A CRITICAL INCIDENTS STUDY OF DIFFERENTIATION

by

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ABSTRACT

Eight couples participated in a workshop designed to identify what events facilitate or hinder differentiation in everyday life. The couples met in three-hour weekly sessions over a period of eight weeks. The program incorporated psycho-educational and experiential components. The content was based on the key concepts of Bowen Family Systems Theory, communication skills, Transactional Analysis and Imago Therapy. During the program and from interviews, 508 incidents were collected. Flanagan's (1954) critical incident technique was used as an evaluation method. Subsequently, the total of 508 reported incidents was reduced to the six major categories. Each major category had its facilitating and hindering counterparts. Then, a definition was created for each category. The categories of "Openness & Intimacy" and "A Sense of Self" accounted for 51% of all facilitating as well as all hindering events. The results of the study were found to be both reliable and valid. The implications for the development of skill-training programs, counselling sessions and future research were outlined.
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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Marriage is a dynamic state between two individuals in their life's journey that ideally begins with attraction, proceeds through the rocky stretch of self-discovery and negotiations, and culminates in a creation of an intimate, joyful, lifelong union (Hendrix, 1990). Marriage is an important outlet for providing a means of meeting one's needs of closeness, contact and intimacy (Hansen, 1990). By doing so, marriage has the ability to enhance each partner's satisfaction. As James (1988) points out, "people who are married have better physical and emotional health, live longer and are more satisfied with life than are people who are separated or divorced (p. 1). Likewise, Lowenthal and Haven (1968) who analyzed life histories, found that the happiest, healthiest people in later years were people who were involved in at least one close personal relationship during their lifetime (Hansen, 1989).

Although marriage is important to well-being, one third of marriages in North America end in divorce (James, 1988). But whatever the reasons behind the decision to divorce, most divorcing couples report
marital distress and they also desire a more enriching and supportive relationship (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1990). Sager, Gundlach, Kremer, Levy and Royce (1968) surveyed clients who received individual psychotherapy and found that 50% of them disclosed serious marital problems through the course of the therapy.

The Problem

Numerous methodology was developed to improve the life of couples and families by the field of psychology. Bowen Family System Theory is one of them. Bowenian Family Systems Theory proposes that the lack of differentiation or emotional separation from one's family of origin is at the core of relationship anxiety (Bowen, 1978). The lower the level of differentiation, the more vulnerable the individual is to stressful events. The undifferentiated couple has a tendency to emotionally react to each other, as opposed to being guided by the thought processes of reasoning, and the couple is also less tolerant of each others' differences.

According to Bowen Family Systems Theory, marital conflict, dysfunction of a spouse (such as sickness or drug abuse), preoccupation with a child via emotional
overinvolvement and emotional cut off are the four basic ways of reducing marital anxiety within the relationship. Subsequently, such problems are identified as symptomatic of the lack of differentiation in spouses. "The emotional attachment between the spouses is identical to the emotional attachment that each spouse had in his or her family of origin" (Bowen, 1978, p. 530). The most productive route for change is to focus on "the differentiation of self in the families of origin [that will] automatically make as much or more progress in working out the relationship system with spouses and children" (Bowen, 1978, p. 545).

The purpose of this study is to investigate what facilitates or hinders the process of differentiation of self. In a couples workshop employing the concepts of Family Systems Theory, the participants were asked to keep a daily journal of events by answering the following question: "What events and/or experiences have you had during the workshop sessions, and between the workshop sessions on a daily bases, which either facilitated or hindered your ability to differentiate?" The study aims to classify these facilitating and hindering events into categories that could be useful
for practitioners or workshop leaders in helping people change.

Rationale

There are a number of applications on how to improve lives of couples and families ranging from the individual and couples to the family and group therapies that recognize the importance of differentiation in the process of change in their practices. Nevertheless, the skill-training programs for couples and families have so far failed to incorporate the concept of differentiation into their curriculum.

Most skill-training couples workshops that traditionally focus on pre-marital, marriage enrichment, communication or parenting programs have not yet introduced the concepts of Family Systems Theory, otherwise so widely accepted in the field of psychology, as part of their training objective. Since skill-training programs for couples have been classified as an effective intervention in prevention and improvement of human functioning (L'Abate, 1981), there is an increasing need or demand for education about Family Systems Theory in such a context.

The present study attempts to do just that by designing and implementing an Integrative Systemic
Skill-Training Program for Couples. This program, in addition to teaching communication skills, marriage enrichment and the basis of Transactional Analysis, also employs the Family Systems Theory concepts as an integral part.

Approach to Research

The question of effectiveness of the Integrative Systemic Skill-Training Program for Couples is immature, since it is not clear or warranted that Bowen's concept of differentiation can be translated into a practice that is measurable and meaningful.

Exploratory evaluation of the events that facilitate or hinder differentiation gives more value and richness as it provides a guide for future programs and gives guidelines for evaluating them. The method employed by the present study is the critical incidents technique (Flanagan, 1954) which was designed to generate descriptive and qualitative data rendering it appropriate for this study's intent of exploratory evaluation.
Definitions

Family Systems Theory:

Family Systems Theory refers to Bowen Theory as published by Murray Bowen in 1978. Bowen Theory consists of eight theoretical interlocking and overlapping concepts. The family is perceived as an emotional system that strives for homeostasis. Subsequently, a change in one component of the system will adjust the balance of the whole system. The greater the degree of emotional fusion of the family system, the less personal freedom an individual will have. Under stressful circumstances, the system will experience more anxiety, and the pressure for status quo will also increase. Optimal functioning of the family system requires a greater emotional separateness of family members.

Togetherness:

Togetherness is one of two counterbalancing life forces that govern individual and family emotional systems. Togetherness propels humans to be a connected and cooperative entity (Bowen, 1978). Optimal human functioning requires a dynamic balance between these counterbalancing life forces. Human life begins with togetherness in the symbiotic fusion with the natural
mother and proceeds through the process of individuation by emotional separation from one's family of origin.

**Separateness:**

The terms separateness or individuality tend to be used interchangeably in the study. They refer to the other counterbalancing life force that propels each human being to become a distinct self-directed entity (Bowen, 1978). According to Bowen, separateness is the more valued entity for the optimal human functioning than togetherness.

**Differentiation:**

Differentiation or differentiation of self is a process that describes a person's ability to define self as a separate entity and to be governed by thoughts rather than by feelings. An undifferentiated individual is emotionally fused. Emotional fusion demonstrates itself by either a lost sense of self in which one feels drowned and enmeshed in a relationship or by feeling emotionally cut off and alienated. In contrast, a differentiated person can be intimate in a relationship yet remain separate. The following definition of differentiation of self was given to the participants in this study:
The degree to which one can be a separate self in an intimate relationship, without feeling drowned or alienated, while at the same time maintaining the ability to be governed by thoughts rather than by feelings.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The last two decades have seen an upsurge of new interventions for couples that are targeted for a non-clinical population. These interventions are characterized by a time-limited group format addressing specific topics that are applied to couples that are not considered as "sick" or as "emotionally impaired" (L'Abate, 1981). Subsequently, the goals of these skill-training programs are educational or enrichment oriented and preventative rather than therapeutic (L'Abate, 1981).

Among the several trends in the evolution of skill-training programs, it is useful to first consider the human potential movement with emphasis on direct confrontation, role-playing, psychodrama, Gestalt therapy, sensitivity training, marathon and group approaches with reduced emphasis on traditional mental health practices and medical view of illness as well as human functioning (L'Abate, 1981). A humanistic focus is on assets and strengths.

The next development can be seen in the increased popularity of self-help groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, that thrive on paraprofessionalism. In
addition, the growth of consumerism led towards the trend of brief and cost-effective types of treatments. Another major influence has been the increased popularity of behavior therapy emphasizing self-control strategies and gradual, linear, step-by-step approaches that have developed into the programmed interpersonal relations movement (Brown & L'Abate, 1969; L'Abate, 1974).

Another trend combines play and art with therapy in a play therapy or an art therapy formats (L'Abate, 1979). Finally, family life education has been transformed into skill-training and enrichment programs that are known to greatly impact family life (L'Abate, 1981). "Skill-training programs can be classified according to a family life-cycle sequence: (a) pre-marital or neo-marital training; (b) marital; (c) parenthood; (d) total family [or family enrichment]; and (e) divorce mediation" (L'Abate, 1981, p. 634).

Pre-marital or Neo-marital Programs

The purpose of pre-marital or neo-marital programs is to prevent couples who are planning marriage or a common-law committed relationship from occurrence of relationship distress and dissolution after marriage.
Thus, the most beneficial changes as a result of premarital intervention would take place after, rather than before marriage (L'Abate, 1981).

Traditionally, preventative skill-training programs for couples have received inadequate attention from marital therapists and treatment agencies, and, were, instead, the responsibility of the clergy and church-affiliated groups (Markman, Floyd, Stanley & Lewis, 1986). Until recently, work with couples before marriage was placed into the context of family developmental theory. The family life cycle as a framework for viewing family development and family transition across the life span has received increased attention from family therapists (Carter & McGoldrick, 1980; Duvall, 1977; Haley, 1972; Lewis, 1984; Napier, 1980; Nock, 1979). PREP program, one example of pre-marital programs, is described below.

The Premarital Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP). PREP is a cognitive-behaviorally oriented intervention for couples who have made a commitment to marry. PREP has become very popular during the past decade and has been found effective in improving communication and problem-solving skills and increasing relationship satisfaction (Markman & Floyd, 1980;
Markman, Floyd, Stanley, & Jamieson, 1984) and identification and modification of dysfunctional interaction patterns that precede the development of relationship dissatisfaction (Markman, 1979, 1981).

PREP is most effective for couples who have a strong commitment to the stability and continuity of the relationship. However, PREP is not designed to treat couples who are experiencing major, current relationship problems (Markman et al., 1986).

Marital Programs

A variety of marital skill-training programs share several common characteristics: emphasis on open and direct exchange of feelings, assumption of personal responsibility for whatever is said, differentiation of feeling from thoughts and actions and an expansion of the available options (Markman et al., 1986).

The programs considered here will include Minnesota Couples Communication Program (MCCP), the Association of Couples for Marriage Enrichment (ACME), Marriage Encounter (ME), Conjugal Relationships Enhancement (CRE), Structured Enrichment Programs (SEP), Relationship Enhancement Approach (REA), Emotionally
Focused Couples Therapy (EFCT) and Imago Relationship Therapy (IRT).

Minnesota Couples Communication Program (MCCP). Minnesota Couples Communication Program is probably most effective and one of the oldest existing communication training programs (Miller, Nunnally, & Wackman, updated, 1975). MCCP stresses disclosure, receptivity and communication skills (L'Abate, 1981). It likewise incorporated the mutual esteem building for couples and the development of a more egalitarian relationship. The focus of MCCP is on awareness in order to illuminate the rules of the interactional pattern of a couple and on mastering communication skills in order to develop a more functional interactional pattern.

Marriage Enrichment. Association of Couples for Marriage Enrichment (ACME) is a national organization composed of married couples who attend either a weekly or a single week-end retreat Marriage Enrichment programs and are committed to achieving more mutual happiness and fulfillment as well as to seeking personal growth (Mace, 1975; Mace & Mace, 1976). The Marriage Enrichment programs are focused on enhancement of communication skills, broadening and deepening emotional
and/or sexual lives and reinforcing and fostering existing marital strengths (Gurman & Kniskern, 1977).

**Marriage Encounter (ME).** Marriage Encounter is a program usually designed for weekend retreats mostly under the auspices of religious organizations and sometimes organized by private therapists or clinics (Bosco, 1973; Calvo, 1975; Demarest, 1977). The focus is on several themes: the "I" theme, the "We," the "We-God," and the "We-God-World" themes (L'Abate, 1981). These encounters tend to teach couples how to share feelings and how to communicate on a deeper emotional level (namely by sharing their pain and hurt) and to promote increased competence of the relationship (L'Abate, 1977a).

**Conjugal Relationship Enhancement (CRE).** Conjugal Relationship Enhancement was developed by Gurney (1977) with a goal of replacing vicious communication cycles with more direct and open cycles. The communication process is separated into distinct components such as expressing feelings and thoughts clearly, accepting the expressions of another, self-criticism of one's own communication skills, constructive conflict resolution (L'Abate, 1981). CRE employs Rogerian concepts of unconditional acceptance and respect for feelings of
others (Rogers, 1951) as well as the concepts of social learning theory such as modeling (L'Abate, 1981).

**Structured Marriage Enrichment Programs (SEP).**

L'Abate (1975, 1977b) developed a didactic, structured approach of Marriage Enrichment Program for Couples designed to provide the most effective and inexpensive technique for couples to achieve greater self-differentiation and a higher quality of family life (L'Abate, 1976). The SEP addresses areas of premarital, sexual and marital interaction combining both affective and cognitive aspects of living as they apply to specific purposes and/or situations (L'Abate, 1981). Unlike other marital skill training programs which employ groups of couples, SEP was designed for treatment of only one couple in the format of six therapeutic session.

**The Relationship Enhancement Approach (REA).** The Relationship Enhancement Approach is advocating a holistic marital therapy by integrating enrichment with therapy. Subsequently, instead of diagnosing the deficits of the relationship, the holistic therapist helps a couple to define, as early in therapy as possible, the kind of relationship they would like to have and then teaches them the skills they need in order
to reach these goals (Bernard Gurney Jr., Gregory Brock, & Jeanette Coufal, 1986). The requisite skills are usually those that promote intimacy, honesty, compassion, harmony and love. The REA's goal is to add knowledge, skills and confidence to a love relationship by addressing expressive, empathic, negotiation, conflict resolution, self-change skills and by helping others change. REA therapy can be used with an individual, a dyad or a group.

Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy (EFCT). Developed at University of British Columbia by Greenberg and Johnson (1986), Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy combines an experiential tradition in psychotherapy which emphasizes the role of affect in change (Greenberg & Safran, 1984; Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1951; Satir, 1967) and the systemic tradition which emphasizes the role of communication and interaction cycles in maintaining problem states (Hoffman, 1982; Sluzki, 1978; Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson, 1967). The focus of EFCT treatments is to change both the interactional cycle and each person's experience of the relationship by delineating the conflict issues in the core struggle, identifying the negative interaction cycle, accessing unacknowledged feelings, reframing the problem in terms
of underlying feelings, identifying disowned needs, accepting a partner's experience, expressing needs, facilitating the emergence of new solutions and consolidating new positions (Greenberg & Johnson, 1986).

**Imago Relationship Therapy (IRT).** The Imago Relationship Therapy is the result of an eclectic approach to marital therapy developed by Harville Hendrix (1990) that combines depth psychology, the behavioral sciences, the Western spiritual tradition, some elements of Transactional Analysis, Gestalt psychology, systems theory and cognitive therapy. According to Hendrix, our search for the ideal mate, The Imago, is guided by an unconscious image of a partner, that has been forming since birth, who both resembles our caretakers, in particular their negative characteristics, and compensates for the repressed parts of ourselves. This integrative highly structured program focuses on finishing the unfinished business of the issues in one's family of origin, developing a relationship vision, improving communication skills, reromanticizing and achieving self-integration.
Parenting Programs

The parenting programs aim is both corrective by improving parent-child relationships and preventative by helping parents raise children who will be happy and healthy functioning adults. A few major types of parental programs include Adlerian and Behavioral approaches.

Adlerian. Adlerian programs (Dreikurs & Soltz, 1967) focus on the family constellation and birth order effects, negative payoffs, power, attention, revenge and helplessness, feelings corresponding to the negative and positive payoffs, logical consequences, positive attention and alternatives, rules of communication, family conferences, enjoyment of family life and allocation of responsibilities (L'Abate, 1981). Adlerian programs exercise empowerment of a child. Among the major Adlerian parent training programs are Parent Effectiveness Training (PET) and Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP). Both of these programs have been widely implemented over the past decade.

Parent Effectiveness Training (PET). Originated by Gordon (1977), PET is rooted in Rogerian tradition, with an emphasis on unconditional positive regard and active
listening as it applies to a variety of potentially conflictful relationships (L'Abate, 1981). The focus of PET is on negotiation of acceptable behavior by sharing power by both, the parent and the child, in a "everybody-wins" format (L'Abate, 1981, p. 647). Such a problem-solving process includes identification of the conflictual issue, generation and evaluation of possible alternative solutions, deciding on the best solution that is equally acceptable to both partners, working out a plan of implementation and follow-up evaluation of the solution (Gordon, 1977).

**Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP).** Developed by Dinkmeyer and McKay (1976, 1982), STEP operates on the premise that it is necessary for the parents to change their own behavior in order to change the behavior of their children. One of the key STEP program concepts is to identify the goals of misbehaving by recognizing that all behavior occurs for a social purpose, such as attention getting or belonging. Another key idea of the STEP program is the encouragement of a child by focusing on children's positive qualities and assets. In addition, STEP teaches communication skills, instilling discipline by
the use of appropriate consequences and the use of family meetings (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1982).

**Behavioral.** Behavioral parenting programs are based on behavioral and social learning principles. Among the most successful behavioral programs is Patterson and Gulion's (1963) program based on the dyadic model that reframes the child's problematic behavior as a child's problematic interaction with another person within the child's social environment, that is, parent, sibling, teacher and so forth. The dyadic model assumes that the faulty interaction between the child and parent is at the root of the difficulty (Gordon & Davidson, 1981). These interactions operate on the principle of reciprocity, the process by which there is an equity in the exchange of positive and negative interactions between the child and the family. Functional analysis is used to identify the problem behaviors as well as their antecedents and consequences. The treatment typically involves some form of systematic parent training in recognizing the problem behaviors, observing and recording them and in systematically intervening using social learning principles to bring about mutually reinforcing interactions (Clark-Hall, 1978).
Family Enrichment (FE)

The Family Enrichment Program is a systematic approach aiding the family unit to improve their functioning and self-differentiation through planned or programmed change by implementing a structured written format of interventions (L'Abate, 1981). For example, structured intervention, Enrichment, developed by L'Abate (1974, 1977) consists of 26 different problem-specific programs oriented to enrichment along cognitive or affective lines covering issues such as financial management, assertiveness, value clarification or differentiation. Some special purpose programs include single parents, adopted children, physically handicapped, mentally retarded children, families of alcoholics or deal with various phases of the family life-cycle (L'Abate, 1976). Although the majority of the programs are suited for individual couples and parents, some programs lend themselves to a group format of groups of parents/couples (L'Abatte, 1981).

Divorce Mediation

Divorce Mediation is a process of resolving conflict (due to a marital break up) through the use of a neutral third-party mediator. The role of a mediator
is to facilitate and successfully negotiate on the behalf of the disputant parties the division and the allocation of the marital property and finances, children's custody, maintenance, child-support payments and visitation rights (Milne, 1986). In addition, the divorce mediator can assist the divorcing couple with the psychological tasks associated with the divorce for the individual adults (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987) as well as tasks for the children as they relate to their developmental stages (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1990). Likewise, the reinstitution and reorganization of the parental unit (as the spouses establish two separate households) is addressed. This relatively new area of marital skill-training programs is gaining a reputation with the demands of modern family life.

Conclusion

In his overview of skill-training programs for couples and families, L'Abate (1981) concluded that:

Skill-oriented programs have shown themselves to be wide in scope and deep in content. Their potential for use with functional and semifunctional couples and families is almost assured....If for every "clinical" or "dysfunctional" couple and family there are three to four other couples and families in need of help, then these programs could be in the front line to help prevent further individual, marital, and familial breakdowns. (p. 657)
Subsequently, in view of such potential effectiveness, we can ask ourselves why the skill-training programs, incorporating a broad range of approaches, have mostly been ignoring the concept of differentiation--the key concept of Family Systems Theory.

**Differentiation**

The concept of differentiation has been a feature of the psychoanalytic theory for some time, but it is only since Bowen (1972) introduced it as a key concept of the Bowen Family Systems Theory that it has become a prominent component of the field of family therapy.

Bowen assumed the family to be a naturally occurring emotional system governed by the two counterbalancing life forces: individuality and togetherness. Individuality propels each human being to become a distinct self-directed entity; togetherness propels humans to be a connected and cooperative entity. Optimal human functioning requires a dynamic balance between these counterbalancing life forces.

Human life begins with togetherness in the symbiotic relationship with the natural mother and continues through the developmental process of differentiation. The basic level of differentiation is
largely determined by the degree of emotional separation a person achieves from her or his family of origin.

More specifically, Kerr and Bowen defined the concept of differentiation as:

The ability to be in emotional contact with others yet still remain autonomous in one's emotional functioning (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 145);
the degree to which they [people] are able to distinguish between the feeling process and the intellectual process (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 97);
the process by which individuality and togetherness are managed by a person and within a relationship system (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 95);
The variable degree of emotional separation that people achieve from their families of origin accounts for a variation in their levels of differentiation of self. (Kerr, 1988, p. 41)

The Scale of Differentiation

To describe the variation in the level of differentiation among people, Bowen (1978) developed a scale of differentiation. The scale of differentiation, ranging on a continuum from low to high levels of differentiation, indicates various levels of the basic self present in a person.

