Experiential marital enrichment: developing a model

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Experiential marital enrichment: Developing a model

Keoughan, Patricia Fowler, Ph.D.
Iowa State University, 1993
Experiential marital enrichment:
   Developing a model
   by
   Patricia Fowler Keoughan

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department: Human Development and Family Studies
Major: Human Development and Family Studies
       (Marriage and Family Therapy)

Approved: ...

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For the Graduate College

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
1993

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to express my sincere thanks to Dr. Linda Enders and Dr. Dianne Draper for their support and guidance during my time at Iowa State University. Their help and expertise in guiding me through my program at ISU has proved invaluable. I also wish to express sincere gratitude to Dr. Mary Jane Brotherson for sharing her knowledge of qualitative research methodology and guiding me in applying it in this study. Furthermore, a special thanks to Dr. Tahira Hira and Dr. Harry Cohen for serving on my committee, for challenging me with their ideas, and supporting my endeavors.

Deepest consideration and thanks to my colleagues and friends who assisted in this study. First, thank you Dan Wulff for participating in the training as a co-trainer. Thank you to Jeff Kerber who did all the ethnographic interviews. Furthermore, thank you to Jeff Angera, Marc Rice, and Sally St. George, members of the consulting team, for providing consultation throughout the study. I would like to also thank Laurie Culp for transcribing the volumes of recorded data.

Finally, a most special thank you to my children, Emily and Paul. Thank you for the support, patience, love, and acceptance you have always provided.
INTRODUCTION

Marital enrichment is a growth model. The purposes of marital enrichment are to enable couples to develop a richer, and therefore more satisfying marital relationship (Otto, 1976), and to help couples who are functioning relatively well to function even better. The enrichment experience usually occurs in the context of a group or workshop. The growth experience of the couple is enhanced by the group process.

Marriage enrichment emerged out of the human potential movement that occurred during the late sixties. This movement set the stage for societal acceptance of group work. More than accepted, group work became popularized, or in the vernacular of that time it became "hip" or "cool" to participate in a weekend marathon group experience.

Simultaneously, the sexual revolution was occurring. Research in the area of human sexuality was being conducted (Otto, 1976). Further, the field of marital and family therapy was flourishing. Post-war divorces of the 50's followed by societal dissonance of the 60's motivated increased concerns about marriage and family life. Consequently, churches began organizing marital enrichment programs during the late 1950's and early 1960's.

David Mace, an early pioneer in the field, began his work with the Society of Friends (Quakers) in 1961. At the same time Herbert Otto began his research and work in the area of enhancing family strengths through group process. The United Methodist Church entered the marital enrichment field in 1965 through Leon Smith's Marriage Communication Lab programs (Otto, 1976).
These various movements occurring around the country were brought together at a conference through the efforts of William Genne' and the National Council of Churches. The representatives from the various programs met in 1973 in Indianapolis. Delegates of various denominations who were experienced and interested in marriage and family enrichment programs participated. Clarification and definition of the movement came out of the conference (Otto, 1976).

What is marital enrichment? A recent definition proposed by Bernard Guernery, Jr. and his colleague, Pamela Maxson in a Decade Review and Look Ahead published in the November 1990 issue of Journal of Marriage and the Family reads as follows:

Marital and family enrichment comprises psychoeducational programs designed to strengthen couples or families so as to promote a high level of present and future family harmony and strength, and hence the long-term psychological, emotional, and social well-being of family members. The programs are sufficiently structured, programmatic, replicable and economical to serve a large segment of the general public. They usually are conducted in a time-limited group format. (p. 1127)

Marital enrichment programs are structured or semi-structured group learning experiences that focus on improving couples' relationships and potentiating personal growth (Guerney, 1977; Otto, 1976). Zimpfer (1988) further clarifies the emphasis of marital enrichment:
The main objectives of a marriage enrichment program can include: awareness of each person's own needs and expectations, awareness of the partner's needs and expectations, improved communication (including empathy and self-disclosure), enhanced problem-solving and negotiating skills, and increased overall adjustment, optimism, and satisfaction with the marriage. (p. 44)

Marital enrichment is one form of "intervention" in the life of a family. Marital enrichment is a proactive or preventive intervention focusing on strengthening marital relationships. In contrast, therapy is primarily a reactive intervention focusing on problematic issues, crises, and dysfunction in couple and family relationships.

Who should participate in marriage enrichment? Couples who want to improve on an already functional relationship are appropriate for this work. Couples whose relationships are troubled or in crisis are not considered to be appropriate. However, studies done by Wampler (1982) indicate that, "Marriage enrichment appeals mostly to people who perceive at least some dissatisfaction and express the need for improvement in their marriages" (Zimpfer, 1988).

Martin and Bumpass (1989) estimate that two-thirds of all first marriages in the United States will end in divorce. These two researchers also report that the divorce rate among marriages taking place between 1980 and 1985 is 25% higher for second than for first marriages (Martin & Bumpass, 1989). There are several undesirable consequences generally associated with divorce. These
consequences described by Kitsen and Morgan (1991) include (a) reduction of income of the woman, who is usually the custodial parent, (b) decreased ability of the custodial parent to address developmental and economic needs of the children, (c) decreased likelihood for children of divorced parents to obtain a level of education they would have had the parents remained married (Wallerstein & Huntington, 1983), and (d) increased divorce rate among children of divorce (Glenn & Kramer, 1987).

The long-range implications of divorce are yet to be understood. There is a continuing societal concern regarding the possible consequences of divorce for families. Therefore, the opportunity and challenge to encourage and support functional marriages is constantly before us.

What does a marital enrichment program provide? The emphasis is on couple communication, social skills, emotional content of the relationship, and the sexual relationship of the couple. The goal is to strengthen the relationship while simultaneously developing the existing marital strengths as well as personal and individual growth (Guerney & Maxson, 1990).

Numerous variations on the theme of marital enrichment have been mentioned by Otto (1976) in his book *Marriage and Family Enrichment*. Some of these program variations are conducted in the context of a group of couples working together. Other program variations may be conducted with a couple independently from other couples. Still, other programs are more family than couple focused. Among the family oriented programs mentioned by Otto are The "Family Enrichment Weekend," "The Family Camp," "The Care Lab," and "The Family Home Evening." Programs that are marriage focused described by Otto are "A

In addition to the programs already mentioned, two programs that have been thoroughly researched and are considered to be very effective marital enrichment programs are the "Relationship Enhancement Program" developed by Bernard Guerney (1977) and "The Couple Communication Program" developed by Miller, Nunnally, and Wackman (1976). These two programs are couple focused, structured marital enrichment programs that usually are conducted in the context of couples working together in a group format.

Even though there are a variety of marital enrichment programs, the predominant group approaches for couples are programs such as "Relationship Enhancement" (Guerney, 1977), "The Couples Communications Program" (Miller et al., 1976), and "Marriage Encounter." There are at least 50 different programs devoted to marriage enrichment and designed to enhance marital relationships (Zimpfer, 1988).

**Purpose and Rationale of the Study**

Marital enrichment programs such as Couple Communication and Relationship Enhancement are based on traditional learning models. Consequently, couples are given information by trainers, asked to assimilate the information, and to practice very specific skills taught during the training. In other words, couples are expected to learn a skill as it is taught, precisely
replicate in some other context those skills taught during training, and hold in their memory specific skills to use as so many "tools" in other contexts. This sort of learning is pragmatic, concrete, and primarily conducted through a didactic presentation. What these programs neglect to offer, or offer only on a very limited basis to couples, is experiential learning as a major component of their enrichment program. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to develop a possible training model for marital enrichment that incorporates and emphasizes experiential learning. In contrast to a classroom, didactic format for marital enrichment, the experiential marital enrichment training model included activities as a major component of the learning process. The model provided a focus on the primary aspects of marital enrichment, including communication training, problem-solving skills, and affectional/sexual skills.

This study was designed to use experiential learning activities to provide couples an opportunity for interactions that bring unconscious processes to a conscious level. This was accomplished by having couples engage in activities that required couples to interact analogically and then discuss digitally the activities they had just completed. More specifically, couples engaged in "initiatives," that is, an activity which involved the couple in direct interaction with one another in response to directives, the purpose of which was not immediately obvious. Upon completion of the activity the couples discussed with each other as a group their experience of the initiative. Consequently the training program engaged these couples in analogic activities similar to experiential learning programs, but also retained the verbal, or digital, language discussions that are the primary learning modality in traditional marital enrichment programs.
Additionally, this was a pilot study designed to develop a training model. The researcher was interested in couples' evaluations of the program itself that would include criticisms as well as affirmations of the model as it was applied with the participants. Couples' evaluations would then be brought to bear in the further development of the model. Therefore, the phenomenological experience of the participant couples provided necessary information in which the model was grounded. The study was also concerned with understanding the process of the training program, that is, what was going on within the session itself (Piercy & Sprenkle, 1991) and how the participants phenomenologically experienced the context of each session. The researcher was interested in making connections, with the help of the participants, between the training process of the model and its outcome effects. Therefore, the researcher sought to avoid imposing a priori assumptions regarding participants training experience and outcome effects on couples' relationships. Rather the researcher attempted to seek out what participants perceived to be the experience of training and outcome effects on their marriages.

