centred therapy to facilitate this emotional experiencing.

4. The reframing of the problem.



The therapist reframes the problem behaviors of the partners in the negative interactional cycle in terms of the newly synthesized underlying emotional experiences, and relates their behaviors to legitimate unmet needs. The experience of strong and significant emotion, and the reframing of the interactional cycle in terms of this, is a powerful modifier of the perceived meaning of behaviors in the cycle for both the experiencing and the observing spouse.

5. Identifying with disowned feelings and needs

Having redefined the interactional cycle in terms of underlying emotional experience and needs, the therapist asks the partners to identify with disowned aspects of their individual experience, and to deliberately engage in some of the behaviors associated with their previously disowned feelings and needs. This is an intrapsychically oriented intervention focusing on enacting disowned parts. Its rationale is to heighten partners' awareness of their underlying needs and to gain some control of previously automatic behaviors in their cycle.

6. Acceptance of the partner's experience.

In this step the focus is on facilitating each partner's acceptance of the other's new emotional experiences. Such acceptance is in contrast to the

usual pattern of reciprocal disqualification which occurs in distressed relationships. The therapist explores blocks to one partner's ability to hear and accept the other's experience, and interprets them in terms of that partner's view of self, past learning in his or her family of origin, and catastrophic fears.

7. Facilitating the expression of needs and wants.

Given the mutual acceptance of each other's underlying feelings, the therapist facilitates the partners' disclosure of the needs and wants associated with these feelings, and helps them to examine the implications of their needs and wants as individuals.

8. The emergence of new solutions.

In this step, the increased clarity of the statement of the partners' needs creates a context for new alternative responses or positions in the interactional cycle. These new alternatives constitute new solutions to the couple's negative interactional cycle.

9. The consolidation of new positions.

In this final step, the therapist helps the couple to consolidate their new position within a changed interactional cycle by encouraging them to metacommunicate about their relationship from a shared perspective in which both seek to fight to "draw" rather

than to win.

#### **Method of Data Collection: The Critical Incident Technique**

As indicated in the introduction, the type of research design used in this empirical investigation of couples change processes is a descriptive and exploratory design. This design also necessitated the use of a method of data collection that would be both descriptive and exploratory.

The critical incident technique met both of these criteria. This technique, which was developed by John Flanagan (1954), satisfied the descriptive criterion because it accesses specific events (in this study, change events or critical moments of change) rather than opinions or general ideas, and because it does this with a fair degree of objectivity (Flanagan, 1954). And, the critical incident technique satisfied the exploratory criterion because it is an a posteriori method (an a posteriori method, in contrast to an a priori method which makes hypotheses before the collection of data which in turn limit what data is or is not collected, accesses data in an exploratory and open-ended manner).

The critical incident technique involves typically the study of the performance of one group of individuals by asking another group to describe critical incidents that relate to the performance of the first group. However, the critical incident technique has also been used in a

self-report manner. Flanagan (1954) reports a study in which pilots were asked to recall an occasion in combat flying in which they experienced disorientation and to describe this experience in detail.

In this study the critical incident technique could have been used (a) in its conventional observational form by asking therapists to recall and describe in detail what they considered to have been change events for the clients, or (b) in the self-report form by asking clients to recall and describe in detail what they considered to have been change events, or (c) in both the observational and self-report forms. However, in a study of couples processes of change, it is the partners' intrapsychic and interactional experiences pertaining to change events that are the focus of investigation. In addition, it is the partners themselves who are the best source of information concerning these experiences. This is particularly the case with respect to partners' intrapsychic experiences, which are less accessible to therapists than are partners' interactional experiences. Consequently, although collecting both the therapists' and the couples' perspectives would have been the ideal research strategy, given constraints such as limited time and finances, this study accesses only the perspective of the couples by using the critical incident technique in a self-report fashion.

According to Flanagan (1954), there are four procedures of data collection used with the critical incident technique (i.e., individual interviews, group interviews, questionnaires, and record forms). In this study the individual interview procedure was used not only because it is probably the most satisfactory (Flanagan, 1954), but also because it was best suited for the purpose of this study; namely, collecting descriptions of change events in couples counselling from each partner's perspective. In order to ensure that partners' descriptions were not influenced by their spouses, the interviews were conducted independently.

#### **Procedures**

##### **The interviewers.**

Although I was the primary interviewer, in order to provide a reliability check with respect to my interviewing, I employed a second interviewer. This second interviewer interviewed five couples or 24% of the sample. Both interviewers were M.A. students specializing in family counselling, and had interviewing experience.

##### **Method of recording the data.**

In order to attend to the interviewees and to facilitate the accuracy of the data collection, the interviews were audio taped. Because the interviewees were accustomed to being recorded from the earlier treatment sessions, it is unlikely that this influenced the collection

of the data adversely.

**The telephone contact.**

Whereas I contacted the 16 couples whom I interviewed between three and four months after the termination of counselling, the second interviewer contacted the five couples whom she interviewed five months after the termination of counselling.

Following Flanagan's (1954) report that the lapse of several months facilitates the recall of dramatic or other special types of incidents, it was hypothesized that the lapse of between three to five months would facilitate the recollection of the most salient critical incidents or change events by causing the less critical events to recede into the background and the most critical incidents to emerge into the foreground.

In contacting the couples, the interviewers identified themselves as associated with the Couples Problem Solving Project, and requested a one-half hour interview with each partner individually in the couple's home. They indicated that the interview was a follow-up of the Couples Problem Solving Project, and that its purpose was to collect more information about how couples resolve conflicts via an interview method as opposed to the paper and pencil measures that had been used in the Couples Problem Solving Project.

### **The interview.**

The researchers conducted the interviews by means of an interview guide consisting of semi-structured questions (see Appendix B for an example of the interview guide). The following questions comprised section A of the guide:

1. What was most helpful for you in counselling?
2. In what ways was counselling not helpful?
3. In what ways could counselling have been more helpful?

The interviewers exhausted the interviewees' responses to each of these questions by asking them to respond as fully as possible to each question (e.g., Is there anything else that was most helpful for you about counselling?). Although the responses to these general questions were not intended to be used as data, these questions were placed at the beginning of the interview because they primed the interviewees for section B of the interview guide.

In section B, the statement which elicited the recollection and description of critical incidents was:

1. Please describe in as much detail as possible a specific incident in counselling that stands out for you as either helpful or hindering.

Then, in order to elicit more information about each incident with respect to change, the interviewers asked:

2. How was this incident helpful/not helpful?
3. What changed for you through this incident?

4. How did this change occur?

After interviewees had responded fully to questions one through four, the interviewers asked if they could recall another incident (i.e., question one). If this was the case, the interviewers then proceeded to ask questions two through four with respect to the second incident.

As the interviewees responded to the questions in section B, the interviewers adhered to the following guidelines as defined by Flanagan (1954):

The interviewer should avoid asking leading questions after the main question has been stated. His remarks should be neutral and permissive and should show that he accepts the observer as expert. By indicating that he understands what is being said and permitting the observer to do most of the talking, the interviewer can usually get unbiased incidents. If the question does not seem to be understood, it can be repeated with some reference to clarifying just what is meant by it. If the observer had given what seems like only part of the story, he should be encouraged by restating the essence of his remarks. This usually tends to encourage him to continue and may result in his bringing out many relevant details that the interviewer did not know the situation well enough



to ask for. (p. 342)

If interviewees began by giving general impressions of what had been helpful or not helpful, the interviewers requested that they recall a specific incident. Although three interviewees were unable to recall a specific incident, most had no difficulty doing this. The interviewers heightened the specificity and vividness with which interviewees recalled incidents by recreating the stimulus situation pertaining to the critical incident (e.g., so, it was in the third session, and your spouse began to cry).

Finally, because of the importance of the idea of emotional experiencing as a mechanism of change in Greenberg and Johnson's (in press) approach, in section C of the interview guide the researchers asked each interviewee to complete a questionnaire consisting of (a) two parallel questions (Did the expression of feelings lead to change for you? Did the expression of feelings make a difference for you?) on a Likert-type five-point scale ranging from *not at all* (1) to *very definitely* (5), and (b) two questions asking interviewees to record the feeling that they themselves expressed that was important, and that their partner expressed that was most important.

### **The transcribed incidents.**

Following the completion of the interviewing, a total of 61 critical incidents (i.e., the responses of interviewees to section B of the interview guide) were transcribed from the audio tapes verbatim. However, of these 61 incidents, 9 were eliminated for the following reasons. Five hindering incidents were eliminated because they did not constitute change events involving the processes of couples change that were being investigated. Two third incidents were removed because they were the only third incidents. The two incidents that continued in time over more than one session were excised because they were not specific change events that occurred in a particular counselling session.

After these eliminations, there remained a sample of 52 critical incidents reported by 37 interviewees with a mean of 1.40 incidents per interviewee. Of these interviewees, 22 reported a single incident each and 15 reported two incidents each. Finally, men reported 23 incidents or 44% of the incidents; women reported 29 incidents or 56% of the incidents.

### **Interviewer Consistency.**

The three factors that influence interviewer consistency are fluency, reliability, and bias. With respect to fluency, the second interviewer, who interviewed

5 couples or 24% of the couples, collected 9 incidents or 17% of the incidents; I interviewed 16 couples or 76% of the couples, and collected 43 incidents or 83% of the incidents. Expressed in terms of a statistical average, the second interviewer collected .9 incidents per interviewee compared to my 1.34 incidents per interviewee.

With respect to reliability, an inspection of the full-length incidents of both the interviewers did not indicate violations of the interview guidelines. This suggests that the interviewers were consistent in adhering to the interview guidelines.

With respect to bias, the distribution of incidents from the first interviewer over the five latent categories did not differ significantly from the distribution of incidents from the second interviewer over the five categories (for an understanding of latent categories, see below). This indicates that the interviewers did not bias the incidents, at least not in terms of sorters' perceptions. Therefore, with respect to the three factors that influence interviewer consistency, it would appear that this study achieved a reasonable level of interviewer consistency.

### **Method of Data Analysis: Categorization Methodology**

The method of data analysis used typically with the critical incident technique consists of developing a category system inductively, and then checking its reliability by determining how consistently raters place the incidents into the categories. However, because the induction of categories from the incidents is "more subjective than objective" (Flanagan, 1954, p. 344), this study used a different method of data analysis.

This method is a categorization methodology that has been employed by Miller, Fowlkes, and Lambert (1967). The basic idea of this methodology is that when sorters independently place content units or stimuli together to form categories (called manifest categories), because they form similar content unit groups, a comparison of their manifest categorizations reveals "latent" categories that underlie the manifest categorizations (hence the term latent categories) and that reflect their common perceptions or discriminations. This methodology consists of two major components: a sorting procedure that produces the manifest categorizations and that is called the Free-sort (F-sort); a computational algorithm developed by Wiley (1967) called Latent Partition Analysis (LPA) that analyzes the results of the F-sort in such a way as to disclose the latent categories.

### The F-sort.

The F-sort consists of subjects sorting stimulus items into categories according to the similarities and dissimilarities which they perceive among the items. Given a set of items, sorters are free to construct as many categories as they wish, and to include as many or as few items as they choose in any one category. The only constraints on their sorts are the set of items and the criterion or sorting cue in the task instructions that accompanies the set of items. Miller et al. (1967) define the sorting cue as follows:

The sorting cue is *the criterion of judgement* [italics added] for the formation of manifest categories thereby serving to define the general thematic content of categories and the level of abstraction at which sorters are expected to form manifest categories. (p. 24)

The sorting cue that was provided in the task instructions to guide sorters in their formulation of categories was as follows:

The criterion for your forming categories is whether you think the incidents are similar with respect to the change for the person (A) reporting the change. Because frequently more than one change process occurs for A, we would like you to choose for

categorizing the change process that you think is *most significant* for A. To reiterate, therefore, the criterion for forming categories is whether you think incidents are similar with respect to dominant change processes for A (see Appendix C for an example of the F-sort directions).

Although change processes in any given critical incident were sometimes reported for the person not reporting the incident (i.e., B), because these processes were described from the perspective of the person reporting the incident (i.e., A), the sorting criterion was limited to the change processes that occurred for A. In addition, because in any given incident more than one change process occurred for A, the sorting criterion was limited still further by requesting sorters to form categories with respect to the *most significant* change process for A.

#### **Simplification of the critical incidents.**

Because the incidents to be sorted contained a lot of diverse information which was often repeated and elaborated in slightly different ways (the average number of double spaced typed pages per incident was three pages), the incidents were simplified with a three-step procedure (see Appendix D for an example of a full-length critical incident and its simplified counterpart). First, the full-length incidents were simplified by omitting all redundant material

and retaining the information considered essential with respect to the change events. This information included (a) the stimulus of the change event (i.e., either a therapist activity, partner activity, or activity pertaining to the self), (b) the response of the person reporting the change, and (c) the partner's response. Second, by comparing these simplified incidents to the full-length incidents, the supervisor of this thesis made some additional albeit minor modifications. Third, the same graduate student in counselling-psychology who had interviewed five of the couples rated the "fit" between the full-length incidents and their simplified counterparts on a five-point scale ranging from *not at all* (1) to *total* (5). The results of her rating are: 37 simplified incidents (or 71.2%) received a rating of five; 14 simplified incidents (or 26.9%) received a rating of four; one simplified incident (or 1.9%) received a rating of three. This student was instructed to give her rationale for any incident to which she assigned a rating of three or less in order to assist in its subsequent refinement. This resulted in only one incident requiring additional refinement.

In order to check the reliability of this rating process, a second graduate counselling-psychology student rated the fit between the full-length incidents and their simplified counterparts. The results of this student's

rating are: 24 incidents (or 46.2%) received a rating of five; 25 incidents (or 48.1%) received a rating of four; 3 incidents (or 5.8%) received a rating of three.

The severely restricted range of the raters' scores (i.e., 96% of the ratings were four or five) rendered a measure of association inappropriate as an estimate of interrater reliability. However, the combined mean of the ratings expressed as percentages are: 58.7% of the incidents received a rating of five; 37.5% received a rating of four; 3.85% received a rating of three. That together the raters gave a rating of four or five to 96.2% of the incidents and a rating of three to only 3.85% of the incidents indicates that the raters strongly concurred that the simplified incidents represented the full-length incidents well.

#### **Latent partition analysis.**

The second major component of the categorization methodology, Latent Partition Analysis (LPA), consists of three matrices. The first matrix, the probability of joint occurrence or the S-matrix, summarizes the manifest categorizations of the F-sort by indicating the proportion of sorters who combined two items in their manifest categories. This matrix is constructed by (a) forming a  $K \times K$  frequency matrix where  $K$  is the number of items in the stimulus set (in this study  $K$  corresponds to the 52 simplified critical incidents), (b) allotting entries a



value of one each time sorters combine a particular pair of items in the same manifest category, and zero if they do not, and (c) dividing each of these entries by the number of sorters (in this study, there were 37 sorters) to determine the proportion of sorters who combine a particular pair of items in the same manifest category. The S-matrix is not interpreted, but provides the basis for the computations that produce the other two LPA matrices, Phi and Omega, both of which are interpreted (see Wiley, 1967, for a description of these complex computations).