"Complete differentiation exists in a person who has fully resolved the emotional attachment to his family" (Bowen & Kerr, 1988, p. 97). In such a fully differentiated person, "the basic self may be changed from within self on the basis of new knowledge and
experience" and "is not negotiable in the relationship system in that it is not changed by coercion or pressure, or to gain approval, or enhance one's stand with others" (Bowen, 1966, p. 476).

"Complete undifferentiation exists in a person who has achieved no emotional separation from his family" (Bowen & Kerr, 1988, p. 97). Such an undifferentiated person would develop a pseudo-self, that is, a pretend self. Pseudo-self is a fluid shifting level of self "acquired under the influence of the relationship system" that is "negotiable in the relationship system" (Bowen, 1966, p. 473).

Other Theoretical Formulations of Bowen Theory

Bowen's central premise states that the unresolved emotional attachment to one's family of origin must be resolved before one can differentiate into a healthy personality. Bowen Family Systems Theory includes numerous theoretical concepts other than the key concept of differentiation of self. Some of these include chronic anxiety, the nuclear family emotional system, family projection process, the multigenerational transmission process and triangles.
**Chronic Anxiety.** The two principal variables of Family Systems Theory are differentiation of self and chronic anxiety. "Anxiety can be defined as the response of an organism to a threat, real or imagined" (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 112). The distinction between acute and chronic anxiety indicates that "acute anxiety is fed by fear of what is; chronic anxiety is fed by fear of what might be" (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 113).

The differentiation scale does not define clinical diagnostic categories but is primarily of theoretical importance in defining an individual's adaptiveness to stress. People in the lower half of the scale live in a "feeling" controlled world where major life's decisions are based "on what feels right," as opposed to what they think is right (Bowen & Kerr, 1988, p. 132). "People at any point on the scale, if stressed sufficiently, can develop physical, emotional, or social symptoms. The higher the level of differentiation, however, the more stress required to trigger a symptom" (Bowen & Kerr, 1988, p. 97). Thus, a greater level of differentiation not only increases a person's ability to function rationally, but also protects a person's health.

**The Binding of Anxiety.** The fundamental explanation of why chronic anxiety increases as the
level of differentiation decreases is because the less emotional separation persons have from their family of origin, the more anxiety they experience about being on their own and about assuming responsibility for themselves (Kerr & Bowen, 1988).

Other than drugs and personality traits, such as obsessiveness or aggression, relationships are by far the most effective way to "bind" or integrate the chronic anxiety into a person's life structure (Kerr, 1988 p. 48).

Differentiation of Self in Relationships. The idea of differentiation is essential to understanding relationships.

Basic self is differentiated, or separated, from the emotional system of one's family very early in life, and to different degrees in different people and families. (Gilbert, 1992, p. 18)

When basic self was only partially formed in one's family of origin, "separation from fusion with others in the family was incomplete" (Gilbert, 1992, p. 19). Subsequently, the only partially differentiated self causes adults to automatically react emotionally to others and the environment as opposed to acting proactively by using reasoning, judgment and logic.
As the boundaries of less differentiated people are more permeable, "in adulthood they tend to try to complete or compensate for the lack in relationships with other. This tendency toward attachment is automatic and outside conscious awareness" (Gilbert, 1992, p. 19). The relationships can then be seen as "an attempt to complete the self the same way it was completed in the original family system" (Gilbert, 1992, p. 20).

Human beings will attempt to complete the self in relationships to the degree that it is incomplete by itself. At the same time, the others in their systems will also be aiming for self-completion. The effort to make a complete self out of two undifferentiated selves results in a fusion of selves. It is based on the need for attachment, or togetherness, that was not resolved in the original family. (Gilbert, 1992, p. 20)

As fusion reduces anxiety, the pressure for sameness increases with the amount of anxiety (Freeman, 1992). "The more people respond based on anxiety, the less tolerant they are of one another and the more they are irritated by difference" (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 121). People unconsciously seek partners on approximately the same level of differentiation that ensures comparable levels of emotional fusion.

"When the level of anxiety is low, a relationship between two people can be calm and comfortable" (Kerr,
1988, p. 52). However, when the equilibrium of the relationship is disturbed by emotional forces from within it or by outside events, the anxiety rises and its symptoms are expressed.

**Nuclear Family Emotional System.** Bowen (Bowen, 1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988) identified four major areas within the nuclear family in which symptom will be expressed under stress: (1) marital conflict, (2) dysfunction in a spouse, (3) projection to one or more children and 4) emotional cut-off. Thus, marital conflict is one way to absorb large quantities of the anxiety due to undifferentiation. Likewise, one spouse can adapt to the increased anxiety by physical or emotional illness, social dysfunction such as drinking, drug abuse or other forms of irresponsible behavior. Also, since family is an emotional system, one person's anxiety can be projected on to or carried by another family member, like a child. Finally, emotional cut-off can relieve one's anxiety as long as the individual remains isolated.

**Family Projection Process.** The projection is a process by which parents project part of their immaturity to one or more children (Bowen, 1978). Subsequently, the parents become less anxious by
focusing on the child. In turn, such a child becomes most emotionally fused with the parents and achieves the lowest level of differentiation compared to other children in the family.

**Multigenerational Transmission Process.** This concept refers to "the transmission of the family emotional process through multiple generations"

In every generation the child most involved in the family's fusion moves toward a lower level of differentiation of self, while the least involved child moves toward a higher level of differentiation. (Nichols, 1984, p. 352)

This process moves also beyond the nuclear family to several generations. The presenting problem manifesting itself in a symptomatic or identified patient, often a child, is a byproduct of parental and ancestral fusion going back for several generations.

**Triangles.** "The triangle describes the dynamic equilibrium of a three-person system" (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 135) that is formulated under the influence of anxiety. When anxiety in a two-person system increases, a third uninvolved person, such as a child, is triangulated into the twosome to reduce the tension. Though the triangle relieves tension, it also impedes resolution of the problem between the pair (Nichols, 1984). When one triangle fails to solve the problem,
the tension spills over into another interlocking triangle (Kerr, 1988). "A system larger than three persons becomes a series of interlocking triangles" (Bowen, 1966, p. 478).

Family Functioning

In a well-differentiated family, where emotionality, subjectivity or pressure for togetherness are not strong influences, a child is allowed to grow to think, feel and act for herself/himself. As a result, "the child grows to be part of the family, yet an individual within it" (Kerr, 1988, p. 41).

In contrast, in a poorly differentiated family, where there is high intensity of emotionality and pressure for togetherness, a child is prevented from growing to think, feel and act for herself/himself. In such a family, "the child functions in reaction to others" (Kerr, 1988, p. 41). The highly reactive child often operates in an oppositional stance to his/her parent by either acting out behaviors or by withdrawal and passivity. Thus, the child is a symptom-carrier for the family.

Kerr (1988) linked the considerable differences in the degree of emotional separation people achieve from
their families of origin to two variables: the degree to which the person's parents achieved emotional separation from their families of origin and the characteristics of a person's relationship with her or his parents, sibling, and other important relatives. Thought "parents tend to function in ways that result in their children's achieving about the same degree of emotional separation from them that they achieved from their parents,...not all children of one set of parents separate emotionally to the same degree" as "parents' relationship with one child may foster more separation than their relationship with another" (Kerr, 1988, p. 41).

Although the basic level of differentiation is fairly well established by adolescence and usually remains fixed for life, it can be increased by conscious separation of thoughts from feelings and by repositioning one's self in the family of origin. An increase in the level of the parental differentiation from their family of origin subsequently lowers the emotionally reactive milieu of the family of procreation and, in turn, facilitates the greater differentiation of the children.
The Theory of Change

According to Bowen (1978), "the most productive route for change, for families who are motivated, is to work at defining self in the family of origin, and to specifically avoid focus on the emotional issues in the nuclear family" (p. 545). Therefore, Bowen perceived working on symptoms as missing the basic issue.

After twenty years of family therapy, Bowen concluded that even though "there is much to be gained from focusing on the emotional interdependence in the marriage," there is "some solid evidence that focus[ing] on the family of origin can be even more productive" (Bowen, 1978, p. 545). "Efforts to gain objectivity and to control emotional reactivity in the nuclear family can remain for long periods on the level of emotional game playing in which the games of each spouse cancel out the potential gains of both" (Bowen, 1978, p. 545). Bowen (1978) concluded that

families in which the focus in on the differentiation of self in the families of origin automatically make as much or more progress in working out the relationship system with spouses and children as families seen in formal family therapy in which there is a principal focus on the interdependence in the marriage. (p. 545)

According to Bowen, a prerequisite to the success of differentiation from one's family is knowledge of the
concepts of Family Systems Theory and a strong motivation to change (Nichols, 1984). "In the family the differentiation begins with one responsible family member in a key position," such as parent (Bowen, 1978, p. 449). When this person moves to a higher level of functioning, the others will automatically follow in an unconscious attempt to maintain the family equilibrium.

"Part of the process of differentiating a self is to contact as many members of the family as possible and develop a relationship with each of them" (Nichols, 1984, p. 365). This enables one to assume a proactive, non-reactive, stance with the members of the family of origin as well as with the nuclear family members.

**Integrative Systemic Skill-Training Program for Couples**

The process of differentiation has been a focus of individual, couples, family and groups of couples therapy for some time, but has not yet been a part of couples skill-training workshops. Most skill-training workshops for couples have traditionally focused on premarital preparation, marital enrichment and parenting programs with a variety of goals, such as behavioral change, skill acquisition, emotional expression,
cognitive growth, attitudinal shifts, communication and problem resolution.

Although, the growing trend of therapy in the eighties and nineties is considerably more integrative and systemic in its orientation (Brehm, 1985), the concept of differentiation has not yet been incorporated into the skill-training workshops for couples (with some exceptions, like Hendix's (1990) The Imago Therapy or Betz & Gunn's (1988) Parenting Program). The present study attempts to integrate the concept of differentiation as an integral part of a skill-training program for couples (Appendix A).

The Integrative Systemic Skill-Training Program for Couples incorporates psycho-educational and experiential components. The program's content is based on the key concepts of Bowen Family System Theory, communication skills, Transaction Analysis and Imago Therapy.

First, the brief lecture format introduced various concepts. Then, experiential exercises were employed to allow the participants to relate these concepts to their own life experience. Lastly, the discussion and debriefing gave the participants an opportunity to share their experiences and understanding of the concepts among themselves.
As knowledge of the Family Systems Theory concepts is a prerequisite to one's differentiation, the couples were educated about the principles of Bowen Family Systems Theory and its concepts. Special attention was given to the key concept: differentiation of self. Couples were also encouraged to employ these principles in their daily lives.

In addition, some traditional topics of skill-training programs for couples that were found highly effective by the research (L'Abate, 1981) were employed. These included Minnesota Couples Communication Program skills and Marriage Enrichment exercises. These topics were also explored through the lens of Family Systems Theory in terms of family of origin communication patterns or unexpressed needs, among others.

Also, numerous experiential exercises of the Imago Relationship Therapy were employed in order to explore the unfinished business with the family of origin and to achieve a greater degree of wholeness by acquiring more of the basic self.

Likewise, the concepts of Transactional Analysis (TA) were used as a basis of many healing experiential exercises. The goal was to achieve a greater separation
between the basic self and the introjects of the parental figures (in Bowen's language so called undifferentiated ego mass). The concepts of TA addressed differentiation in a symbolic experiential manner.

For the purpose of this study, the Integrative Systemic Skill-Training Program for Couples has been developed in order to answer this research's question: "What specific events or experiences hinder or facilitate the process of differentiation of self?"

Such an exploratory evaluation has been achieved by the use of a daily log in which the participants recorded their daily events as they relate to differentiation in both positive and negative ways.

The goal of the skill training interventions and the awareness enhancing exercises was to sensitize the participants to the concept of differentiation and to promote greater differentiation of self. Although, technically, only a small increment of change in one's level of differentiation is possible after leaving one's original family, any change in the basic level of differentiation can make a radical difference in the functional level of differentiation in all areas of life, particularly in relationships (Gilbert, 1992).
CHAPTER 3. METHOD

Evaluation Design

Purpose. The purpose of this study is to discover what events or experiences hinder or facilitate the process of differentiation of self. Since Bowen's concept of differentiation has not yet been translated into an assessment measuring device that is widely acceptable and meaningful, a deductive approach to research that tests hypotheses with the aim to produce generalizations is not suited for the present study. In contrast, the inductive approach that gives attention to individual experiences and allows the categories to emerge from the incidents themselves lends itself well to the exploratory evaluation of the present study.

Patton's (1980) description of such an inductive approach to categorization in research design is useful as it is contrasted with the deductive approach in experimental design:

A qualitative research strategy is inductive in that the researcher attempts to make sense of the situation without imposing preexisting expectations on the research setting. Qualitative designs begin with specific observations and build toward general patterns. Categories or dimensions of analysis emerge from open-ended observations as the researcher comes to understand organizing patterns that exist in the empirical world under study.
This contrasts with the hypothetico-deductive approach of experimental designs which require the specification of main variables and the statement of specific research hypotheses before data collection. ... The strategy in qualitative designs is to allow the important dimensions to emerge from analysis of cases under study without pre-supposing in advance what those important dimensions will be. The qualitative methodologist attempts to understand the multiple interrelationships among dimensions which emerge from the data without making prior assumptions about the linear or correlative relationships among narrowly defined, operationalized variables. (pp. 40-41)

The critical incident technique pioneered by Flanagan (1954) was selected as the most appropriate method for conducting this research because it was designed to generate descriptive and qualitative data of a still mostly uncharted domain (Proulx, 1991). This aim of critical incident design corresponds well to the goal of exploratory evaluation of the present study. The critical incidents are well suited for an exploration of events that facilitate or hinder differentiation of self.

The Critical Incident Technique. In one of the initial studies, Flanagan (1954) used the critical incident technique to uncover which specific behaviors of combat veterans were helpful or hindering to the accomplishment of the assigned mission. In a more recent study, Flanagan (1978) extended the critical incident technique to include the subjects' experiences
as well as behaviors as they facilitated or hindered "quality of life." Subsequently, the critical incident technique has been used for many studies with diverse aims (Andersson & Nilsson, 1964; Borgen & Amundson, 1984; Broughton, 1984; Cochran, 1985; Klein, 1989; Tjosvold, 1990).

The critical incident technique involves a collection of specific incidents either disclosed in an interview or written up by the observers themselves that report on the subject's experiences as well as behaviors that facilitate or hinder the attainment of the aim under study. Flanagan (1954) defined a critical incident as follows:

...any observable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about the person performing the act. To be critical, an incident must occur in a situation where the purpose or intent of the act seems fairly clear to the observer and where its consequences are sufficiently definite to leave little doubt concerning its effects. (p. 327)

Flanagan (1954) further stated that the reporting of the critical incident "should be limited to those behaviors which, according to competent observers, make a significant contribution to the activity" (p. 355). Subsequently, during the analysis of the data, vague reports should be discarded because they might contain
some inaccuracies. Flanagan (1954) defined competent observers as "those in the best position to make the necessary observations and evaluation" (p. 355). In view of this study, the subjects themselves are the best qualified observers of their subjective experiences in relationship to both positive and negative changes in their level of differentiation.

Participants

Participation in the present study was limited to married or common-law couples with one or more children. The couples were drawn from a pool of referrals to a Mental Health Center by either self referral or by referral from school professionals and family physicians. The participants were predominantly middle class, caucasian (with exception of one culturally diverse couple) and middle age ranging from 31 to 53 years of age. For 10 participants their present relationship was their first marriage and for 6 others this was their second marriage (or common-law relationship). The length of the relationships varied from 2 to 22 years. With exception of two full-time homemakers, all participants were employed outside their home with incomes ranging from mid-income to high-income
categories. The high-income category included a self-employed professional with a graduate medical degree, a self-employed businessman and a high income labor job earner. Mid-income group encompassed a variety of clerical jobs, a variety of self-employment and manufacturing positions.

The following criteria were used for the selection:

(1) Parents recognized that their child had a behavioral problem;

(2) Parents desired professional help in dealing with the child's problem;

(3) Both parents committed to attend three-hour weekly workshop sessions over a period of eight weeks and to participate in pre-, mid-, and post- half-hour interviews and

(4) Both parents needed to have cognitive skills required for completing the daily log homework assignment.

The rationale for the selection of couples with an acting out child for the study was provided by the principles of Bowen Family Systems Theory. According to Bowen Family Systems Theory, the child's acting out behavior is symptomatic of parental anxiety due to the parental lack of differentiation. According to Bowen,
an increased level of parental differentiation reduces parental anxiety. Reduction in parental anxiety, subsequently detriangulates the child from the parental triangle. In Bowen's view, such a triangle is created and maintained in order to reduce or carry parental anxiety. As a result, the increased level of differentiation allows the parent to assume a proactive stance towards the child's behavior and to address discipline in a rational way.

In addition, an increased parental differentiation level will likewise foster a greater differentiation of a child. The key principle of differentiation indicates that differentiation needs to take place in one's family of origin as opposed to one's present nuclear family. Therefore, it is necessary for parents to differentiate within their family of origin first, in order to allow their children to likewise differentiate in the nuclear family. In conclusion, Family Systems Theory assumes that better differentiated parents will be able to parent their child on the basis of rational thought as opposed to their emotionality while respecting intergenerational boundaries and fostering a higher level of differentiation in their children.
Parents seeking help on behalf of the child's problematic behavior were informed about how their participation in the couples workshop, involving differentiation of self, could assist them in dealing effectively with their child's problem. According to the principles of Family Systems Theory, it is implied that with greater spousal differentiation, the overall family functioning, couples relationship and parent-child attitude will likewise improve. This expectation motivated couples to participate in the present study.

Initially, nine couples committed to the eight-week couples workshop. After the first session, one couple declined further participation due to their marital break up. Eight remaining couples participated in the workshop and thirteen participants carried out home assignment of keeping a daily log of events.

Generation of Incidents

The collection of factual incidents involved three sources: daily log, interviews and participant observations. In total, 508 incidents were collected. These included 371 incidents from the daily log, 102 incidents recorded from interviews and the remaining 35 incidents from the observations of the workshop leader.
Daily Log. Participants were asked to keep a daily record of events that either hindered or facilitated their differentiation of self by answering the following question: "What events and/or experiences have you had during the workshop sessions, and between the workshop sessions, which either hindered or facilitated your ability to differentiate?" Participants were given examples of hindering and facilitating events and explained how they related to the following definition of differentiation:

The degree to which one can be a separate self in an intimate relationship, without feeling drowned or alienated, while at the same time maintaining the ability to be governed by thoughts rather than by feelings.

Every participant was given a supply of fifty white and fifty yellow index cards for recording their daily events. The yellow cards were to be used for hindering events and the white cards for facilitating events. Each card was to be signed and dated. The participants were instructed to designate approximately ten minutes at the end of each day for reflection upon their day's events and then record anything that had a significant or noticeable impact on their differentiation in both positive and negative directions. It was suggested that
the participants bring these cards to the next workshop session.

In addition, the participants were instructed to follow the format below:

(1) Describe the event as a story by indicating what led up to it, what happened and what followed.

(2) Who said what to whom?

(3) What were your thoughts?

(4) What were your feelings?

(5) Identify specifically what makes this event facilitating or hindering?

The index cards were collected at the beginning of each session. Discussion of the cards followed afterwards and participants were invited to share some examples of their events and ask any questions. New index cards were available to participants as requested. The participants were also encouraged to phone the workshop leader at any point during the week to clarify any questions or problems with writing the daily log.

Interviews. All participants took part in pre-session, mid-session and post-session interviews, each half hour in duration. During the preliminary interview, participants were given an explanation of the
aim of the study and how a greater level of differentiation could improve their personal functioning as well as their interactions with other family members. Participants were also asked to attend eight weeks of a couples workshop and explained the importance of keeping the daily log was explained. They were likewise informed of their right to terminate their participation in the study, at any point, for any reason, with no negative consequences. Participants signed the Consent Form (Appendix B) indicating their voluntary participation in the study and their right to withdrawal.

Mid-session and post-session interviews lasted half an hour for each participant. These were also audio-taped for future reference. The subjects were asked to comment on in-session incidents, incidents observed by the group leader, clarify those incidents in the daily log which were not clear, and, in particular, disclose any other incidents that participants had not recorded in the daily log. The workshop leader presented a summary of the material and experiential exercises addressed during the workshop, to orient subjects to the concept of differentiation. In addition, subjects were asked to give their definition of differentiation and
elaborate on it. During the final interview, the subjects were also asked if they noticed any change in their level of differentiation from before the workshop compared to their differentiation level at the final interview and identify what they attributed this change to.

**Participant Observation.** Participant observation included leader's observations of the participants' reactions during presentations and experiential exercises, response to participants' statements, apparent emotional breakthroughs and noticeable interactions with other participants or workshop leader. These also included observations of subjects' level of active participation, cooperation and risk taking during the eight-week program.