Qualitative research methodology was used because the emphasis of qualitative research is on the context, including the complexities of that context. Rather than attempting to focus quantitatively on a reduced portion of the context and adhering to highly structured interview formats, measurement instruments designed to answer specific questions, and/or questionnaires developed to answer specific rather than general questions, the qualitative researcher choose a "wide angle shot." In order to understand the context holistically, the various participants were asked to describe what they experienced from their involvement in the "picture." The various descriptions
were used to develop a consensually agreed upon concept of the context and ultimately the model itself. Piercy and Sprenkle (1991) describe qualitative research as compatible with the process perspective.

Qualitative research also seems to be theoretically compatible with the new process perspective, which calls for the use of intensive analysis, detailed descriptions and observations, and the smaller-is-better philosophy. Moreover, qualitative methods can provide contextual data that can enrich the interpretations of quantitative outcome studies. (p.452)

Thus, qualitative research seeks an understanding of complex events and interactions. Of interest to the qualitative researcher is the natural context wherein events and interactions take place. Furthermore, the qualitative researcher wants to understand those events and interactions from the points-of-view of the participants involved (Moon, Dillon & Sprenkle, 1990).

The present study was designed to develop a model of experiential marital enrichment programming. A model is a pattern or a prototype. The model developed from this study is specific enough that others can use it as a guide for future training. However, the model is not as exact and detailed as a precise protocol. Consequently, subsequent marital enrichment training groups should be able to apply the model and incorporate variations appropriate to their specific group.

The model was developed through consultation with all participants, with special emphasis on the experience of couples. Therefore, couples'
perceptions were used to develop the model and assess couples' perceptions of its effectiveness. Throughout the training process ethnographic interviews were conducted to obtain all participants phenomenological experience of training. Participants included the couples', trainers', and consulting teams.' The content of the interviews was summarized into an ethnography that provides readers detailed information regarding the participants phenomenological experience. This ethnography included a written summary of ethnographic interviews of the couples and debriefing interviews of the trainer/investigator, co-trainer, and consulting team members. This ethnography provided information that established the model which serves as a general pattern of experiential marital enrichment for use by trainers and researchers.

Prior model development of marital enrichment programs had not included any description of the participants' experience of the program. Therefore, no previously developed models of marital enrichment had been grounded in the experience of the clients as has been accomplished by this study. Consequently, during the follow-up group debriefing interviews, couples were asked to describe their perceptions of the overall training program, that is, their phenomenological experiences of participating in the program. Couples were also asked to describe changes they perceived to have occurred in their relationships following the completion of the program. The phenomenological experiences of couples provided information important to the development of the model. A summary of couples descriptions of changes they perceived to have occurred in their relationships provided information potentially useful in generating hypotheses for consideration in future outcome studies.
Questions Posed by the Study to Assist in Development of the Model

The study was designed to answer the following questions:

1. What was the phenomenological experience of the couples who participated in the experiential marital enrichment training?

2. What changes, if any, occurred in the marital relationship of participant couples?

3. What changes, if any, occurred in the communication of the participant couples?

4. What changes, if any, occurred in the problem-solving activities of the participant couples?

5. What changes, if any, occurred in the affectional/sexual aspects of the relationship of the participant couples?

6. What, if anything, provided in the experiential marital enrichment program was helpful to participant couples?

7. What, if anything, provided in the experiential marital enrichment program was not helpful to participant couples?

8. What changes need to be made in the model based on information from participant couples and consulting team members?
REVIEW OF PRIOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Marital Enrichment

Marital enrichment is a learning context for couples who want to improve their marital relationship. It is a model of relationship growth rather than relationship repair. Marital enrichment work is usually done with couples as a group rather than with individual couples. A group for couple enrichment provides a context in which an individual and a couple unit benefit from the experience and information shared by other individuals and couple units in the group. Group work also adds the beneficial dimensions of cost effectiveness and time effectiveness for participant couples. The dynamics of a group process often provide a more potent experience than individual and/or couple therapy (Corey & Corey, 1987; Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1991).

There are advantages and disadvantages in group process. One advantage is that fees may be less since the cost is shared among the group participants. Also, inherent in group work is the opportunity for participants to learn from one another. Consequently, groups provide a context in which a myriad of new ways of thinking and being may develop beyond what is available for one couple working with a single therapist. Furthermore, couples may experience situations in a group setting that resemble conflicts that occur in their daily lives. Lieberman and Lieberman (1986) viewed couple group work as a context in which couples may discuss issues in their relationship that might be too volatile to deal with in another context.
Couples may use the group as an opportunity to develop new meanings and to practice new behaviors. A group setting provides members support and empathy. Group members are potential "therapists" for other group members (Lieberman & Lieberman, 1986). In the group context, couples may have an opportunity to see themselves as others see them by hearing other group members' comments. There is opportunity for participants recognize differences and become aware of commonalities among the participants (Corey & Corey, 1987).

Disadvantages are also inherent in group work. Participants in group therapy may feel pressure to conform to group norms and expectations (Corey & Corey, 1987). Additionally, group process may create a context in which a member's role in the group becomes that of a "scapegoat." Furthermore, some members of the group may attempt to dominate the process, use the time to ventilate their woes, and do little in the way of using the group for developing new ways of thinking and/or behaving. Consequently, it is useful and necessary to screen participants prior to inclusion in a group therapy process. It is also essential to have group facilitators trained in understanding and managing these concerns.

The current predominant marital enrichment programs are "Relationship Enhancement" (Guerney, 1977; Guerney & Maxson, 1990), "The Couples Communication Program," (Miller et al., 1976), and "Marriage Encounter." These current programs operate according to a tightly structured rigidly prescribed format of a traditional learning model. The language used in this
context is necessarily predominantly digital, that is, words expressed in logical syntax and understood cognitively are used to convey information. The digital communication mode is particularly functional for conveying information about objects and for the transmission of knowledge in the context of prevailing time constraints (Watzlawick, Bevalas, & Jackson, 1967). The digital communication mode is primarily a cognitive endeavor rather than an emotional/thinking process. Digital communication is based on the semantic convention of the language (for example, English) used to convey the words.

Experiential Enrichment

An experiential component included in marital enrichment exposes participants to communication on an analogical level, as well as both metaphorical and nonverbal (Gaw, 1986). Analogic communication defines the nature of the relationship between two or more people and is expressed nonverbally through behaviors, tone of voice, inflection, and volume. Analogic communication tells the listener how to interpret the digital portion of communication, that is the literal meaning of words. Watzlawick et. al, (1967), tell us that, "Whenever relationship is the central issue of communication, we find that digital (verbal) language is almost meaningless." (p.63)

Humans are the only organism known to communicate through both the analogical (nonverbal) and digital (verbal) modes (Watzlawick et al., 1967). Animals, on the other hand, are observed to communicate the nature of their relationship with other animals and with humans through only analogic modes. For example, two male wolves fight with one another to determine the dominant pack leader. The yielding animal is observed to roll over on his back
and bear his neck to the dominant animal. The analogical message is, "I submit." The analogy clearly defines the relationship. There is no digital communication in this interaction, but the message is conveyed and understood in the context in which it occurs. Communication in the context of intimate relationships, such as a married couple, occurs both through digital and analogical modes with analogical and metaphorical language predominating (Watzlawick et al., 1967).

Experiential activities, or initiatives, provide a context in which individuals can experience an event metaphorically. Metaphors are expressed in analogical rather than digital language. Because "relationship" is primarily an analogical, not a digital phenomenon, adding experiential or metaphorical activities to a group process provides couples a reference for understanding, as well as experiencing, their relationship both digitally and analogically (Becvar & Becvar, 1993).

To further clarify this concept, the following quotation from Pragmatics of Human Communication (Watzlawick et al., 1967) may be helpful.

Human beings communicate both digitally and analogically. Digital language has a highly complex and powerful logical syntax but lacks adequate semantics in the field of relationship, while analogic language possesses the semantics but has not adequate syntax for the unambiguous definition of the nature of relationships. (Pp. 66-67)

Couples tend to use the analogical mode in communicating with one another. Often it is the highly charged emotional issues that couples tend to
communicate on a covert, analogical and/or metaphorical level rather than a direct digital level. Therefore, couples often have difficulty clearly defining problematic issues in their relationships, much less addressing them. Because much of their significant communication occurs analogically and metaphorically, information for understanding is not directly accessible (Papp, 1982). Metaphorical language is the language of abstract thought by which one often communicates emotions in the context of intimate relationships (Papp, 1982).