Each entry in the second matrix, the latent category matrix or Phi-matrix, indicates the estimated probability that a particular item belongs to a particular latent category. Given that a factor in factor analysis is "defined" by those variables which have high loadings on (correlations with) the factor, and that a latent category is "defined" by those items which have high probabilities of occurring in that category, the Phi-matrix is similar to a factor pattern matrix in factor analysis (Conry, 1973).

The third matrix, the confusion matrix or Omega matrix, is an estimate of latent category confusions. An entry in Omega is interpreted as the probability that any item from one of the corresponding latent categories will be assigned to the other indicated latent category.

Of the three matrices, only the Phi matrix and the Omega matrix are interpreted. The former indicates the optimal number of latent categories that "fit" the data and the stimulus items that comprise these categories; the latter indicates how cohesive the categories are. The more cohesive the categories, the more unambiguous can be the researcher's conclusions.

#### **The sorters.**

In general, the greater the number of sorters who undertake the F-sort, the more stable are the results. A general guideline is that at least 30 sorters are needed for analytic results to be considered seriously (Miller et al., 1967).

Given this guideline, a homogeneous sample of 37 students were selected to do the sort. These students were selected on the basis of (a) their being enrolled in graduate counselling-psychology at U.B.C., (b) their having a minimum of one eight-month clinical experience counselling individuals and/or couples and families, (c) their having a minimum of two semester's courses in individual and/or family-marital modalities of psychotherapy, and (d) their being willing to volunteer for the task. The rationale for using this homogeneous sample of sorters is that commonality of perceptions or discriminations is a function of homogeneity of the sorters. In other words, the more

homogeneous the sorters are in terms of education and life experience, the more consistency there will be in the discriminations which they make of the data resulting in less ambiguous latent categories.

The majority of the students (76%) were recruited via a personal appeal to five classes. Because an insufficient number of students were recruited in this manner, the remainder were recruited via a personal telephone call.

#### **The sorting experiment.**

In order to minimize bias engendered by students placing incidents together on the basis of the order in which they appeared in the decks as opposed to perceived similarities among the incidents, decks of 52 simplified critical incidents that had been ordered randomly in terms of five different random order series were used.

The amount of time required to do the sort varied somewhat because of the individuality of the sorters (range: one to three hours). Most sorters completed the sorting task within one and one-half to two hours.

Although the ideal would have been to have had all the sorters complete the sorting experiment in a standardized classroom setting, only 19 (51%) did so. A lack of time in the classroom setting necessitated that 9 sorters (24%) who commenced the sort in a classroom setting completed it at home. The 9 students (24%) who were recruited via a

personal telephone call did the task in their homes following standardized instructions (see Appendix C). Because the sorting task proved to be straight forward with the sorters requiring minimal direction beyond the standardized instructions, the lack of a standardized setting did not appear to influence the sorting experiment adversely.

## Results

### The Manifest Categorizations

The F-sort experiment produced 37 sets of manifest categories. The modal number of manifest categories per sort was seven; the number of manifest categories per sort ranged from 4 to 20, with a median of 8.88 and a mean of 9.68.

### Selection of the Number of Latent Categories

According to Miller et al. (1967, p. 183), a major problem that is not completely resolved is that of estimating the number of latent categories ( $L$ ) necessary and sufficient for describing a given set of sorting data. Miller describes this problem, and suggests a means of dealing with it:

If  $L$  is set at a particular number, then the computational procedure of rotation produces estimates of  $\Phi$  and  $\Omega$ --which is to say, the parameters of a particular model for the sorting experiment. But different selections of  $L$  produce models which differ in how well the data are fit both mathematically and substantively. The LPA computations do yield ... a rough estimate, called  $L$ , of the number of latent categories [i.e., when  $L$  is requested to be the number of latent roots equal

to or greater than 1.0). This estimate has been found, empirically, to be imprecise, especially when the number of items is much larger than the number of sorters. Until the mathematical procedures are improved, the selection of the number of latent categories must be made, in part, by *ad hoc* reasoning. (pp. 183-184)

In order to make this selection, the 37 sorted decks were analyzed using the University of Alberta (Division of Educational Research Services) computer program SCAL06. A sequence of computer runs was made, with the program instructed to extract a particular number of latent categories on each run.

On the first run a rough estimate of  $L$  was determined by requesting that  $L$  be the number of latent roots equal to or greater than 1.0. This produced 14 latent categories ( $L=14$ ). However, inspection of the corresponding Phi matrix revealed various anomalies (e.g., two categories with only one incident each) which indicated that overfactoring had occurred.

Therefore, on the second run, a smaller  $L$  was requested. Because the median number of manifest categories per manifest categorization was approximately nine,  $L=9$  nine was chosen. However, an inspection of this Phi matrix also indicated anomalies, as did an inspection of the Phi matrix

for L=8.

The first Phi matrix that was without anomalies and therefore interpretable occurred on the fourth run when L=7 was requested. However, to determine if there were models with still fewer latent categories which might also be interpretable, three more runs were requested with L=6, L=5, and L=4 respectively.

Because all of these models (i.e., L=7, L=6, L=5, and L=4) were interpretable in the sense that an inspection of their Phi matrices did not indicate any anomalies (see Appendix E for the Phi matrices of L=7, L=6, and L=4; see Table 2 for the Phi matrix of L=5), they were examined in terms of a number of *ad hoc* criteria to determine which model constituted the optimal solution in terms of number of latent categories. These criteria were (a) the number of incidents in the categories or the size of the categories, (b) the substantive coherence of the categories, and (c) the redistribution of the content units as L decreased from seven to four.

An application of these criteria to the L=7 results indicated that (a) the fourth category in its Phi matrix was quite small, consisting of only two items (4, 29), and (b) that these two items did not constitute a coherent category substantively. Consequently, it was apparent that this model had too many categories.

When L was decreased from five to four, application of these criteria to the L=4 results indicated that the second category in its Phi matrix, which consisted of 13 incidents, had absorbed all eight incidents from the fourth category in the Phi matrix where L=5. The absorption of these eight items, which in L=5 constituted a coherent category substantively, resulted in a category that lacked coherence. Consequently, it was apparent that with only four latent categories underfactoring had occurred and that a model with more than four latent categories was required.

Therefore, the choice regarding which model constituted the best solution had been narrowed to either L=6 or L=5. When L decreased from six to five categories, the fourth category in the L=6 Phi matrix, which consisted of four incidents (43, 11, 15, and 44), collapsed. Because its four incidents fit well into the categories of the L=5 matrix to which they were distributed (incident 43 was distributed to category 4, incident 11 to category 5, incidents 15 and 44 to category 2), and because a model with five larger categories constituted a more optimal solution than a model with six categories (one of which had only four incidents), it was judged that L=5 yielded the optimal solution.

This conclusion was confirmed by the application of a method which is used in factor analysis to determine the number of factors that best explains correlations among



factors. This method, the Scree-test, involves examining the graph of eigenvalues for the point on the graph beyond which the factors are factorial litter or "scree".<sup>3</sup> Opinion is divided about whether one should stop factoring at the point where the eigenvalues begin to level off forming a straight line with an almost horizontal slope or whether one should stop factoring to the left of this point. As is indicated in figure 1, the point where the eigenvalues begin to level off corresponds to latent category five, and the point to the left of this corresponds to latent category four. Because a model of four latent categories had been ruled out on the basis of *ad hoc* criteria, it was confirmed that the L=5 model constituted the optimal solution in terms of number of categories.

#### **The Phi Matrix of Five Latent Categories**

The next step in the data analysis was to examine the Phi matrix of the L=5 model. Phi, the latent category matrix, specifies the item composition of the latent categories (i.e., items are grouped according to their membership in the latent categories). As Table 2 indicates, the Phi matrix of L=5 has 52 rows corresponding to the 52

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<sup>3</sup> Scree is a geological term referring to the debris which collects on the lower part of a rocky slope (Kim & Mueller, 1978).

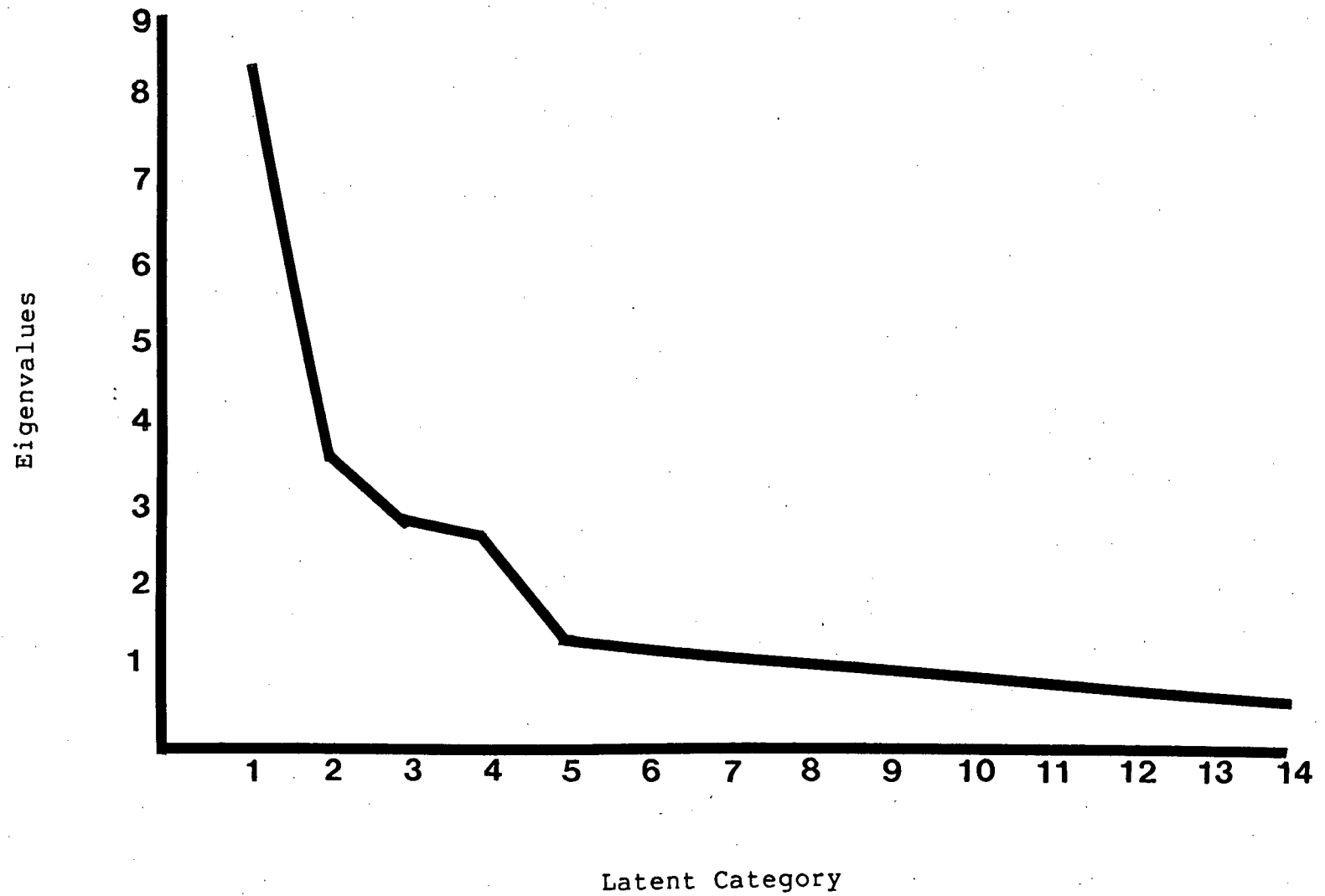


Figure 1. Plot of Eigenvalues for the First 14 Latent Categories

critical incidents, and 5 columns corresponding to the five latent categories.

The membership of simplified incidents in latent categories is determined by the size of entries (called loadings) in the Phi matrix.<sup>4</sup> Each simplified incident is assigned to the latent category on which it has the highest loading (called the primary loading). As Table 2 indicates, 17 simplified incidents are associated with latent category one, 11 with category two, 9 with category three, 8 with category four, and 7 with category five.

Within each latent category, the simplified incidents are ranked from the incident with the highest primary loading to the incident with the lowest primary loading. For purposes of interpretation, incidents with primary loadings in the 90+ range are considered strong, incidents with primary loadings in the 60-90 range are considered moderate, and incidents with primary loadings in the 30-60 range are considered weak (Miller et al., 1967). On the basis of this schema, in the L=5 Phi matrix there were 26 strong incidents (a mean of 5.2 per category), 15 moderate incidents (a mean of 3 per category), and 11 weak incidents

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<sup>4</sup> Entries in all LPA matrices are estimated probabilities. In the tables of this study, entries have been rounded to two decimal places and multiplied by 100.

Table 2  
Phi Matrix of Five Latent Categories

		<i>Latent Category Number</i>				
<i>Latent Category No.</i>	<i>Incident No.</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
1	8	123	-25	4	5	0
	3	117	-9	38	-25	-8
	52	116	11	-11	-11	15
	23	114	-20	-8	19	-1
	49	112	-19	4	5	-3
	36	106	-11	25	-7	-15
	21	103	8	-21	20	-4
	37	97	-5	5	-4	7
	30	96	25	-3	-14	3
	45	92	22	-45	22	7
	14	85	-1	-27	4	31
	34	75	58	-34	-3	5
	28	72	25	1	6	-6
	1	67	-14	40	-6	1
	18	64	-8	-5	21	10
	10	60	39	11	-11	6
	40	56	6	9	-4	4
2	16	-2	122	-21	-4	3
	48	16	120	-17	-8	-13
	50	-31	111	33	-19	2
	24	-14	108	8	-6	3
	17	-6	93	-8	39	-15
	27	-7	93	10	-9	14
	42	14	82	-17	42	-12
	47	-14	74	74	-23	1
	46	-8	72	23	10	-3
	38	-3	70	1	10	8
	39	7	59	17	2	-10
3	4	-16	4	118	7	-14
	29	14	-7	109	-12	-9
	33	74	-11	104	-37	-16
	5	-19	3	98	43	-10
	44	-29	-5	89	3	47
	15	-26	-9	88	4	45
	25	54	5	69	-6	-18
	9	19	39	55	8	-21
	31	-16	3	45	28	28
4	41	-14	-5	14	126	-3

	26	-1	-15	-7	123	0
	2	12	24	-42	104	5
	20	14	-8	10	102	-10
	6	-10	23	37	50	-14
	43	27	-27	27	47	14
	19	17	8	40	41	-10
	51	-13	-15	30	40	32
5	35	-2	-3	-8	-4	123
	32	-2	-14	-3	9	122
	7	3	62	-22	-11	86
	13	3	-11	26	-10	78
	11	4	-12	32	20	54
	12	31	28	-16	-5	53
	22	35	-1	-3	18	48

(a mean of 2.2 per category).

The remainder of the entries in the Phi matrix are called secondary loadings. A high secondary loading indicates that in their manifest categorizations sorters tended to place an incident with incidents that belong to another latent category. When a particular latent category has a number of incidents with high secondary loadings on another particular latent category, this results in a confusion of the two latent categories (the corresponding entry in the Omega matrix is an index of this confusion).