**Program Design**

The Integrative Systemic Skill-Training Program for Couples was implemented over an eight-week period in three hour weekly sessions. This program incorporated communication skills, marriage enrichment exercises, numerous experiential exercises from the Imago Relationship Therapy and Transactional Analysis, and, in particular, the principles of Bowen Family Systems.
Theory with its major concept of differentiation. The format of the program was in part psycho-educational and in part experiential. (For further description of the program design refer to Chapter 2. and for the detailed outline of the program refer to Appendix A.)

Procedure

Chronological Description. Prospective couples were selected from a pool of referrals to a Mental Health Center. All of these couples were parents who approached a Mental Health Center with a request for help with their child's behavior. Since the demand for counselling services exceeded the Center's capacity to satisfy such a need, a viable option for assisting these families was to initiate a skill-training workshop program. The local director of the Mental Health Center showed great support and enthusiasm for the implementation of this study within the Center.

During the preliminary interview, couples were informed about the purpose of the study and its implied benefits to the participants. Participants were also informed about the importance of keeping the critical incidents record in a daily log and attending the
eight-weeks of three hour workshop sessions. In addition, the workshop facilitator read the Consent Form to the couples (Appendix B). Each participant agreed to sign the Consent Form. This interview lasted approximately half hour.

Within two weeks after the preliminary interviews, the eight week workshop started. Each session lasted three hours. Yellow and white index cards were distributed during the first session to be used as a record of the daily log. These were collected and discussed at the beginning of each session. Also, an outline of each session was introduced at the beginning of the session and weekly handouts were distributed. The first four sessions of the program focused on an explanation of Bowen Family Systems Theory principles (especially the key concept of differentiation of self), relationship building and communication skill training.

After each session, the workshop facilitator wrote a letter to each of the couples. The aim of the letter was to comment on that week's session, bond with the participants, encourage curiosity and sustain high attendance record (Appendix C).

After completion of the four sessions of the program, a mid-session interview took place outside the
workshop format. This interview was conducted on an individual basis with each participant for a half hour and audio taped for future reference. Participants were asked to clarify those incidents in the daily log which were not clear and to ask any questions, seek clarifications or make comments with respect to the program and its related concepts. In particular, participants were asked to report any additional incidents not recorded in the daily log. Participants were also asked to define differentiation at their level of understanding.

The second half of the program continued with the same format. These sessions addressed issues of a more personal nature, such as unfinished business of family of origin and repetition of the interactional patterns across generations. Thus, the nature of the latter part of the program was not only psycho-educational but also therapeutic.

Again, the workshop facilitator sent letters to each of the couples after every session. The letters facilitated the group cohesiveness and encouraged participation.

Within a week after the completion of the eight-session program, the post-session interviews took place.
The same format implemented in mid-session interview was followed. In addition, the participants were asked to report any changes in their level of differentiation from the beginning of the program. The participants were asked to provide specific examples of critical incidents indicative of such change. Finally, participants were thanked for their participation and for a consistently high attendance record during the program.

**Category Construction**

Critical incidents were extracted from the facilitating and hindering events that were written on the index cards by the participants. The extraction of the critical incidents meant rewriting many events while editing others to indicate "Who" was involved in the incident, to identify the "Context" of the event, to explain "What happened" and to describe the "Effect" that followed the incident. As many of the incidents were very lengthy, they were summarized into one paragraph. Great caution was exercised to accurately extract the essential features of the critical incident. The summary conveyed the subjects' feelings, thoughts, behaviors and attitudes. In order to sustain the
original meaning, the quotes of subjects were kept in place. In addition, subject's explanation of the rationale for classifying the event facilitating or hindering was re-recorded.

Vague and unclear reports were discarded. These were not sufficiently complete to permit inferences and predictions to be made about the person's intent. Some of the vague reports were clearly related to the participant's lack of understanding of the concept of differentiation. These vague reports were collected mostly from subjects who turned in a relatively very small number of index cards over the course of the program.

Using the theoretical concepts of Bowen Family Systems Theory as a guide, the critical incidents were sorted into groups on the basis of their similarities. The aim was to obtain groups of concrete incidents which refer to the same construct. These groupings then became the basis of the evolving category system. A category was formed on the basis of grouping several similar critical incidents from various participants. The researcher was very careful not to impose her own theoretical constructs on the data and, instead, allowed the categories to emerge spontaneously. This process
"more subjective than objective," also required "insight, experience, and judgement" on the part of the researcher (Flanagan, 1954, p. 344). The researcher was looking for the underlying patterns which gave meaning to the particular incident in relation to the frame of reference selected (Proulx, 1991).

Each facilitating category had a corresponding opposing hindering category. Two facilitating categories had two opposing hindering categories each. The clearest incidents were categorized first. These were the prototypes of that category as they captured the key feature of the category. Other, less similar incidents were likewise included in the category. Some incidents lent themselves to be categorized into several categories and such borderline incidents were categorized on the basis to which extent they resembled the prototype of a particular category more than the other.

After a tentative facilitating as well as hindering category system was established, the critical incidents were checked for the fit of their resemblance to the prototype and many were reclassified. Following several reviews and modifications, six major categories were distinguished with their facilitating and hindering
counterparts. As suggested by Flanagan (1954), the guideline in establishing the final category system is to maintain "the most appropriate level of specificity-generality" (p. 345). This meant "weighing the advantages of the specificity achieved in specific incidents against the simplicity of a relatively small number of headings" (Flanagan, 1954, p. 345). Each major facilitating category and its hindering counterparts were then assigned labels that captured the essence of the category and conveyed "meanings in themselves without the necessity of detailed definition, explanation, or differentiation" (Flanagan, 1954, p. 345). Then a definition was created for each category. Each major category covered a wide range of possibilities. This range of the possibilities was reflected by the broad definition of each category.

**Reliability and Validity**

Anderson and Nilsson (1964) conducted a study of reliability and validity of the critical incident technique. The aim of their study was to determine the job training requirements for training store managers. Using a variety of methods to test critical incident
technique's validity and reliability, they concluded this method to be both reliable and valid.

Exhaustiveness of Category System. An exhaustiveness test is a reliability check addressing the question of saturation and comprehensiveness. Anderson and Nilsson (1964) discovered that the category system became apparent after only a relatively small number of incidents had been classified. More specifically, 95% of subcategories had emerged before two-thirds of the incidents had been classified (Proulx, 1991). Anderson and Nilsson (1964) concluded that the technique was comprehensive enough "to include all types of behavioral units that the methods may be expected to cover" (p. 399). They also found that the structure of the incidents was not significantly affected by various method of collection of the data or by the use of different interviewers.

Independent Rater. Anderson and Nilsson (1964) further supported the reliability of the critical incident technique by performing an inter-rater reliability check and establishing its guidelines for acceptance. One or more independent raters were asked to sort the incidents in the categories provided by the researcher. They recommended that an acceptable level
of agreement between the researcher and the independent rater(s) was 75 to 85% for the major categories.

**Theoretical Agreement.** In order to determine the validity of the technique, Anderson and Nilsson (1964) analyzed the literature used in the training of store managers. They concluded that all important aspects of the task of training store managers were covered by the category system. The category system was therefore considered valid.

**Opposition of Incidents.** For the category to be valid, it is also considered that it must correspond to its counterpart category in a positive or negative direction. In other words, categories of corresponding hindering and facilitating incidents must be in direct contrast to one another.

**Participation Rate in the Category System.** Participation rate is another indicator of the validity of a category. Participation rate is determined by taking a count of the number of subjects that participated in each of the categories and calculating a percentage of participation. The level of the percentage that is considered valid is to be established beforehand. The higher the participation rate, the more valid the category is.
CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

From eight couples, 508 incidents were collected through the use of a daily log of events (totaling 371 incidents), pre-, mid- and post-interviews (totaling 102 incidents) and participant observations (totaling 35 incidents). The guidelines of the specificity-generality principle, used in establishing the category system, called for a relatively small number of specific major categories. Subsequently, the total of 508 reported incidents was reduced to the six major categories. Each major category had its facilitating and hindering counterparts. Out of the total of 508 incidents, 323 or 64% were facilitating and 185 or 36% were hindering. Though gender differences are not a focus of the present study, it is worthwhile to mention that out of the total of 508 reported incidents, 315 or 62% were reported by females and 193 or 38% were reported by males. The results of the present study will be presented, first, by reporting the results of the tests to determine the reliability and validity, and, next, by providing the description of the major six categories, namely: RESPONSIBILITY versus BLAMING or EXCUSING, ANXIETY CONTROL versus INABILITY TO CONTROL.
ANXIETY or PROJECTION OF ANXIETY, A SENSE OF SELF versus LACK OF INDIVIDUAL BOUNDARIES, ACCEPTANCE OF OTHERS versus REJECTION OF OTHERS, OPENNESS & INTIMACY versus LACK OF OPENNESS & INTIMACY and COGNITIVE versus EMOTIONAL FUNCTIONING.

Reliability and Validity

A variety of methods to test reliability and validity of the critical incidents technique used by Anderson and Nilsson (1964) was also employed by the present study. As noted in Chapter 3., Anderson and Nilsson (1964) concluded: "According to the results of the studies reported here on the reliability and validity aspects of the critical incidents technique, it would appear justifiable to conclude that the information collected by this method is both reliable and valid" (p. 402). The researcher accepted these methods to determine the reliability and validity checks of the present study.

Exhaustiveness of the Category System. It refers to the comprehensiveness of data collection to determine if it encompasses all the possible varieties of behavior and/or experience that the particular critical incident technique may be expected to cover.
In the present study, the emergence of the categories became apparent after the first fifty incidents were classified. Approximately, one third or 150 incidents, both hindering and facilitating, were randomly removed prior to categorizing. These were used to assess the exhaustiveness of the system by classifying them after the category system was established. Since all of these incidents fit into the existing categories, the researcher considered the category system exhaustive. Furthermore, the third of the incidents that was held back was a product of different collection methods, such as subjects' observations, participant observation and interviews. The stability of the categorical system was not effected by the type of data collection.

**Independent Rater.** Approximately 10% of the total of 508 incidents, 50 hindering and facilitating incidents, were systematically and randomly selected for an independent rater to sort into the established categories. These incidents were randomly selected out of each of the six major facilitating categories and their corresponding hindering counterparts.

An independent rater, in this case a fellow counsellor, was trained in the knowledge of the category
system by learning about the key distinguishing features of each category. The researcher first described the typical behavior of each category and then provided an example of a typical incident. Then the rater was asked to sort the sample of 50 cards into the existing category system. It was established beforehand that a category will be deemed reliable if agreement is 80% or higher. The inter-rater accuracy of 94% supported reliability of the category system.

**Theoretical Agreement.** The following question was asked by the present researcher as it pertains to the validity of this study: "Given the theory of differentiation, are the categories of the present study in agreement with the concepts of the Bowen Theory?" After review of related literature, the researcher concluded that the six major categories emerging from the present study that facilitate and hinder differentiation strongly reflect the key concepts of Bowen, though their definitions may be a departure from Bowen.

Garfinkel (1980), who developed an assessment instrument based on Bowen Theory, carefully examined the eight theoretical concepts of Bowen Systems Theory. She found the Bowen's concepts to be not only
"interlocking," as Bowen (1975) states, but also "overlapping" in their content (Garfinkel, 1980, p. 305). "This resulted in the investigator formulating five constructs for which scale items were developed, which actually reflected the information referred to in the eight [Bowen's] concepts" (Garfinkel, 1980, p. 40).

Three of Garfinkel's constructs, Recipient of the Projection Process, Emotional Cutoff and Family Regression, refer to one of Bowen's basic concepts: anxiety. They address the basic Bowen's notion of how anxiety, as a sign of a lack of personal differentiation, is bound in relationships, transformed over generational boundaries, temporarily relieved by emotional cutoff and projected by the formation of triangles. In the present study, Category II. (namely, Anxiety Control versus INABILITY TO CONTROL ANXIETY or PROJECTION OF ANXIETY) as well as the hindering counterpart of Category V. (represented by LACK OF OPENNESS & INTIMACY) are reflective of such Bowen's constructs built around anxiety.

In addition, Garfinkel's (1980) examination of Bowen's key concept, differentiation of self, revealed two distinct areas of focus: Integration of individuals' pseudo and solid selves and their balance
Cognitive and emotional functioning under stressful circumstances. Garfinkel (1980) created two corresponding scales, namely, Integration of Self and Cognitive Versus Emotional Functioning. Integration of Self is constructed on the basis of the following Bowen's characteristics of self:

The level of solid self is stable. The pseudo self is unstable and it responds to a variety of social pressures and stimuli. The pseudo self is acquired on the basis of the relationship system and it is negotiable in the relationship system. (1976, p. 366)

An individual with a higher level of differentiation maintains more of "solid self" and fuses less into a "common self," composed out of each partners' negotiable "pseudo self." In the present study, the construct of Integration of Self is represented by Category I. (RESPONSIBILITY versus BLAMING or EXCUSING), by Category III. (namely, A SENSE OF SELF versus LACK OF INDIVIDUAL BOUNDARIES), by Category IV. (ACCEPTANCE OF OTHERS versus REJECTION OF OTHERS) and by Category V. (OPENNESS & INTIMACY versus LACK OF OPENNESS & INTIMACY).

Garfinkel's scale of Cognitive Versus Emotional Functioning "defines people according to the degree of fusion between emotional and intellectual functioning" (Bowen, 1976, p. 362). This construct corresponds to
the present study's Category VI., COGNITIVE versus EMOTIONAL FUNCTIONING.

In addition, the interlocking and overlapping characteristics of Bowen's constructs are also evident by this study's category system. Many events could easily qualify for several categories at the same time. In such cases, the researcher categorized these borderline incidents on the basis to which extent they resembled the prototype of a particular category more than the other.

In summary, the review of Bowen's theoretical constructs and of empirical research employing such constructs supports this study's category system. Thus the researcher concluded, that the present study's category system is in agreement with the Bowen Family Systems Theory and, therefore, considered valid.

Opposition of Incidents. It is also considered that for the category to be valid it must be represented by facilitating as well as its corresponding hindering counterparts. In the present study, all six major categories have hindering counterparts. Four facilitating categories (namely, A SENSE OF SELF, ACCEPTANCE OF OTHERS, OPENNESS & INTIMACY and COGNITIVE FUNCTIONING) each have an opposing category that
reflects a direct hindering contrast for the whole range of that category. The remaining two facilitating categories (namely, RESPONSIBILITY and ANXIETY CONTROL) each have two opposing hindering categories that are likewise in the direct contrast to the facilitating one. Thus, it was concluded that the existence of oppositional categories supports the validity of the classification system.

**Participation Rate in the Category System.** It was determined beforehand that if participation rate in a category is at least 75% then general validity of a category is to be assumed. The participation rates of the present study were determined for each major category, encompassing its positive and negative counterparts, by counting the number of participants who produced at least one incident under that category. Three subjects did not participate in the writing of a daily log. Subsequently, the participation rate was based on the total participation of 13 out of the study's 16 subjects.

The results show a participation rate of 85% for Category VI., COGNITIVE versus EMOTIONAL FUNCTIONING; 92% for Category I., RESPONSIBILITY versus BLAMING or EXCUSING, and 92% for Category IV., ACCEPTANCE versus
and 100% for the remaining three categories: Category II., Anxiety Control versus Inability to Control Anxiety or Projection of Anxiety; Category III., A Sense of Self versus Lack of Individual Boundaries, and Category V., Openness & Intimacy versus Lack of Openness & Intimacy. The high participation rate involved in the formation of the six major categories indicates that the independent reporters are reporting about the same kind of events that facilitate or hinder differentiation.

Conclusion. The present study of critical incidents of differentiation used a variety of reliability and validity methods as proposed by Anderson and Nilsson (1964). The present study concluded that the independent rater check suggested that the categories can be reliably used to categorize events, that the categories were reasonably exhaustive and supported by the theory, that the events showed symmetry of positive and negative and that the formation of categories was supported by independent reports of the majority of the participants. These findings enhance confidence in the reliability and validity of the category system.
The Category System

The present study category system is comprised of six major categories to which the total of 508 reported incidents was reduced. Each of the six major facilitating categories and its corresponding hindering counterparts was labeled with a title that conveys the key meaning of that category. Then a definition was created for each category. Each category encompasses the broad range of possibilities.

The resulting category system is presented first by identifying the category by its numeric order number and, second, by stating the total number of its corresponding critical incidents (both facilitating and hindering) as well as the overall participation rate. Next, the facilitating title of the category is presented with its definition. In addition, the number of its corresponding critical incidents and participation rate are indicated. The description of the range of the events follows. Thereafter, one to three narratives of the prototypical events are presented. Lastly, the hindering counterpart(s) of the category is presented following the same format.
A. FACILITATING

1. RESPONSIBILITY:

Judgment of responsibility for feelings, thoughts and actions and their consequences. (Number: 49, Participation Rate: 69%)

Range: The category of RESPONSIBILITY includes a person taking on a Responsibility for self and also setting boundaries by Letting others be responsible for themselves.

Illustration 1: (Responsibility for self)
Context: During the final interview a participant was asked how she explained to herself her increased level of differentiation that she had acknowledged.
What happened: She replied: "I have the responsibility for myself, my own happiness, I am an individual, not just a collection of my roles as wife, mother or daughter. As a result, everything has changed. It's my time!"

Illustration 2: (Letting others be responsible for themselves)
Context: The couple had previously discussed the purchase of a new washer/dryer and how much to spend.
What happened: The husband visited his wife at her workplace when she was very busy and could not talk to him. He asked what kind and color of washer/dryer he should buy. The wife replied: "You make the decision" and proceeded with her work. She thought to herself: "I feel bogged down and resentful of the daily responsibility. I feel that I must be the leader in the house for decisions to be made. By differentiating myself, stepping back and letting my husband take on the
responsibility for the final decision, I feel that he stepped forward and also differentiated."

B. HINDERING

2. BLAMING:

Erroneous judgment of responsibility for feelings, thoughts and actions and their consequences by blaming.
(Number: 15, Participation Rate: 53%)

Range: The category of BLAMING ranges from Blaming self and assuming responsibility for others' feelings, thoughts and actions as well as their consequences to Blaming others for one's own feelings, thoughts and actions as well as their consequences. This category also includes putting other's needs first and neglecting own needs.

Illustration 1: (Blaming self)
Context: The couple is raising their granddaughter while their daughter, the mother of the child, is presently not involved with the child, and their son-in-law, the father of the child, is undertaking rehabilitation for a clean and sober lifestyle.

What happened: The son-in-law phoned and cancelled his previously arranged visit to take care of his daughter for a day. The grandmother was at first angry and disappointed, then became very understanding and ended up feeling overwhelmed and trapped while at the same time feeling incompetent and guilty. Although the grandmother felt burdened by the full time responsibility for the grandchild, she blamed herself for not coping better. She thought to herself: "What is my problem? Why can't I cope? He is too stressed out and needs to look after himself. I don't have that
much to do. Lots of people do more than I do without cracking up. I just have to get more organized; I need more energy. I wonder how long I can physically handle this. I hate feeling spaced out and dizzy. My heart is pounding; I've got to get a handle on this and put everything into perspective. Why do I feel this way? A lot of people raise their grandchild. She is my responsibility. Why don't I get on with it?"

Illustration 2: (Blaming others)

Context: The wife wanted to do yard work and found that the weed eater did not work and the extension cord was not supplying any power.

What happened: When her husband came home from work and asked the wife how her day was, she replied it was "not good" and angrily explained the fact that the garden tools were not working had ruined her day. She thought to herself: "It's all your fault, I had a rotten day. If you cared about me, you would make sure that the things I use around the house are in good running order." Wife was blaming the husband for her anger and for feeling unloved but did not express what she wanted from him--to assume responsibility for keeping tools in working order.

3. EXCUSING:

Erroneous judgement of responsibility for feelings, thoughts and actions and their consequences by excusing.

(Number: 15, Participation Rate: 46%)

Range: The category of EXCUSING ranges from Excusing self and denying one's responsibility for one's own feelings, thoughts and actions as well as their consequences to Excusing others from their responsibility for their feelings, thoughts and actions as well as their consequences. It also includes
instances when a person fails to delegate responsibility by being overresponsible and by making excuses for others.

Illustration 1: (Excusing self)
Context: After working in the yard, the wife talked to the husband. 
What Happened: The wife complained to the husband about his lack of pride in their yard and about not maintaining the yard equipment. In response, the husband angrily defended himself by looking for excuses to justify his lack of participation in the yard work.

Illustration 2: (Excusing others)
Context: The couple is raising their granddaughter while their daughter, the mother of the child, is presently not involved with the child, and their son-in-law, the father of the child, is undertaking rehabilitation for a clean and sober lifestyle. 
What happened: The son-in-law phoned later in the evening to cancel his commitment to look after his daughter next day as he felt he "had a bad week." The grandmother proceeded to tell her son-in-law that although she was disappointed he would not be looking after his daughter the next day, she understood and "it was really important that he look after himself first." She carried on by stating reasons (or excuses) why it was important for the son-in-law to take care of himself at the expense of any parental commitment. Only later on, the grandmother acknowledged to herself that she felt taken advantage of.