Metaphors provide a complete gestalt in which disassociated facts and events can be seen in relation to one another. Explanatory language tends to isolate and fragment, to describe one event followed by another in a linear fashion. Figurative language tends to synthesize and combine. It is capable of uniting different levels of thought, feeling and behavior into a holistic picture . . . (p. 454)

By introducing the use of metaphor and analogic communication into marital enrichment, couples have an opportunity to use the language of abstract thought to communicate emotions in the context of their intimate relationship. Combining digital, analogical and metaphorical communication modes in the context of group process broadens the scope of communication modes and enriches the relationship of couples. The comprehensive combination of these communication modes provides a more expansive approach than is taken by the predominant enrichment programs available currently.
Experiential learning provides a context in which the participant becomes actively engaged in doing something that simulates or symbolically represents meaningful aspects of life for the participant. Essentially one learns by doing. That doing can be literal, simulated, or symbolic in nature. The goal of experiential learning is to give the learner an experience that allows their learning to be transferable to other contexts. Therefore, experiential marital enrichment is aimed at giving the participants experiences that symbolically represent aspects of their relationships. Through their participation in this symbolic "doing," couples are given an opportunity to learn about aspects of themselves and their relationship that they can take into other contexts. Educators refer to this process as learning transfer (Bruner, 1960).

Bruner (1960) suggests three central learning theories connected to learning transfer. These theories are listed below.

1. **Specific transfer of training** - specific applicability to tasks highly similar to originally learned tasks  
   Example: Transferring typing skills to computer keyboard

2. **Non-specific transfer of training** - learning of attitudes or principles that can be applied to new learning situations, problems or situations  
   Example: Developing trust in a group by participating in a group activity; developing trust with spouse

3. **Metaphoric transfer** - transfer of principles that are not the same in structure, but are similar, analogous or metaphorical  
   Example: Learning to cooperate with others on a softball team in order to be competitive; using cooperation in the corporate environment in order to be competitive in business

Programs such as "Outward Bound" and "Adventure Education" have been using group process and experiential learning for some years (Stich,
1983). These programs are the forerunners of what is known as "ropes" or "challenge" therapy. Many treatment centers in the United States and Europe have built "ropes" courses and included this experiential group process model in the treatment of children, adolescents, adults, and family groups. Also, programs for troubled youth use the outdoor, wilderness experience as a therapeutic modality. (Badzmierowski, 1990; Gass & McPhee, 1990; Kimball, 1983).

Austrian psychiatrist, Jacob Moreno, introduced psycodrama and sociodrama into group process in 1910. Then, in 1925 Moreno introduced psychodrama to the United States (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1991). According to Gazda (1975) Moreno coined the term "group therapy." Other examples of experiential work include Peggy Papp (1982) who introduced her action oriented methods with couples that she called couples choreography, and Samuel Slavson who used an experiential group model with disturbed adolescents and children in New York City in the 1960's (Slavson, 1964).

Also during the 1960's, the human-potential movement saw the burgeoning development of growth centers such as Esalen on the West Coast. It was at Esalen that encounter groups began. These experiential groups were particularly popular during the 1960's among the upper-middle social classes (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1991).

Experiential learning in a group context has seen a resurgence in recent years, especially in the treatment of troubled adolescents. Experiential learning as a group process is used with youth groups, work groups, and more recently with psychiatric groups (Stich, 1983). However, little has been done using these techniques with couples' groups. While Gillis and Bonney (1986)
described adding adventure activities to group counseling with couples and families in a one-day workshop and Peggy Papp (1982) described her work with couples’ choreography in a group context, none attempted an evaluation of the impact of their work on the relationships of participants. Also, they did not pursue any understanding of the phenomenological experiences of participants. A unique aspect of the present study was the experiential context in which couples, as a group, benefited from integrating digital, analogical and metaphorical communication.

Even though Relationship Enhancement and Couple Communication have been thoroughly researched and are considered useful, neither adequately addresses the emotional aspects of the relationship (Brock & Joanning, 1983). The emphasis is on skills training and development. Guerney (1991) suggests that future research examine different ways of structuring interactions among participants to promote emotional expression and awareness of unconscious processes. Research also needs to look at how greater client involvement in selection of topics influences group process (Joanning, Newfield, & Quinn, 1987).

Elsewhere in the helping professions experiential learning programs such as Adventure Education and Outward Bound have emphasized analogic communication. These programs have in common an emphasis on learning by becoming involved in complex activities that demand that participants move beyond spoken communication as a method of learning. These programs involve participants in an activity that demands that they work together in a cooperative manner in order to complete a task or solve a problem. The activities or experiences inherent in these programs are designed to be analogs
of real life situations that participants will engage in when they complete the program. Analogic experiential activities emphasize emotional, unconscious processes that cannot readily be expressed consciously, that is, verbally (Gass, 1985).

Borrowing from experiential learning programs, marital enrichment educators could build programs that include experiential activities designed to enhance marital communication, problem-solving, sexual expression and overall satisfaction. Such a program would continue to include spoken, digital, communication training, but would add experiential exercises designed to deal more directly with unconscious processes by employing analogic activities.

Because experiential learning activities directly involve unconscious, nonverbal processes, they may have a more global influence and thereby affect overall marital satisfaction. Experiential activity promotes transfer of learning or training, that is, enhances future learning experience and generalizes learning to other contexts (Gass, 1985). Furthermore, transfer of learning is enhanced by including significant others in the learning process (Gass, 1985).

An experiential model incorporates analogical and metaphorical forms of communication, namely kinetic (physical) communication. Winn (1982) asserts that, "The active use of one's body in order to confront a physical problem will generalize to the use of one's psyche to master psychosocial challenges within and beyond the therapeutic environment" (p. 163). Also, Jean Houston (1982) contends that "talking therapies do not work as well as they might since. . . they do not knowledgeably involve the body in the therapeutic process" (p. xix).
Using a physical activity in group therapy addresses several issues simultaneously. A single activity may simultaneously provide opportunities to address cooperation, trust, communication, and problem-solving (Kesselheim, 1976).

According to Gillis and Bonney (1986), "The conscious and unconscious modeling that naturally occur in group counseling with unrelated individuals seems to be especially great when relationships are the unit of focus" (p. 216). Activity provides an added dimension of metaphor which is considered the most potent aspect of the experiential process with couples (Gillis & Bonney, 1986).
METHOD

Participant Informants

Couples who participated in the study were recruited through newspaper advertisement that described the study as a training experience for couples who wanted to improve their relationships. (See Appendix A.) A purposive sampling of a range of all possible couples who might benefit from such a program was selected. The study was approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee of the Graduate College of Iowa State University.

Purposive sampling is analogous to representative sampling in quantitative studies. In this study the sample was purposive in order to obtain as broad a range of couples as possible among the six couples chosen to participate. Therefore, couples chosen included an older couple from a long-term marriage, a newly married couple, a couple with young children, a couple with teenagers, a couple with no children, and a divorced and remarried couple. By purposively sampling a range of couples the study addressed the transferability issue of qualitative research design and methodology. (See Data Analysis.) In general, the goal of transferability for this study was to develop a robust model, that is, a model that would be applicable to a wide range of couples, thus the wide range of couples who provided this sample.

Telephone screening was done with responding couples to assess their appropriateness for the group and to exclude couples who needed marital therapy. According to Wampler (1982), marriage enrichment appeals primarily to couples who express some dissatisfaction with their relationship and a need for improvement in their relationship. L’Abate and Weeks (1976) clearly agree
that couples who are experiencing significant distress in their relationships are not appropriate for marriage enrichment. Therefore, the following screening questions were used to assess for marital distress among interested respondents:

1. On a scale of one to ten, with ten being very satisfied and one very dissatisfied, how satisfied are you in your relationship currently?

2. Are you currently dealing with relationship issues that you consider serious or very difficult to resolve?

3. Are you willing to participate in activities that are designed to promote discussion of relationship issues in the presence of others?

Couples who placed their relationship at a five or below on the scale of one to ten were excluded from the study. Couples who answered "yes" to question two were excluded from the study. Couples who answered "no" to question three were excluded from the study. Therefore, couples who answered any one or all of the three screening questions in the non-intended direction were excluded from the study because their relationship was assumed to be problematic. Couples identified to have problematic relationships and thereby excluded from the study were to be referred to the Iowa State University Marriage and Family Therapy Clinic for marital therapy. None of the couples who responded to the announcement indicated by their responses to screening questions a need for referral for marital therapy.

Couples who answered all three of the questions in the intended direction were assumed to have functional and satisfying relationships. From among these couples a list of potential participants was identified. From
among the list of potential qualifying participants, couples were selected, contacted by phone a second time, and invited to participate in the study. A description of the study, including the time frame for the training sessions and follow-up debriefing session, was given to couples during this second phone conversation. Couples invited to participate in the study were requested to make a commitment to consistent attendance of training sessions throughout the study and to the follow-up group debriefing necessary for the completion of the study.

Six couples were recruited with the intent of completing a group with no fewer than four couples and no more than six. Therefore, flexibility was provided to allow the study to continue if couples were absent or dropped out before the study was completed.

Research Team

Other than the couples participating in the training, the study required to cooperation of a group of individuals including trainers, ethnographer and consulting team members. The following information further identifies and defines the roles of these participants.

Trainers

There were two trainers conducting each session. In order to provide a gender balance, one female trainer and one male trainer worked together to facilitate each training session.