A term related to the magnitude of the primary and secondary loadings of an incident is *ambiguity*. This term indicates that an incident's membership in a latent category is uncertain. According to Miller et al. (1967, p. 186), the general rule for determining whether or not an item's membership in a latent category is ambiguous is to consider

any item with a secondary loading of 30 or more to be ambiguous. In practice, Miller et al. (pp. 193-230) determined whether or not an item was ambiguous on the basis of the relative difference between the magnitude of the primary and the secondary loadings. For example, although according to their explicit rule an item which received a secondary loading of 39 should have been considered ambiguous, this judgement was apparently not made because there was a substantial difference between this loading and its primary loading of 76 (Miller et al., p. 194).

Because Miller et al. (1967) did not explicate the magnitude of the relative difference between the primary and secondary loadings that functioned implicitly as their criterion in determining whether or not items were ambiguous, it was necessary to choose a differential that was congruent with the parameters of this study. The two major parameters with respect to item ambiguity are the number of sorters and the complexity of the stimuli to be sorted. Item ambiguity is a function of a small number of sorters and highly complex stimuli. Because in this study the number of sorters relative to the number of stimuli was low (the ideal is to have more sorters than stimuli), and because the stimuli were complex, a differential of 25 was chosen. This meant that an incident was considered ambiguous if there was less than a 25 point difference between its primary loading

and its highest secondary loading. Finally, on the basis of this criterion, 14 incidents (a mean of 2.8 incidents per latent category) were ambiguous (the primary loading and highest secondary loading of these incidents are printed in bold face in Table 2).

#### **The Omega Matrix of Five Latent Categories**

The Omega matrix, which is an index of latent category confusion and cohesion, appears in Table 3. This square matrix has as many rows and columns as there are latent categories. It is symmetric, with each entry above the diagonal equal to the corresponding entry below the diagonal.

The diagonal entries represent the cohesiveness of the latent categories (these appear in bold face in Table 3). More specifically, a diagonal entry is the probability that any particular pair of incidents from this latent category will be placed with each other in the sorters' manifest categorizations. For example, as shown in Table 3, latent category five is the most cohesive category with the probability of 46 that incidents that belong to this latent category will have been placed with each other in the sorters' manifest categorizations. Latent category three is the least cohesive with an entry of 26.

The off-diagonal entries represent the confusion of any pair of latent categories or their tendency to merge. More

Table 3  
The Omega Matrix

<i>Latent Category No.</i>	<i>Latent Category Number</i>				
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>1</i>	32	12	13	9	5
<i>2</i>	12	37	10	13	9
<i>3</i>	13	10	26	15	9
<i>4</i>	9	13	15	37	5
<i>5</i>	5	9	9	5	46

specifically, an off-diagonal entry is the probability that any pair of content units from a particular pair of latent categories will appear together in the sorters' manifest categorizations. For example, as shown in Table 3, latent category three and latent category four are the most confused with the probability of 15 that any pair of incidents drawn from both of these latent categories will appear together in the sorters' manifest categorizations.

In this study, the magnitude of the diagonal entries, which represents the cohesiveness of the latent categories, is somewhat low (the entries range from 26-46 with a mean of 35.6 per latent category). This may be attributed to the same two factors that are responsible for item ambiguity; namely, a low ratio of sorters to incidents and the high complexity of the incidents. Had there been a larger number



of sorters, and had the incidents been less complex, the magnitude of the diagonal entries would likely have been higher.

The magnitude of the off-diagonal entries representing the confusion of the latent categories is low (the entries range from 5-15 with a mean of 10 per pair of latent categories). This means that although the latent categories are not highly cohesive, neither are they very confused. What may be concluded from the Omega matrix is that the five latent categories are discrete and separate categories.

#### **Description of the Latent Categories**

The description of each of the five latent categories will consist of (a) the suggested title, (b) an expansion of the title, (c) the loadings of the incidents that belong to the category, (d) the simplified critical incidents accompanied by a brief comment pertaining to their meaning, and (e) the abstracted meaning of the category. The procedure used in interpreting each category was to formulate the central idea of the latent category and any secondary ideas on the basis of strong-loading incidents, and then to examine how weaker-loading incidents and ambiguous incidents substantiated these ideas.

The five latent categories that emerged were named: (1) emotional experiencing leads to change in interpersonal perceptions, (2) the disclosure of feelings and needs, (3)

understanding, (4) taking responsibility for experience, and (5) validation. These categories are described below.

**Latent category one: emotional experiencing leads to change in interpersonal perceptions.**

Expanded title: The experiencing of emotion--in the sense of the acknowledgement of primary feelings by one of the partners--alters interpersonal perception and produces couples change. More specifically, A's observation of B's emotional experiencing, or A's own emotional experiencing, results in A having a new perception of B which leads to A relating to B differently. <sup>5</sup>

Loadings: Category one is the largest category with 17 incidents. It has 10 strong-loading incidents (8, 3, 52, 23, 49, 36, 21, 37, 30, 45), 4 moderate-loading incidents (14, 72, 67, 64), 1 weak-loading incident (40), and 2 moderate-loading incidents (34, 10) that are ambiguous because the differential between their primary and secondary loadings is less than 25.

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<sup>5</sup>For the sake of convenience and clarity, partners are designated as A and B. A is always the person reporting the incident.

### Critical Incidents:

#### 1. Incident 8, Couple 14 (strong loading of 123)

##### A-Female

Both A and the therapist noticed that B had been on the verge of breaking down and crying when he had quickly regained control of his emotions. In spite of their wanting him to open up, he did not. However, A recognized that B was upset about their handicapped baby, and concluded that he had not dealt with his pain around their baby being handicapped because it was too overwhelming. Because A had not been aware of how hurt B was about the baby, seeing his reaction caused her to feel more understanding and sympathetic toward him. She stopped nagging him to deal with his pain as she thought best (i.e., by expressing it) and accepted his right to deal with it by not expressing it because this was most comfortable for him.

In this incident B's emotional experiencing (i.e., his hurt and pain concerning their handicapped child) is characterized by his allowing the primary feelings of hurt and pain into awareness. As the result of observing this, A implicitly has a new perception of B as hurting which leads A to be more understanding of B, and to respond differently behaviorally. Because A had not been aware of the extent of B's hurt, B's emotional experiencing is a new emotional expression.

#### 2. Incident 3, Couple 1 (strong loading of 117)

##### A-Female

It became evident that B feels afraid that he will lose control when A is emotional. The therapist helped B to realize that this reaction is connected to his father's drinking. A saw that B realized that he withdraws from people by becoming rational when he is afraid of being rejected. As the result

of seeing B get in touch with his feelings, understanding why it is he is so scared of his emotions, and how this blocks him from being intimate with her, A felt closer to B.

In this incident B's emotional experiencing (i.e., getting in touch with his feelings) is characterized by the acknowledgement of the primary feeling of fear. As the result of observing this, A implicitly has a new perception of B as afraid of his emotions which leads A to feel closer to B. In addition, because B's fear of losing control became evident in this incident, B's emotional experiencing is a new expression.

### 3. Incident 52, Couple 21 (strong loading of 116)

#### A-Female

In a particular session the therapist requested that B share how he felt rather than what he thought, which technique he continued to use thereafter. Through hearing B's feelings, A felt that she gained a better understanding of him, that he was more trusting of her, and that they were brought closer together.

In this incident B's emotional experiencing (i.e., sharing his feelings) is characterized by the acknowledgement of feelings which, because they had not been acknowledged previously, are implicitly primary feelings. As the result of observing this, A implicitly has a new perception of B (this is implicit in A's increased understanding of B) which leads her to feel closer to B. Also, because B had not disclosed feelings previously, B's emotional experiencing is a new expression.

4. Incident 23, Couple 6 (strong loading of 114)

A-Female

A, who had been talking to the therapist about how she had been hurt by B not telling her about his affair, admitted spontaneously that she might have handled the affair the same way. When B replied, "My gawd, you're really human", A was struck by the insight that although inappropriately she perhaps imposed her values and high standards on him, and that she was not as perfect as she presented herself to be. Because A had been blaming B for some time for the affair, she felt embarrassed and guilty concerning this admission. However, the admission enabled A to see B's perspective and consequently to perceive him in a more positive light.

In this incident B's emotional experiencing (i.e., the statement, "My gawd, you're really human") is characterized by the acknowledgement of an implicit feeling of resentment (i.e., B's resentment concerning A's attitude toward his affair) accompanied by an affectively laden thought, or what Greenberg and Safran (in press) have labelled "hot" cognitions. As the result of observing this, A perceives B in a more positive light and comes to an increased understanding of herself and of B.

5. Incident 49, Couple 13 (strong loading of 112)

A-Female

A found it particularly moving when B, who did not show emotion easily, and when he did expressed mostly anger, said with tears that he needed help in knowing how to respond to her: that it was not that he was unwilling to respond but that he did not know how. A's seeing this side of B changed her perception of him--from noncaring to willing but not knowing how. Consequently, when B is unresponsive A also is aware that rather than feeling badly and powerless and reacting to this by withdrawing or

attempting to forget about it, that she is able to choose to access his responsive side by expressing what she wants.

In this incident B's emotional experiencing (i.e., expressing a "felt-need" for help with tears) is characterized by the acknowledgement of a felt-need accompanied by heightened emotional arousal and expression. Given that an acceptance of feelings tends to inform people in a direct way of their desires or wants (Greenberg & Safran, in press), primary feelings are implicit in the acknowledgement of B's felt-need. As the result of observing B's emotional experiencing, A has a new perception of B (i.e., as lacking in knowledge rather than uncaring) which leads A to respond differently behaviorally. In addition, because A had rarely seen B express "soft" emotions, B's emotional experiencing is a new expression.

#### 6. Incident 36, Couple 10 (strong loading of 106)

##### A-Female

When B said that one of his beefs was that A had quit giving him compliments, A realized that B was really wanting compliments even though he was uncomfortable receiving them. A understood this dynamic a little better and began complimenting him more.

In this incident B's emotional experiencing (i.e., stating the beef that A had quit giving him compliments) is characterized by the acknowledgement of a resentment and the affectively laden thought or hot cognition accompanying it. As the result of observing this, A implicitly has a new

perception of B as wanting compliments which leads to her responding differently behaviorally (i.e., complimenting B more). In addition, because B had been suppressing this resentment, B's acknowledging it is a new expression.

7. Incident 21, Couple 6 (strong loading of 103)

A-Male

When B cried and A saw the pained expression on B's face, it meant a lot to A. A's feelings toward her changed, and they were brought closer together. A also felt discomfort because he realized that he was responsible for her pain, and he purposed to not jeopardize their marriage again as he had done.

In this incident B's emotional experiencing (i.e., crying with a pained expression on her face) is characterized by the acknowledgement of the primary feeling of pain accompanied by heightened emotional arousal and expression. As the result of observing this, A implicitly has a new perception of B as hurting which leads to greater emotional closeness between them and to A's resolve to respond differently. In addition, that the pained expression on B's face meant a lot to A implies that it is a new affective expression.

8. Incident 37, Couple 11 (strong loading of 97)

A-Male

B's crying and pouring out her feelings of how isolated she feels in the relationship is experienced by A differently than similar emotional expressions at home because it was not being caused by what normally causes it. A realizes the seriousness of the situation, and is concerned to work harder to rectify it.

In this incident B's emotional experiencing (i.e., crying and pouring out her feelings of isolation) is characterized by the acknowledgement of the primary feeling of loneliness accompanied by heightened arousal and expression. As the result of observing this, A implicitly has a new perception of B as desperately in need of support which leads to his resolving to respond differently to B. Because of the therapeutic setting in which this emotional experiencing occurs, A perceives it to be a new expression.

9. Incident 30, Couple 9 (strong loading of 96)

A-Male

When A sees on B's face an expression of fear or vulnerability which A had not seen before (rather than the usual mask of anger), A perceived B in a new way. This perception made A feel less defensive, more willing to be vulnerable, and to share himself in counselling.

In this incident B's emotional experiencing (i.e., the expression of fear or vulnerability on B's face) is characterized by her allowing the primary feeling of fear or vulnerability into awareness. As the result of observing this, A has a new perception of B as vulnerable which leads him to respond differently behaviorally (e.g., being more willing to share in counselling). Because A had not seen the expression of fear on B's face before, B's emotional experiencing is a new expression.

10. Incident 45, Couple 20 (strong loading of 92)

A-Male



When A told B in a direct way how he felt--that he needed her support very much, A experienced this as a beautiful moment. A realized that he had been perceiving B in terms of her deficiencies as the cause of their problem, and overlooking what she contributed to their relationship. A accepted her as an equal in spite of her lower energy level.

In this incident A's own emotional experiencing (i.e., experiencing the sharing of his felt-need for B as a beautiful moment) is characterized by the acknowledgement of a felt-need. As the result of this, A has a new perception of B as a valuable contributor to their relationship which leads to his accepting her as an equal. The intensity of A's experiencing implies that A's emotional experiencing is a new expression.

11. Incident 14, Couple 4 (moderate loading of 85)

#### A-Female

When B unloads his pain in a nonblaming manner, A feels closer to B. A also feels good because she interprets B's sharing to mean that he approves of the therapist and counselling and is serious about resolving their problem, and because it was A's idea to come to counselling, she interprets his sharing to also mean that he approves of her.

In this incident B's emotional experiencing (i.e., unloading his pain in a nonblaming manner) is characterized by the acknowledgement of the primary feeling of pain. As the result of observing this, A implicitly has a new perception of B (i.e., as approving of the counselling and of herself) which leads to A feeling closer to B.

12. Incident 34, Couple 17 (moderate loading of 75,

ambiguous)

#### A-Female

A, who had been suppressing her thoughts and feelings regarding socializing--that she does not like socializing a lot, shares this with B. B, who had been under the impression that socializing was easy for her, understands her position and responds to her in a new way behaviorally.

In this incident A's own emotional experiencing (i.e., A sharing her thoughts and feelings regarding her dislike of socializing) is characterized by the acknowledgement of a resentment and the affectively laden thought accompanying it. As the result of observing this, B implicitly has a new perception of A (this is implicit in his understanding of her position), which leads to B understanding A's position and responding differently behaviorally. Given that A had been suppressing her resentment, her emotional experiencing is a new expression.

A high secondary loading of 58 on category two, the disclosure of feelings and needs, however, indicates that the membership of this incident in category one is uncertain. This secondary loading may be attributed to A's disclosure of her thoughts and feelings.

13. Incident 28, Couple 8 (moderate loading of 72)

#### A-Male

Early in A's marriage he had felt uncomfortable because B was dominant in the relationship. In the session A related an experience from that period of their marriage after which he had become dominant in the relationship. When A related this experience,

he experienced a flood of feelings associated with how uncomfortable he had felt in the subordinate position early in the marriage. Besides discomfort, he also experienced a release--a giving up of something he had held on to tightly because he recognized something was in need of change. This intense emotional experience enabled A to empathize with how B felt in the relationship, and he began to see that she was entitled to feel dissatisfied. A also came to see the difficulty was not B's problem but a relationship problem centered on an imbalance of power.