CATEGORY TWO (Number: 90, Participation Rate: 100%)

A. FACILITATING

1. ANXIETY CONTROL:

Ability to remain anxiety-free during periods of stress. 
(Number: 47, Participation Rate: 85%)
Range: The category of ANXIETY CONTROL includes the following range: Anxiety level referring to a knowledge of own general anxiety level and an avoidance of highly stressful situations by taking care of self; Comfort level concerned with monitoring own comfort level of anxiety during periods of stress; Calmness, ability to maintain own calmness during periods of stress and Return to calmness defined as ability to return to calmness after periods of stress. Anxiety control also covers anger management and impulse control.

Illustration 1: (Anxiety level)
Context: Mrs. H. was sick for three days. Mrs. H., a mature student and a primary caregiver for her grandchild, was leading a very busy lifestyle. During the past year, Mrs. H. became physically sick due to stress.
What happened: Mrs. H. took courage, for the first time, to ask her instructor for a three day extension on an assignment due shortly because of her sickness. As Mrs. H. explained: "As much as I hated asking, I did it anyway. To lose those three days I had counted on puts me under a lot of stress--stress that I don't need. So I decided to look after myself and ask for the extension."

Illustration 2: (Comfort level)
Context: Mrs. A. quit smoking.
What happened: Mrs. A. had several potentially difficult situation for staying away from smoking. Two of her worst situations were going out for dinner and going to a lounge. On Mrs. A.'s birthday, she "had done both of these" and she "managed just fine" by monitoring her comfort level. As Mrs. A. explained, "Whenever I get the urge, I do deep-breathing and it's working great. I feel wonderful and am extremely proud of myself!"
Illustration 3: (Calmness)

Context: Mrs. N. quit smoking recently and is easily irritated.

What happened: The continuous misbehaving of two sons of this couple's step-family frustrated Mrs. N. to the point of storming out of the house while yelling and swearing at her spouse J., slamming the front door and driving away without explanation. Mr. J. had empathy for what his wife was going through on account of her quitting smoking and decided not to react to her anger. J. did not get angry, though he felt discouraged by his wife's inability to cope, and hoped her tolerance level would improve when she gets over her smoking withdrawal.

B. HINDERING

2. INABILITY TO CONTROL ANXIETY:

Inability to remain anxiety-free during periods of stress. (Number: 18, Participation Rate: 77%)

Range: The category of INABILITY TO CONTROL ANXIETY covers the following range: Lack of awareness of anxiety level, a lack of knowledge of one's own general anxiety level; Inability to monitor comfort level, inability to monitor one's own comfort level during periods of stress; Lack of calmness, inability to maintain one's own calmness during periods of stress and Failure to return to calmness, inability to return to calmness after periods of stress. Anxiety control also covers anger management and impulse control.
Illustration 1: (Lack of calmness)
Context: It was a four-year old daughter's bedtime and her father tucked her into bed.
What happened: The four-year old continuously kept coming out of her room claiming she had something to tell to her father. The father was at first patient with her, but as this routine continued over and over, he got fed up. Eventually he got mad and while carrying his daughter to her room he hollered and threatened her with spanks and locked her door. The father felt abused by his four year old daughter and realized that his angry and irrational reaction to his daughter's misbehaving did not resolve the problem of his ineffective discipline.

Illustration 2: (Failure to return to calmness)
Context: In a response to the couples' decision to build a new family home, the father-in-law made a critical comment: "What's wrong with young kids is that they want more and what they have is never good enough."
What happened: After hearing such a negative comment, the daughter-in-law felt hurt, angry and personally blamed for the idea of building a new home. For several days thereafter, she remained hurt, felt guilty and anxiously doubted the couples' decision to build a new house.

3. PROJECTION OF ANXIETY:
Projection of anxiety from one relationship onto a third party. (Number: 25, Participation Rate: 69%)
Range: The following types of anxiety projection are included in this category: Parent to child, Child to Parent, Spouse to spouse, Spouse to friend, Work to spouse/family, Child to parent to spouse and Parent to child to spouse.
Illustration 1: (Parent to child)
Context: The wife wanted to do yard work.
What happened: After checking garden supplies in the tool shed, the wife got angry at her husband and thought to herself: "every time I go to use one of his tools it's either broken, dirty, needs fixing, or I can't find it at all. I wish he'd look after his things, he's worse than a kid. How the hell am I to get things done around here when nothing works properly?" As a result, Mrs. E. has become frustrated and really angry. She described her experience: "It took me a long time to settle down. In the meantime, I yelled at the kids and made them miserable. I really wanted to yell at my husband. I was out of control and taking my anger out on the kids."

Illustration 2: (Work to spouse/family)
Context: Mr. O. was self-employed. His usual "crazy day at work" involved dealing with the public which could be very trying at times.
What happened: Mr. O. realized that though "the customer may always be right," some may also be "real idiots." As Mr. O explained: "I have to deal with my stress in a constructive fashion; I always keep my mouth shut on the job, but then I bring that stress home. I almost resent my job, at times, for doing that to me: indirectly interfering with my home life, which I value very much."

Illustration 3: (Child to parent to spouse)
Context: The wife came home late from working an evening shift and found their young children still up.
What happened: After the couple put the children to bed, the husband went to sleep and the wife went to have a bath. "I had just got into the tub when our youngest started to cry. I listened for a while. She got louder and louder and started screaming for daddy. After about five minutes of this, I was furious. I got out of the tub, literally stomped up the stairs, dripping wet with a small towel wrapped around me, opened our bedroom door and yelled at the top of my voice: Can't you hear your kid screaming her bloody head off!" As there was no reply since the husband was sound asleep (being a very deep sleeper), wife proceeded to furiously swear and yell at him.
CATEGORY THREE (Number: 124, Participation Rate: 100%)

A. FACILITATING

1. A SENSE OF SELF:

Ability to distinguish and honor self as separate from others. (Number: 73, Participation Rate: 100%)

Range: The category of A SENSE OF SELF encompasses the following range of subcategories: Conscious awareness of self by knowing the difference between "I" and "Not-I" (including Protection of own boundaries as well as Respect for other's boundaries); Acceptance of self by appreciation of self without unhealthy comparisons, blame or guilt; Security by trusting self and feeling secure about being self in the context of anxiety and by avoiding self-doubt or compromise of self; Commitment to self by being true to self (covering areas, such as Giving out of choice, not obligations, Saying NO without guilt and feeling free to have own priorities, Following through on self-generated commitments in spite of external influence) and Proactivity (referring to one's ability to detach or separate self from other's emotionality by assuming proactive stance).
Illustration 1: (Conscious awareness of self: Protection of own boundaries)

Context: A brother of Mr. L. called to announced that he would be coming to visit L.'s family on Friday at 1.00 p.m.

What happened: "My brother is a schizophrenic and because of his illness tends to lean on me a lot (or do I let him?)." Friday 1.00 p.m. was not a good time for Mr. L. to be home as he planned to be at a Rotary meeting. At first, Mr. L. became uptight and anxious with his brother's expectation but calmed down and relaxed as soon as he decided on his course of action. Mr. L. realized that he can, on this occasion, ask his brother to adjust to his schedule: "D., I'll be at a Rotary meeting and I'll leave the front door open. Make yourself at home! It might be a good idea to also take a walk around the neighborhood, if you get restless, so you can see where we live. I'll see you later when my Rotary meeting is over." This plan worked very well for both brothers and allowed Mr. L. to enjoy his brother without resentment for sacrificing his own plans.

Illustration 2: (Commitment to self: Following through)

Context: Mrs. O. is generally very busy raising a young family and working part-time. Subsequently, she finds it hard to have time to herself.

What happened: "I have had some great facilitating events lately. I've begun an interesting tape program on 'Personal power' and am enjoying it thoroughly. I find it facilitating because I'm following through on it. I have always been really bad on the 'follow through,' so I'm really pleased that I ensure that every day, no matter what, I find the time to listen to that day's tape. I'm really happy with myself that I've made the commitment and stuck to it."

Illustration 3: (Proactivity)

Context: Mrs. H., a mature university student, planned to visit her mother who lives out of town in order to have peace and quiet to write her term paper.

What happened: While packing her overnight suitcase Mrs. H. approached her husband with concern over his feelings as he was isolating himself from the rest of the family. Mr. L. expressed he was opposed to her going away and questioned why she could not do her assignment at home. Against her husband's wishes, Mrs.
H. felt entitled to go away without feeling guilty. As Mrs. H. explained: "I know my husband really didn't want me to go. I didn't feel guilty and I didn't feel really anxious. I made up my mind not to let myself get upset over something that was really his problem."

B. HINDERING

2. LACK OF INDIVIDUAL BOUNDARIES:

Inability to distinguish and honor self as separate from others. (Number: 51, Participation Rate: 77%)

Range: The category of LACK OF INDIVIDUAL BOUNDARIES covers the following wide range of possibilities:

Blurred boundaries of self by not knowing the difference between "I" and "Not-I" (concerned with Boundary invasiveness by allowing others to invade one's own boundaries or being controlled by others as well as Boundary intrusiveness by intruding into other's boundaries or being controlling); Lack of acceptance of self by one's inability to appreciate self without unhealthy comparisons, blame or guilt; Insecurity by not trusting self and feeling insecure in the context of anxiety, by self-doubting, compromising self, defending self and being fearful in anticipation of negative reaction; Obligations defined as doing something out of obligation as opposed to personal choice and subsequently feeling resentful and trapped and
Reactivity characterized by one's inability to detach from other's emotionality and by becoming reactive by arguing or by emotional cut off and also by personalizing or feeling negative.

Illustration 1: (Lack of acceptance of self)
Context: During one of the couples workshop sessions, the participants were asked to recall their early childhood memories with respect to how they were parented as children.
What happened: Mr. J. realized that he had little memory of his life prior to age 10 and only fragments of memory after that age. Mr. J. felt confused and disappointed as he blamed himself for not being able to respond satisfactorily. Mr. J. was likewise intimidated by seeing other participants responding and enjoying this exercise.

Illustration 2: (Insecurity)
Context: Mrs. H. had a late afternoon doctor's appointment in the city some 100 miles away from home.
What happened: After her doctor's appointment, Mrs. H. went to one of the city's malls for one hour to avoid the rush hour. Mrs. H. became very anxious while driving home and anticipated that her husband and teenage daughter would be annoyed with her because she did not come straight home. On behalf of her defense, Mrs. H. chose not to tell them, unless they asked, that she went to look around the mall for one hour. She was especially concerned that her husband would be "totally ticked off," and she would get defensive, resulting in a fight. She was also dealing with a feeling of guilt for taking an hour for herself. When she arrived home, she was relieved to find out that her husband had gone out.

Illustration 3: (Obligations)
Context: A friend phoned the couple to invite them to a Saturday night dinner party.
What happened: Mrs. H. responded: "Oh that sounds great P., thank you very much. We'll really look forward to seeing you." In contrast, she thought to herself: "Oh no! That's the last thing I want to do on
Saturday night." The couple made previous arrangements for that night and the previous night as well. Likewise, Sundays are always busy with family activities and Mrs. H. had an important exam coming Tuesday. She thought to herself, "I'll be exhausted. But how could I say no. We've cancelled out of the last couple of things they've invited us to." Mrs. H. felt trapped, anxious and dishonest as she did not really want to go. "I made an assumption that they would be disappointed if we declined. I made an assumption that my husband would probably want to go. I am creating a lot of stress for myself by allowing external events to push and pull me--to dominate my life!"

CATEGORY FOUR (Number: 48, Participation Rate: 92%)

A. FACILITATING

1. ACCEPTANCE OF OTHERS:

Ability to appreciate and respect others on their own merit.  (Number: 34, Participation Rate: 92%)

Range: The category of ACCEPTANCE OF OTHERS is characterized by events reflective of Acceptance of others by one's ability to appreciate others on their own merit; Acceptance of difference in others by tolerating differences and by having Realistic expectations of others.

Illustration: (Acceptance of difference in others)

Context: Mr. R. wanted to go to see the strippers.
What happened: Mr. R.'s wife, Mrs. C., explained her viewpoint: "I didn't feel comfortable about him going, but he could go. I explained my feelings and he said he wouldn't go. I asked if we could come to a solution
that was agreeable to us both. We did some problem solving and he went." Mrs. C. detached emotionally from her husband's desire to go to the strip club. Even though she was not in favour of him going, Mrs. C. could tolerate it and not be upset if he went.

B. HINDERING

2. REJECTION OF OTHERS:

Inability to appreciate and respect others on their own merit. (Number: 14, Participation Rate: 38%)

Range: The category of REJECTION OF OTHERS encompasses Criticism of others stemming from one's inability to appreciate others on their own merit by criticizing, condemning and comparing; Pressure for sameness of others seen in intolerance of differences and having Unrealistic expectations of others by being demanding and controlling.

Illustration: (Unrealistic expectations)
Context: Mrs. S. was helping a friend remodel her kitchen and they needed a truck to pick up some paneling.
What happened: Mrs. S. told her friend she knew someone who could help and proceeded to ask her co-worker to borrow his truck. "He said that he would lend it to me for my personal use, but not for my friend. I thought, 'what a jerk,' and walked away. My feelings were of anger, fuming, and I was really mad that he said no." Mrs. S. really expected him to say yes and remained extremely mad for the rest of the day when her expectations were not met.
A. FACILITATING
1. OPENNESS & INTIMACY:
Vulnerability with one's own feelings, thoughts, needs and wants as well as ability to listen to and support others' feelings, thoughts, needs and wants.
(Number: 97, Participation Rate: 92%)

Range: The category of OPENNESS & INTIMACY includes the following wide range of possibilities: Trust referring to one's ability to believe in one's own feelings, thoughts, needs and wants; Vulnerability defined as the ability to share one's own feelings, thoughts, needs and wants; Accessibility by making oneself available to others to listen to their feelings, thoughts, needs and wants; Support for another person as well as the ability to be empathic and also the ability to ask for help and support; Clarifications explained as an avoidance of mindreading, and, instead, ability to ask others for clarifications as well as the ability to clarify own ideas, needs and expectations and Mistakes concerned with admitting of own wrongs as well as allowing others to rectify their mistakes.
Illustration 1: (Trust)
Context: Mrs. H. felt very sick and had an appointment with her doctor that same day in a city that was a two-hour drive away from her home.
What happened: Mrs. H. felt torn between keeping her commitment with the doctor and looking after herself: "I'm so sick I can't make it to the city and back, but I can't cancel the appointment; it's too late I'll have to try and make it." Finally, Mrs. H. gained trust in her feelings of being too sick and the necessity to take care of her immediate needs: "I phoned the doctor's office at 2.00 p.m. and cancelled my 4.00 p.m. appointment and went home to bed." This took considerable courage on Mrs. H.'s part as she usually neglected her own feelings and needs in favour of pleasing others.

Illustration 2: (Accessibility)
Context: A couple had an argument about other family members.
What happened: "This time, rather than discussing it as a lot of 'B.S.,' I took the time to listen to what she had to say. I thought to myself, 'whether I agree or not, I should at least listen; whether I feel it's an important issue or not, I should listen,' which I did. The argument turned into a calm exchange of views on the matter. I am more aware of my wife's presence, not her physical presence, but her feelings and emotions."

Illustration 3: (Mistakes)
Context: The parents bought an expensive pair of runners for their teenage son.
What happened: When the son was wearing his expensive runners to play in the yard, his father cautioned him to wear his old pair instead. After hearing this, his mother proceeded to lecture her son on not wearing his new runners for play. The son angrily responded that he knew what he had done wrong and did not need to hear it twice. Afterwards, the mother thought that her son was right and it was not her place to get involved in a well understood exchange between father and son. "I admitted to him what I had done was wrong."
B. HINDERING

2. LACK OF OPENNESS AND INTIMACY:
Lack of vulnerability with one's own feelings, thoughts, needs and wants as well as inability to listen to and support other's feelings, thoughts, needs and wants.
(Number: 39, Participation Rate: 77%)

Range: LACK OF OPENNESS AND INTIMACY category encompasses the following wide range of themes: Mistrust referring to one's inability to believe in one's own feelings, thoughts, needs and wants; Emotional unavailability by one's inability to share one's own feelings, thoughts, needs and wants; Emotional cut off defined as one's unavailability to others to listen to their feelings, thoughts, needs and wants; Lack of support for another person as well as one's inability to be empathic and also the inability to ask for help and support; Assumptions involving mindreading and making assumptions about others as well as expecting others to read one's mind and Mistakes concerned with denial of own wrongs and inability to accept others' rectification of their mistakes.

Illustration 1: (Emotional unavailability)
Context: During the mid-interview Mrs. E. talked about her problematic style of communication.
What happened: Mrs. E. explained how her anger and frustration, often persisting for many days, have to do with the fact that she usually lets her feelings go unexpressed. Mrs. E. gave an example of how an elderly driver parked his car too close to her car in a mall's parking lot. She thought to herself: "You jerk, how do you expect me to have enough room to get out of my car. Don't you see what you're doing, you idiot!" As the driver stepped out of his car and realized he was parked too close to Mrs. E.'s car, he walked over and asked if she had enough room to get out. Mrs. E. replied "yes" with a smile on her face. At the same time, she was mad at the elderly driver for not realizing he had parked too close to her car regardless of what she said. She was also angry for not speaking up.

Illustration 2: (Lack of support)
Context: Mrs. A. had her wisdom teeth pulled out and was in substantial pain for several days afterwards. What happened: "My husband has been a total jerk. Whenever I'm sick, he removes himself emotionally. He's unable to cope with illness, so he just doesn't acknowledge it. He walks around like a martyr who's being very hard done by. Two days after my surgery he came upstairs (I hadn't been out of bed yet) to see if I wanted to help him do his year-end G.S.T. I wanted to smack him right in the mouth. It's like saying that his needs are more important than mine."

Illustration 3: (Assumptions)
Context: Mrs. E. had an exceptionally difficult time with the couples' two young children as they, as well as herself, were sick. What happened: "By the time my husband came home from work, I had had enough! I was in a rotten mood and expected my husband to take over. I barely spoke to him and had tuned myself off to everything and everyone. I felt unloved, trapped and deeply depressed, My thoughts were: 'this is totally crazy, I need this like a hole in my head. Why did I ever get myself into this situation. I'd like to pack my bags and run away.' I didn't explain to my husband how I felt, what I thought or wanted. I assumed he should be able to read my mind and I got angry when he didn't."
A. FACILITATING

1. COGNITIVE FUNCTIONING:

Making decisions based on rational thought as opposed to emotions and maintaining balance between the forces of individuality and togetherness. (Number: 23, Participation Rate: 85%)

Range: The category of COGNITIVE FUNCTIONING ranges from one's ability to use Rational reasoning (as opposed to making decisions based on one's emotions), through Intellectual autonomy (involving one's ability to state autonomous beliefs and opinions without attacking those of others or without the need to defend one's own position), to Balance between individuality and togetherness by one's ability to be self-determined while remaining considerate of others.

Illustration 1: (Rational reasoning)
Context: Mr. L., a pharmacist and owner of a local drugstore, had to deal with a difficult customer. What happened: The customer demanded to have his prescription filled right away, but the medication was on order and had not arrived yet to the store. Mr. L. ensured him he would have it for him the next day, but the customer replied he wanted it now, knowing that the store didn't have it. Mr. L. apologized again, and though irritated, remained calm and suggested he would make an effort to get the prescription from another
pharmacy the same day (which he did). Mr. L. was pleased that he remained calm though the customer's manner was really unreasonable. Responding rationally, allowed Mr. L. to be creative to find another solution.

Illustration 2: (Balance between individuality and togetherness)
Context: During the mid-term interview, Mr. J. was asked what was his understanding of a definition of differentiation.
What happened: Mr. J. perceived differentiation to be the ability to use rational thoughts as a guide and also the balance between taking care of one's self while being intimately connected in a relationship. Mr. J. invested a great effort into practicing such balance in his relationship by giving his partner space and tolerating differences while remaining connected by sharing his feelings and wants and encouraging his partner to do the same.

B HINDERING
2. EMOTIONAL FUNCTIONING:
Making decisions based on emotions as opposed to rational thought and an inability to maintain balance between the forces of individuality and togetherness.
(Number: 8, Participation Rate: 46%)
Range: The category of EMOTIONAL FUNCTIONING covers the range from Emotional reasoning (involving making decisions based on emotions as opposed to based on rational thought), through Lack of intellectual autonomy (concerned with one's inability to state autonomous beliefs and opinions without attacking those of others or needing to defend one's own position), to Imbalance
between individuality and togetherness by one's inability to be self-determined while remaining considerate of others.

Illustration: (Emotional Reasoning)
Context: Mrs. H. talked to a friend on the phone about the couples workshop.
What happened: The friend responded: "Well I'm not like you; I can grow and sort out my own problems without having to lean on outside help. I've gone through some of the stuff you're going through, but I sorted it out myself." In reply, Mrs. H. acknowledged her own willingness to learn from others who might know more. Mrs. H. felt put down and angry. She proceeded to be defensive and also reacted to her friend with sarcasm. As Mrs. H. felt really annoyed by her friend's statement, she reacted by trying to get her friend to see things her way. In Mrs. H.'s words, this led to the following: "It was a stupid conversation and a complete waste of time."