Female trainer The female trainer was Patricia Keoughan who was also the investigator. Therefore, she was referred to as the investigator/trainer.
**Male trainer** The male trainer was an experienced therapist who had a Masters in Social Work degree and was enrolled in the Doctoral Program in Marriage and Family Therapy at Iowa State University.

**Responsibilities** The responsibilities of the trainers included, but were not limited to facilitating the training sessions, encouraging conversation among participants, and promoting a context in which couples could develop as a group. (See Appendix B.)

**Ethnographer**

An ethnographer interviewed couples following each session seeking to understand their phenomenological experience of the process on a session-by-session basis.

**Ethnographer** The ethnographer was an experienced male therapist with a Masters degree in Marriage and Family Therapy and was enrolled in the Doctoral Program in Marriage and Family Therapy at Iowa State University. The ethnographer had experience in qualitative research and conducting ethnographic interviews.

**Responsibility** The ethnographer interviewed couples weekly and at follow-up group debriefing sessions. Following each training session, and two weeks following the final training session, the ethnographer debriefed couples asking them to describe their phenomenological experiences of each session. (See Appendix B.)
Consulting team

A consulting team of three individuals observed throughout the training sessions offering ideas to the trainers for session improvement and model development.

Team members The consulting team was made up of two males and one female. All consulting team members were experienced therapists who held masters degrees in the helping professions and were enrolled in the Marriage and Family Therapy Doctoral Program at Iowa State University.

Responsibility Members of the consulting team observed and provided consultation during training sessions. The consulting team members also debriefed with trainers following training sessions.

The Iowa State University Family Therapy Doctoral Program has been accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education, a division of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT). This study was undertaken with the permission of the Human Subjects Review Committee of the Graduate School of Iowa State University.

Procedure

Design of the study

Figure 1 provides a focused summary of the study design. A full description of the procedure of the study follows.
Training sessions

Number of training sessions  Four marital enrichment training session groups were conducted weekly.

Duration of training sessions  Ninety to 120 minutes was allotted for each session.

Session format  Each training session followed the following sequence:

Phase I:  Introductory

Phase II:  Initiative (See Appendix C.)

Phase III:  Processing the initiative and closure

Debriefings

Couple debriefings  The ethnographer met with the group of couples and conducted a debriefing following each of the training session. Also, following the final training session couples met again as a group and were debriefed by the investigator/trainer and the ethnographer.

Number of couple debriefings  Five debriefing session were conducted with the participant couples. Four weekly debriefing ethnographic interviews were conducted following each training session. Additionally, a final follow-up debriefing interview was conducted two weeks after the last training session.

Duration of couple debriefings  Approximately thirty minutes was allotted for each post-training debriefing session. Ninety minutes was allotted for the follow-up debriefing that was conducted two weeks following the final training session.
Design of the Study

Recruitment of Subjects:
Investigator

Screening and Evaluation:
Investigator

Initial Pre-treatment Evaluation:
Couples + Investigator/Trainer + Co-Trainer + Consulting Team + Ethnographer

Training Sessions:
Couples + Investigator/Trainer + Co-Trainer + Consulting Team

Weekly Post-Training Couples' Debriefing:
Couples + Ethnographer

Weekly Post-Training Peer Debriefing:
Investigator/Trainer + Co-Trainer + Consulting Team

Weekly Model Development Meeting:
Ethnographer + Investigator/Trainer

Two-week Follow-up Debriefing Interview:
Couples + Ethnographer

Member Check:
Couples + Investigator/Trainer + Co-Trainer + Consulting Team + Ethnographer

Figure 1 Design of the Study
Peer debriefings  Trainers and consulting team debriefed one another together following each training session. A review of the trainers and team members perceptions of the session along with ideas, concerns, and suggestions for model development were the focus of the debriefings.

Number of peer debriefings  Four peer debriefings were conducted following each training session.

Duration of peer debriefings  Peer debriefings were brief usually lasting 15 to 20 minutes each.

Model development meeting
The investigator/trainer and ethnographer debriefed one another weekly following couple and peer debriefings. This debriefing focused on a review of the ethnography just completed, and issues of model development.

Number of model development meetings  Five model development meetings occurred. The ethnographer and researcher met each week following the couple debriefings and following the follow-up debriefing.

Duration of model development meetings  This meeting generally last 15 to 20 minutes.

Follow-up debriefing
An ethnographic interview was conducted by the ethnographer and the investigator/trainer with couples as a group two weeks following the last training session.

Number of follow-up debriefings  One follow-up debriefing was conducted with couples two weeks following the final training session.
**Duration of follow-up debriefing**  The follow-up debriefing was conducted over a period of 90 minutes.

**Member checks**  Several aspects of the design provided for multiple member checks.

Member checks included:

1. Couple post-training debriefings and follow-up debriefing
2. Peer debriefings
3. Model development meeting

The study was a pilot study using a single group qualitative design that employed semi-structured ethnographic interviews with participant couples to assist in development of a model of experiential marital enrichment.

Descriptive assessments of couple communication and dyadic adjustment were collected prior to the first group training session and during a half-hour evaluation following the last group session.

**Ethnographic interview process**  A debriefing interview with participant couples, using ethnographic interviewing techniques, was conducted each week following the training session. These weekly interviews were conducted as a group debriefing for the purpose of providing information to the investigator/trainer, co-trainer, and consulting team to further construct the training model. Two weeks following the last group session participant couples met together for a follow-up semi-structured group interview. The goal of the follow-up interview was to assess
couples' lasting impressions and their perceptions of the overall training experience.

Before beginning the training session with participant couples, a practice session was conducted as a trial run. The trainers, ethnographer, and consulting team members met for the practice session and incorporated all aspects of the study design outlined in the methods section. The practice group was conducted with two couples. One couple was a married couple in their forties who had three adolescent children. Two male graduate students role-played the second couple. The purpose of this trial session was to pilot the group format, practice the process, and receive feedback from the "couples" and team members. This feedback was used to refine the format and program plan prior to beginning the formal study.

During the formal study couples participated in four group training sessions lasting for 90-120 minutes. The couples met one time per week for a total of four training sessions. Each training session was followed by a debriefing session. Couples met two weeks following the final training session for a group follow-up debriefing. The ethnographer conducted all post training session couple debriefing interviews. The follow-up debriefing interview with couples was conducted jointly by the ethnographer and the investigator/trainer.

The investigator/trainer and co-trainer were both experienced therapists enrolled in the doctoral program in Marriage and Family Therapy at Iowa State University. One trainer was female and the other male.

The male trainer held a master's degree in Social Work, had eighteen years clinical experience that included experiential marital and/or family therapy,
and was enrolled in the doctoral program in Marriage and Family Therapy at Iowa State University.

The female trainer, Patricia Fowler Keoughan, was also the investigator. Ms. Keoughan held a master's degree in Counseling and Personnel Services from Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa. She had post-graduate training in Marriage and Family Therapy from The Menninger Clinic in Topeka, Kansas. Also, Ms. Keoughan had experience and training in experiential group therapy. Ms. Keoughan had six years of clinical experience in marital and family therapy.

Ms. Keoughan's participation in the study as the primary investigator and as a participating trainer placed her at the heart of the study as a participant observer. Qualitative methodology has its roots in anthropological data collection procedures that include participant observation. Participant observation places the researcher in the context of the phenomenon under study and in the presence of participants on an ongoing basis (Stainback & Stainback, 1984).

The ethnographer was an experienced therapist with a masters degree in Marriage and Family Therapy. He was familiar with and had participated in qualitative research studies in which ethnographic interviewing techniques were used. The ethnographer was enrolled in the doctoral program in Marriage and Family Therapy at Iowa State University.

The consulting team members had masters degrees in one of the social sciences and/or helping professions and were enrolled the doctoral program in Marriage and Family Therapy at Iowa State University.

To provide diversity in gender perspective, the gender composition of the consulting team was made up of two men and one woman. Also, having a
male co-trainer working with the female trainer/investigator helped provide
gender balance in the training sessions.

The investigator/trainer and the co-trainer facilitated the training sessions.
A three-member consulting team provided input during each training session.
The team, investigator/trainer, and co-trainer engaged in a peer debriefing
following each training session. In order to facilitate the training sessions it
was necessary that both trainers and members of the consulting team be
informed of the purpose and methods of the study.

When couples met for the first training session an additional half-hour
pre-training session was used to further explain the program to participant
couples and obtain signatures on human subject consent forms and to have
couples complete a demographic survey. (See Appendix D). Also, during pre-
training session each couple was asked to identify a difficult issue in their
relationship and discuss that issue together for a period of five minutes. The
couple's interaction was audiotaped and used to describe the couple's
communication skill as measured by the Communication Rapid Assessment
Scale (Joanning, Brewster & Koval, 1984). Further, each couple was asked to
complete a self-report instrument, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier,
1976). The scores obtained on these instruments were used as additional
descriptors of the participant couples. (See Appendix E.)