In this incident A's own emotional experiencing (i.e., the flood of feelings associated with his former one-down position in the relationship) is characterized by the acknowledgement of primary feelings accompanied by heightened emotional arousal. As the result of this experience, A implicitly has a new perception of B as entitled to feel dissatisfied which leads A to understand B's position and the relationship more clearly. The intensity of A's emotional experiencing indicates that this emotional experiencing is a new expression for him.

#### 14. Incident 1, Couple 1 (moderate loading of 67)

##### A-Male

When the therapist instructs the couple to stop talking and to look at each other, A realizes that B is another person rather than a set of past impressions. This experience breaks briefly a few patterns of relating and provides A with a little greater understanding of the relationship.

Because A does not acknowledge primary feelings verbally, A does not have an explicit emotional experiencing in this incident (it is likely that A has an implicit

experiencing of emotion on an intrapsychic level as he gazes at B). As the result of this experience, A has a new perception of B as a person which leads to changes in relationship patterns and his having a greater understanding of the relationship.

15. Incident 18, Couple 5 (moderate loading of 64)

#### A-Male

When A and B raised an historic issue--B wanting A to correct for past hurts concerning A's daughter (i.e., B's stepdaughter), the therapist pointed out to B that it was futile to attempt to change the past. When B accepted this, A felt relieved because he would no longer be asked to do the impossible. A saw in this incident an indication that they were willing to work for solutions rather than impute blame to each other. Also, A felt deeply touched by B's pain which indicated how deeply she cared about her relationship.

In this incident B's emotional experiencing (i.e., B's pain regarding her relationship with her stepdaughter) is characterized by the acknowledgement of the primary feeling of pain. As the result of observing this, A implicitly has a new perception of B as deeply caring for his daughter.

16. Incident 10, Couple 3 (moderate loading of 60, ambiguous)

#### A-Female

Because when A tried to discuss things with B he would get angry and would not listen, A had decided that there was no sense in discussing things with him. After an incident in which the therapist got behind B's feelings of anger and helped him to relieve them, B seemed to look at things in a different light. B realized that A was not purposely blocking him out but that A just could not

respond to him when B was angry. B did not react with anger, was more relaxed and at peace with himself. Then A felt she could share her feelings, and they were able to discuss their feelings which they had not been able to do before.

In this incident B's emotional experiencing (i.e., the therapist getting behind B's feelings of anger and helping him to relieve them) is characterized by the acknowledgement of primary feelings underlying the secondary affect of anger. This leads B to develop new responses and to understand the relationship differently, and it leads A to feel that she could share her feelings. However, the secondary loading of 40 on category two, the disclosure of feelings and needs, makes this incident's membership in category one ambiguous. This secondary loading may be attributed to A's feeling that it was safe to share her feelings.

#### 17. Incident 40, Couple 12 (weak loading of 56)

##### A-Female

When the therapist confronts A and B with the alternatives in their relationship including separation, it forced A to commit herself to the relationship and to express this to B. A recalls B being really pissed off. A had never seen him so angry and was blown away by it. She finds it helpful to realize that B is angry but not desperate, because he does not reject her as he might easily have done.

In this incident B's emotional experiencing (i.e., being really angry) is characterized by the acknowledgement of the primary feeling of anger accompanied by heightened

arousal and emotional expression. Although anger may be either a primary or a secondary emotion (Greenberg and Safran, in press), on the basis of B's independent recall of this incident (see incident 39, p. 83) where B's anger expresses a felt-need for A, the anger in this incident is primary. As the result of observing this, A implicitly has a new perception of B as not desperate even though he is very angry. Also, because A had never seen B express anger like this before, B's emotional experiencing is a new affective expression.

Abstracted Meaning: The main idea of this latent category is that the experiencing of emotion--in the sense of an acknowledgement of primary feelings by one of the partners--alters interpersonal perception which leads to couples change. This acknowledgement of primary feelings takes three forms. The first form involves the acknowledgement of primary feelings either by allowing them into awareness (8, 30) or by verbalizing them (3, 52, 14, 18, 10); the second form involves the acknowledgement of primary feelings accompanied by heightened arousal and emotional expression (49, 21, 37, 45, 28); the third form involves the acknowledgement of primary feelings accompanied by hot cognitions (23, 36, 34).

The experiencing of emotion leads to couples change via two change patterns. In the primary change pattern, as the result of observing B's emotional experiencing either explicitly (23, 49, 30) or implicitly (8, 3, 52, 36, 21, 37, 14, 18, 40), A has a new perception of B which leads to A relating to B differently. This change pattern is supported by nine strong-loading incidents (8, 3, 52, 23, 49, 36, 21, 37, 30), by two moderate-loading incidents (14, 18), and by one weak-loading incident (40).

In the secondary change pattern, as the result of A's own emotional experiencing, A has a new perception of B either explicitly (45, 1) or implicitly (28) which leads to A relating to B differently. This pattern is supported by one strong-loading incident (45), and by two moderate-loading incidents (28, 1).

An analysis of the ten strong-loading incidents indicates the specific ways in which A's new perception of B leads to A relating to B differently. There are five occurrences of A becoming more understanding or accepting of B (8, 3, 52, 23, 45); there are four occurrences of A exhibiting new behavioral responses (8, 36, 30, 49); there are three occurrences of A experiencing greater emotional closeness to B (3, 52, 21); there are two occurrences of A resolving to respond differently (21, 37).

Finally, an analysis of the ten strong-loading incidents also indicates that the emotional experiencing that alters perception and results in couples change is new emotional expression. This is explicit in seven strong-loading incidents (8, 3, 52, 49, 36, 37, 30) and is implicit in two strong-loading incidents (21, 45).

**Latent category two: the disclosure of feelings and needs .**

Expanded title: The experience of disclosing feelings leads to the positive valuing of the disclosure of feelings, and the disclosure of needs leads to change. More specifically, A's experience of disclosing feelings leads A to the positive valuing of the disclosure of feelings; A's disclosure of needs leads to couples change.

Loadings: Category two is the second largest category with 11 incidents. It has six strong-loading incidents (16, 48, 50, 24, 17, 27), three moderate-loading incidents (42, 46, 38), one weak-loading incident (39), and one ambiguous incident (74).

**Critical incidents:**

1. Incident 16, Couple 15 (strong loading of 122)



## A-Male

When A expressed the concern that because B was going out too much they were drifting apart emotionally, and B said that there was nothing to be worried about, A realized that his concern was unfounded. Clearing up this concern started A and B communicating on other issues. Also, A realized that he could express his feelings without his head getting chopped off.

In this incident A experiences disclosing his feelings and realizes that it is safe to do this.

## 2. Incident 48, Couple 13 (strong loading of 120)

## A-Male

When A spoke to B frankly about his feelings, B felt that this was a significant moment--that A was letting B inside of A for the first time. As a result, B felt closer to A and more secure to talk about some things. Also, B no longer perceived A as closed and unwilling to reveal himself. A's perception of this incident differed from B's. A did not think that this was the first time he had expressed his emotions and she did. However, A recognized the practical value of being more expressive so that the other person knows what is going on and he began to do this.

In this incident A experiences disclosing his feelings and recognizes the value of expressing his feelings more.

## 3. Incident 50, Couple 21 (strong loading of 111)

## A-Male

When the therapist asked A how he felt about something and A expressed his thoughts rather than feelings, the therapist asked again how he felt in the here and now. This moment constituted for A the breaking of a barrier to expressing his feelings, the setting of a precedent that enabled his acquiring the pattern of expressing feelings. Moreover, A recognized the value of expressing rather than suppressing feelings and began to feel that to do this was acceptable.

In this incident A experiences disclosing his feelings rather than his thoughts, and recognizes that disclosing feelings is both valuable and acceptable.

#### 4. Incident 24, Couple 16 (strong loading of 108)

##### A-Male

When A finally realized that he as well as B have the need to express their feelings more in the relationship, A felt very emotional and took B's hand and conveyed this to her. As a result, A felt less confused in counselling and an even greater desire to share himself.

In this incident A realizes the need that he and his partner have to share their feelings more, and conveys this understanding to B. Disclosing this need leads A to feel less confused in counselling and more motivated to share himself. In this incident A also feels very emotional as he discloses his perception of their need. The emotional component of this need is attributable to the strong connection that exists between feelings and wants in human experiences (Greenberg and Safran, in press). According to these authors, this connection results from primary feelings informing people of what they want, are missing, or wish for. In other words, primary feelings provide information which informs people in a very direct fashion of their desires. It is only when peoples' needs or wants are based on feelings that they are truly experienced and communicated as needs and wants. The expression "felt-need" describes this connection between feelings and wants.

Consequently, the need expressed in this incident may be considered a felt-need.

5. Incident 17, Couple 5 (strong loading of 93)

A-Male

A's losing some inner blocks and becoming more open by speaking about personal issues and feelings in a way that neither B nor the therapist felt they had heard before, marked a turning point in counselling. A realized that B's criticism of him--that he did not express his needs clearly, was valid and that he had to take the initiative to do this. He also realized that it was his responsibility to work continually on the relationship by talking about personal issues and feelings.

In this incident A experiences losing some inner blocks and discloses his feelings in a new way. Also, he realizes his responsibility to disclose feelings in the relationship.

6. Incident 27, Couple 7 (strong loading of 94)

A-Female

When A broke down and cried, and B got up and left the room, A became very upset about his lack of support. Later they clarified that both his leaving the room and her feeling unsupported were predicated on misinterpretation that resulted from inadequate communication. A realized through this experience that it was safe to cry in front of the therapist, and this put her at ease with the therapist. A realized also that it was acceptable to express real anger in counselling, and that their relationship would survive this.

In this incident A expresses her anger and hurt, and realizes that it is both safe and acceptable to express these feelings in counselling.

7. Incident 42, Couple 19 (moderate loading of 82)

A-Male

When A tells B how he felt, he became very emotional, felt very hurt and just about started to cry. However, rather than his typical response of blaming B for his hurt, A responded by expressing his hurt and his wanting her. It made a difference to A that B did not respond in her typically defensive manner but opened up to him. A realized how difficult this new way of responding was for him; that he could get what he wanted without driving B away by expressing that he felt hurt and really wanted her rather than by blaming and demanding.

In this incident A discloses his hurt and need for B without blaming B. This is a new response for A, and he realizes that although this new way of responding is difficult that it facilitates the intimacy he wants. The idea of the value of disclosing feelings is implicit in this realization.

8. Incident 47, Couple 13 (moderate loading of 74, ambiguous)

#### A-Male

When the therapist asked B to state how she felt about something and B began to criticize A, the therapist intervened and pointed out the difference between sharing one's own feelings and criticizing one's partner. A and B agreed that the former was more facilitative of listening responses than the latter. The awareness of this difference enabled A and B to monitor their interactions and to choose to share feelings. Through this they learned that it was safe to share feelings, that sharing feelings received a fairly concerned reception.

In this incident A and B learn the difference between disclosing feelings and criticizing. They realize that sharing feelings facilitates listening responses and also is

safe. However, because this incident's secondary loading is equal to its primary loading, its membership in this latent category is highly ambiguous. This high secondary loading on category three, understanding, may be attributed to the term "awareness" in this incident.

9. Incident 46, Couple 20 (moderate loading of 72)

A-Female

A realized how important her need to be loved was and that it was okay to need that in the relationship, to want that and to ask for that. A experienced this realization as an exciting discovery of herself as an individual. As the result of clearly expressing this realization to B and B's own process of change, there was somehow a change in B such that they became closer and started working together rather than fighting each other.

In this incident A realizes her felt-need to be loved and expresses this realization to B. This disclosure leads to change in B and to greater emotional closeness in the relationship.

10. Incident 38, Couple 11 (moderate loading of 70)

A-Female

When the therapist was talking to A about her needs, A broke down and cried intensely. It felt natural and good to cry--a release of frustration. A's needs came into awareness in this emotional way because she was not aware of them. A felt surprised that she felt that way and realized she has a hesitance in recognizing her needs. She came to recognize that as a mother, wife, and career woman she had practical needs. She expressed these needs to B, and also that she needed and loved him.

In this incident A becomes aware of her felt-needs through an emotional experience and expresses them to B.

This awareness leads A to a realization about herself-in-relationship; namely, that she has a hesitance to recognize her needs.

11. Incident 39, Couple 12 (weak loading of 59)

#### A-Male

In a moment of heart-opening A got really angry and showed B how desperate he was. For a few minutes there seemed to be a change in B related to her seeing how much he needed her. However, rather than asking what she could do that would help, her response was to express how shocked she felt that he needed her so badly that he would express such anger. A realized through expressing his anger that he was committed to the relationship--that he would not hold back to make the relationship work.

In this incident A expresses his anger and felt-need for B. This leads B to a realization about himself-in-relationship; namely, the extent of his commitment to the relationship.

Abstracted Meaning: The main idea in category two is that the experience of disclosing feelings leads to the positive valuing of the disclosure of feelings. This positive valuing includes notions that the disclosure of feelings is (a) valuable (48, 50, 42), (b) safe (16, 27), (c) acceptable (50, 27), and (d) a responsibility (17). This main idea is supported by five strong-loading incidents (16, 48, 50, 17, 27), one moderate-loading incident (42), and an ambiguous incident (47).

A secondary idea in category two is that the disclosure of felt-needs leads to change. As mentioned on page 79, the expression "felt-needs" refers to the close connection between feelings and wants or needs in human experience. This idea is supported by one strong-loading incident (24), two moderate-loading incidents (46, 38), and one weak-loading incident (39). The change that occurs as the result of the disclosure of felt-needs includes (a) greater understanding of the self-in-relationship (38, 39), (b) increased willingness to self-disclose (24), and (c) greater emotional closeness (46).

**Latent category three: understanding.**

Expanded title: The development of intellectual understanding, emotional understanding, or a combination of these leads to couples change. More specifically, A's developing intellectual understanding, emotional understanding, or a combination of these leads to A relating to B differently.

Loadings: Category three is the third largest latent category with nine incidents. It has four strong-loading incidents (4, 29, 33, 5), two moderate-loading incidents (44, 15), and three ambiguous incidents (25, 9, 31).

### Critical incidents:

#### 1. Incident 4, Couple 2 (strong loading of 118)

##### A-Male

The therapist helped A and B to acknowledge a pursue-distance pattern and asked them to become more aware of this pattern. A experienced this initially as reassuring and a relief. Then, he began to feel uncomfortable and wanted to change. It increased his readiness to change in that after he had looked at his behavior for a while (rather than jumping and changing it), he felt prepared to do something about it.

In this incident A develops an understanding of relationship dynamics pertaining to the pursue-distance pattern in the relationship. According to Greenberg and Safran (in press), a distinction between intellectual and emotional understanding or insight was noted originally by Freud in 1913. Implicit in this distinction is the notion that, in addition to the ego having an intellectual awareness of disavowed contents (i.e., unconscious conflicts, impulses), it is essential for the ego to attain emotional insight by directly experiencing these contents. In philosophical discussions, the same distinction has been made using the expressions "knowledge by description" and "knowledge by acquaintance". The former refers to knowledge *about* something, while the latter refers to direct experiential contact. Because A's understanding involves knowledge about their pursue-distance pattern rather than an experiencing of it, the understanding in this incident is



intellectual in character.