Summary

Out of the study's total of 508 critical incidents, 323 or 64% were facilitating and 185 or 36% were hindering. The distribution of events into the six categories is displayed in Table 1.

The study found the category of OPENNESS & INTIMACY, with particular focus on the ability to express one's feelings, thoughts and, in particular, wants, to facilitate differentiation far more than any other category. Thirty percent of all facilitating
events fit this category (Table 1.). Also, the category of **A SENSE OF SELF**, concerned with one's ability to distinguish boundaries between self and other, was found highly facilitating and accounted for 23% of all facilitating events. **A SENSE OF SELF** category was also the most hindering category containing 28% of all hindering events. The second highest hindering category was **LACK OF OPENNESS & INTIMACY** with 21% out of the total of hindering events. Thus, this research found the categories of **OPENNESS & INTIMACY** and **A SENSE OF SELF** to account for 51% of all events in both facilitative and hindering directions (exactly, 53% out of all facilitating events and 49% out of all hindering ones).
Table 1

**Categories and Percentages of Events**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Number of events</th>
<th>Percent for each category</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Facilitating</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blaming</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Excusing</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Facilitating</td>
<td>Anxiety Control</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inability to Control Anxiety</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Projection of Anxiety</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Facilitating</td>
<td>A Sense of Self</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of Individual Boundaries</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Facilitating</td>
<td>Acceptance of Others</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rejection of Others</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Facilitating</td>
<td>Openness &amp; Intimacy</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of Openness &amp; Intimacy</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Facilitating</td>
<td>Cognitive Functioning</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional Functioning</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUBTOTAL:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Facilitating</strong></td>
<td><strong>323</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>64%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Hindering</strong></td>
<td><strong>185</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>36%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>508</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td>****</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

Summary of Results

From eight couples completing eight-weeks workshop, 508 incidents were reported that either facilitated or hindered differentiation. These incidents were reduced into six major categories which were found to be both reliable and valid. The categories included the following: **RESPONSIBILITY versus BLAMING or EXCUSING, ANXIETY CONTROL versus INABILITY TO CONTROL ANXIETY or PROJECTION OF ANXIETY, A SENSE OF SELF versus LACK OF INDIVIDUAL BOUNDARIES, ACCEPTANCE OF OTHERS versus REJECTION OF OTHERS, OPENNESS & INTIMACY versus LACK OF OPENNESS & INTIMACY** and **COGNITIVE versus EMOTIONAL FUNCTIONING.**

Limitations

The significance and generalizability of this study's results of what events facilitate or hinder differentiation are limited by several factors. First, of all, the results are limited by the participants' understanding of differentiation, what they were capable of articulating and what they were willing to reveal by the study's method of measure. For example, three
couples of the eight participating couples had very poor participation in the writing of the daily log of events: three men did not write any cards and their female spouses each wrote only a very few events. English was a second language for one of these couples. Though this couple actively participated during the workshop sessions and acknowledged substantial gains from the program during the final interview, they also admitted that their language barrier prevented them from active participation in the writing of a daily log. The other two couples, when asked during the final interview what their understanding of differentiation was, had very little understanding of the concept of differentiation.

The two men also expressed their displeasure of writing. Likewise, all three men expressed their difficulty in expressing feelings. Also, some participants revealed very personal material in their events that might not have been appropriate for others to disclose. Other participants were, at first, reluctant to write the daily log events but gained confidence during the duration of the eight week workshop thereby increasing the depth of their participation. Thus, both the extent and depth of
participation in the daily log varied due to the limitations of the study method.

It would be more desirable to observe the participants' changes in their level of differentiation. Nevertheless, this might prove economically impractical and unethical with respect to the couples' privacy.

Likewise, the composition of this study's group might be questioned as being representative of the general population. All participants had children and were referrals to the Mental Health Center in regards to their child's problematic behavior. It might be possible that this predominantly middle class caucasian group might not be representative of the general population. In addition, only eight couples took part in the study. With such a small sample, it might also be difficult to generalize to the general population.

In conclusion, the generalizability of these results is limited by stated factors. Given such limitation, this study's results hold value mostly for programme development and for practical theoretical application.

Implications for Theory

The findings of the present study validate Bowen's
approach to a certain extent. The constructs of Bowen Family Systems Theory are, to some degree, recognized by the present study category system. In particular, the present category system encompasses the three key concepts of Bowen: anxiety, sense of solid self and rational thinking.

The researcher found this study category system to be reflective of the concepts of the Bowen Family Systems Theory though their definitions may be a departure from Bowen. One of Bowen's basic concepts, anxiety, is reflected in this study's categories of ANXIETY CONTROL versus INABILITY TO CONTROL ANXIETY or PROJECTION OF ANXIETY and a hindering counterpart of OPENNESS & INTIMACY versus LACK OF OPENNESS & INTIMACY. The two main areas of the key concept of differentiation of self, an increased level of solid self and a preference for cognitive functioning versus emotional functioning, are also represented by the present study category system. Categories of RESPONSIBILITY versus BLAMING or EXCUSING, A SENSE OF SELF versus LACK OF INDIVIDUAL BOUNDARIES, ACCEPTANCE OF OTHERS versus REJECTION OF OTHERS and OPENNESS & INTIMACY versus LACK OF OPENNESS & INTIMACY correspond to the notion of solid self while COGNITIVE versus EMOTIONAL FUNCTIONING is
equivalent to the Bowen concept of cognitive versus emotional functioning.

In addition, each of the six categories proper of the present study category system have a wide range of possibilities. For example, A SENSE OF SELF versus LACK OF INDIVIDUAL BOUNDARIES encompasses both positive and negative features ranging from awareness of self, through acceptance of self, trusting self, commitment to self, to one's ability to assume a proactive stance.

All categories also reflect the relational nature of differentiation of self concerned with interactions between self and others. For example, the category of RESPONSIBILITY versus BLAMING or EXCUSING makes references to responsibility and blaming or excusing of self with respect to others. Likewise, the category of OPENNESS & INTIMACY versus LACK OF OPENNESS & INTIMACY makes references to a persons' ability to express themselves by, for example, being vulnerable, asking for help and being accountable for their own mistakes as well as their ability to allow others to do the same by the means of reflective listening, offering support and asking for clarifications.

Finally, the interlocking and overlapping characteristics of the Bowen constructs are also evident
in this study's category system. Subsequently, many incidents could easily qualify for several categories bearing some resemblance to various category proper prototypes.

The findings of the present study depart from Bowen on several important points. Bowen Family Systems Theory values rational thinking above emotions. Feelings are thus considered inferior in human experience. Many incidents of the present study category system indicate events that used rational reasoning to facilitate differentiation which often left the individual with negative feelings. For example, a couple who is raising their grandchild, since the biological parents decline their parenting responsibility, felt burdened and trapped by such commitment. Yet, when they exercised their rational reasoning and explored the possibility of giving their granddaughter for adoption in the best interest of themselves as well as the child, they were left with overwhelming feeling of guilt, self-blame and an unbearable sense of loss. By reflecting upon such an outcome of effect, it was difficult to classify, such an event as either negative or positive.
According to Bowen, it is questionable how a well differentiated person would experience such a sensitive dilemma. Bowen does not address what effect follows events that are reflective of differentiation. If, according to Bowen, a well differentiated person is less influenced by his or her feelings, would the opposite also be true; that is, would greater differentiation also lessen the person's deep sense of joy that this couple draws from being active participants in their grandchild's life? Given the principles of the Bowen Theory, the answer is unclear.

Bowen also does not seem to give much attention to love. According to Bowen (1978), the less differentiated people's "primary life goals are oriented around love, happiness, comfort and security," and "high-scale people are free to engage in goal-directed activity, or to lose 'self' in the intimacy of a close relationship" as their solid self is not negotiable in the relationship system (pp. 474-475). Subsequently, a self-determined differentiated person invests most energy and derives more satisfaction from self-directed activity (Bowen, 1978). Such a view of love and intimacy in a close relationship was found to be too narrow. Most couples found the deep sense of intimate
sharing, when "self" was not compromised, to be a source of love, happiness, comfort and security. In other words, most participants declared that these feelings were more satisfying than the fulfillment of goals that emphasized achievement (such as running a successful business).

In sum, the present study found the couples to draw most satisfaction from togetherness while maintaining permeable semi-solid boundaries of self. Thus, in view of the results of this study, the importance of feelings and togetherness was perceived as an asset, not as a detriment as Bowen would have it.

Bowen's discussion of differentiation from the Family Systems perspective "has not given sufficient credence to the issue of attachment, the prerequisite of individuation" (Farley, 1990, pp. 86). As proposed by Bowlby (1969), secure attachment is a prerequisite for any form of healthy individuation. For example, a child of one of the couples in this study had experienced some severe disruptions in his bonding earlier in his life. The mother, presently remarried, was faced with the son's hostility and disregard for his step-father. Her detachment from her son's problem might have been facilitating for her differentiation but was, at the
same time, deepening the attachment problem for her son as he perceives it as abandonment. In Bowby's view, one cannot securely individuate unless one is first securely emotionally attached or bonded to another human being.

In summary, the major concepts of Bowen's Theory were progressively elaborated upon by the evolving category system, broadening and altering the meaning of the category. Thus, essentially, the categories described in Chapter 4. are not Bowenian categories but are the revision of Bowen as required by the richness of the study's concrete incidents. In particular, this study found the sense of community or togetherness to be essential to one's feeling of belonging, and, therefore, it is highly valued. Also, vulnerability with one's feelings, thoughts and wants as well as respect for other's experiences led participants to a greater closeness accompanied by a high degree of satisfaction. Such closeness was experienced by the participants as love and security, and they found this effect to be superior to other forms of satisfaction, such as self-directed goals as proposed by Bowen.
Implications for Practice

The practical implications of this study category system examine how it validates, invalidates or extends modern practice. The results of the present study validate and extend modern practice of skill-training programs by the fact that the Bowen Theory enriches skill-training programs, and also, more specifically, parenting programs. In addition, this study category system extends the counselling practices by identifying a map of what facilitates change.

The overview of skill training programs (as provided in Chapter 2.) concluded that the skill-oriented programs' "potential for use with functional and semifunctional couples and families is almost assured" (L'Abate, 1981, p. 657). This view is supporter by Gertz and Gunn (1988) with respect to parent education programs: "Parents are responding to parent education and training with increased interest as they become aware of new knowledge and want to apply it to a positive upbringing for their children" (p. 331).

In order to improve a child's functioning, parental education and support has long been recognized as essential (Gertz & Gunn, 1988). Adlerian approach recognizes the mutual influences of parents and
children. Subsequently, "given the importance of parents in the lives of children, it seems vital that any kind of professional intervention in relation to the child should be concerned with supporting and strengthening the parents" (Fine & Gardner, 1991 p. 33).

Nevertheless, Getz and Gunn (1988) suggest that there is some evidence that parent education programs can cause family division. Typically, the mother is the participant in such programs....The danger is that the wives may become the "experts" and the husbands may become resistant and hostile toward the new approaches. (p. 332)

Skill-training programs, and, in particular, "parenting education has generally not addressed the family as a system, however, and the effect of such programs on the entire family may not have been seriously considered" (Getz & Gunn, 1988, p. 332). Getz & Gunn (1988) strongly believe that parent education programs could greatly benefit from incorporating Family Systems Theory concepts into their curriculum, in particular, family communication patterns, patterns of emotional distance between family members (enmeshed families when there is too little distance and disengaged families when there is too much distance) and family role structuring (concerned with hierarchy and parental unit alliance). According to Betz and Gunn
(1988), family assessment could identify these patterns. Subsequently, solutions to the child-parent interaction should vary according to the systemic needs of these patterns. For example, an enmeshed family could benefit from the use of logical consequences in correcting the child's behavior, as opposed to a disengaged family that might have very diverse needs for greater communication skills and/or family meetings.

This study's format, first, concerned with educating parents about family systems in order to increase their level of differentiation with the goal of improving parental ability to effectively address their children behavior problems, and, second, concerned with involving both spouses in the intervention, is perceived to be lacking in most parent education programs. However, such format's potential benefits are recognized by some educators, such as Getz and Gunn (1988) and Fine and Gardner (1991).

Furthermore, this study extends such ideas as its focus is not only on the nuclear family interactions, but also on the family of origin involvement, identified by Bowen as the most effective key to change: "Families in which the focus is on the differentiation of self in the families of origin automatically make as much or
more progress in working on the relationship system with spouses and children" as families concentrating on nuclear family as a major outlet of such work (1966, p. 545). The workshop sessions oriented participants to the patterns of interaction established in their family of origin and sensitized participants to the influences of such patterns in their nuclear family.

Although most of the events that emerged out of this research referred to interactions with nuclear family members, the participants had a heightened awareness of how their habitual relational style developed in the milieu of their family of origin influenced or guided their present relational style. The widening gap between the habitual pattern of interaction and the preferred pattern (by the individuals' choice) facilitated the shift for change. Likewise, the recognition of the individual habitual relational patterns assisted the participants in understanding their spouses and led to greater respect for personal boundaries and tolerance of differences of spouses as well as children.

The present study's categories of events that facilitate or hinder differentiation can map the territory that can be a part of the training knowledge.
The categories can be used as a guide for developing programs, could be used as a tool for how a counsellor measures program effectiveness or as a map of what facilitates or hinders change. This study found OPENNESS & INTIMACY, with particular focus on the ability to express one's feeling, thoughts and wants, to be, by far, the most facilitating category, responsible for 30% of all events facilitating differentiation. Contemporary skill-training programs as well as family therapy sessions might find it useful to consider this concept to be an integral part of their practices. Also, the category of A SENSE OF SELF, concerned with one's ability to distinguish boundaries between self and others, was found highly facilitating. The fact that this research found these two categories accounted for 51% of all events (in both, negative and positive directions) might prove useful for modern practices of program development and therapy sessions.

Implications for Research

The present study generates possibilities for future research as it ought to be replicated as well as extended. The study could be replicated by using a new group of participants with the application of the
identical program or program with changes in the workshop method.

Likewise, pre- and post- measures could be employed to measure the effectiveness of the current program. These could involve measures of personal growth, couples' satisfaction, child's behavioral check lists or measures of family environment, among other.

In addition, the categories of this study category system might be used for development of a measuring instrument for the process of change. As explained in Chapter 4., the five scales of the existing measuring instrument as developed by Garfinkel (1980) are reflected in the present study category system. Though Garfinkel's scales of differentiation have not been utilized by the research of family therapy, the need for a measuring instrument of the process of change in one's level of differentiation persists and could prove to be invaluable in the clinical and skill-training spheres.

Lastly, future research could examine whether there is a difference between gender with respect to differentiation. Further research would need to be done to determine if there is also a difference in quality and nature of events reported by males and females.
Summary

Eight couples participated in a workshop designed to identify what events facilitate or hinder differentiation. The couples met in three-hour weekly sessions over a period of eight weeks. The program incorporated psycho-educational and experiential components. The content was based on the key concepts of Bowen Family Systems Theory, communication skills, Transactional Analysis and Imago Therapy.

During the program and from the mid- and post-interviews, 508 incidents were collected. Flanagan's (1954) critical incident technique was used as a method to discover what facilitates and hinders differentiation in everyday life. Subsequently, the total of 508 reported incidents was reduced to the six major categories. Each major category had its facilitating and hindering counterparts. Then, a definition was created for each category. The category of "Openness and Intimacy" was found to be, by far, the most facilitating and accounted for 30% of all facilitating incidents. The categories of "Openness & Intimacy" and "A Sense of Self" accounted for 51% of all facilitating as well as hindering events.
The results of the study were found to be both reliable and valid. The implications for the development of skill-training programs, family therapy sessions and future research were outlined.
REFERENCES


(It is common knowledge that Bowen wrote this chapter.)


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APPENDIX A: INTEGRATIVE SYSTEMIC SKILL-TRAINING PROGRAM

FOR COUPLES
SKILL-TRAINING PROGRAM FOR COUPLES

SESSION ONE

1. DAILY LOG REVIEW
General discussion of daily log events takes place.

2. INTRODUCTION
Objectives:
- To assume leadership of the group
- To get to know each other
- To express hopes and fears
- To introduce the outline of the workshop
- To establish ground rules
- To establish group process
- To start building trust and rapport
- To elicit a commitment of the group

Time required: 60 mins.

Materials:
- Overheads
- Flip chart
- Handouts
- Ghetto blaster
- Background music

Process:
The facilitator sets up the room in advance. She checks on heat, lighting and ventilation, finds out where the nearest washroom and water fountain is, sets up the refreshments and arranges sufficient chairs in a half circle. The facilitator also hangs up flip charts, sets up overhead, prepares the music equipment, places handouts on each chair and prepares name-tags. She also places a sign with the workshop name on the door.

The facilitator puts on background music and greets the couples as they enter the room and asks them to wear name tags. Once everyone is seated, the facilitator takes attendance and welcomes the group with the following statement: "My name is______ and I'd like to welcome you here tonight. Some of you may be feeling a little nervous right now. I know that I'm a little nervous myself. This is a natural response to being in a new situation with a group of people we don't
know. I can appreciate the courage it takes to make a decision to participate in a workshop like this. The best way to deal with the first night nervousness is to find out more about who we are."

(1) GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER
The couples are to pair up with another couple they do not know and are given the following instructions: "Now I'd like to invite you to spend a few minutes getting to know each other. You could do so by asking the other couple the following questions: name, occupation, where they are from, how they met, how long they have been in this relationship, number of children in the couple's family and their ages, what hobbies they enjoy in their spare time. Share as much as you feel comfortable with. Try to listen to each other and, if you wish, you can take notes. When we return to the large group you will be asked to introduce the other couple. Make sure that you check with the members of your group, beforehand, whether it is appropriate for you to tell the rest of our group what others just revealed to you. You have approximately ten minutes." When the large group reassembles, one member of each couple is asked to introduce the other couple.

After all the participants have been introduced, the leader introduces herself by encouraging the group to "gang-up-on-the-leader" by asking her questions, such as:
- What was your family of origin like?
- What is your family like now?
- What do you like/dislike?
- Where are you from?
- What are your qualifications?
- Anything else?

(2) HOPES AND FEARS
The facilitator addresses participant's hopes and fears: "Some of you might have specific expectations of as well as fears about this workshop. Some of these may be the same as those of other members and some of them may be different. Now we are going to give each person an opportunity to express these hopes and fears."

Each individual member is then given the opportunity to express his or her hopes and fears. The leader asks for
two volunteers to write these onto two separate flip charts.

After all the members of the group have had an opportunity to voice their hopes and fears, the leader states her own hopes and fears.

(3) OUTLINE OF THE WORKSHOP
The facilitator displays the overhead of the outline of the eight-week workshop sessions and briefly explains its content and rationale. Extra attention is given to the current session.

(4) GROUND RULES
The ground rules are described in the following manner:

**Attendance:** "To maximize your benefit from this program, it is advisable to attend all eight sessions of the program. If, after this first session, knowing a bit more about the workshop, or at any other time thereafter, you decide that this is not right for you, then I would appreciate if you would approach me and let me know. However, if I don't hear from you, I will assume that you will do your best to attend all the sessions on the basis of your individual commitment."

**Homework:** "For the purpose of the study and also to maximize your benefit from this workshop, it is vital that you spend ten to fifteen minutes daily reflecting and writing events in your daily log. I will explain to you in detail how to record your daily events after I present the theoretical model of this workshop. I appreciate your commitment in this regard."

**Anonymity:** "One of the guidelines we need to establish is anonymity. The principle of anonymity calls for confidentiality of any private information we disclose here; that is, anything any member of the group says here is to be kept confidential, and, likewise, the membership of this group is to be known only to us. Feel free to talk to the 'outsiders' about the skills you will learn here but nothing is to be said about the personal content of our exchange. Such confidentiality will enable each member to get the most out of this experience."
Concerns: "Should anyone have any concerns related to the group or any particular activity, please do not hesitate to inform me, so we can feel comfortable with each other."

Right to Pass: "Anybody has the right to pass if you do not wish to speak or participate in any of the activities. There is no competition on how much we disclose here. You will be wise to deal with as much as it feels comfortable for you, at any given point in time, and your pacing is exactly right for you."

Right to Speak: "Every member has a right to speak and express his/her opinions without being judged or interrupted."

Caution: "Some of the activities may evoke powerful feelings in you. You are advised to detach, relax or even leave the room at any given point you do not feel comfortable. I will remind you beforehand such activities so that you will know what to expect. Thus, I encourage you to be gentle with yourself; do not deal with more than you are ready for."

Questions: "Before we move on, I'd like to encourage you to bring up any questions or comments with regard to these ground rules."

(5) HOUSEKEEPING ITEMS
The participants are informed about housekeeping items, such as locations of washroom, coffee breaks, refreshment arrangement, smoking regulations and fire and safety regulations.