At the end of the final, fourth session, an additional half-hour post-
training session was used for the couples to repeat the Communication Rapid
Assessment Scale (CRAS) (Joanning et al., 1984) and the Dyadic Adjustment
Scale (DAS) (Spanier, 1976). These two assessment procedures, along with
interview data and demographic information from couples, were used in
complementary fashion to describe the couples who participated in the study. Such complementary use of data is a form of triangulation designed to build a description using multiple vantage points. Triangulation of this type provided an in-depth description of the couples in the study so that readers of the study could determine whether the findings of the study may transfer to couples seen in other contexts.

Training sessions followed a pattern. Each session began with an introductory phase, followed by an initiative phase, and ended with the processing phase. This pattern was followed unless debriefing interview information from couples indicated a need for change. In other words, the pattern was subject to change based on the needs of the participants.

During the first training session, Phase I, the introductory phase, involved getting acquainted and assessing the readiness of the couples to proceed to the initiative phase. Subsequent sessions used the introductory phase primarily to process (discuss) the emotional state of the participants and their readiness to proceed with the initiative phase of the session.

Next, during the initiative phase, an activity or a problem was presented to the group members for a response. The investigator/trainer and co-trainer introduced and set up the initiative, gave directions for the group to follow in responding to the initiative, and facilitated participation of group members in responding to the initiative.

Finally, during the processing phase of the training session, investigator/trainer and co-trainer facilitated the conversation among the couples regarding their experience of the initiative. During group processing the investigator/trainer and co-trainer drew upon their training as therapists.
using those skills to facilitate discussion among group members. The investigator/trainer and co-trainer asked questions intended to generate conversation relative to the participants experience of a particular initiative rather than their overall experience of the entire session. An example of an initial question to open the group processing is as follows:

"You've just completed an initiative. What was your experience of participating in the initiative?"

"What has it been like for you to have participated in the preceding activity?"

The investigator/trainer and co-trainer continued to facilitate the conversation of participants by following up on words and phrases used by the participants in their response to the initial question. Each training session was audio and video recorded. Video recordings were reviewed by the researcher. A consulting team of three therapists observed throughout each training session. Periodically during the session, the investigator/trainer and co-trainer consulted with the team. In the hope of enhancing the training session and the overall model development, the consulting team members were asked to provide suggestions for investigator/trainer and co-trainer to use within the training session and to assist in overall model development. Therefore, the consulting team members observed the group process as a whole, interactions of the couples during the training session, and the trainers actions throughout the training sessions. From their observations, consulting team members were asked to offer relevant ideas and suggestions for to use within the session in progress and/or subsequent sessions. During the peer debriefing (investigator/trainer, co-trainer and consulting team members) the consulting
team was also asked to offer ideas for changes in the model based on their observations. Also, during peer debriefings following each session the consulting team members, co-trainer, ethnographer, and investigator trainer generated ideas and plans for each subsequent session.

Training sessions continued regardless of any absence of consulting team members. Any team member(s) missing a training session was (were) asked to view the video recording of the session and offer their feedback and suggestions for the model after viewing the tape.

To develop a model of marital enrichment that incorporates an experiential element the investigator pursued the phenomenological experience of participants as a means of informing the development of the model. Information based on the phenomenological experiences of participant couples gleaned during debriefing interviews following each session was used by the investigator/trainer, co-trainer, and the team in developing the next session. Plans for subsequent training sessions were based on couples' debriefing comments. Therefore, each session was based on a flexible, rather than a tightly structured format. In other words, a general format was established a priori, but it was flexible and varied with the emergent needs of the group. In this way, any particular initiative chosen for the group was based on the meanings conveyed by the group. These meanings developed through languaging among couples within the group. Goolishian and Anderson (1992) describe languaging as conversation that generates new meaning or "constructed realities." These constructed realities became the basis for selecting a particular initiative. The investigator/trainer's and the co-trainer's
choices of a particular initiative was led by the consensual communication, that is, the constructed realities, of the group members.

Several initiatives metaphorically represented salient relationship issues for couples in the group. The initiative selected by the investigator/trainer and co-trainer was based on those pervasive issues emergent in the group. If trust had been a pervasive issue, an initiative to provide an analogy of trust would have been chosen.

An example of an initiative analogy for trust is the "Blind Walk." For this initiative each of the couples is instructed to discuss and decide who would be their leader. The other partner would then be given a blindfold and asked to place it over their eyes. The leader partner would then be responsible for safely escorting the "blind" partner on a brief walk. At the end of the walk the couples would be given an opportunity to discuss, as a group, their experience. Next, partners would exchange positions and the previous leader would become "blind" and their partner would lead them back to the starting place via a different route. The group would be given opportunity to process their experience. During the conversational processing of the initiative, language used by the participants validates or invalidates the meaning of the initiative as anticipated by the investigator/trainer and co-trainer.

Also, following each training session an ethnographer conducted a group debriefing with participant couples using ethnographic interview techniques. The ethnographer interviewed the couples as a group seeking descriptions of the couples' experiences of the entire training session. The interviews were audio recorded. Recordings were transcribed and analyzed before the next session. These transcript analyses were used to inform the next session. In
other words, information generated during the debriefing group was used by
the investigator/trainer, co-trainer, consulting team, and ethnographer to further
expand, describe and inform the model on a session-by-session basis.

The weekly group debriefing interviews with couples were conducted as
a group. The interviews consisted primarily of open ended questions to elicit as
much information as possible from the informants and to limit introduction of
interviewer biases. The interviewer sought to expand responses of the
interviewees by asking for clarification, elaboration or examples. Interviews
began with a broad open-ended question such as, "Would you please describe
your experience of participating in this group session. What meaning did the
initiative have for you?" At the end of each session the consulting team, the
investigator/trainer, and co-trainer debriefed one another. The consulting team
members, the investigator/trainer, and co-trainer conducted their debriefing in
another room while the couples were being debriefed by the ethnographer.
Debriefing sessions with the team, investigator/trainer, and co-trainer were
audiotaped. The recordings were also transcribed and analyzed following each
session. These transcriptions analyses were used as an additional means of
informing the next session and building the model.

The ethnographer and the primary investigator also met each week
following the couple group debriefing and the peer debriefings of trainers and
consulting team. The consulting team, investigator/trainer, and co-trainer
debriefing interviews, along with the ethnographer and investigator discussions,
were used inform the model and to provide a member check.

Each week the investigator in consultation with the ethnographer
compiled a written description of the emerging model. The model was
reviewed with the consulting team, investigator/trainer, and co-trainer as part of their peer debriefing interviews. The model was modified and revised as new information became available.

Couples were asked to return two-weeks following the final training session for a follow-up group debriefing interview. The follow-up debriefing interview was conducted by the investigator/trainer and the ethnographer. The follow-up debriefing interview was audio recorded. The follow-up debriefing interview was conducted two weeks after the final treatment session to allow for the dissipation of the "halo" effect. The "halo" effect is the lingering highly charged emotional response associated with participation in experiential group work (Brock & Joanning, 1983). Participants were able to recall their experience but less intensely colored by emotionally charged effects usually present for a short period following this type of group process.

Follow-up interviews began with broad open-ended questions such as, "If a close friend were to ask you about what you had been doing during these evenings you've spent here, what you would tell him/her about your experience? How would you describe what you have been doing?"

The goal of the follow-up debriefing interview done two weeks following the final training session was twofold. First, the interview was concerned with hearing couples phenomenological experiences of the training. Their experiences of the process provided further ideas and information for model development. Therefore, the model was grounded in clients' experiences. Second, the investigator was interested in assessing lasting impressions and effects rather than the "emotional high" characteristic of participants who have just finished an intense group experience. Interview questions concerned with
changes couples experienced are analogous to outcome data. Specifically, questions that generated information regarding changes in the couples' relationship evident in the areas of communication, problem-solving, affectional/sexual relationship, and overall marital satisfaction were asked of the couples.

Questions included in the follow-up interview were as follows:

1. Overall, what has it been like for you to participate in this program? Or, please describe your experience of participating in this program.

2. What changes, if any, have occurred in your marital relationship since training? Or, what changes, if any, have occurred relative to overall marital satisfaction?

3. What changes, if any, have occurred in your communication?

4. What changes, if any, have occurred regarding your problem-solving?

5. What changes, if any, have occurred in your affectional/sexual relationship?

6. What did you experience as helpful in the training?

7. What did you experience as not helpful in the training?

8. What changes in the training would you suggest?

In both the weekly group debriefing interviews and the final follow-up interviews, couples were asked to expand upon responses to the broad, open-ended questions. This was accomplished by asking the couples descriptive, structural, and contrast questions (Spradley, 1979).
Descriptive questions ask the "informant" to describe their experience more fully. For example: "Could you tell me what you mean by you talk more openly now?"

Structural questions are designed to ask the informant to further define possible "domains," that is, broad categories of meaning. For example: "You've talked about having different kinds of arguments. Would you tell me more about these different kinds of arguments?"

Contrast questions are designed to further define the meaning implicit in symbolic language used by informants by finding out how one symbol is different from other symbols. For example: "You've used the words, 'argument,' 'heated discussion,' and 'love talk.' How are these three things different?"