2. Incident 29, Couple 8 (strong loading of 109)

A-Female

When the therapist explained that people have areas of vulnerability, A began to understand their behavior in terms of underlying motivations. She realized that she had to look for something deeper as a reason for their continued arguments.

In this incident A develops an understanding of relationship dynamics pertaining to underlying motivations. This leads her to look for underlying feelings as the explanation for their arguments. Because A's understanding involves knowledge about the concept of vulnerability and its implications for their relationship, the understanding in this incident is intellectual in character.

3. Incident 33, Couple 17 (strong loading of 104)

A-Male

Because the therapist monitored their interaction, A and B were able to discuss the feelings around their crisis more calmly than had the therapist not been present. A discovered that he did not listen as well as he thought he had and began to understand B's perspective. His ability to listen to words and emotions improved. He developed more understanding of what underlay B's emotional swings, and of how crises developed so as to avoid them.

In this incident A develops the understanding that he did not listen to B as well as he thought he had. This understanding leads to an improvement in B's ability to listen to words and emotions. Because this understanding involves A making a discovery about himself through directly

experiencing how he listened in the session, the understanding in this incident is emotional in character.

4. Incident 5, Couple 5 (strong loading of 98)

A-Male

When A and B began to recall unresolved and contentious issues from the past, the therapist acknowledged these issues and gave them an opportunity to express them. However, he used these issues to focus their attention on their current relationship and on what was occurring in the here and now in the session. A found this helpful because it kept him aware of his responsibility for his present behavior. He found it sobering to notice that he easily engaged in unproductive behavior in the session. Through this experience he realized that he was not as open and flexible in his positions as he had thought that he was. This realization opened him up to begin to question his positions and to hold them less rigidly.

In this incident A develops an understanding of himself-in-relationship; namely, that he was not as flexible in his positions as he had thought he was. This understanding leads him to become more flexible in his positions. A's understanding involves a knowledge about his lack of flexibility. However, this understanding occurs through direct experiencing of his behavior. Therefore, the understanding in this incident is best characterized as a combination of intellectual and emotional insight.

5. Incident 44, Couple 20 (moderate loading of 89)

A-Male

When the therapist helped A to realize how hard he had been on himself, and that he did not have to solve others' problems in order to have self-worth, A felt he had finally recognized himself, and was

ready to accept who he was and feel good about himself and love himself. This was an emotional experience--he was on the verge of tears--that was difficult to put into words. He felt a great relief, like a big burden had been lifted off his shoulders. Moreover, because after this he became more assertive and less overwhelmed by the problems of living, he sees this incident as a turning point not only in terms of his relationship but also in terms of how he deals with his world.

In this incident A understands of how hard he had been on himself and that his self-esteem did not depend on his solving others' problems. This understanding leads A to a new acceptance and love of himself that changes how he is in his relationship and in the world. Because A's understanding involves a direct emotional experiencing of how hard he had been on himself, the understanding in this incident is emotional in character.

#### 6. Incident 15, Couple 4 (moderate loading of 88)

##### A-Female

When the therapist pointed out the discrepancy between their belief system and how they were relating to each other, A realized that it was easier for her to extend forgiveness to others than to herself. This changed her perception of what had transpired and also her opinion of herself. A realized that she was valuable, that she was salvagable--that she was not so far off the mark as to never be acceptable to B again.

In this incident A comes to an understanding of herself--that it was easier for her to forgive others than herself--that leads to an acceptance of herself as valuable and a heightened view of her worth in the relationship. A's awareness of the discrepancy between what she believes about

forgiveness and how she lives is intellectual in character. However, A's changed self-perception indicates that she directly experienced this awareness. The understanding in this incident, therefore, is both intellectual and emotional in character.

7. Incident 25, Couple 7 (moderate loading of 69, ambiguous)

A-Male

When B was crying A got up and returned with a coffee and kleenex. Although A meant well, B experienced this action as his ignoring her and became angry. As a result, A realized that when B needs him to listen to her, it is important for him to listen to her feelings rather than doing what he thinks she needs. A began to listen more and to be aware of when he fails to do this.

In this incident A develops an understanding of B; namely, the importance of listening to B's feelings when she needs him to listen. This understanding leads A to listen more and to become more aware of when he fails to listen. A's understanding involves a knowledge about the importance of listening to B's feelings. However, this understanding occurs through direct experiencing of B's anger. Therefore, the understanding in this incident is best characterized as a combination of intellectual and emotional insight.

Because this incident has a high secondary loading of 54 on category one, emotional experiencing leads to change in interpersonal perception, its membership in category three is ambiguous. This high secondary loading may be

attributed to the main idea of latent category one (i.e., A's observation of B's emotional experiencing leads A to relate to B differently) being present in this incident (thus in this incident A's observation of B's crying and anger leads A to understand the importance of listening to B's feelings).

8. Incident 9, Couple 3 (weak loading of 55, ambiguous)

A-Male

When B expresses that she fears for her well-being when A becomes angry, A breaks down and cries, feels confused, sorry and ashamed. He comes to understand his temper as a function of communication blocks in the relationship which they then worked on removing through counselling. And, A identifies his fear of showing affection and not having it received or returned by B. B was not aware of this fear.

In this incident A discovers understandings about himself-in-relationship; namely, that he is afraid of showing affection and that his temper is a function of communication blocks in the relationship. The understanding concerning the communication blocks leads A to work on changing them in counselling. Because A's understanding involves the bringing into awareness or direct experiencing of his fear of showing affection, the understanding in this incident is emotional in character.

However, because of a secondary loading of 39 on category two, this incident's membership in category three is ambiguous. The secondary loading on category two, the disclosure of feelings and needs, may be attributed to A's

disclosing his feelings in this incident.

9. Incident 31, Couple 9 (weak loading of 45, ambiguous)

A-Female

Because the therapist empathized with what A was feeling and said the right thing to lead her to the next step, A experiences the fear, sadness, and pain of becoming emotionally aware of a protective mechanism that she had taken on as a child and without which she felt she would have died. A identified this as a barrier that prevented her from trusting B. A felt more relaxed and sees this barrier as something which is not automatic but about which she has some choice in terms of whether or not to trust B or let him in.

In this incident A develops an understanding about herself-in-relationship; namely, the presence of an inner protective mechanism that inhibits her trusting B. This understanding leads her to realize that she chooses whether or not to trust B. Because A's understanding involves the bringing into awareness or direct experiencing of a protective mechanism, the understanding in this incident is emotional in character.

However, because this incident has a secondary loading of 28 on both category four and five, its membership in this category is ambiguous. The secondary loading on category four, taking responsibility for experience, may be attributed to A's realization that she has a choice in terms of how she responds to B; the secondary loading on category five, validation, may be attributed to the implicit validation of A by the therapist's empathy.

Abstracted meaning: The main idea in latent category three is that A develops intellectual understanding (4, 29), emotional understanding (44, 9, 31, 33), or a combination of these (5, 25, 15) that leads to A relating to B differently.

The new understanding reached by A pertains to (a) relationship dynamics (4, 29, 33), (b) the self-in-relationship (33, 5, 9, 31), (c) the partner (33, 25), and (d) the self (44, 15). In the two incidents in which A develops a new understanding of the self, this understanding is accompanied by an acceptance of the self which precedes A relating to B differently.

As the result of achieving new understanding, A relates differently to B by developing new responses. These responses include improved listening (33, 25), greater flexibility (5), analyzing behavior in terms of underlying motivation (4), choosing whether to trust rather than automatically not trusting (31), and working to remove communication blocks (9).

**Latent category four: taking responsibility for experience.**

Expanded title: The awareness of personal responsibility in the relationship results in the shift from attributing blame to taking a self-focus. More specifically, A comes to a new awareness of personal responsibility in the relationship

that results in A shifting from attributing blame to taking a self-focus.

Loadings: Category four is the fourth largest latent category with eight incidents. It has four strong-loading incidents (41, 26, 2, 20) and four ambiguous incidents (6, 43, 19, 51).

#### Critical incidents:

1. Incident 41, Couple 18 (strong loading of 126)

##### A-Female

When A tells B about an incident and how she felt that he was going to react, A realizes that it is her responsibility to not anticipate how B is going to react, but rather to trust that B will speak for himself, that he is responsible for his own reactions, and A for hers. Also, A realizes that she can not blame it on B that she gets upset because of the way she anticipates he is going to react.

In this incident A realizes that she is responsible for her own reactions and B for his and that she cannot blame him for how she anticipates he will react. Implicit in this incident is the notion that these realizations lead A to respond differently to B.

2. Incident 26, Couple 7 (strong loading of 123)

##### A-Female

A realized that B was not totally to blame for their relationship difficulties, but that by assuming too much responsibility and blaming him rather than setting limits she too was responsible for their



difficulties. When A expressed this to B she saw him sit up taller in his chair and puff out his chest and interpreted this to mean that B felt better to be no longer in the blamed position. As a result, A learned to set limits concerning what she was willing to be responsible for in the relationship.

In this incident A realizes that because she failed to set limits in terms of what she took on in the relationship, B is not totally to blame for their relationship difficulties, but that she too is responsible. This realization leads A to learn to set limits.

### 3. Incident 2, Couple 1 (strong loading of 104)

#### A-Female

When A cried she realized how difficult it was to experience this with another person and to ask for comfort. Looking at B and seeing that he was caring enabled her to ask him to hold her at home. She felt this moment to be a shared experience which overcame her isolation. She realized that by shutting him out and blaming him for her isolation rather than by reaching out, she was responsible for her isolation.

In a shared experience of intimacy, A realizes that she is responsible for her isolation and that B is not to blame for it. This realization leads A to ask B for physical contact/comfort at home.

### 4. Incident 20, Couple 5 (strong loading of 102)

#### A-Female

When A brings up an old issue pertaining to her relationship with B's stepdaughter, and wants B to intervene between them, B became very angry and said that it was a dead issue which he did not want to deal with anymore. A found this painful to hear and cried. However, she perceived this to be a new

response on B's part. It was the clearest thing B had ever said on this issue. A realized that the issue, which was between her and his step-daughter, was her problem and that she had been making it an issue inappropriately in her relationship with B. A also realized that rather than wanting to correct what had happened, that she had to accept it as it was; that this was difficult because she tended to hold grudges. Finally, A realized that she had used this issue as an expression of resentment against B for other things, and felt embarrassed and a bit ashamed.

In this incident A implicitly blames B for not intervening in A's relationship with B's step-daughter and realizes that she is responsible for her relationship with B's stepdaughter. A also realizes that she had been making this relationship an issue in her relationship with B inappropriately by blaming B for not intervening. Implicit in this incident is the notion that this realization leads A to respond differently to B (i.e., by ceasing to make her relationship with B's stepdaughter an issue in their relationship).

5. Incident 6, Couple 2 (weak loading of 50, ambiguous)

A-Female

Although a session in which A and B brought up old painful issues and A cried a lot and blamed ended with both feeling locked in their positions, it intensified A's feelings around these issues such that she either had to resolve her feelings or leave B. A realized not only that she had a choice to really be in the relationship or out of it, but also that she really wanted to be in it. She also realized that she had not been dealing with issues directly, and that B was open to her doing this.

In this incident A blames B for old issues and out of this experience realizes that she is responsible for choosing to be in the relationship. However, because of a weak primary loading and a secondary loading of 37 on category three, the membership of this incident in category four is ambiguous. The secondary loading on category three, understanding, may be attributed to A coming to new understandings about herself-in-relationship; namely, that she had a choice to be in the relationship, and that she had not been dealing with issues directly.

6. Incident 43, Couple 19 (weak loading of 47, ambiguous)

A-Female

A understood B's position of taking on other's problems as his issue, and understanding that B felt oppressed by this helped A to feel less like she inflicted her problems on him. A understood her position--that she was not responsible for his taking on her problems and then blaming her. Understanding where the blame came from enabled A to feel unburdened, less guilty, a lot freer--to feel okay about herself. A also felt more entitled to her own problems, allowed B to deal with others' problems without joining in, and reacted to B's blaming less. Moreover, A felt more relaxed and compassionate toward B.

In this incident A realizes that she is not responsible for B's taking on others' problems and blaming her. This understanding leads A to feel better about herself, to react to B's blaming less, and to not become involved when B takes on other's problems. Because this incident has a weak primary loading and a secondary loading of 27 on category

three, its membership in category four is ambiguous. The secondary loading on category three, understanding, may be attributed to A's achieving a new understanding of herself-in-relationship that leads her to relate to B differently.

7. Incident 19, Couple 5 (weak loading of 41, ambiguous)

A-Female

When B expresses a particular dissatisfaction regarding his relationship for the first time--that he finds A's perfectionism demoralizing and distressing, A feels distressed because of the impact of this part of her character on others, and elated because B's comment demonstrated that he was more involved in the relationship than previously. A comes to a new perspective of herself concerning her perfectionism, and begins to deal with her perfectionism by lowering her standards and by clearly stating them.

In this incident A comes to a new understanding of her perfectionism and begins to deal with it differently. Because of a weak primary loading of 41 and a secondary loading of 40, however, this incident is highly ambiguous. The primary loading on this category, taking responsibility for experience, may be attributed to A taking responsibility for her perfectionism through lowering her standards and stating them clearly; the secondary loading on category three, understanding, may be attributed to A coming to a new understanding of her perfectionism.

8. Incident 51, Couple 21 (weak loading of 40, ambiguous)

A-Female

When the therapist asked how long A was willing to wait for B to decide how he felt, and suggested that A set a date pending which she would not press issues but would work on building the relationship, A felt less of a victim and more powerful in her relationship. A felt this way because the therapist helped her to take charge of her direction by setting a specific length of time that she was willing to wait rather than waiting indefinitely.

In this incident A assumes some control in her relationship by setting a specific time limit. However, because of a weak primary loading of 40, and a secondary loading of 32 on category five, this incident is highly ambiguous. The weak primary loading on this category, taking responsibility for experience, may be attributed to A's implicitly taking responsibility for her part in the relationship by setting a time limit; the secondary loading on category five, validation, may be attributed to A implicitly feeling validated by the therapist.

Abstracted meaning: The main idea in latent category four is that A comes to a new awareness of personal responsibility in the relationship that results in A shifting from attributing blame to taking a self-focus. This idea is supported by the four strong-loading incidents (41, 26, 2, 20). The remaining four ambiguous incidents (6, 43, 19, 51) also involve A assuming greater personal responsibility in the relationship. However, the shift from attributing blame

to taking a self-focus is absent in these incidents.

As the result of the shift from blaming to taking a self-focus, A responds differently to B by setting limits (26), and asking for contact/comfort (2). In the other two strong loading incidents (20, 41), the notion that the shift from blaming to taking a self-focus leads to A responding differently to B is implicit.

#### **Latent category five: validation.**

Expanded title: Validation leads to change for the partner who receives validation and change in the behavior of the partner who observes the process of validation. More specifically, A's receiving validation leads to change for A and change in the behavior of B who observes the process of A's validation.