3. SYSTEMIC DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL
Objectives:
To understand developmental and attachment principals
To familiarize with Transactional Analysis
To understand the principals of the Bowen Family Systems Theory
To gain knowledge of the differentiation process
To learn how hindering and facilitating events of differentiation are to be recorded in the Daily Log

Time Required:
60 mins.

Materials:
Overhead
Process:

(1) **MODEL**
The leader briefly explains the eclectic theoretical model of the workshop based on the principles of attachment, Eriksonian developmental theory, Transactional Analysis, and, in particular, Bowen Family Systems Theory with its key concept of differentiation of self. The Bowen's three stance of differentiation (as they relate to anxiety) are explained: enmeshment, reactivity and proactivity. Enmeshment and disengagement are graphically demonstrated and explained as they relate spousal relationship. The concept of transgenerational transmission of anxiety is also presented and the formation of interlocking triangles is demonstrated. Other Bowen's concepts are briefly described.

(2) **DEFINITION OF DIFFERENTIATION**
Definition of differentiation is provided.

(3) **DAILY LOG**
Daily events, hindering or facilitating one's ability to differentiate, are to be recorded in a daily log. The leader describes in detail and gives examples of what is expected from the participants.

4. **SCULPTING**
**Objectives:**
To experience the feelings corresponding to the two states of fusion, enmeshment and disengagement, and the state of differentiation
To develop a deeper understanding of the process of differentiation
To build trust and intimacy with partner

**Time required:**
20 mins.

**Materials:**
None

**Process:**
**Introduction:**
The couples are to use their body positions to express the two states of fusion and a state of differentiation to get in touch with how differently these states feel.
Activity:
FUSED-DROWNED: (Lost sense of Self--enmeshment)
(a) "Only You And You Alone": Couples are hugging each other tight, face to face/eye to eye. This can be compared to the state of infatuation when people are falling in love or so called honeymoon stage of a relationship. The partners are to negotiate and execute whose turn is it to take out the garbage. What happens when one partner tries to move away?
(b) "Codependent": Couple stands side by side leaning towards each other, heads together, feet apart from each other. One partner steps away while the other leans more towards her/him. They are to negotiate their finances.
FUSED-ALIENATED: (Emotional cut off--disengagement)
Partners are standing back to back with their hands holding at elbows. They are to negotiate sharing of the household chores.
DIFFERENTIATED:
Couples stand face to face holding hands loosely and standing apart at arms length. They are to let go of one hand or the other and hold on again. The partners are to discuss a holiday trip.
Debriefing:
Each couple is to pair up with another couple to form groups of four to debrief this exercise. Each partner of the dyad discusses how s/he felt in each position, what was their eye contact like, how did the communication proceed, how much freedom of physical movement they had and what position felt familiar to them.
Afterwards, couples share their experience in a large group.

5. GAZING
Objectives:
To build trust and intimacy with partner
To rekindle attraction to the partner
Time required:
10 mins.
Materials:
Ghetto blaster
Tape: Love song
Process:
Activity:
Couples are asked to sit facing each other and gaze in each others eyes while holding hands. They are asked
not to look away if possible. After a few minutes they are to tell each other what attracted each partner to the other.

Debrief:
Couples debrief the experience: what did it feel like, was it hard to maintain eye contact, would you like your partner to tell you more often what attracts her/him to you.

6. MEDITATION

Objectives:
To relax the participants
To suggest to look for happiness inside ourselves, as opposed to outside

Time required:
10 mins.

Materials:
Meditative music
Ghetto blaster

Process:
Introduction:
The leader asks everyone to get seated comfortably in a chair. Anyone who does not feel comfortable with the meditative process is asked to keep their eyes open and just listen. The purpose of this meditation is explained.

Activity:
Relaxation proceeds through muscle tensing and relaxing. Then a brief Sufi story about the meaning of happiness is read.

Debriefing:
The group debriefs this workshop introductory session.
SESSION TWO

1. DAILY LOG REVIEW
General discussion of daily log events takes place.

2. FEARS, EXPECTATIONS AND HOPES
Objectives:
To express fears, expectations and hopes about your relationship
To build trust and intimacy
Time required:
15 mins.
Materials:
Overhead
Process:
Introduction:
"In the following exercise, partners in each dyad assume roles of a speaker and a listener. While one partner in the dyad is speaking, the other partner is actively listening without any interruptions. The partners then switch roles of a listener and a speaker. When both partners of the dyad are finished speaking, the couple can bring forth any questions or clarifications. Facing your partner, answer the following three questions to each other:

1. What are some of the fears you have had about your relationship?
2. a) What are some of the expectations you have had about you relationship?
   b) In what way have your expectations been fulfilled?
   c) In what way have your expectations not been fulfilled?
3. What are some of the hopes you have had or still have for your relationship in the future?

Demonstration:
The leader and a volunteer demonstrate the exercise.
Activity:
Couples assume the roles of a speaker and a listener.
Debriefing:
Both partners discuss how it felt to express their own fears, expectations and hopes; how it felt to listen to their partners' fears, expectations and hopes and if they have learned anything new. This is to be done without defending one's own position and blaming or
criticizing one's partner. The partners are merely to hear each other out. Couples share their experience in the large group if they wish.

3. **DIRTY FIGHTING LIST**

**Objectives:**
- To learn about each other's dislikes
- To express what we do not like
- To respect our partner's dislikes

**Time required:**
30 mins.

**Materials:**
- Paper and pencil
- Handouts

**Process:**

**Introduction:**
The leader states objectives of the exercise.

**Demonstration:**
The leader goes through the list of items on the "Dirty Fighting List" of a handout giving examples for each category.

**Activity:**
The couple goes through a handout of "Dirty Fighting List" item by item identifying whether and how each item applies to each individual. One partner is to write it down. The couple is to add their own items not covered by the list. The partners are asked to be specific. For example, in the category of "Name Calling" each partner is to list specific names s/he does not wish to be called, such as "cute."

It is suggested that the couple place their list somewhere where it could be seen, like putting it on the fridge. They are to pay attention to their list by doing the following:

1. When the agreement is broken by your partner just remind her/him immediately,
2. During the next week, discuss the list at the end of each day,
3. Modify list if necessary,
4. Start each day fresh, do not bring up the past,
5. Apologize if you broke a rule of "The Dirty Fighting List" but do not defend yourself or blame someone else; just be responsible for yourself.

**Debrief:**
Debrief in a large group.
4. BONDING
Objectives:
To experience bonding with your partner
To appreciate the power of the sensation of touching
Time required:
20 mins.
Materials:
Meditative music
Ghetto blaster
Process:
Introduction:
The leader introduces the exercise.
Activity:
One partner is to remain seated while the other stands behind and places her/his hands on the partner's shoulders. The partners who are standing are to touch the others' shoulders, beginning with the fingertips, continuing with the palms of their hands and then using their whole hands. The hand movement is to proceed in a calm fashion. The partners who are sitting down are to get in touch with their feelings and if they experience any discomfort, they are to locate where in their body they feel the discomfort. The feelings, characteristic of one's history of bonding, might surface. Music is played while the leader gently instructs the couples. Partners are to switch places and repeat the exercise.
Debriefing:
The dyads debrief the exercise stating their feelings in each role.
The large group debriefs the exercise.

5. RELATIONSHIP VISION
Objectives:
To define, on an individual basis, what you want in your relationship
To prioritize the importance of your wants
To realize the potential in your relationship
To realize and appreciate the differences of your partner
Time required:
1 hr. 30 mins.
Materials:
Paper and pencil
Overheads
Handouts
**Process:**

**Introduction:**
The leader states the objectives and indicates that this exercise is accomplished in two steps, namely: "Planning Board" and "Our Relationship Vision."

**Activity:**

1. **PLANNING BOARD**
   a) Each participant is given two sheets of paper. They are instructed to fold these together twice lengthwise and twice across. As a result, each sheet is divided into sixteen parts. These parts are to be numbered 1 to 16 on one of the sheets (that becomes a planning board) starting with the left upper corner as 1 and moving to the right for each of four lines. The other sheet is to be torn up into 16 pieces without numbering them.

   b) The following four statements are to be written (each on one of the sixteen individual small pieces of paper):  
      - We are financially secure  
      - We have satisfying sex  
      - We are sexually faithful  
      - We share in important decisions

   c) The participants are asked to place each piece of paper on the planning board according to each statement's importance with 1 being the most important space and 16 being the least important space on the planning board. The participants are informed that the placement of these statements on the planning board is temporary and they will be able to rearrange the order at a later point.

   d) Four more statements are to be written again, each on one piece of paper, and placed on the planning board in order of importance. The previously placed statements can now be rearranged to accommodate this new input.  
      - We have children  
      - We work well together as parents  
      - We openly communicate feelings, thoughts and desires  
      - We have common hobbies

   e) Again, four more statements are to be written and placed on the planning board. Again, previously placed statements can be rearranged to accommodate this new input.  
      - We feel safe with each other
We both have satisfying careers
We share equally in housework
We share common religious/spiritual beliefs

f) At this point, there are four empty spots left on the planning board. Each participant is to add four of their own relationship vision statements to the board bearing in mind that any previous statements can be rearranged again.

g) Looking at the planning board, the participants are to check the relationship statements by replacing the ones that do not apply to them with their own new statements and by finalizing the order of importance. Then they are asked to write the corresponding numbers of importance on the individual pieces of paper.

Debriefing: Each partner of the spousal dyad is to read their relationship vision statements list, state their rationale for their order of importance, elaborate on dilemmas involved in deciding on the order and explain their own additions to the planning board. While one partner presents her/his relationship vision, the other partner is to just listen without interruptions or comments. Any comments are to be expressed after the partner has finished her/his presentation. Then the other partner presents her/his vision in the same fashion. The goal is to hear each other out; the partners are to refrain from negotiating or persuading each other.

(2) OUR RELATIONSHIP VISION
a) One partner copies the relationship vision statements from the planning board onto a separate sheet of paper labeled "Our Relationship Vision."
b) The items are to be divided into four categories according to their descending order of importance starting with category "1" for items 1 to 4, continuing with category "2" for 5 to 8, category "3" for 9 to 12 and ending with category "4" for the items 13 to 16. The category of each item is to be written to the left of the statements and the partner's name is to be written above this column.
c) Other partner's corresponding category numbers are to be added on the right hand side of the relationship statements and her/his name is to be written above this
column. Partner's own additions are to be added at the end of the list.

d) The items that are not on either partner's list are left blank.
e) The partners are to examine these items that have no numerical value (i.e. each partner's own additions).
f) If the item is agreeable to the partner, s/he is to assign his/her category number "1" to "4" to it as it corresponds to his own priorities of importance for that item.
g) If the item is not agreeable, the partner is to cross it out from the list. These are to be negotiated later on during the program.
h) The couple is to negotiate importance of the items by placing them into four categories of importance starting with "1" for most important items and ending with "4" for least important items. Then, the couple is to rewrite the "Relationship Vision" according to their agreed upon order of importance.
i) The couple is to read the final draft of "Our Relationship Vision" together out loud. The couple is advised to make on-going changes in their "Relationship Vision" in the future.

Debriefing:
The couple is to discuss their Relationship Vision noticing which items they differ least on, which items they differ most on and acknowledging any surprises. The partners are to avoid any negotiation of the crossed out items, for now. These will be dealt with later in a problem solution session.

Homework:
The couple is to read their "Relationship Vision" daily, for the next week.

6. CARING DAYS

Objectives:
To rekindle passion and attraction in each other
To express our desires
Learn to say no and learn to accept partner's no
Learn to enjoy having one's needs and wishes met

Time required:
20 mins.

Materials:
Overhead
Handout
**Process:**
The leader states objectives of this reromanticizing exercise.

**Demonstration:**
The leader reads an example list of pleasers.

**Activity:**
Each partner is asked to make a list of "Pleasers" by completing the following sentence: "I feel loved and cared for when you... ". First, each spouse is to list pleasers that the partner is already doing with some regularity. Next, the partners are to recall the romantic stage of relationship and list any caring and loving behaviors that the partner used to do for them that they are no longer doing. Last, the partners are to list loving and caring behaviors that they always wanted but never asked for. These may come from their vision of an ideal mate or from prior experiences. They may include private fantasies and secret wishes. The pleasers should not, however, refer to activities that are presently a source of a conflict in the couples' relationship.

Partners exchange their lists and examine them. They put an "X" by any item that they are not willing to do at this time. They do not need to explain or justify why they say no. Likewise, the partner is not to influence or try to persuade the other to give certain pleaser. Requested pleasers that are not feasible or are too costly should also be deleted from the list. Partners are to frequently add new pleasers to their list.

Dyads then contract for one or more "Caring Days" per week by selecting a convenient day(s) during a week for this event. It is easier to keep the same day(s) every week but the partners can pick different days to suit their schedule. Nevertheless, the "Caring Days" should be chosen in advance. The dyad is to have "Caring Day(s)" at least once a week for the next eight weeks. Caring Days should be outstanding events whenever they occur; days of a symbol of dyad's love and caring for each other like a Valentine's Day. When Caring Day arrives, each partner is to strive to give the other as many pleasers as possible, whether or not any pleasers come back in exchange. They are also to take notice of any pleasers they might receive. At the end of the day, the partners can praise each other for their efforts and
let each other know what they enjoyed. However, they should not get caught up in competition or resentments if unequal exchange occurs. Each partner is responsible for her/his part only. Caring behaviors are gifts, not obligations.

At times, it is possible to experience some resistance with this kind of exercise. Regardless, the partners are encouraged to continue with the exercise as it will become rewarding with practice of giving and receiving pleasers. Some of us, have learned as children that it was safer to believe we were undeserving of receiving pleasures rather than to believe that our parents were incapable of meeting our needs for love and care. Thus, some of us gradually developed a built-in-prohibition against pleasure. Subsequently, the caring and loving behaviors can evoke in us the feelings of unworthiness, guilt, and even pain as an association with the critical, punishing way we might have received love as children. Thus, we need to relearn not only how to give but also how to receive love, care and nurturing in a safe deserving way.

Debriefing:
Dyads share their experiences of the session in the large group.
SESSION THREE

1. **DAILY LOG REVIEW**
   General discussion of daily log events takes place.

2. **SURPRISE DAYS**
   **Objectives:**
   To rekindle passion and attraction in each other
   Learn to enjoy to have one's needs and wishes met
   Learn to accept pleasurable experience
   **Time required:**
   5 mins.
   **Materials:**
   None
   **Process:**
   **Introduction:**
   The couples are asked to discuss the previous week's homework: Dirty Fighting List and Caring Days.
   **Activity:**
   The leader instructs the couples to have a "Surprise Days" in addition to the "Caring Days" within the duration of the workshop. "Surprise Days" involve giving and receiving additional pleasers on a random basis as a surprise.

3. **OPEN VERSUS CLOSED FAMILY SYSTEM**
   **Objectives:**
   To understand the theory of open versus closed communication
   To explore one's family of origin communication pattern
   To understand partner's family of origin communication pattern
   To appreciate differences in your partner's communication style
   To develop more open style of communication
   **Time required:**
   10 mins.
   **Materials:**
   Overheads of the Circumplex Model of Communication
   Handouts
   **Activity:**
   The leader explains the linkage between open and closed family systems and communication styles as follows:
   "It is generally accepted that a lack of effective communication skills is at the root of many relationship
problems. We learned our basic communication style in our family of origin. By modelling and by adapting to the family of origin dynamic, we developed our own style of communication in order to belong and keep ourselves safe from rejection. Here, we can make an analogy from the family life to an iceberg: Only 10% of an iceberg is visible and 90% of it is hidden below the ocean level. Likewise, most people are only aware of about one-tenth of what is going on in their family life—the tenth that they can see and hear. Not knowing what is underneath this limited awareness can, at times, set the family on a dangerous course. Just as a sailor's fate depends on the knowledge of the bulk of the iceberg under the water, so does a family's fate depends on understanding the thoughts, feelings and needs that lie beneath everyday family events. In order to achieve such understanding, the family needs to function as an open system with full freedom of one's expression, as opposed to a closed system."

4. FOUR INEFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STYLES

Objectives:
To experience the four universal ineffective communication styles
To be able to identify one's own style of communication

Time required:
30 mins.

Materials:
Overheads
Handouts
Index cards with scenarios and communication styles

Reference:
Satir (1988)

Process:
Introduction:
The leader explains that within the closed family system, family members cannot be accepted for being uniquely themselves. Subsequently, in order to protect self from the threat of rejection, family members develop the following four universal ineffective patterns of communication: placating, blaming, computing and distracting.

Demonstration:
The leader explains each of the four communication styles and demonstrated each style with the help of the body language.
Activity:
The couples are divided into small groups of four. The individual members assume family roles of mom and/or dad and children. Each member of a small group is given an index card specifying her/his communication style and a scenario that his family group is to act out. While the small groups are acting out their scenarios, the communication style of each member is not known to the rest of the group.

Debrief:
The family group members reveal their communication style and discuss their experience.
In conclusion, the large group reassembles and individual small family groups share their experience.

5. COMMUNICATION SKILLS
Introduction:
The leader explains that the most common problems in communication occur due to misunderstanding when the intended message is either not fully expressed by the speaker or misunderstood by the listener. Thus, the role of a listener is equally important to the role of a speaker. The goal of effective communication is not agreement, but understanding. The leader further outlines listening skills, such as attending, feedback and tracking, as well as self-disclosure skills, for example, I statements and the use of I sense, I think, I feel and I want statements.

(1) MIRRORING
Objectives:
To observe and duplicate non-verbal behavior
To parrot verbal statement back to the speaker
To notice incongruence between verbal and body language

Time requirement:
20 mins.

Materials:
Sample list of cliches

Reference:
Schwab, Baldwin, Gerber, Gomori & Satir (1989)

Process:
Introduction and demonstration:
The facilitator introduces and demonstrates the exercise with a volunteer from the group.

Activity:
The large group divides into small groups of four to six participants. One dyad in a small group sits facing
each other. One partner quotes a short cliche (provided by the leader) and the other partner is to watch and listen closely. Then the listener is to parrot the statement back as well as mimic the exact tone, gestures, timing, body position and expression. The observing couples decide whether there was a match or not, by calling: "Match," or "No match." If there was "No match," the speaker and listener repeats the same cliche until they will get a "Match" call from the small group. When there was a match the speaker continues with two more statements. Then the partners of the dyad switch roles of the listener and the speaker. When the dyad successfully mirrored three statements each, other couples within the group take their turns.

Debriefing:
Small groups debrief their experience.

(2) "DO YOU MEAN...?"

Objectives:
To give feedback by parroting, paraphrase and empathy
To develop understanding of possible meaning of the statement.

Time required:
20 mins.

Materials:
Sample list of short statements

Reference:
Schwab et al. (1989)

Process:
Introduction and demonstration:
The facilitator introduces the exercise and demonstrates several examples with a volunteer.

Activity:
The large group divides into small groups of four to six participants. One partner of each dyad, the speaker, makes a short statement about something s/he believes to be true (a sample of short statements is provided by the leader). The other partner, the listener, responds to this statement by trying to understand the possible meaning of the statement by beginning each question with the words "Do you mean..." and following it by her/his own perception of what the speaker might have meant. The speaker is restricted to the three answers: "Yes," "No," and "Partially." If, after a number of attempts, the listener is having difficulty getting three yes replies, he or she asks the speaker for another version of the statement and then tries again. The observing
members of the small group can, at such point, assist the listener to get the meaning of the statement. The speaker of this dyad provides two more statements, making it a total of three. Then the dyad exchanges the speaker and the listener roles. Other dyads of the small group take their turns at this exercise.

Debriefing:
(a) The small group debriefs the exercise.
(b) In the large group, a spokesperson of each group shares their experience and observations with "Mirroring" and "Do you mean...?" exercises.

(3) SELF-DISCLOSURE

Objectives:
To practice speaker and listener roles
To practice self-disclosure
To learn the use of "I" statements
To fully express one's messages
To identify one's thoughts, feelings and wants
To practice listening by attending, providing feedback and tracking

Time required:
60 mins.

Materials:
Overheads
Handouts

a) HYPOTHETICAL SCENARIOS

Process:
Introduction & Demonstration:
The leader states guidelines of self-disclosure, presents a list of hypothetical scenarios and demonstrates the skills of self-disclosure and listening with a volunteer.

Activity:
In small groups, each partner of a dyad practices self-disclosure and listening skills using one of the hypothetical scenarios and reverses roles afterwards. Other couples serve as observers and check the performing couple for the correct use of the skills and give feedback.

b) PERSONAL ISSUES

Process:
Activity:
In small groups, each partner of a dyad practices self-
disclosure and listening skills using one example from couples serve as observers and check the performing couple for the correct use of the skills and give feedback.

Debriefing:
Small groups share their experiences in the large group.

6. **GAZING**

**Objectives:**
To rekindle the romance
To give each other positive feedback

**Time required:**
5. mins.

**Materials:**
None

**Process:**
**Activity:**
The couple is to gaze in each other eyes and tell each other what attracts them to each other at this point in their relationship.
SESSION FOUR

1. **DAILY LOG REVIEW**
   General discussion of daily log events takes place.