Although these three types of questions are not totally discrete, they tend to get at different dimensions of meaning and allow the interviewer to better understand how informants view experiences in their life. In this study such questions allowed the investigator to more fully understand how couples had experienced the training program.

The ethnographic interview ended when couples had shared all relevant information, that is, until the couples began to repeat themes.

Following completion of all training session debriefing interviews with all couples, and the follow-up interviews with couples, a preliminary analysis of the data was conducted.

The results of information gleaned from the interviews and the descriptive data available from the scale scores of instruments, along with demographic data were integrated into a final report. This final report was a
compilation of the ethnography of couples phenomenological experience of the training program, the results of the behavioral and self-report instrument, and the training model that evolved during the course of the study. The training model has been described throughout the study by the investigator. This model was "informed" by the comments of the couples during debriefing, as well as by the investigator/trainer, co-trainer, and consulting team peer discussions following each treatment session, and by the follow-up interviews with participant couples.

Consequently, the final report includes the training model based upon the investigator/trainer's, co-trainer's, and couples' actual experience of the process of training. The training model, in turn, became the training process or program. Future outcome studies employing a pretest, posttest, follow-up with control group design may be conducted to further evaluate and test the model.

Instruments

The two instruments were used in this study to provide descriptive data rather than statistical data. A behavioral instrument and a self-report instrument was used for this purpose.

Behavioral The Communication Rapid Assessment Scale (CRAS) (Joanning et al., 1984) was used as a behavioral measure of interpersonal communications between members of a couple unit. (See Appendix E.) The verbal form of CRAS was used in the study. A five-minute audio taped interaction in which couples discussed a difficult relationship issue was obtained and subsequently evaluated by two trained raters. The raters rated the interaction on a range from -2 (verbal behaviors highly destructive to a
relationship) through +2 (behaviors highly constructive to a relationship). Therefore, the five-point scale would make available scores of -2, -1, 0, +1, +2. Raters were asked to consider the conversation as a whole rather than allowing one statement or behavior to provide the basis for the rater decision. Rather, raters were asked to rate their impression of the overall conversation. Raters were asked to first decide if a conversation was neutral. Neutral conversations received a rating of zero. If raters decided the conversation was not neutral they were asked to rate the impact of the conversation on the quality of the relationship. Raters were asked to indicate a positive impact with a "+" and negative impact with a "-." Further, raters were asked to rate the degree to which the conversation was negative or positive using the numbered scale 1 or 2 preceded by the positive or negative indicator. The scale was developed by Joanning et al., (1984) and has been reviewed for content validity and interrater reliability. Content validity was established by basing the scale on the findings of previous empirical studies of components of couple communication. Interrater reliability was determined to range from $r = .92$ and .99 in various studies (Joanning et al., 1984).

**Self-Report** The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) developed by Spanier in 1976, was used. (See Appendix E.) This instrument assesses spouses' perceptions of changes in marital satisfaction. The instrument provides a total scale score and four subscale measures. The four subscales are (a) dyadic satisfaction, (b) dyadic cohesion, (c) dyadic consensus, and (d) affectional expression. The 32-item DAS was derived through factor analysis of the content of existing marital adjustment scales. Reliability coefficients for scales
range from .73 to .96. Also, content validity, criterion-related validity and construct validity are established by Spanier (1976).

Construct validity was established by demonstrating an intercorrelation of .86 for married and .88 for divorced respondents between the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale. Criterion related validity was established by retaining only those items that distinguished between married and divorced couples using a t-test ($p < .001$). Content validity was established if three judges considered the items relevant, consistent with nominal definitions of adjustment and satisfaction, and carefully worded with fixed choice responses.

Analysis of verbal data from ethnographic interviews

Qualitative data analysis procedures were used for this study. Training sessions, interviews, and debriefings were audio taped and transcribed. The transcriptions were analyzed according to the Developmental Research Sequence of Spradley (DRS) (Spradley, 1979).

Domain analysis as specified by the DRS were used. Four orders of domain analysis ensue:

1. Raw transcription of the interviews.

2. Synthesis statements, derived from key words and phrases, were extracted from the raw text.

3. Synthesis statements were clustered and collapsed into categories of similar meanings obtained from each couple.
4. Domains of meaning obtained from each couple, and/or investigator/trainer, co-trainer, and team members were clustered and collapsed into categories of similar meanings from across all informants.

Spradley (1979) described domains as any symbolic category that included other categories. Domain analysis is a methodological means of understanding a person's phenomenological experience according to the language he or she uses to talk about and to classify a particular experience (Sturtevant, 1972).

Following the suggestions of Guba (1981) the following steps were taken to insure the study was done rigorously. Four indicators of rigor have been incorporated into the study. These four indicators are:

1. Credibility
2. Transferability
3. Dependability
4. Confirmability

Descriptions of these four indicators of rigor as established in this study are given below.

1. **Credibility** was established by integrating the interpretations of different individuals involved in the study. For example, peer debriefings among investigator/trainer, co-trainer and consulting team were used to develop the initial analyses. Credibility was further established through triangulation of various forms of data.

   Triangulation was introduced by asking an informed but uninvolved person to review the analysis and suggest changes. Likewise, member checks were done by asking participant couples to review and comment upon the initial findings of the qualitative analysis. Further triangulation has been provided
through the complementary use of descriptive data generated by the CRAS, the DAS, and the interviews with participant couples.

These various steps have been taken to insure that the final ethnography incorporated the phenomenological experiences of multiple observers rather than the interpretation of a lone investigator. In short, an attempt was made to reach consensus among all study participants.

2. **Transferability** was established by sufficiently defining the context of the study so that readers of the final ethnography could determine if the information gathered in this study is useful to them in a context different from that in which the study was conducted. Two methods were used to establish transferability. The first was purposive sampling. A sample the range of couples were chosen to participate in an enrichment group experience. For example, a young newly married couple, a middle-aged couple married twenty to thirty years, and a remarried couple were recruited to insure diversity across the marital life cycle. Transferability was further established by writing a contextual description of the findings of the study. This description included sufficient information and examples from participants' comments to allow the reader to make judgments regarding the appropriateness of study findings to other contexts.

3. **Dependability** was established by overlapping methods of data interpretation such as triangulation and member checks already mentioned. Further, the researcher organized and methodically managed data collection and data analysis so that an uninvolved party could readily understand what, how and why the study was conducted. The researcher's careful organization and documentation of the process of the study provides an "audit trail." Adequate
records provided an audit trail that informs the reader exactly how the analysis was done and how the methodology evolved during the course of the study (Lincoln & Guba. 1985). The various sources of data that provided the audit trail in this study are as follows:

1. Raw data
   ◆ electronically recorded materials
     • audio recordings (and transcripts)
     • video recordings

2. Data reduction and analysis (see previously mentioned DRS)
   ◆ Summaries of transcripts including
     • Synthesis statements
     • Clustered and collapsed categories of similar meanings
     • Domains of meaning

3. The research proposal

4. The two assessment instruments and their results
   a. Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976)
   b. Communication Rapid Assessment Scale (Joanning, 1984)

Using the above mentioned items as an audit trail, a dependability audit was conducted by a researcher who was informed and experienced in both qualitative methodology and marital enrichment. The auditor is a graduate of Iowa State University with a Ph.D. in Human Development and Family Studies and a Specialization in Marriage in Family Therapy. The dependability audit
was conducted in order to insure a logical progression throughout the course of the study.

4. Confirmability was established by attempting to introduce neutrality into the efforts of the investigator. This investigator attempted to remain neutral by using triangulation and an audit trail to insure that the procedures followed during the study were not an arbitrary application of only the researcher’s interpretation of the data.

Neutrality through triangulation was provided for in this study through the peer debriefings following each session and through the involvement of the consulting team during each session. The researcher, who is also a participant observer, was thus challenged and/or confronted when non-neutrality or biases emerge.

In summary, rigor was introduced into the study by using a variety of methods, which at times overlapped, to increase the probability that credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were established.

Information provided by the CRAS (Joanning et al., 1984) and DAS (Spanier, 1976) scores simply provided additional descriptive data of the participants that allowed for additional triangulation. Because of the small sample size and for the purpose of this study, analysis of these scores was descriptive only. Therefore, tables have been generated indicating scores of the CRAS (Joanning et al., 1984) and the DAS (Spanier, 1976) to give a visual representation of score variances and changes for each participant couple observed at each administration of the instruments. Due to the small number of participants in this pilot study, that is, ten to twelve individuals making up five to six couples, comparison of scores was on a case-by-case basis.
RESULTS

This study was designed to develop a model of experiential marital enrichment as described by participant couples, facilitators, and consulting team members. This study used ethnographic interview techniques to gather data that was then analyzed using Spradley's (1979) Developmental Research Sequence (DRS).

Demographic and Descriptive Data

Descriptions of informant participants

Six couples participated in the study. The couples were selected using opportunistic sampling procedures. The program was advertised in the local newspapers and in area churches. Interested couples contacted the investigator and were screened for inclusion in the program.