Loadings: Category five is the smallest latent category with seven incidents. It has two strong-loading incidents (35, 32), one moderate-loading incident (13), and four ambiguous incidents (7, 11, 12, 22).

#### **Critical incidents:**

1. Incident 35, Couple 10 (strong loading of 123)

A-Female

When the therapist asked B if he does anything wrong, he said, "No". The look on the therapist's face validated A's experience and helped her to feel that B is in the wrong also at times. Also, A felt entitled to having complaints and experienced a release in sharing them and having them understood by the therapist.

In this incident the look on the therapist's face validates A's position with the result that A feels entitled to her position and to having complaints.

2. Incident 32, Couple 9 (strong loading of 122)

A-Female

At one point B burst out laughing and the therapist focused on the meaning of his reaction. When A observed the therapist's intervention, she felt a sense of relief that B was finally being confronted by someone he would listen to, and that he was hearing her side. A felt validated that she was not wrong all the time. As a result, A felt more confident to be who she was. Because she felt understood by the therapist and confident about the therapist's ability to intervene, she trusted the therapist and the counselling process more.

In this incident the therapist validates A's position with the result that A feels affirmed as a person, and more trusting of the therapist and the counselling process. Also, B's observing the process of A's validation leads B to hear A's position.

3. Incident 7, Couple 14 (moderate loading of 86, ambiguous)

A-Female

When A who was feeling isolated with her pain and disappointment shared these feelings, A felt good

because the therapist understood and validated her experience. Also, B, who responded typically by invalidating her feelings, upon hearing her hurt, realized that her feelings were valid and began to understand her pain more. Consequently, were the need to arise, A feels confident about expressing her feelings to B because she thinks that he would understand.

In this incident the therapist validates A's feelings with the result that A feels affirmed. Also, B's observation of the process of A's validation leads B to accept and to understand A's feelings more. However, because of a secondary loading of 62 on category two, this incident is highly ambiguous. This secondary loading on category two, the disclosure of feelings and needs, may be attributed to A disclosing her feelings and developing the confidence that it is safe to do this.

#### 4. Incident 13, Couple 4 (moderate loading of 78)

##### A-Male

When the therapist told them in a sincere and concerned manner that she was impressed with their commitment, the progress that they were making, and that there was hope for their relationship, A felt encouraged to keep at counselling. Also, because the therapist's comments enabled A to give less importance to his inner doubts about his relationship with B, and to begin to believe that it was on the mend, he felt calmer and more content.

In this incident the therapist validates A's commitment to and progress in counselling with the result that A feels encouraged regarding counselling and assured regarding his relationship with B.

#### 5. Incident 11, Couple 3 (weak loading of 54, ambiguous)



## A-Female

As a result of the therapist's comments, A felt that B realized that they both had a need to do independent activities and consequently that B was more accepting of A's need to do this. Also, A felt entitled to have her own activities without feeling guilty.

In this incident the therapist validates implicitly A's position with the result that A feels entitled to her own activities. Also, the therapist's validation of A leads B to be more accepting of A's need to have these activities. Because of a weak primary loading of 54 and a secondary loading of 32 on category three, however, this incident's membership in category five is ambiguous. This secondary loading on category three, understanding, may be attributed to A's understanding of B's realization.

6. Incident 12, Couple 4 (weak loading of 53, ambiguous)

## A-Male

A felt good about the therapist reinforcing his view in such a way that B really heard it. As a result, B realized that she had been perceiving A as vengeful and self-centered rather than as hurting. It felt good to A that B was starting to understand how he was feeling. This resulted in A feeling more hopeful about a genuine renewing of their relationship, and to open up a bit to B because he realized he was not trusting her enough.

In this incident the therapist validates A's position with the result that A feels affirmed. According to A, his receiving validation leads B to change her response to him, and to be more understanding of his feelings. Because of a weak primary loading of 53 and a secondary loading of 31 on

category one, however, this incident's membership in category five is ambiguous. This secondary loading on category one, emotional experiencing leads to change in interpersonal perception, may be attributed to the reference to primary feelings (i.e., hurt) in this incident.

7. Incident 22, Couple 67 (weak loading of 48, ambiguous)

A-Female

When B affirms A in an area of sensitivity--A's physical attractiveness--by looking at her and saying in an emotional and sincere manner that indicated he was reaching out to her, "You're beautiful, I love you the way you are", A burst into tears and thought that perhaps she could believe B. A realized that she had been ignoring B's sincerity in relation to her, and that B was not ashamed of her. A began to feel good about herself again.

In this incident B validates A's physical attractiveness with the result that A changes her perception of B and her self-esteem improves. Because of a weak primary loading of 48 and a secondary loading of 35 on category one, however, this incident's membership in category five is ambiguous. This secondary loading on category one, emotional experiencing leads to change in interpersonal perception, may be attributed to A's emotional arousal and expression in this incident.

Abstracted meaning: The main idea in latent category five is that validation leads to change for the partner who receives validation (i.e., A) and change in the behavior of the

partner who observes the process of validation (i.e., B).

The ways in which being validated leads to change for A include A feeling (a) entitled to his/her position (35, 11), (b) affirmed as a self (32, 7, 22), (c) more trusting of the therapist and the counselling process (32), and (d) encouraged regarding counselling and assured regarding the relationship (13). According to A, B's observation of the process of A's validation leads B to become more understanding and accepting of A's feelings (12, 7), needs (11), and position (32).

Because in all but one incident (22) it is the therapist rather than the partner who does the validating, the therapist plays a central role in A's receiving validation. The therapist's focus in validating A is most frequently A's position (35, 32, 12, 13), feelings (7), and needs (11).

### Results of the Interview Questionnaire

In the first part of the questionnaire, two parallel questions accessed quantitative data concerning the relationship between the expression of feelings and change (i.e., Did the expression of feelings lead to change for you? Did the expression of feelings make a difference for you?). On a Likert-type five-point scale ranging from *not at all* (1) to *very definitely* (5), the mean of the 42

interviewees was 4.05 on the former question and 4.14 on the latter question. The combined mean of these questions was 4.1. This indicates that the interviewees perceived the expression of feelings to be definitely important in change.

A Pearson  $r$  correlation coefficient of .74 indicates that there is a strong positive correlation between interviewees responses to these parallel questions. Because this statistic means that interviewees tended to consistently answer both parallel questions on the upper end of the scale, it indicates the stability with which the interviewees rated the constructs in the questions (i.e., the expression of feelings and change).

In the second part of the questionnaire, two questions accessed qualitative data concerning the feelings that the interviewees expressed in counselling that they deemed were important for themselves and their partners. With respect to the first question (i.e., What feeling did you express that was important for you?), there were five occurrences of commitment to the relationship; there were four occurrences of vulnerability, anger, frustration, sadness and love; there were two occurrences of fear and caring for the partner; there was one occurrence of rejection, despair, weakness, truth, guilt, powerlessness, pain (loss), crying, defensiveness, helplessness, resentment, acceptance of the self and partner, tolerance and understanding.

Because of the close connection between feelings and needs, interviewees also expressed needs that were important to themselves. There were two occurrences of the need to be loved for oneself, the need to understand or be understood, and the need to have the partner disclose feelings; there was one occurrence of the need for the partner to be sensitive and the need for recognition.

With respect to the second question (i.e., What feeling did your partner express that was most important?), there were eight occurrences of caring; there were seven occurrences of commitment to the relationship; there were four occurrences of love; there were three occurrences of hurt, vulnerability, and acceptance; there were two occurrences of acceptance of the self, pain, understanding or sensitivity, and fear; there was one occurrence of rejection, anger, frustration, disappointment, loneliness, discouragement, sadness, and sincerity.

The interviewees also stated needs that the partner had expressed that were important. There was one occurrence of the need for acceptance, for individual space, for toleration of differences, for help regarding household duties, for support, for trust, for reassurance regarding fears.

## Summary and Discussion

### Summary

The objectives of this study were twofold: to describe empirical categories of couples change processes in an integrated affective systemic couples treatment from the couples perspective, and to refine Greenberg and Johnson's (in press) theoretical model of change processes in the light of these processes. The former objective has been accomplished in the previous chapter; the latter objective will be accomplished in this chapter.

An exploratory and descriptive technique, the critical incident technique, was used to collect critical incidents or descriptions of change events from the perspective of each partner of 21 couples. These couples had experienced significant change in a brief affective systemic couples treatment vis à vis a wait-list control group. Two graduate students in counselling-psychology, whose interviewing was judged to be comparable, collected 61 incidents using a semi-structured interview format. When these incidents had been transcribed, 52 were judged on the basis of various criteria to be suitable for analysis. These incidents were simplified in a manner which represented them well in order to facilitate their analysis via a categorization methodology.

In the data collection phase of this methodology, the F-sort, 37 graduate students in counselling-psychology each formed categories of a randomly ordered deck of 52 simplified incidents by placing together incidents that were similar with respect to the dominant change process for the person reporting the incident.

In the data analytic phase of the categorization methodology, Latent Partition Analysis (LPA), the results of the F-sort were analyzed by computer. This produced three matrices--S, Phi, and Omega. The Phi matrix was used to select the model of Phi with the optimal number of latent categories; the Omega matrix indicated that the categories of this model were separate and discrete.

LPA resulted in a model of Phi with five latent categories of couples change processes being selected. Table 4 presents a summary of the titles and expanded titles of these categories. In addition, the results of an interview questionnaire included in the interview guide indicated that partners perceived the expression of feelings to be important in change.

#### **The Theoretical Model**

As stated in the introduction, the purpose of comparing the empirically derived categories of change processes with Greenberg and Johnson's (in press) theoretical model of change processes is to refine, modify, or clarify their

Table 4  
Summary of the Titles and Expanded Titles of the Five Latent Categories

<i>Latent Category No.</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Expanded Title</i>
1	Emotional experiencing leads to change in interpersonal perceptions.	The experiencing of emotion--in the sense of the acknowledgement of primary feelings by one of the partners--alters perception and produces couples change. More specifically, A's observation of B's emotional experiencing, or A's own emotional experiencing, results in A having a new perception of B which leads to A relating to B differently.
2	The disclosure of feelings and needs.	The experience of disclosing feelings leads to the positive valuing of the disclosure of feelings, and the disclosure of "felt-needs" leads to change. More specifically, A's experience of disclosing feelings leads to the positive valuing of the disclosure of feelings; A's disclosure of needs leads to couples change.
3	Understanding.	The development of intellectual understanding, emotional understanding, or a combination of these leads to couples change. More specifically, A's developing intellectual understanding, emotional understanding, or a combination of these leads to A relating to B differently.



- |   |                                       |   |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| 4 | Taking responsibility for experience. | The awareness of personal responsibility in the relationship results in the shift from attributing blame to taking a self-focus. More specifically, A comes to a new awareness of personal responsibility in the relationship that results in A shifting from attributing blame to taking a self-focus. |
| 5 | Validation                            | Validation leads to change for the partner who receives validation and in the behavior of the partner who observes the process of validation. More specifically, A's receiving validation leads to change for A and change in the behavior of B who observes the process of A's validation.             |

model in order to facilitate model building. The idea of comparing the results of empirical investigation with a theoretical model in order to refine, modify, or clarify the model is drawn from the rational-empirical method of task analysis (Greenberg, 1984). In the first phase of this method, the rational aspect, an initial theoretical model of a particular phenomenon is developed on the basis of clinical notions; in the second phase, the empirical aspect, a series of examples of this phenomenon are investigated; in the third phase, theory building, the initial model is refined, modified, or clarified in the light of the results of the empirical investigation.

The first change process in Greenberg and Johnson's (in press) model is "an individual perceives himself or herself differently by bringing into focal awareness experiences not previously dominant in this person's view of self; for example, 'I see and accept my vulnerability'". In the change process identified in latent category one, emotional experiencing leads to change in interpersonal perceptions, there are three incidents in which A reports on his or her own emotional experiencing (i.e., 45, 28, 1). This emotional experiencing leads to change in interpersonal perception rather than in self-perception. In other words, in each incident the As do not perceive themselves differently but rather perceive their partners differently.

However, in four other incidents, two in category two (46, 38), and two in category three (44, 15), the As do perceive themselves differently as a function of their emotional experiences (in incidents 38 and 44, there is an explicit emotional experiencing; in incident 46, there is an implicit affective component). In the incidents in category two, the As come to new perceptions of themselves by becoming aware of felt-needs; in the incidents in category three, the As come to new perceptions of themselves by becoming aware of how hard they had been on themselves. Therefore, while emotional experiencing primarily influences perception of the partner rather than of the self, it does

bring into focal awareness new insights about the self and the self's felt-needs that influence self-perception.

An idea that is implicit in Greenberg and Johnson's (in press) first change process is that bringing into focal awareness experiences not previously in awareness produces reorganization of the self. According to Greenberg and Johnson, a person's self-organization at any given moment depends on what aspects of his or her experiential process (i.e., thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations, images) are in focal awareness. For example, the emergence into awareness of primary feelings of fear or vulnerability results in a person being organized as "vulnerable". Even though people may not report on or even be aware of their reorganization, it will be effected in their interactions. It is in this sense that self-organization determines a person's behavior. This idea is articulated in the third change process in Greenberg and Johnson's model.

The idea that bringing experiences into focal awareness produces reorganization of the self may be made explicit by refining Greenberg and Johnson's (in press) first change process as follows: "An individual organizes himself or herself differently by bringing into focal awareness experiences not previously in awareness". What is key in this refined change process is not the new perception of the self but the reorganization of the self.

This refined change process is corroborated implicitly by empirical categories two, three, and four. In the primary aspect of the change process identified in latent category two, the disclosure of feelings, that the As come to value disclosing feelings implies that by bringing previously unacknowledged experiences into awareness a new self-organization has occurred. In the change process identified in latent category three, understanding, that the As come to new understanding about their interactions and personal process implies that by bringing previously unacknowledged experiences into awareness a new self-organization has occurred. In the change process identified in latent category four, taking responsibility for experience, that the As take a self-focus rather than attributing blame implies that by bringing previously unacknowledged experiences into awareness a new self-organization has occurred.

The second change process in Greenberg and Johnson's (in press) model is "the spouse, upon witnessing the partner's new affective expressions, perceives the partner in a new way; for example, 'I see your need for caring and contact rather than your hostility'". In the change process identified in latent category one, emotional experiencing leads to change in interpersonal perceptions, of the 14 incidents in which A witnesses B's emotional experiencing,

there are 12 incidents in which A perceives B in a new way. This indicates that the first empirically derived change process corroborates strongly the second change process in Greenberg and Johnson's model.

The third change process in Greenberg and Johnson's (in press) model is "the individual's personal reorganization leads to different behavior in the interaction with the spouses; for example, 'I now ask you for reassurance from a position of vulnerability'". What is key in this change process is the different behavior in the interaction, and not the personal reorganization (this was emphasized in their first change process).

In the change process identified in latent category one, emotional experiencing leads to change in interpersonal perceptions, there are three incidents (45, 28, 1) in which As reorganization leads to different behavior. In incident 45, A's reorganization leads to A accepting B in a new way; in incident 28, A's reorganization leads to A having an increased understanding of B's position and the relationship; in incident one, A's reorganization leads to A having an increased understanding of the relationship.