2. **FUN LIST**
   **Objectives:**
   To intensify couples' emotional bond
   To deepen one's feelings of safety and pleasure
   To become more spontaneous
   To give oneself permission to have innocent fun

   **Time required:**
   15 mins.

   **Materials:**
   Pen and paper

   **Process:**
   **Introduction:**
   The couples are asked to discuss with their partner the couple's experience of "Caring Days," "Surprise Days" and "Dirty Fighting List."

   **Activity:**
   Each partner makes a list of fun and exciting activities they would like to do with their partner. These should include face-to-face experiences and any pleasurable physical contact activities such as, playing tennis, bicycling, movies, sex, theater-toter etc. Partners share their lists. They are to pick at least one activity from their list each week to do.

   The leader warns the couples that they may experience some resistance to taking part in such exuberant, at times, childlike activities, especially if they have a high degree of conflict in their relationship. However, it is important to do this exercise even if it means going against one's own resistance and experiment with a brief return to childhood spontaneous experiences.

3. **ADJECTIVE CHECKLIST**
   **Objectives:**
   To disclose a view of oneself
   To express a view of a partner
   To receive feedback on a partners' view of their spouses
   To compare differences between one's own view of self and how one is viewed by one's spouse
**Time required:**
20 mins.

**Materials:**
Adjective checklist handout

**Process:**

**Activity:**
Each partner of a dyad is given an adjective checklist and is to circle 10 adjectives that they think are most descriptive of themselves. Then the partners place check marks beside the adjectives that they believe best describe their partner.

**Debriefing:**
Partners take turns disclosing their view of themselves and compare it to their partner's perception of them.

4. **LISTENING HABITS**

**Objectives:**
To express a view of one's own listening habits
To express a view of a partner's listening habits
To receive and give feedback on listening habits

**Time required:**
20 mins.

**Materials:**
Handout

**Process:**

**Activity:**
Participants mark items on a listening habits handout twice: first, with an "X" for own habit; next, with an "O" for partner's habit.

**Debriefing:**
One partner of a dyad shares her/his responses about own listening habits and receives feedback from partner's perception of her/his listening skills.

5. **COMMUNICATION PATTERNS**

**Objectives:**
To review communication patterns learned in one's family of origin
To explore communication patterns of a partner's childhood
To explore similarities and differences in communication patterns of a spouse's family of origin
To review how one's communication patterns of one's family of origin differ to one's spousal communication patterns
**Time required:**
20 mins.

**Materials:**
Handout

**Process:**
**Activity:**
Participants fill out "Communication Patterns" questionnaires.

**Debriefing:**
Partners share answers to the communication questionnaire and elaborate on how communication patterns of their family of origin reflect on their communication style in their present relationship.

6. **BEING YOUR OWN PERSON**

**Objectives:**
To explore the process of differentiation in the family of origin
To explore the process of differentiation in one's present family
To identify facilitating forces of togetherness and separateness

**Time required:**
25 mins.

**Materials:**
Handouts

**Process:**
**Activity:**
Participants fill out "Being Your Own Person" questionnaires.

**Debriefing:**
Partners share answers to the questionnaire.

7. **COMMUNICATION SKILLS REVIEW**

**Objectives:**
To review and practice speaker and listener skills
To practice the skills with personal issues

**Time required:**
60 mins.

**Materials:**
Overhead

**Process:**
**Introduction and demonstration:**
The leader reviews and demonstrates self-disclosure and listening skills with a volunteer.
Activity:
In small groups, partners of dyads take turns practicing self-disclosure and listening skills using examples from their own life. Other couples serve as observers and check the performing couple for the correct use of the skills.  
Debriefing: 
Small groups share their experiences in a large group
LESSON FIVE

1. **DAILY LOG REVIEW**
General discussion of daily log events takes place.

2. **YOUNG GIRL/OLD LADY**

   **Objectives:**
   To demonstrate how two people with different frames of reference can perceive the same event in two different ways

   **Time required:**
   15 mins.

   **Materials:**
   Three variations of the picture of "Young Girl/Old Lady" 
   Overheads

   **Process:**
   **Activity:**
   Divide the participants into same sex groups. Show a picture of a young girl to one group and a picture of an old lady to the other group. Then ask them to discuss a description of the person in the picture, including such characteristics as sex, clothing, hair style, and age. Then reunite spouses and show them a third picture, a composite of young and old woman. Ask the dyads to describe the person in the picture to each other, including such characteristics as sex, clothing, hairstyle, and age.

   **Debriefing:**
   A discussion in the large group addresses following questions:
   1. "Did the spouses see the third picture the same way?"
   2. "Once you have perceived the picture one way, was it difficult to see it in another way?"
   3. "Do you think that previous experiences set up a frame of reference we rely upon in making sense out of our present and future experiences?"

3. **INTERPERSONAL PATTERNS**

   **Objectives:**
   To identify interpersonal patterns in interactions with others

   **Time requested:**
   30 mins.
**Materials:**
Handouts on Interpersonal Patterns
Overheads

**Process:**

(1) **INTERPERSONAL PATTERNS**
**Activity:**
The participants are to identify five verbs out of the list of twenty that best describe their behavior in interaction with others.

(2) **STYLES OF RESOLVING INTERPERSONAL CONFLICTS**
**Activity:**
The participants are to rate, on the scale of 1 to 5, how typical are each of the 35 proverbs on the "Interpersonal Patterns" handout in their style of conflict resolution.
Then the participants add scores according to the supplied key. Each category corresponds to the one of five conflict resolution styles.

**Debriefing:**
The leader explains each style of conflict resolution. The participants are to compare the results of the "Interpersonal Patterns" descriptors and assigned style of conflict resolution category to their perception of their style of conflict resolution and discuss it with their partner.
The large group debriefs how individual results of questionnaires on conflict styles correspond to their image of their style of conflict resolution.

4. **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**
**Objectives:**
To outline and practice five stages of conflict resolution model
To demonstrate the "win/win" conflict resolution strategy
To widen the scope of possible resolutions strategies
To eliminate stuckness in the process of conflict resolution

**Time required:**
60 mins.

**Materials:**
Handouts
Overheads
Process:
Introduction:
The leader introduces the importance of effective conflict resolution: "On the one hand, one of our natural life forces is pulling us toward separateness to become the unique person we were meant to be and, on the other hand, the other natural life force is pushing us towards togetherness in relationships with others. We engage in relationships because we have goals we wish to pursue that require the participation of other people.

Personal relationships are profoundly cooperative in that they are built on shared goals and joint activities. Relationships start with an initiative that begins a cycle of social interaction that includes perceiving what the other person is doing, deciding how to respond, taking action, and then perceiving the other person's response. When both persons are involved in the cycle, they spontaneously coordinate their behavior to build a relationship. This repetitious cycle of a couple is influenced by their goals, roles, moods, the physical setting, the nature of the occasion, relevant social rules, the feedback they receive from others and the personal interaction style they learned in their family of origin.

We can conclude that relationships are a necessity, not a luxury. They are the key to our cognitive and social development, to forming an identity, to achieving career success, to finding a meaning to our lives, to maintaining our physical and psychological health, to coping with adversity and stress, to actualizing our potential and to ensuring human procreation by creating a family to launch the next generations. Forming and maintaining relationships, however, is not easy. Our interactions are constantly changing our relationships.

The differences in our needs and desires lead to conflicts. Yelling, pouting, arguing or withdrawing can be some of the signs of frustrated unmet needs and desires. The two basic inefficient ways to resolve conflicts are silence and ventilations. Persistence of unresolved conflicts is the major cause of marital breakup. Thus investing energy into conflict resolution is a vital requisite of lasting relationship satisfaction."
The leader further introduces the five stages of the conflict resolution model, namely: Confrontation, Problem Identification, Brainstorming Solutions, Contracting Solution and Evaluating Solution.

**Demonstration:**
Leader demonstrates the use of the five step model with a volunteer.

**Activity:**

(1) **HYPOTHETICAL CONFLICTS**
In groups of four, the dyads practice hypothetical situations (examples of which are provided by the leader) and receive feedback and coaching from observing couple.

(2) **OWN CONFLICT ISSUES**
In groups of four, the dyads are to work on their own issue using the five stage model of conflict resolution and receive feedback and coaching from observing couple. The most common areas of conflict that many couples experience are outlined to help the couples to chose their personal conflict: Communication, Children, Sex, Money, Leisure, Relatives and Household Tasks.

**Debriefing:**
Groups of four debrief their experiences.
At last, the small groups share their experiences with the large group.

5. **DIPLOMATIC CORRECTION**

**Objectives:**
To give criticism in a non-blaming way
To make requests in a diplomatic way

**Time required:**
10 mins.

**Materials:**
Handout
Overhead

**Process:**
Introduction and Demonstration:
The leader explains the ten-step process of diplomatic correction as an effective way of giving criticism.
Next, the leader demonstrates how to use this model.
6. RECEIVING CRITICISM

Objectives:
To receive criticism without a need to defend oneself
To deal with authority
To learn self-criticism

Time required:
15 mins.

Materials:
Handout
Overhead

Process:
Introduction and Demonstration:
The leader explains various approaches to criticism, such as reflective listening, negative assertion, fogging, negative inquiry and later trial date. Then, the leader demonstrates each skill.

7. HYPOTHETICAL SCENARIOS

Objectives:
To practice giving and receiving criticism

Time required:
30 mins.

Materials:
Overhead of scenarios

Process:
Activity:
The leader gives each couple an opportunity to practice skills of giving and receiving criticism in small groups. The observing couples(s) give feedback to the couple who is practicing.

Debriefing:
The experience of the small group process is shared in the large group.
SESSION SIX

1. DAILY LOG REVIEW
General discussion of daily log events takes place.

2. REVIEW
Time required: 15 mins.
Process: The couples shares their experience of Caring Days, Surprise Days, Fun List and Dirty Fighting List.

3. GETTING THE LOVE YOU WANT
Objectives:
To educate participants about the difference between conscious versus unconscious relationship rules and goals
To become conscious of one's choices
To recognize the potential for personal as well as relationship growth
To facilitate greater differentiation from one's family of origin
To build interdependent autonomy in one's relationship

Time required: 15 mins.
Materials: Overheads Handouts
Reference: Hendrix (1990)
Process: The leader explains the difference between unconscious and conscious marriage:
"Most people believe that the only way to have a good relationship is to be lucky enough to meet the right partner. But, in fact, the only way to have a good relationship is to became the right partner. Thus good relationship is a matter of choice, not luck."

(1) RULES, GOALS AND MYTH OF UNCONSCIOUS MARRIAGE
The leader explains Hendix's concept of "IMAGO:"
"According to Hendrix, the 'Ideal Mate,' named as 'IMAGO,' of a so called unconscious marriage is someone:
(1) who resembles our primary caretakers in positive but especially in negative traits;
(2) who compensates for the repressed parts of ourselves.

Most of human behavior is guided by unconscious rules of our old reptilian brain. The reptilian brain holds the memory of our childhood and tries to recreate our childhood environment with two goals:
(1) in hopes of healing old childhood wounds by recreating some often painful themes;
(2) in an attempt to make us whole by merging with a person who has certain characteristics we have denied in us.

After the initial honeymoon stage of a marriage, the differences of partners resurface and conflict and anxiety arises. Subsequently, the long-anticipated healing of childhood wounds that partners hoped to unconsciously accomplish in their relationship is not taking place. On the contrary, as partners realize that their relationship reinjured their childhood wounds, they feel betrayed. To achieve fulfillment and happiness in our intimate relationship, we need to heal our childhood wounds and reclaim the disowned parts of our lost selves. In doing so, we begin our life's journey of celebration of self as well as our relationship. The next three sessions of the program will address and offer healing in both of these areas.

(2) LAW OF FIXED ENERGY
The leader explains the law of fixed energy as proposed by Bowen:
"A healthy relationship has a balance between the amount of energy invested into togetherness and the amount of energy consumed by the individual life force. This balance is not static but it is in a dynamic state of equilibrium. There is a fixed amount of energy available for the two life forces: togetherness and separateness. Subsequently, if most of energy is bound by togetherness, there is not enough energy left for separateness. In such situations, partners anxiously react to each other's thoughts, feelings, wants and actions.

In a relationship, each person invests the same amount of energy into togetherness. Therefore, we attract people with the same level of differentiation but with opposite defense mechanisms such as, introvert/extravert
or dependent/dominant. The level of differentiation carries over generations. Subsequently, the parental level of differentiation determines their children's level of differentiation (though not all children acquire the same level of differentiation as some might be more emotionally enmeshed with their parents and some might be more free to have more autonomy). In less differentiated families we discard some aspects of self that we were not allowed to express as children. The lost parts of self predispose us to unconsciously search for a partner who display these openly. Thus, the opposites attract not from the standpoint of choosing, but rather from the standpoint of needing. We need the other person to bring out in us the denied parts of self.

In the first stage of a relationship, the two incomplete people fuse and temporarily relieve the anxiety of functioning on their own as incomplete people. But when the differences surface, the fused couple cannot cope and both feel a sense of betrayal and reinjury of the childhood wounds. Subsequent conflict, anxiety, blaming, and criticism leads to unhappiness. The solution lies in becoming more aware and in investing energy into the process of differentiation. A more differentiated person will experience less power struggle and more autonomy and has a potential of creating a deeply satisfying relationship."

4. DRAW A PICTURE OF YOUR FAMILY OF ORIGIN

Objectives:
To get in touch with family of origin members
To expose clues to the rules we live by
To get in touch with feelings associated with our life's relational theme

Time required:
30 mins.

Materials:
Overhead
Pen and paper

Process:
Activity:
The leader asks the participants to draw a picture of their family of origin and include all the people they grew up with regardless of whether they lived in several families. In case of adoption, the participants are to include an image of their biological parents they had as
children as well as their adopted family. The focus is on people in the earlier developmental years.

Debrief:
In small groups of six, the participants introduce their family of origin to the group. When all the members of the small group have finished with the introductions, they give each other feedback by commenting on the following aspects of other's drawings: sizes of figures, placement on the paper, detail, body parts, similarities/differences of the self figure, interaction of figures and perceived emotions of the figures.

5. EARLY CHILDHOOD RECOLLECTIONS: GUIDED FANTASY

Objectives:
To refresh participants' memory of their caretakers
To aid childhood recollections
To assist in construction of "Imago" exercise

Time required:
30 mins.

Materials:
Inner Child meditation tape
Guided Meditation of Parental Figures

References:
Bradshaw (1990)

Process:
Introduction:
The leader introduces guided meditation as follows:
"Doing guided meditation, will involve guided age regression. If you have religious or any other reservations against the meditative process, you might be relieved to know there is nothing which will conflict with any religious beliefs in this exercise. We go in and out of a trance-like-state several times a day through spontaneous subconscious age regression whenever we get in touch with the unhealed childhood wound. So, there is nothing I'll ask you to do you're not doing already, except this time, you'll be consciously in charge of the experience. Remember, that you can stop at any time when you're feeling uncomfortable or overwhelmed in the middle of the meditation. You can then open your eyes, detach yourself from the feelings or even leave the room.

This exercise sometimes evokes strong feelings for people. If you are on medication, have a history of mental illness or if you are the survivor of an untreated physical/sexual abuse, it might be advisable
not to participate in this meditation. You can just remain seated and follow the meditation on a cognitive level only by listening to the words with your eyes open. Be gentle with yourself. Remember, you are in charge of the process.

**Activity:**
The facilitator leads the guided fantasy of meeting parental or primary caretakers figures to the background of Inner Child meditative music.

**Debriefing:**
Partners share their experience with their spouses.

6. IMAGO

**Objectives:**
To record positive and negative character traits of one's mother and father (or parental figures) and any other people who had a strong influence in our childhood

**Time required:**
10 mins.

**Materials:**
Overheads
Handouts

**Reference:**
Hendrix (1990)

**Process:**

**Activity:**
Participants are given "Imago" exercise sheets and asked to write negative traits of their childhood key caretaker as well as any other influential people on the bottom half and positive characteristics on the upper half of the circle. The participants are to lump all these traits together without identifying who they belong to. Then, participants are to complete sentences on the bottom of the sheet (see Hendrix, 1990).

7. PARTNERS PROFILE

**Objectives:**
To identify characteristics we like and dislike about our partner

**Time required:**
10 mins.

**Materials:**
Overhead
Handout
Reference:
Hendrix (1990)

Process:
Introduction:
The leader instructs the couples to do this exercise individually and not to share this information with their partner.

Activity:
On the top half of Partner's Profile sheet, the participants are to write positive traits of their partner and on the bottom half, the negative traits of their partner. They underline both positive and negative traits that effect them most. They are then to complete the sentences on the bottom of the sheet.

8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Objectives:
To compare partner's traits with Imago
To uncover areas of unfinished business
To identify sources of frustrations and underlying needs

Time required:
30 mins.

Materials:
Imago handout

References:
Hendrix (1990)

Process:
Introduction:
The leader urges the partners not to share this information with their spouses. The couples are informed that revealing the negative characteristics could be hurtful to their partner. However, the negative characteristics will be used in the Stretching exercise, next week. This will be a constructive way of letting one's partner know what is causing frustrations for each spouse.

Activity:
The participants compare positive and negative traits of the Imago and Partner's Profile and circle traits that are similar. They then compare the sentence completion and the circled traits. Any circled and possibly underlined negative traits could be areas of unfinished business from childhood. The leader assists individuals with identifying the nature of their unfinished business.
Debriefing:
The spouses share their findings with another unrelated group member, not with their partner. The large group debriefs this exercise and their experience in this session. The leader collects the Imago handouts as they will be distributed during the next week's session.

9. LOVE LETTER
Objectives:
To rekindle the relationship
To show appreciation for your partner
Time required:
20 mins.
Materials:
Pen and paper
Process:
Activity:
The partners are to write a love letter to each other and then read the letters out loud to their spouse.
SESSION SEVEN

1. **DAILY LOG REVIEW**
   General discussion of daily log events takes place.

2. **STRETCHING**
   **Objectives:**
   To became aware of one's deepest needs
   To disclose one's deepest needs to a partner
   To stretch ourselves in order to change and adjust our own behavior to meet one's partner's needs
   **Time Required:**
   40 mins.
   **Materials:**
   Handout
   Overhead
   Imago handouts
   **Reference:**
   Hendrix 1990
   **Process:**
   **Introduction and Demonstration:**
   The leader explains that the persistence of frustrations results in on-going conflict. If such conflict persists over a long period of time, it leads to arguments, emotional distance or it forces a spouse to seek the satisfaction of his or her needs by outside sources. In some instances, on-going frustrations can lead to an eventual relationship break up. Therefore, it is very important for each spouse to express his or her frustrations as well as their underlying desires and to have these understood and accommodated, to some degree, by one's partner. Partners of each dyad split up and pair up with another member of the group.
   **Activity:**
   (1) **LIST FRUSTRATIONS**
   The participants are asked to individually identify what frustrates them about their partner when they feel angry, annoyed, afraid, suspicious, resentful, hurt or bitter in the relationship by completing the following sentence: "I don't like it when you.... ." The participants are given their Imago exercise sheets from the previous week to help them connect their partner's negative characteristics with their own frustrations. This list is not to be shared with their spouses.
(2) IDENTIFY FEELINGS
Next, the participants are to identify their feelings for each frustration. Members of the pairs help each other to identify the underlying feelings in each frustration. Handouts of examples also assist participants with this task.

(3) HIDDEN DESIRES
Now, participants are to identify their hidden desire in each frustration. This is usually an antonym of the underlying feeling in the frustration. Participants are to further identify the desires that are most important to them by putting "*" (astride) next to them. Again, members of the pairs help each other and use their handouts as a resource.

(4) MAKING REQUESTS
a) Finally, the participants are to write down a specific request for each desire that would be helpful for satisfying that desire. It is important that these requests are non-blaming, positive and specific "I" requests. The participants fill in the "REQUESTS" handout by completing the blanks of the following sentence:
"When you _____, I feel _____ because _____ and I would like you to _____ so I can feel _____." The participants identify by "*" their most pressing requests.
b) At this point, the participants pair up with their spouses and read their request lists to their partners. They also clarify any questions or misunderstandings.
c) Then they exchange the lists with their partner and commit to fulfilling one to two (or more) requests of their partners list every week.
d) Partners are to add new requests to the list as they come up.
e) The participants are reminded that these requests are gifts, not obligations. As unconditional gifts, they are given for the sake of giving without having expectations in return.

Debriefing:
The large group debriefs the exercise.
3. **Meditation**

**Objectives:**
To prepare participants for the Pre-natal Inventory exercise
To sensitize participants to the experience of being an unborn baby
To stimulate memories of familial and social circumstances of one's birth

**Time required:**
10 mins.

**Materials:**
Ghetto blaster
Meditation tape

**Reference:**
Bradshaw, 1989

**Process:**
A guided meditation of Bradshaw's tape is played. This meditation is done to the music and the sound of a heartbeat of a mother, as a fetus hears it.