Scores of the DAS and CRAS provided descriptive information of couples who participated in the study. The mean scale scores for married couples is 114.8 with a standard deviation of 17.8 (Spanier, 1976). The mean scale score for divorced couples is 70.7 (Spanier, 1976). Scores obtained on the DAS indicated all couples with the exception of one fell within Mean range of a well adjusted dyad ($M = 114.8$, $SD = 17.8$). One couple fell below the Mean range ($M = 70.7$, $SD = 23.8$) with a score below that of divorced individuals. This same couple received scores on the CRAS that indicated some difficulties in the area of communication.
The following descriptions of participants was provided to further inform the results of this study.

**Couple A**  This couple resided in Ames, Iowa. They were both Caucasian and both were 41 years old. They had been married 17 years. Neither spouse reported prior marriages. They both identified themselves as Catholic. They had three teenage children. Both spouses worked and reported their income over $50,000 per year. The husband reported having a two-year college degree and the wife graduate or professional training.

Pre- and posttest scores for Couple A are indicated in Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DAS</th>
<th>CRAS (Couple)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Couple A did well both pre- and posttest of the CRAS. The raters finally agreed on a +1 at posttest but indicated they were close to a +2.

**Couple B**  Couple B resided in Nevada, Iowa. They were both Caucasian. He was 32 years old and she was 28 years old. They had been married for 18 months. They had no children. They both described their religious affiliation as Pentecostal. She reported having had some college and he reported completing high school. Both reported previous marriages. She
was married previously for six months and he for six years. She described her career as management and he described himself as a professional. He reported his income to be over $50,000 and she reported her income to be between $31,000 and $35,000 per year.

This couple argued during the CRAS pretest. They indicated having been engaged in a heated discussion on their way to the session. This was obviously carried over into their pretest. At posttest the couple discussed the group and what they had learned from the program (Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DAS</th>
<th>CRAS</th>
<th>(Couple)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>143</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Couple C**  
Couple C was a Caucasian couple married for 23 years with one child who was nine years old. Both spouses were 46 years old. Neither reported having been married previously. The wife reported her religion as Unitarian Universalist and the husband reported no religious affiliation. Both spouses reported graduate or professional training. Both spouses were employed and described themselves as professionals making over $50,000 per year.

This couples' pre and post test scores are shown in Table 3. The DAS scores were indicative of a couple with significant relationship problems. The
CRAS scores taken along with the DAS indicated that this couple was having difficulty in their relationship. At both testing times of CRAS this couple focused on non-relationship issues.

Table 3 Couple C Pre- and Posttest Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DAS</th>
<th>CRAS (Couple)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Couple D Couple D was a Caucasian couple who had been married for over 11 years. They resided in Ames, Iowa. She was 34 years old and he was 35 years old. Neither reported having been married previously. They had two children, a six-year-old school-age child and a three-month-old infant. The wife reported her religious affiliation to be Lutheran and the husband reported his to be Catholic. Both completed four-year college degrees. Both were employed. She reported her professional area to be Design and he reported himself as a professional. They reported their income to be over $50,000 per year.

Pre and posttest scores for Couple D are shown in Table 4. This couple focused on non-relational issues at both testing of the CRAS. They did not have any difficult issue to discuss at posttest.
Table 4 Couple D Pre- and Posttest Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DAS</th>
<th>CRAS (Couple)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Couple E  This was a Caucasian couple married four and one-half years and reported having no previous marriages. She was 28 years old and he was 29 years old. They lived in Ames, Iowa and had one child who was 11 months old. Husband and wife both reported their religious affiliation to be Catholic. They both also reported having completed a four-year college degree. He described himself and a professional and she as a homemaker. Their income was reported to be between $41,000 and $45,000 per year.

The DAS and CRAS pre- and posttest scores for Couple E are shown in Table 5.

This couple dealt with a very heavy relationship issue at posttest and a non-relationship issue at pretest of the CRAS.

Table 5 Couple E Pre- and Posttest Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DAS</th>
<th>CRAS (Couple)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Couple F  Couple F was a Caucasian couple married for two years. She was 23 years and he was 26 years old. They reported no previous marriages and had no children. They lived in Ames, Iowa and both were attending graduate school. They both reported their religious affiliation to be The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They reported their income to be between $16,000 and $20,000 per year.

The pre- and posttest scores of the DAS and CRAS for Couple F are shown in Table 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DAS</th>
<th></th>
<th>CRAS (Couple)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>124</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>+ 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This couple was open and respectful during both the pre- and posttesting of the CRAS. They discussed a relationship issue at both testing.

Table 7 summarized the demographic information and the pretest/posttest scores of the participant (informant) couples.

Analysis of the Qualitative Data

The analysis of data began with transcribing the audio recordings of all ethnographic interviews with couples and therapy teams into printed text. The text was then read and key words and phases were highlighted. The text was
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Couple</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>PreM</th>
<th>Yrs M</th>
<th>Reside</th>
<th>Income/Yr</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th># Child</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A W</td>
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<td>Ames</td>
<td>&gt;50,000</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>115</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A H</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td></td>
<td>111</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B W</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>31-35,000</td>
<td>Pentecostal</td>
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<td>137</td>
<td>143</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B H</td>
<td>32</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;50,000</td>
<td>Pentecostal</td>
<td></td>
<td>141</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C W</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>Ames</td>
<td>&gt;50,000</td>
<td>Unitarian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C H</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;50,000</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td>81</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D W</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>Ames</td>
<td>&gt;50,000</td>
<td>Lutheran</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>122</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D H</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;50,000</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td></td>
<td>110</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E W</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Ames</td>
<td>42-45,000</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>110</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E H</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td></td>
<td>101</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F W</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Ames</td>
<td>16-20,000</td>
<td>LDS</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>124</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F H</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>LDS</td>
<td></td>
<td>119</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
then re-read and synthesis statements were written in the right hand column of the transcript. Synthesis statements are summaries of the major thought expressed within a given portion of the text. In some cases a synthesis statement was written for one paragraph of text. In other cases a single synthesis statement might summarize one or more pages of text. The number of synthesis statements per page was dependent upon the "denseness" of the text, that is, the amount of relevant information provided as opposed to casual conversation or irrelevant comments. The raw data and synthesis statements were re-read by the investigator and sorted into related categories using the "Find" function of Microsoft Word for Windows Program (1991). The resulting categories were further gathered into related domains of meaning. Domains of meaning were the most inclusive category developed for the study.

Synthesis statements gathered from the analysis of the transcripts from all four of the training sessions were provided to couples at the follow-up debriefing session. (See Appendix F.) Couples were asked to comment on these synthesis statements indicating where they agreed or disagreed with the analysis. Couples agreed fully with the synthesis statements that were provided. Comments provided by couples during the follow-up debriefing were used to further develop the complete analysis and expand synthesis statements where appropriate.

**Weekly post-training couples' debriefings**

The results of domain analysis of the couples' debriefings are given below. The results were arranged in the following manner. Domains were organized from largest and most important to smallest and least important.
Within domains the results were presented beginning with the name of the domain followed by a brief definition and description of the domain. Within large domains, the domain was further broken into subdomains. Following the definition of domain, or subdomain, a detailed section entitled characteristics was listed. The characteristics section provided relevant quotes generated by couples during ethnographic interviews. Within the characteristics section comments were organized by the session debriefing during which the comment was made. These detailed quotes were included to give the reader a clear idea of the "raw data" upon which the further domain analysis was done. Following the characteristics section an additional section within each domain was given and labeled elaboration. The elaboration section gathered all the synthesis statements developed during the textual analysis of transcripts. These synthesis statements were gathered within the domain for which they were relevant. The synthesis statements were edited for ease of reading.

**Couples' Debriefings.** Five domains of meaning were evident in the data generated by the couples' debriefings that occurred following each of the four training sessions. The overall domains were:

1. Evaluation
2. Meanings
3. Group
4. Ethnography
5. Outcome

Within the domain of Evaluation, four clusters of meaning were identified. The clusters are: (a) Expectations, (b) Liked, (c) Not liked (Xliked),
(d) *Suggestions.* Also, within the domain of Meaning were two clusters. Those clusters are (a) *Learning,* (b) *Play.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOMAINS</th>
<th>CLUSTERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meanings</td>
<td>Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnography</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2 Couples’ Debriefings Domains & Clusters

Domain: *Evaluation* This domain included characteristic descriptions of participants' general and inclusive evaluation of the program. This domain emerged from informant debriefing interviews. Characteristics of the general domain of Evaluation were provided followed by a related elaboration of the domain.

Characteristics of the Domain: Evaluation were identified by session. Characteristics were quotations taken from transcripts that were relevant to the domain.

*Characteristics of Session 2:*

2.1 *I think last week some of us thought it was going the wrong direction.* (EVALUATION)
2.2 It was a good meeting. Better than last time? Definitely. (EVALUATION)

2.4 I thought about that all week. What the spontaneous conversation that came out at home, many of us felt like we had lost play in our marriage. I really think that was a wonderful starting point. If everything about marriage is so serious and so much work you think why bother? I thought the message was right about getting back to play. Then go back to others. So in spite of the fact that we were critical of her later, I thought what a wonderful starting point for us. (EVALUATION) (MEANING)

2.5 We didn’t have enough time. (EVALUATION)

2.6 It was frustrating because there were so many people. (EVALUATION)

Characteristics of Session 3:
Letters summarizing the comments of the participants from the ethnographic interviews were sent to participants following sessions 1, 2, and 3. (See Appendix G.)