In the primary aspect of the change process identified in latent category two, the disclosure of feelings, the As personal reorganization as "valuing of self-disclosure" leads to different behavior in the interaction (i.e.,

self-disclosing behavior). In the change process identified in latent category three, understanding, the As personal reorganization as "understanding" leads to different behavior in the interaction--such as improved listening, greater flexibility, and analyzing behavior in terms of underlying feelings. In the change process identified in latent category four, taking responsibility for experience, the As personal reorganization as "self-focused" leads to different behavior in the interaction--such as setting limits and asking for contact or comfort. Therefore, the change processes identified in the first four latent categories, and principally in latent category two, three, and four, corroborate the third change process in Greenberg and Johnson's (in press) model.

The fourth change process in Greenberg and Johnson's (in press) model is "the spouse's new perceptions of the partner lead to different responses; for example, 'I comfort you rather than withdraw'". In the change process identified in latent category one, emotional experiencing leads to change in interpersonal perceptions, the As new perception of their partners leads to different responses--such as A becoming more understanding or accepting of B, exhibiting new behavioral responses, experiencing greater emotional closeness to B, and resolving to respond differently. This indicates that the change

process identified in latent category one provides strong corroboration of the fourth change process in Greenberg and Johnson's model.

The fifth change process in Greenberg and Johnson's (in press) model is "as a function of their partner's new behaviors, the individuals come to see themselves in a new way; for example, 'since I can fulfill your needs, I see myself as valuable and necessary to you'". None of the change processes identified in the five latent categories appear to corroborate this change process.

The change process identified in latent category five, validation, is not reflected in any of Greenberg and Johnson's (in press) change processes. Because the purpose of comparing the empirically derived change processes with the change processes in their model is to modify as well as to refine their change processes, it would seem important to add the fifth empirically derived change process, validation, to their model. This change process would read as follows: "As a function of the therapist's validation, the individual experiences change. For example, 'I feel entitled to my position'".

The previous discussion indicates that (a) Greenberg and Johnson's (in press) second and fourth change processes received strong corroboration from the first empirically derived change process, (b) their first change process

needed to be refined, and (c) their fifth change process received no corroboration. That their fifth change process received no corroboration suggests that its validity is questionable; however, it is possible that other forms of data collection could provide evidence to support its validity. Finally, because the change process identified in latent category five, validation, was not reflected in their model, it was added to the revised model. Table 5 presents a summary of this revised model of change processes.

#### **Interpretation of the Latent Categories Found in the Empirical Analysis**

**Latent category one: emotional experiencing leads to change in interpersonal perceptions.**

The change process identified in latent category one, emotional experiencing leads to change in interpersonal perceptions, has two related change patterns. In the primary change pattern, as the result of observing B's emotional experiencing, A has a new perception of B which leads to A relating to B differently. In the secondary change pattern, as the result of A's own emotional experiencing, A has a new perception of B which leads to A relating to B differently.

This two-pattern change process is significant because it indicates that emotional experiencing is a powerful modifier of partners' perception of each other. Not only



Table 5  
The Revised Model

*Revised  
Change Processes*

An individual organizes himself or herself differently by bringing into focal awareness experiences not previously dominant in awareness.

The spouse, upon witnessing the partner's new affective expressions, perceives the partner in a new way; for example, "I see your need for caring and contact rather than your hostility".

The individual's personal reorganization leads to different behavior in the interaction with the spouses; for example, "I now ask you for reassurance from a position of vulnerability".

The spouse's new perceptions of the partner lead to different responses; for example, "I comfort you rather than withdraw".

As a function of the therapist's validation, the individual experiences change. For example, "I feel entitled to my position".

*Corroborating  
Empirically Derived  
Change Processes*

2. The disclosure of feelings 3. Understanding  
4. Taking responsibility for experience

1. Emotional experiencing leads to change in interpersonal perception

2. The disclosure of feelings 3. Understanding 4. Taking responsibility for experience

1. Emotional experiencing leads to change in interpersonal perception

5. Validation

does observing a partner's emotional experiencing change the observing partner's perception of the experiencing partner (i.e., the primary change pattern), but also a partner's own

emotional experiencing changes his or her perception of the other partner (i.e., the secondary pattern).

This suggests that the importance of emotional experiencing in couples therapy lies in changing an individual's perception of the partner rather than his or her view of the self. In other words, the communicative aspect of emotional experiencing is possibly more important than the intrapsychic aspect of emotional experiencing in an affective systemic couples therapy.

That the emotional experiences that alter interpersonal perception and result in couples change are new affective expressions is also noteworthy. It would appear that new affective expressions are potent in altering interpersonal perceptions because they introduce new information into the couple system that is a stimulus for perceptual change.

Finally, the practical significance of the finding that emotional experiencing is a powerful modifier of perception of one's partner rather than of one's self is that the modification of perception leads to couples change such as an increased understanding and acceptance of the partner, new behavioral responses, increased intimacy, and new intentions.

**Latent category two: the disclosure of feelings and needs.**

The change process identified in latent category two, the disclosure of feelings and felt-needs, has two aspects. In the primary aspect, the experience of disclosing feelings leads to the positive valuing of the disclosure of feelings (i.e., that the disclosure of feelings is valuable, safe, acceptable, and a responsibility) by the person disclosing. Because six of the seven incidents that support this aspect are reported by men, it would appear that the experience of disclosing feelings leading to positive understanding about such disclosure is a change process that is possibly more important in men than in women. Given society's norms against men expressing emotion, this finding is not surprising.

In the secondary aspect of this change process, the disclosure of felt-needs leads to change--such as greater understanding of the self-in-relationship, an increased willingness to self-disclose, and greater emotional closeness.

According to Waring and Chelune (1983), self-disclosure may be classified in terms of (a) the expression of emotion, (b) the expression of need, (c) the expression of thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes, and (d) self-awareness. They further classify these types of self-disclosure by grouping (c) and (d) under the rubric of cognitive self-disclosure. Although they do not do so, (a) and (b) may be classified

under the rubric of affective self-disclosure. The change process in latent category two, therefore, identifies the two types of self-disclosure (i.e., the expression of feelings and the expression of needs) that comprise one of the two branches of self-disclosure (i.e., the affective branch).

The significance of this change process lies in the existence of a strong positive relationship between self-disclosure and intimacy. According to Waring and Chelune (1983), self-disclosure is a major determinant of the level of intimacy among married couples. Given this, it is not difficult to conceive of how both aspects of the change process in this category would contribute to the development of intimacy. With respect to the primary aspect, the positive valuing of the disclosure of feelings would create more self-disclosure that would contribute to the development of intimacy; with respect to the secondary aspect, the disclosure of felt-needs would create change in the relationship that would contribute to the development of intimacy.

**Latent category three: understanding.**

The change process identified in latent category three, understanding, indicates that intellectual, emotional, or intellectual-emotional insights--pertaining to relationship dynamics, the self-in-relationship, the partner, or the

self--lead to new responses in the relationship. These responses include improved listening, greater flexibility, analyzing behavior in terms of underlying motivation, choosing whether or not to trust rather than automatically not trusting, and working to remove communication blocks.

Although the idea that understanding that is not merely intellectual but also emotional in character leads to change is not new, it is an idea that is currently unfashionable in couples therapy. According to Wile (1979), understanding and insight approaches in couples therapy have largely been repudiated in favour of action-oriented methods such as manipulating the couple system or teaching partners to negotiate. The significance of this change process, therefore, lies in its reaffirmation of the efficacy of understanding as a mechanism of change in an age that has largely forgotten it.

**Latent category four: taking responsibility for experience.**

The change process identified in latent category four, taking responsibility for experience, involves the partner coming to a new awareness of personal responsibility for his or her experience in the relationship that results in this partner experiencing a shift from attributing blame to taking a self-focus.

According to Jacobson and Margolin (1979), the most difficult client behavior to change in marital therapy is the tendency of spouses to blame each other for marital problems. Guerin (1982) suggests that assisting spouses to attain self-focus is of the utmost importance to a successful outcome in the treatment of marital conflict. That the attainment of self-focus is both difficult and essential suggests that the change process identified in this latent category is significant with respect to couples change.

**Latent category five: validation.**

The change process identified in latent category five, validation, has two aspects. In the primary aspect, the partner that is validated experiences change--such as feeling entitled to his or her position, and affirmed as a self; in the secondary aspect, according to the partner who receives validation, the behavior of the spouse who observes the partner's process of validation changes (e.g., the spouse becomes more understanding and accepting of the validated partner's feelings, needs, and position). Because in all but one incident (22) the therapist rather than the partner does the validating, the therapist plays a central role in this change process.

According to Wile (1981, p. 110), the major problem of partners is their feeling of unentitlement to their own

positions. He suggests that this problem stems from disqualification, which is a danger not only in partner-to-partner relationships but also in therapist-to-partner interactions. Consequently, Wile (1981, p. 110) believes that validation or establishing each partner's point of view may have a powerful therapeutic effect.

The change process identified in this latent category supports Wile's contention. It does so at a time when the methods and concepts employed by other major contemporary approaches to couples therapy (i.e., the psychoanalytic, behavioral, and systemic approaches) may have the effect of invalidating partners' responses (Wile, 1981, p. 101). As such, this change process is of significance with respect to couples change.

#### **Interpretation of the Interview Questionnaire**

On the two parallel questions which accessed quantitative data concerning the relationship between the expression of feelings and change (i.e., Did the expression of feelings lead to change for you? Did the expression of feelings make a difference for you?), the interviewees had a combined mean of 4.1 on a Likert-type five-point scale. This statistic indicates that from the interviewees' perspective the expression of feelings was definitely important in change. However, because questions concerning

the importance of cognition or behavior in change were not asked, these parallel questions only indicate that the interviewees perceived emotion as important in change as opposed to showing that emotion is more important than cognition or behavior in change.

This finding, and the finding of latent category one (viz., that the expression of feelings leads to couples change by altering interpersonal perceptions), both lend support to the importance of the expression of feelings in couple change.

On the two questions that accessed qualitative data concerning the feelings that the interviewees expressed in counselling that they deemed were important for themselves and their partners (i.e., What feeling did you express that was important for you? What feeling did your partner express that was most important?), responses that cluster around the ideas of love or caring and commitment occurred frequently. More specifically, commitment to the relationship occurred five times on the first question and seven times on the second; caring for the partner occurred two times on the first question and eight times on the second, while love occurred four times on both questions.

Waring and Chelune (1983) have proposed a model of the qualitative dimension of intimacy which provides a framework for interpreting these results. In their model, which



consists of eight aspects (i.e., affection, cohesion, expressiveness, compatability, conflict resolution, sexuality, autonomy and identity), love or caring is considered the aspect of affection, and commitment to the relationship is considered the aspect of cohesion.

While the expression of primary feelings was important for both the interviewees and their partners (e.g., there were four occurrences of vulnerability, anger, and sadness on the first question, and there were three occurrences of hurt and vulnerability on the second), it would appear that in distressed couples the more complex emotional expressions of affection and cohesion are important processes in therapy which help increase intimacy. Given the state of alienation or loss of intimacy that characterizes distressed couples, this finding is not surprising.

#### **Limitations and Future Recommendations**

There are five areas in which this study's methodology is limited. The first four, the simplification procedure, the selection of the optimal number of latent categories, the self-report nature of the data, and the homogeneity of the sorters, pertain to the design of the study; the fifth, the data collection component of the categorization methodology (i.e., the F-sort), pertains to the execution of the study.

With respect to the process of simplifying the full-length incidents, it was inevitable that this process would involve a loss of information. The crucial issue is whether this loss of information was essential or nonessential to the meaning of the incidents. That two independent raters perceived the simplified incidents to represent their full-length counterparts well suggests that a loss of essential information did not occur.

The second limitation is the procedure that was used to select the optimal number of latent categories. Given that this selection required the use of *ad hoc* reasoning, there is the danger that the number and substance of latent categories is less than optimal. However, this danger is more apparent than real. For example, had  $L=6$  rather than  $L=5$  been chosen when the choice among models had been narrowed to these two, five of the categories would have remained relatively stable (i.e., three categories would have had one additional incident each; two categories would have had two additional incidents each). This means that the selection of an  $L=6$  model rather than an  $L=5$  model would merely have added an additional four-item latent category with minimal effect on the other five categories.

The third limitation of this study is the self-report nature of the data. That the incidents were reported by the partners means that the data is a record of what occurred

from their perspective as opposed to what may have been noted by observers. However, that the critical incident technique accesses actual incidents or events rather than general ideas or opinions increases the likelihood of a convergence between the data as reported by the partners and as might have been noted by observers. In spite of the controvertible nature of self-report data, client perception of change is an important perspective from which change should be assessed.

The fourth limitation of this study pertains to the homogeneity of the sorters. Because the sorters were a homogeneous sample of students in counselling-psychology, their common humanistic worldview is represented in the latent categories. To note this limitation is to make the point that the latent categories reflect a particular worldview, and that indeed some such worldview is inevitable.

The fourth limitation of this study pertains to the execution of the F-sort. In this study 37 graduate students in counselling-psychology sorted 52 incidents. Had there been at least 52 sorters, it is likely that the entries in the Phi and Omega matrices would have been higher. This could have affected the item composition and consequently the meaning of the latent categories. In the future, therefore, it is recommended that at least as many sorters

as items requiring sorting be used.

Other recommendations pertaining to this study are:

1. Given that the change process identified in latent category one (i.e., emotional experiencing leads to change in interpersonal perceptions) indicates that the expression of primary feelings leads to couple change by altering interpersonal perception, and that the partners perceived the expression of feelings to be important in change, the most important recommendation is that the expression of primary feelings continue to be emphasized in an affective systemic treatment.
2. Given that four other change processes that appear to be significant in couples change were also identified, it is recommended that they be promoted in an affective systemic treatment as well.
3. Given that five empirically derived change processes in an affective systemic treatment have been identified, it is recommended that these processes be tested using appropriate methods of verification.
4. Given that a methodology which identifies change processes in couples therapy (i.e., the critical incident technique and the categorization methodology) has been conceptualized and applied to one particular approach to couples therapy (i.e., the affective systemic approach) with important results, it is

recommended that this methodology be applied to the study of change processes in other approaches to couples psychotherapy (e.g., strategic couples therapy, behavioral-cognitive couples therapy).

5. Given the controvertible nature of self-report data, it is recommended that studies using the critical incident technique evaluate the convergence between the incidents as reported by the partners and as reported by observers (e.g., through an inspection of video tapes) in order to assess the value of this technique as a method of data collection.

### **Generalizability**

Johnson (1984), whose sample had a mean level of distress of 92.1 on the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (i.e., the couple pre test total DAS score), characterized her sample as moderately rather than severely distressed. Given that the combined mean level of distress for the couples from the experimental and the control group is 92.05 on the DAS, the sample in this study is also most accurately considered as moderately distressed.