4. **PRE-NATAL INVENTORY**

**Objectives:**
To examine one's belief about once being a newborn child
To explore how family stories about one's infancy influenced one's life
To explore how parental, familial, social, political, economical or any other context influenced one's infancy
To gain insight into how our infancy story influenced our later life
To break free from any negative influence of our infancy story

**Time required:**
25 mins.

**Materials:**
Pen and paper
Overheads

**Process:**
**Introduction:**
The leader invites the group to divide into small groups of four by joining with another couple. The participants are instructed to write a pre-natal inventory by imagining what it was like before they were born. They are to construct this story from stories and memories from their childhood, from stories of their parents or other family members or friends, from events they believe that happened and from any parental,
familial, social, political or economical influences of the times. These could address issues, such as: "Were you a planned child and did that influence your parents' attitude towards you in any way?" or "Was it okay to be a girl/boy?" or "How did your mom's sickness after your birth and your dad's unemployment influence your infancy?"

As a story, this inventory is to explain what led up to one's birth, what happened and what followed after a baby was born.

Activity:

When the participants complete their pre-natal inventory, they are to think about their portrayal of themselves as an infant in the story and complete the following statements:

1. "I am _____."
2. "Life is _____."
3. Title your inventory "_____."

Debriefing:

Participants read and debrief their inventory in small groups of four. They likewise comment on their experience with the pre-natal meditation.

5. A BIRTH OF A MAGICAL CHILD

Objectives:

To reexperience one's birth in a positive way
To be welcomed to the world and reaffirmed as a valuable being
To breed self-love by loving one's Inner Child as a part of self
To educate the participants about the Transactional Analysis' concept of the three parts of self
To heal unfinished business with our family of origin issues

Time required:
35 mins.

Materials:

Overhead
Meditative tape
Ghetto blaster

Reference:

Capacchione, 1991

Process:

Introduction:
The leader explains the concept of the "Inner Child" by providing answers to the following four questions:

1. "Who is the Inner Child?"
2. "Why is it trapped inside of us?"
3. "What does it have to offer?"
4. "How can it be liberated?"

1. "The concept of the Inner Child is not new. It has its roots in ancient mythology and fairy tales. In these stories, the Child is usually abandoned and threatened by one or both parents and is often protected by guardians represented by natural forces. At the end, the child often becomes the saviour, the leader or brings peace, harmony and hope. Carl Jung saw the Child as an archetype, as a universal symbol of rebirth, hope and healing. Just like other archetypes, the Child is an integral psychological part of all humans. Thus, the symbol of Child bridges the past with the hope of the future. As any other archetype, the Child also unifies the opposites as it combines positive and negative aspects of human nature. Jung concluded that the Child archetype paves the way for a future change of personality.

The idea of a Child as a healer, who has the capacity to make each individual a whole person, was popularized during the sixties and seventies by Eric Berne who developed Transactional Analysis, so called T.A. According to T.A., each individual psyche is composed of the three parts of Self: Parent, Adult and Child. The role of a Parent Self is to set out rules and regulations; the role of an Adult Self is to think, make decision and solve problems and the role of a Child Self is to feel and react. Transactions of T.A. refer to interactions between these different three parts of ourselves as well as to interactions of these three parts of Self with the three parts of Others. For example, one's Child Self can be interacting with other's Adult Self. The knowledge of these interactions can shed light on some of our interactions in our relationships.

In 1980, Hal Stone and Sidra Winkelman developed another model of the Inner Child: "Voice Dialogue." According to this model, human psyche consists of countless subpersonalities, such as, the Child, Critic, Protector, Artist or Play-girl/boy. We need to develop an "aware ego" that is to act like a director of a play that decides what part of our personality will be on stage at any given time. This "aware ego" allows us to give
voice to all parts of us, good and bad, and, subsequently, such an acceptance will makes us whole.

2. A child is born to the world unable to provide for his/her own needs. Unlike reptiles, who are born to the world fully developed and capable of fending for themselves, we humans cannot survive infancy and childhood on our own. We need to be fed, clothed, sheltered, nurtured, protected, loved, empowered to believe in ourselves and feel that we belong. In order to satisfy a child's dependency (or narcissistic needs), the parents must be very psychologically healthy individuals whose own needs are fully met. Some experts estimate that 95% of the population received inadequate parenting themselves. For such people their Inner Child was wounded. Vulnerable and needy children split-off parts of themselves that were either denied or punished by their inadequate parent. As adults, such people are often acting from the hurt part of themselves—the Child part. Moreover, as parents we often pass these hurts to the next generation.

3. Fritz Perls once said that the goal of life is to move from environmental support to self-support. Thus, the goal of life is to achieve individuation to become a self-directed person with choices and limitless possibilities. But people with wounded Inner Child are not whole, and, therefore, are not free to risk and seek their happiness and fulfillment. In contrast, they are bound and limited by their past. Healing the wounded Child offers possibilities of re-birth, wholeness and fulfillment.

4. The Inner Child can be liberated by re-parenting ourselves. First, we need to rediscover the different aspects of our Inner Child: playful, creative, spontaneous, imaginative as well as bratty, selfish, resistant to grow up or destructive. Next we need to go back to the childhood developmental stages and use our Parent Within Us to re-parent ourselves so all our needs can be met for us as children. By doing so, we give our Inner Child an active voice so we can accept it as an integral part of us that will heal us back to health and wholeness. This process can be described by stages of awareness, acceptance, trust and risk taking. However, such growth work needs a supportive and empowering audience. We provide this audience for each other in programs like our workshop."
Activity:
The leader guides the participants through a guided meditation to music. This medication will allow the participants to use their imagination to meet their Inner Child with joy and love. A series of affirmations is being given at the end of this meditation.

Debriefing:
In small groups of four, the participants debrief their experience.

6. DRAW A PICTURE
Objectives:
To develop a visible symbol of the Inner Child Self
To bring the Inner Child alive
To facilitate communication and healing with the Inner Child

Time required:
10 mins.

Materials:
Overheads
Pen and paper

Process:
Activity:
The participants are asked to draw a picture of their Inner Child. To assist the participants' imagination, various examples are shown.

7. DIALOGUE
Objectives:
To give voice to the Inner Child Self
To facilitate interaction between the Child Self and Parent Self
To explore the unmet needs of the Inner Child
To re-parent the Inner Child by using the Parent Self to meet the Inner Child Self's needs
To thrive for wholeness and develop the disowned parts of Self

Time required:
15 mins.

Materials:
Overheads
Pen and paper
Background music
Ghetto blaster
Process:

Activity:
The participants are invited to write a dialogue between their Inner Child part and Adult part of Self. They are to use their non-dominant hand for writing of the Inner Child's dialogue and dominant hand for writing of the Parent part. To assist them, the leader displays an example of such dialogue.

Debriefing:
In small groups of four, the participants introduce their picture of the Inner Child to others and read their dialogue.
The large group debriefs individual's experiences.

8. Sentence Completion

Objectives:
To become aware of parental influences upon us as children
To examine how these influences still rule us
To break free of negative parental influences
To develop insight into our childhood as well as adulthood

Time required:
25 mins.

Materials:
Pan and paper

Process:
Activity:
The leader reads a series of sentence stems to be completed by the participants. This sequence of sentence stems is analogous to a storytelling about one's childhood. It brings insight about one's parental influences and it facilitates growth.

Debriefing:
In small groups, each individual reads their story and comments on it.
Large group debriefs the overall experience of that days' session.

Assignment:
The participants are to think of their process of differentiation and bring in a symbol, for the next session, that is reflective of their differentiation process.
SESSION EIGHT

1. DAILY LOG REVIEW
General discussion of daily log events takes place.

2. ERIKSONIAN DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES.
Objectives:
To educate participants about developmental stages and their individual developmental tasks
To identify own deficits as they relate to the developmental tasks
To name losses of one's childhood
To identify how these losses affected us as children
To identify how these losses still affect us as adults
To acknowledge instances when we were not influenced by these losses
To identify our wisdom and resources which we use to defeat negative influences of such losses
To heal our childhood wounds
To thrive for wholeness
To develop greater autonomy
To become free of negative childhood experiences

Time required:
60 mins.

Materials:
Handouts
Overheads
Life Line
Index cards
Masking tape

Process:
Introduction:
The leader explains five childhood stages of the Eriksonian developmental model and identifies the developmental task for each: Infant (ages 0 to 18 months), basic trust versus mistrust; Toddler (ages 18 months to 3 years), autonomy versus shame; Preschooler (ages 3 to 6 years), initiative versus guilt; School Age Child (ages 6 to 12 years), industry versus inferiority and Adolescence (ages 12 to 21 years) identity versus role confusion.

Activity:
The participants are asked to think back to their childhood and identify "Losses," hurtful events, that happen to them at different stages. The participants are invited to write down one to three such events (by
writing each one on a separate index card) using the following format:
  1. Name the loss/event by describing what led up to it, what happened and what followed.
  2. How did you, as a child, react to the loss?
  3. How is the loss still affecting you today?
  4. Give one example/instance when you were able to resist the influence of this loss.
  5. What were your resources and wisdom that allowed you to resist the negative influence of the loss.

The leader provides examples of such an exercise from her own life events. The leader draws a Life Line outlining the Eriksonian five childhood developmental stages and their corresponding ages and tasks on the board. The participants are encouraged to share their losses with the group and to tape their index cards containing the written events next to the Life Line's corresponding stage.

Debriefing:
The large group debriefs the exercise. The leader shows appreciation of the participants' willingness to risk sharing their experiences in front of the group.

3. **HOMECOMING MEDITATION**

*Objectives:*
To separate one's Self from hurtful childhood experiences
To experience emotional separateness from parental figures and from hurtful childhood wounds
To facilitate autonomy
To assume responsibility for our own healing
To gain vision of one's preferred self-determined destiny

*Time required:*
20 mins.

*Materials:*
Background music tape
Ghetto blaster

*Process:*

**Activity:**
The leader guides the group through the healing meditative process of imagining ourselves leaving the home of our caretakers in order to have our own life.

**Debriefing:**
The spouses debrief the exercise.
The large group discusses their experiences.
4. SYMBOL OF DIFFERENTIATION

Objective:
To symbolically express one's idea of differentiation
To identify the specific steps and wisdom employed in one's process of differentiation
To hypothesize about one's preferred differentiated lifestyle
To facilitate greater differentiation
To identify advantages of one's greater differentiation
To estimate one's growth on the scale of differentiation during the course of this seminar
To create an audience as a witness to one's greater differentiation
To learn from other's experiences
To be encouraged by similarities of other's trials in their growth
To learn from teaching others
To identify most helpful things in one's differentiation
To acknowledge one's growth
To identify what one has learned as a result of this seminar

Time required:
20 mins.

Materials:
Handouts
Symbol of differentiation (an object brought by participants)

Process:
Activity:
The leader asks the participants to fill in a questionnaire on their process of differentiation.
Debriefing:
Each participant is invited to introduce their symbol of differentiation to the large group and elaborate (using the handout as a guideline) on his or her process of differentiation.

5. CLOSING

Objectives:
To clarify any unfinished business, personal or group related
To give the leader feedback on content and group process
To suggest any improvements to the program
To have an opportunity to voice any concerns
To give the leader an opportunity to thank the group for their participation
Time requested:
20 mins.
Materials:
none
Process:
Each participant and the leader make closing remarks.

6. AFFIRMATIONS
Objective:
To give each other positive feedback
To empower each other
To take credit for one's positive traits
To focus on one's gains
To appreciate positive side of others
To elevate one's and other's self-esteem

Time required:
30 mins.
Materials:
Index cards
Pencils

Process:
Activity:
The participants are given one index card each. They are to write their name on the top of it and pass the card to the person on their left. Each participant is to write an affirmation or positive comment to the person whose card they hold. Then, the cards are passed to the next person to the left. The process continues until each participant receives their own card.

Debriefing:
Participants read their affirmations aloud in the large group.
The participants and the leader say good bye to each other and exchange phone numbers for future contact.
APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM
Consent Form

I consent to participate in the study Getting The Love You Want: The Effects of a Couples Workshop on Differentiation of Self. This study is conducted by Helena Novotny, a Master's Degree student in Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia, and supervised by Dr. Larry Cochran, Professor. This study will examine what conditions facilitate and what conditions hinder the differentiation of self.

Data collection for this study will take four forms:
1. You will be required to complete three, 1/2 hour interviews, of which the mid-session and post-session will be audio-tape and transcribed to ensure more accurate data collecting. In the pre-session and post-session interviews you will be asked to complete three questionnaires. In the mid and post-sessions you will be asked to relate information pertaining to your personal process of differentiation.
2. You will be asked to complete a daily log. This is estimated to take 10-15 minutes a day. As well, the leader will record observations as a result of the interactions during the sessions.
3. Your file information at Chilliwack Mental Health pertaining to the research maybe accessed.
4. The teacher of your child will be asked to complete a questionnaire pre-session and post-session. This questionnaire takes about 10 minutes to complete.

All identifying information will be deleted from any recorded material to ensure confidentiality. Your name will remain confidential. All tapes will be erased and all written material will be incinerated upon completion of the study.

The study requires a commitment to attending three-hour workshop sessions and ten to fifteen minutes per day reflecting and writing of a daily log. You have the right to refuse to answer any questions, participate in any exercise, and may also withdraw from the study at any time without consequences of any kind. Participation in this study is voluntary.

Any questions or concerns can be directed at either Helena Novotny (980-2950) or Larry Cochran (822-5259).

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THE ABOVE AND HEREBY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY. I ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF THE CONSENT FORM AND ALL ATTACHMENTS.
APPENDIX C: LETTERS TO PARTICIPANTS
Jan. 30, 1992

Dear

Thank you for participating in my research study. I think that the research will be valuable for extending the knowledge that we have of family interactions. I can also appreciate how difficult it is to attend a first night session. Walking into a group situation can be threatening, and I thank you for your courage. From my experience in running groups, I have found that it takes three to four sessions to develop comfortable feelings with the group process.

After attending the first session, it is quite common to feel that your expectations might not be met. However, previous participants to this workshop have, in retrospect, indicated to me how satisfying the total experience was.

I can also appreciate that through the duration of this workshop, you and your partner might experience some conflict due to the everyday stresses that families are besieged with. Attending the workshop regardless of this conflict can be quite a growing experience. It offers an opportunity to put the process of differentiation into practice.

I also realize that in the beginning, writing your daily log might seem like a chore. Having gone through the experience myself, I found that my persistence was rewarded as I learned to enjoy this private daily time. Should you find that you are having difficulty understanding the task, I hope that you will bring it to my attention before or after our session so I can assist you. I can assure you that it is simple and it will get easier.

I am looking forward to seeing you February 5, at 7:00 pm.

Sincerely,

Helena Novotny
February 6, 1992

Dear

Here are some after thoughts arising from our last workshop that I thought I would like to share with the two of you. First of all, after reading the facilitating and hindering event cards, I must compliment you on the effort that you are investing in our research project. I especially like to comment on the depth of description on many of the cards. I will be curious to read your event cards, and to hear your comments about having written them for a second week in a row.

In our last session, I appreciated the hard work that you did in participating in the exercises. I was quite concerned about how all of you would be able to maintain interest through the demanding "Relationship Vision" exercise. Needless to say, my concern was unfounded as you handled it so admirably. Love is work, and I think that the effort you put into this exercise will have long term pay-off.

I will be looking forward to our next meeting. At that time we will address communication skills. Many of you have expressed the desire to master this fundamental skill of human interaction. We begin the process of mastering communication skills on Feb. 12, 7:00 pm.

Sincerely yours,

Heleta Novotny
February 13, 1992

Dear

We had fun at our last session, I missed you, but I understand how these things come up. It is debatable whether the participants are learning more from me or whether I am learning more from them. In any case I feel very thankful.

Keep those cards coming in. I really appreciate the fact that you are willing to share your life with me, and as well help me do my research. Although the thesis will be in my name we are really doing it together.

I pointed out an analogy about the cards in the last session. It is that of a steak house; the questionnaires are the croutons on the salad, the interview is the baked potato and the cards are the steak. You might be able to substitute for the croutons and possibly, with some difficulty for the baked potato, but when you run out of steak you bankrupt the steakhouse.

We are only half way through our journey through communication. Problem-solving is just around the corner in our next session. You might want to phone to find out what we accomplished in our session.

If you excuse me now, to coin a phrase from , I have to differentiate myself and get my cup of coffee.

See you next week

Helena Novotny
February 19, 1992

Dear

At the end of our last session I tuned into my self, doing my own differentiation work and realized that I felt quite dead. I wonder if it was evident to you. If it was remember, being differentiated means allowing others to have their own thoughts, feelings and actions. In other words, if you noticed and felt somehow responsible, that would be a hindering event. On the other hand, if you noticed and did not feel responsible, then that would be a facilitating event. In any case, after thinking about it, it appeared to me that it is quite predictable that a mid-term session would likely be lower on energy then the higher energy beginning and ending sessions.

I was impressed by the large number of facilitating/hindering events that you as a group handed in this week. In family therapy we have discovered that we live our lives by the stories that we create that give special meaning to our experiences. Stories have a beginning, a middle and an end. They disclose to us what led up to the event, what happened during the event and what followed after the event was over in terms of thoughts, emotions and actions. It just occurred to me that is what you are doing when you write your event cards.

As we tell our stories, we grow along the storylines. What this means is that our stories end up becoming our reality. Therefore, when we have more stories that indicate differentiated self, we find that our thoughts, feelings and actions follow along those lines.

Because it is the half-way point of our workshop, it is time to schedule the mid-interviews. The purpose of these is to help me explore your events in more depth to make sure that I fully understand your experiences. I can start seeing couples next Thursday, either daytime or evening, as well as the following Wednesday or Thursday. Think about a time that would be most convenient for you and let me know next session.

Our 5th session will give us more opportunity to practice conflict resolution skills, and we are going to find out HOW TO GET THE LOVE YOU WANT.

Have a good week.

Helena Novotny
February 27, 1992

Dear

I just realized that there is only three more sessions left to go on our workshop. There is a lot we could do and so little time left. However, I'm confident that we will make the most with the least amount of time.

Keep those cards coming in! I always look forward to reading them. I likewise feel privileged to have this window view into your inner world.

By now, I feel bonded with our group and see ourselves as special partners in our personal growth.

We missed you at our last session and really appreciate you letting me know and I look forward to seeing you in our next group session.

I will be contacting you by phone to set-up our mid-point interview to review your events.

Sincerely,

Helena Novotny
March 4, 1992

Dear

By now you have become real experts at writing your cards. Novak's Fourth Principle tells us that most personal growth occurs during the last period of any intervention. Therefore, we can predict that this is the primetime for you in your process of differentiation, and so don't be surprised if you have a lot of cards to write.

Novak's Third Principle tells us that people who write things down gain approximately twice as much benefit from the experience than people who don't. Her Second Principle states that perseverance is the winning edge to overcoming resistance, implying that resistance is the major stumbling block to change.

On a less theoretical note, in our next session we will continue our healing journey through childhood, and we will give ourselves the gift of joy, freedom and happiness.

See you soon,

Helena Novotny
March 12, 1992

Dear

It is hard to believe that we will be meeting for the last time on March 25. It really seems that the past seven weeks have gone quickly. I guess the old adage must be true..."Time flies when you are having fun."

I found that the comment made by one of the participants probably applies to many of us:

"Although I am at the end of the workshop, it feels like I am just at the beginning of an exciting journey of doing my own work."

On the scale of readiness for personal work, where do you feel you fit?

This is the last call for handing in facilitating and hindering cards. In other words, this is the last opportunity for you to give me your excess baggage. Feel free, I am differentiated enough to take it.

But, I'm not sure if I am differentiated enough to ask you whether you have read any of my letters. It takes a certain courage for me to make such an enquiry, since the code of silence about the letters has not been broken once during our sessions. Sometimes I have nightmares that one day I'll wake up to find a bag of letters stamped "RETURN TO SENDER" on my doorstep.

I would like to ask you to bring a symbol of your level of differentiation at this point in time, to our last session. This would be an object that is a metaphor for where you are at in your relationship with self. For example, for myself it is a seashell. This object represents how I think and feel about myself. A seashell provides safety and a sense of home no matter where I go, while at the same time it represents a freedom of movement that allows me to explore my ever expanding horizons.

On the other hand, I can still remember the lowest time in my life when I felt stuck and deflated. My metaphor, at that time, was a flat tire.

Looking forward to our parting party on the 25th.

Helena Novotny
April 2, 1992

Dear

When it comes time to say good-bye I sometimes question my level of differentiation; this is one of those times. On the one hand, I will appreciate having Wednesday nights for other activities, yet on the other hand, I shall miss our weekly meetings. I became attached to you as a group. I wonder, was it as good for you as it was good for me?

I certainly appreciate your commitment to attending the sessions and investing your energy into participating in the activities. In particular, I really appreciated the trust and hard work it took to consistently write out the daily events. Thank you for making the research project possible.

I wonder where you predict your level of differentiation will be in a year from now? I would be curious to know how aware you will be about your awareness of the impact this eight week workshop will have on your successful process of differentiation? What wisdom have you learned in this process that you would like to tell others who might want to follow in your pioneering footsteps?

Differentiatingly yours,

Helena Novotny