Because the couples in this study were solicited, and because there may be differences between moderately distressed solicited couples and moderately distressed couples who voluntarily seek treatment, the findings in this study are generalizable with the greatest confidence to

moderately distressed solicited couples in the experimentally accessible population of Vancouver and the Lower Mainland. To generalize beyond this population with confidence would require the comparability on key demographic variables and outcome variables of the sample in this study with samples from a wider target population of moderately distressed couples who voluntarily seek treatment.

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## Appendix A

Table A

**Individual and Couple Pre and Post Total Dyadic Adjustment  
Scale (DAS) Scores**

Couples from the Experimental Treatment

<i>Couple No.</i>	<i>Incident No.</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Individual</i>		<i>Couple</i>	
			<i>Pre</i>	<i>Post</i>	<i>Pre</i>	<i>Post</i>
1	1	M	105	110	101.5	110.5
	2	F	98	111		
	3	F				
2	4	M	109	121	103.5	120.5
	5	M				
	6	F	98	120		
3	9	M	103	124	97	126
	10	F	91	128		
	11	F				
4	12	M	77	126	80.5	123
	13	M				
	14	F	84	120		
	15	F				
5	17	M	94	112	89.5	109
	18	M				
	19	F	85	106		
	20	F				
6	21	M	102	125	98	121
	22	F	94	117		
	23	F				
7	25	M	112	123	102.5	118.5
	26	F	93	114		
	27	F				
8	28	M	107	119	102.5	120.5
	29	F	98	122		

9	30	M	82	97	76	88
	31	F	70	79		
	32	F				
10		M	101	112	99.5	108.5
	35	F	98	105		
	36	F				
11	37	M	102	111	82	111.5
	38	F	62	112		
12	39	M	92	96	94.5	95
	40	F	97	94		
13	47	M	97	111	88	106
	48	M				
	49	F	79	101		

Couples from the Control Treatment

14		M	118	118	106	106
	7	F	94	94		
	8	F				
15	16	M	77	93	86	99
		F	95	105		
16	24	M	103	104	104.5	102.5
		F	106	101		
17	33	M	112	121	95.5	117
	34	F	79	113		
18		M	73	79	76.5	80
	41	F	80	81		
19	42	M	91	101	87.5	102
	43	F	84	103		
20	44	M	67	85	73	82
	45	M				
	46	F	79	79		
21	50	M	91	101	89	103
	51	F	87	105		
	52	F				

## Appendix B

### The Interview Guide

#### Section A.

1. What was most helpful for you in counselling?  
(Repeat the following question until no more responses are forthcoming: Is there anything else that was most helpful for you in counselling?)
2. In what ways was counselling not helpful?  
(Repeat the following question until no more responses are forthcoming: Is there any other way that counselling was not helpful?)
3. In what ways could counselling have been more helpful?  
(Repeat the following question until no more responses are forthcoming: Is there any other way that counselling could have been more helpful?)

#### Section B.

1. Please describe in as much detail as possible a specific incident in counselling that stands out for you as either helpful or hindering.
2. How was this incident helpful/not helpful?
3. What changed for you through this incident?
4. How did this change occur?  
(If the interviewees are able to recall a second incident that stands out as helpful or hindering, repeat

questions one through four.)

**Section C.**

**1. Interview Questionnaire**

## Appendix C

### F-sort Directions

Understanding how couples change in counselling is a pressing issue. We would like you to form your own categories of couples change processes by sorting statements of couple change events. The criterion for your forming categories is whether you think the statements are similar with respect to the change that occurs for the person (A) reporting the change. Because frequently more than one change occurs for A, we would like you to choose for categorizing the change process that you think is *most significant* for A. To reiterate, therefore, the criterion for forming categories is whether you think statements are similar with respect to dominant change processes for A.

An example of the application of this criterion to a simple statement is as follows:

A--Male

When B requests that A tell her at least once a day that he loves her, A agrees to B's request and tells her that he loves her.

In this statement there are several change processes that occur for A. However, because A's telling B he loves her is an expression of his agreement to her request, the dominant change process for A is something like A's agreeing to B's request.

Please form your categories according to the following directions:

1. *Read and Study* the first statement in the deck.
2. *Decide* without dwelling too long on the statement what the dominant change process that occurs for A is.
3. *Write* a tentative phrase of a few words that describes this dominant change process on a pink piece of paper located at the back of the deck. This phrase is to assist you in sorting the statements into categories.
4. *File* the statement beneath the pink piece of paper.
5. *Repeat* steps one to four for each statement. If any *new statement* involves the *same* type of dominant change process as one you have previously sorted, *put the two* together. If not, begin a new category by writing a tentative phrase on another pink piece of paper.
6. *Resorting*: At any time during the sorting task you may come across a statement which does not belong where you have previously placed it. You may do one of three things with it:
  - a. Place it in another category
  - b. Start a new category
  - c. Put it back into the deck of unsorted statements
7. *Review* your categories carefully. Review the statements in each category with special concern for whether the statements *belong together* (i.e., whether they are



similar with respect to the type of dominant change process for A). You may make any changes by dividing, combining, or switching the statements.

8. *Check* to see that you have a pink piece of paper for each category, and that on each you have written a phrase which you think best describes the type of dominant change process for A which caused you to place the statements together.
9. *Write* the numbers of all the statements belonging to a category on the pink piece of paper bearing the tentative phrase describing the category. Do this with all the statements and their respective categories.
10. *Form* a deck by stacking your categories, secure it with an elastic, and place it inside the envelope.

## Appendix D

### Example of a Full-Length Critical Incident and its Corresponding Form as a Simplified Incident

#### The full-length incident (A-Male 42).

I was telling F. how I felt about her, and how I felt about one point when we broke up. I was trying to tell her about how I felt when she had left me and how I didn't feel that I could go on. And, I got really emotional and very very hurt. And, I just about started crying. And, I didn't--I just sort of hung on. I literally hung on--physically even hung on to the chair. And, I remember talking about how I didn't feel that I could exist without her at that time, and how hurt I felt. But, the difference was I didn't say it in a blameful way. Usually, I would have blamed her for hurting me, for leaving me at that time. In other words, that it was her fault for her doing that to another person, namely me. But this time I was just hurt and was expressing that, expressing that I really wanted her. I couldn't say love her, or anything like that. I talked a lot about just how I felt about the incident. And, it seemed to make a difference with her--how she felt about me. And, also I realized how hard it was for me to say something like that, how much easier it was for me to be angry at her for not giving me what I wanted in our

relationship. And, it made an impression on me because I realized how hard it was for me to say something like that and how easy it was for me to blame. And, it seemed to make an impression on her--that I didn't blame her as such. She didn't usually--she would just be defensive about it. And, just opening up made a difference to me.

Interviewer: How was this incident helpful?

Client: It made me almost pick on her less. I didn't have to go after her to get what I wanted, for us to be loving to one another which is what most people want in a relationship--what I want. I could express something to her without driving her away. A lot of times if I expressed anger or blame or anything like that, she just--she was just sort of driven away from me. She gets cold, and she feels blamed and so on. So, I can say something toward her and she didn't react. And, I didn't get the opposite reaction I wanted to. Instead of driving her away, and her withdrawing to save her own emotional state, she didn't. She stayed where she was. She didn't sort of stonewall and ignore it or get angry or something or other. I got something out of it that I wanted just by being myself, by saying what I really felt. That was a really important thing for me to realize--that I could be myself or express certain things and get what I wanted without driving her away. I didn't have to be angry or force her to give me my own way.

Interviewer: And, what changed for you through this incident?

Client: I think I became more accepting of both my needs--instead of being angry saying, "Okay, I need this from her. I need to be liked. I need to be loved or whatever. I need this thing from her". I accepted that I didn't get as angry both at myself for being so-called weak and at her for not giving me what I wanted. I just seemed to make things easier between us. Because very often the anger at my needing something would drive her away and make me very hard to get along with. And, the less angry she got and the more open and accepting of me, the easier it was for me to be nice to her. That's about the best I can put it.

Interviewer: How did the change occur in this incident?

Client: You mean during the session, after the session?

Interviewer: In the incident--some change occurred that you were describing.

Client: It really didn't occur in the incident. It took a while to integrate the incident. And, I'm only verbalizing it now, but I realize it has taken place. A lot of the stuff that happened in the sessions didn't change things right away. There was an incident, and some times right after the incident we'd go back worse than we were before because the incident affected us. And, sometimes you'd fight against it because it was a bit too hard to take.

But, it took a while to integrate.

**The Simplified Incident (A--Male 42).**

When A tells B how he felt, he became very emotional, felt very hurt, and just about started to cry. However, rather than his typical response of blaming B for his hurt, A responded by expressing his hurt and his wanting her. It made a difference to A that B did not respond in her typically defensive manner but opened up to him. A realized how difficult this new way of responding was for him; that he could get what he wanted without driving B away by expressing that he felt hurt and really wanted her rather than by blaming and demanding.

## Appendix E

Table E-1

## Phi Matrix of Four Latent Categories

<i>Incident No.</i>	<i>Latent Category Number</i>			
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
3	137	-10	-11	-3
8	132	-22	0	-2
52	121	14	-28	12
36	121	-11	2	-13
49	120	-17	1	-5
23	118	-16	9	-6
33	108	-17	21	2
37	105	-4	-7	-8
30	102	27	-24	1
21	102	13	2	-12
1	83	-16	14	7
45	82	28	-10	-4
14	82	3	-20	26
25	77	1	35	-8
28	77	27	3	-8
34	69	63	-3	-2
10	67	40	-10	8
18	66	-5	16	7
40	63	7	-3	5
41	-20	148	0	-11
26	-10	128	-8	-11
20	11	119	-3	-18
5	5	111	-2	3
2	-6	84	32	-10
4	16	82	-4	5
6	-5	82	23	-13
19	26	71	7	-8
43	33	68	-27	14
51	-9	63	-16	36
31	-7	60	1	35
29	46	54	-14	9
9	34	44	36	-14
16	-10	-18	125	0
48	11	-20	123	-16

24	-14	0	108	6
50	-24	3	107	10
17	-13	40	96	-20
27	-5	-4	93	18
42	6	36	86	-19
46	-4	27	72	0
38	-5	12	72	8
47	7	22	68	15
39	11	14	59	-9
35	-6	-16	-16	129
32	-6	-7	-7	128
7	-5	65	-31	88
13	10	-13	2	88
44	-6	-10	59	63
15	-4	-15	60	61
11	11	-13	40	60
12	28	30	-20	53
22	34	7	13	48

Table E-2

## Phi Matrix of Six Latent Categories

<i>Incident No.</i>	<i>Latent Category Number</i>					
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
8	127	1	21	9	2	7
23	126	-21	-14	18	13	-15
52	114	-1	10	-5	-13	13
49	113	3	-17	4	3	-7
45	104	-48	28	6	17	-5
3	103	55	-14	-15	-21	3
21	100	-4	8	-16	18	0
36	96	37	-14	-12	-5	-6
37	95	10	-4	-1	-6	-7
30	91	12	23	-13	-14	7
14	82	-10	-3	-12	2	31
28	79	-7	29	13	2	-15
34	79	-25	59	-6	-7	2
1	65	31	-14	11	-5	-1
18	59	10	-11	-14	22	16
40	56	8	6	4	-5	2
22	56	-4	7	51	9	18
10	48	34	33	-21	-8	19
4	-33	108	-3	11	15	-2
29	-1	99	-13	12	-5	0
33	59	98	-15	11	-32	-8
5	-29	83	-1	16	48	-4
47	-27	73	68	3	-17	11
25	42	71	1	0	-2	-9
9	1	70	32	-18	14	-2
31	-18	32	1	17	30	25
16	-19	2	122	-1	-7	1
48	-6	15	118	-11	-9	-8
50	18	-29	110	18	-19	-2
24	-3	-9	109	15	-8	-3
17	1	-8	91	-11	38	8
27	8	-7	91	4	-9	14
42	-5	12	80	-15	42	-5
46	-1	1	77	30	6	-16
38	-10	3	72	13	8	1
39	14	6	59	4	2	10
44	10	-5	7	112	-10	-1



15	15	-5	1	102	-6	-2
11	-18	24	-5	62	14	22
43	-13	44	-20	47	42	-10
41	7	-13	-5	3	126	-1
26	-13	5	-12	4	120	-2
20	30	2	-14	-28	110	8
2	-43	21	27	-2	100	0
6	38	-17	20	-4	53	-6
19	42	10	5	-3	43	-3
51	-1	-4	-12	35	38	16
35	-6	-4	-11	6	0	118
32	-4	-4	-21	10	6	115
7	0	-6	52	-21	-6	95
13	16	3	-15	19	-7	69
12	12	19	19	-27	0	65

Table E-3

## Phi Matrix of Seven Latent Categories

<i>Incident No.</i>	<i>Latent Category Number</i>						
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>
23	122	2	-15	-9	13	11	-14
45	117	-27	26	-17	-1	11	-5
8	107	27	-22	-5	6	1	-6
49	107	13	-18	7	-1	0	-6
28	99	-22	28	15	4	-3	-14
1	98	-25	-15	54	-1	-1	1
37	92	11	-5	13	-6	-8	-6
21	85	21	7	-7	-17	17	0
52	83	41	9	-17	-3	-11	14
40	78	-21	6	28	-6	-10	3
3	68	64	-13	20	-12	-19	4
34	68	8	57	-20	-7	-8	3
30	60	44	22	-9	-9	-12	7
18	52	13	-11	6	-15	21	17
14	51	37	-4	-27	-6	5	32
43	47	-7	-20	-4	43	41	-9
25	-22	102	1	4	13	6	-9
33	10	93	-15	36	18	-27	-8
36	33	93	-15	-15	-2	1	-6
9	-39	72	33	17	-8	20	-3
10	7	62	33	-6	-13	-3	19
19	-27	58	5	0	6	49	-3
16	-1	-1	120	-18	2	-6	1
48	-4	24	117	-20	-6	-7	-9
50	-7	-20	110	26	14	-22	-2
24	3	-14	108	5	13	-10	-3
17	-15	10	90	-8	-8	40	-8
27	12	-20	90	20	0	-12	15
42	16	-3	79	-11	-15	40	-5
46	-14	19	76	-15	34	9	-17
38	4	-3	71	-7	13	8	1
47	-28	26	68	47	3	-16	11
39	35	-28	59	32	-4	-3	-9
29	17	10	-12	90	4	-10	1
4	-26	27	-1	79	9	14	-2
44	-1	-3	6	5	112	-9	-1

15	-1	1	0	2	106	-5	0
22	23	29	6	-59	64	14	16
11	53	-41	-6	12	53	10	24
41	-8	-5	-4	7	2	125	-1
26	-5	6	-12	-19	7	122	-3
20	2	10	-13	20	-28	109	8
2	37	-33	26	-17	-5	96	0
5	-44	44	1	42	21	51	-4
6	7	-17	21	45	-11	50	-5
51	28	-39	-12	24	26	34	18
31	-10	-1	2	26	15	29	26
35	-2	-9	-11	0	1	0	122
32	-10	2	-21	-7	11	6	119
7	-1	-9	52	6	-24	-7	99
13	6	-1	-15	14	18	-8	71
12	-5	33	19	-9	-21	3	67