3.1 [letters received] Both times? And that’s good? In addition to what is going to be coming? [Yes.] (EVALUATION)

Characteristics of Session 4:

4.7 . . . it was hard to pull them up [Ideas generated during sessions], then you have to put them away. (EVALUATION)

4.11 Pat would have to say, do you want to keep talking or do what we prepared for tonight? You kind of wanted to know but we weren’t done
talking. (EVALUATION) did you feel like you had the choice to say no? (EVALUATION) I totally felt like that. (EVALUATION)

4.12 I thought they were quite successful. (EVALUATION)

Characteristics of Follow-up Session:

f.2 I don't think there was anything that didn't fit someone. I think most everything that you did, when I looked around the room I thought it fit somebody at least. So I couldn't say take anything out. (EVALUATION)

f.3 [A letter requesting participants wear comfortable clothing and no jewelry was sent to participants prior to the first session.] . . . letter before we started, in fact, I think that created more anxiety for me than necessary. Stuff like don't wear jewelry. Comfortable clothes. (EVALUATION)

Elaboration of the Domain: Evaluation summarized the information from within the domain. Within the domain of overall program evaluation couples identified what was helpful and what was not. This domain included couples ideas of what they thought could be changed to make the program or a particular session better.

Couples discussion of the overall program revealed that they were curious about the initiatives and therefore wanted to participate in them. However, they indicated that they particularly appreciated the discussions among the group members. It was during the discussions, pre- and post-initiative processing, that couples indicated they gained the most from the experience.
There was indication from the couples that some of the initiatives were not as well connected to prior or later initiatives or the process in general as they would have liked. Couples views of the final session on intimacy were that it was more thoughtful, serious, uncomfortable and difficult.

Couples evaluations of the sessions evolved from the first session through the follow-up session. Following the first session, couples indicated some concern about getting their expectations met and some ambivalence about the experience. The evaluation following Session 2 was more approving. At the follow-up session couples continued to offer ideas for program improvement and seemed more comfortable with that role. They also were approving of the overall program concept. Furthermore, the negative evaluation couples gave regarding the initiative of the first session changed to a strong consensus regarding the desirability of consistently using the same, or a similar initiative for a first session in subsequent programs. In short, after completing the program, the couples affirmed value of the first session initiative.

**Cluster: Expectations** Within the domain of evaluation were clusters of meaning relative to the domain. Expectations was a cluster within the Evaluation Domain that described various expectations couples had of the experience prior to and throughout the sessions.

Characteristics of the Cluster: Expectations were quotations taken from transcripts that were relevant to the cluster. These characteristics were identified according the each session.
Characteristics of Cluster: Expectations from Session 1:

1.1 We came here tonight thinking okay, we are going to do this, and the following week will be better because we learned how to work on a relationship by doing this. Maybe we are too methodical.

1.3 For one reason, I didn’t come into this program to "better my marriage." I heard about it, it sounded fun, I'll do it. So I didn’t have a set goal. (EXPECT)

1.4 I'm starting to get the feeling that there's some folks coming in with some different expectations of what this is all about. This is something that we need to attend to in terms of how we invite folks to come be a part of this. We need to make that more clear. How many people were disappointed, had different expectations about what actually happened? [two couples and one member of another couple] (EXPECT)

1.5 I heard you had some expectations? (EXPECT) Yes, and you didn’t feel like that happened at all when we were talking about playfulness? (EXPECT)

I don’t think we were expecting an expert opinion from on high about do or don’t. Because if there was a formula for patenting marriages somebody would have done it a long time ago. Fifty percent bite the dust these days so there is obviously no magic formula. No, I was not expecting anything from you and Pat and Dan. The answer is no, I wasn’t. (EXPECT)

1.6 . . . thought that we would be doing some things for us. (EXPECT) (COUPLES)
1.7 Mike and I are really going to have to really make some time to talk about this because it's not being met for me here. (EXPECT)

Characteristics of Cluster: Expectations from Session 2:

2.1 [The researcher sent letters to couples during the week summarizing the first session's comments] [Letters] Helped to focus. You had a better concept of what to expect. (LIKED) (EXPECT)

2.2 . . . everyone was saying last week was, it wasn't what we expected. I think this week may have been what was expected. (EXPECT)

2.3 I like to have, coming in a little prepared, having some focus for me when I come in. I thought that activities were brief enough to spark our interest, that I had time to talk with Mike about it. So when we go home, it would only be bigger and we could work on it the rest of the week. (EVALUATION) (LIKED) (EXPECT)

2.4 I think a lot of us came in with too many expectations last week. We are going to do this and this and this. Our expectations were too high for what they could do in one session. (EXPECTATIONS)

Characteristics of Cluster: Expectations from Follow-up Session:

f.1 I came to this looking for some seeds. I thought I definitely got that. (EXPECTATIONS)

f.2 I had visions of us rolling on the floor touching each other. (EXPECTATIONS)

f.3 I thought, now what are we going to do, something different! Like Star Trek. That's what attracted me to the experiential, it was something
different than work, everybody is so serious. I wanted to explore, do something way different. (EXPECTATIONS)

Elaboration of the Cluster: Expectations was a summary of information relevant to the cluster. Couples came to the first session expecting that the enrichment program would address their relationship concerns, but they were uncertain just how that was going to happen.

Initially some couples felt disappointed that their expectations were not met while others adjusted their expectations as they became involved in the process. Letters sent to the couples between sessions provided a focus developed from the ethnography. Couples indicated this helped satisfy their expectations. Couples expected the experience to be something "different." At follow-up the consensus among the couples was that their expectations had mostly been met by the end of the fourth session.

Cluster: Liked This cluster occurring within the domain of Evaluation describes various aspects of the program the participants liked, that is, are for which they expressed approval or commented on favorably. The relevant characteristics of the Cluster: Liked are given by sessions.

Characteristics of Cluster: Liked from Session 2:

2.1 looking at the letter seemed to give us some perspective a basic overview of this group... (LIKED)

2.2 It was basically good to see the overview of what everyone thought. (LIKED)
2.4 [letter] Helped to focus. You had a better concept of what to expect. (LIKED) (EXPECT)

2.5 ... when you are presented with this 3-4 days in advance, you can give it some thought and it is more meaningful to sit through it and see how it unfolds. (LIKED) (EVALUATION)

2.8 ... for communication I felt like this was really good. (LIKED) helped to give us something to talk about. We discussed the things we went over. I enjoyed that we got feedback that said, you guys are actually listening to us, you actually care to listen to this tape. But you listened to us evaluate, this was a strong point, (EVALUATION) (LIKED)

2.9 ... it made me feel like I wanted to come again. That I am spending my time here, you are actually going to use this, it is going to go toward a future project, like you said. Not get lost in the shuffle. (EVALUATION) (LIKED)

2.10 ... this letter gave us something to talk about. The communication between ourselves. It made us feel like coming here. Something was being done, people actually care. (EVALUATION) (LIKED)

2.11 It gave us feedback, which I think everybody was wanting. Going into something like this, I want some response. (EVALUATION) (LIKED) (EXPECT)

2.13 I like to have, coming in a little prepared, having some focus for me when I come in. I thought that activities were brief enough to spark our interest, that I had time to talk with Mike about it. So when we go home, it would only be bigger and we could work on it the rest of the week. (EVALUATION) (LIKED) (EXPECT)
2.14 I think it was good to see that other couples experienced the same frustrations that we experience. (LEARNING) (LIKED)

2.15 ... what I found to be the most beneficial tonight. To hear that other people are happy and frustrated with the exact same things that sometimes I feel within individual marriages. That was really important to understand. (EVALUATION) (LIKED) (LEARNING)

Characteristics of Cluster: Liked from Session 3:

3.1 I think it's helpful for Pat, it gives us a chance to wrap things up, talk about the evening in her absence. Then she can review the tape and put it into letter form which is helpful for us to read it. (ETHNOGRAPH)(LIKED)

3.2 Did you get a letter this week? Yes, which is very helpful. Especially after the first session. That really brought it together for me. I thought she did an excellent job interpreting out comments during this time debriefing the first session. Helpful for Pat first, helpful for us to bring it all together. (EVALUATION) (LIKED)

3.3 ... the letters during the week are beneficial. Helps us refresh our minds to what was said during the session. Also what is coming for the next session, for us to think about.

(LIKED)

3.4 ... this letter gave us something to talk about. The communication between ourselves. It made us feel like coming here. Something was being done, people actually care. (EVALUATION) (LIKED)
Characteristics of Cluster: Liked from Session 4:

4.2 I think the questions were okay and what we were supposed to do tonight in the time that was permitted was okay. But we just felt uncomfortable with it. I think that was very normal that we felt uncomfortable with it because the environment wasn't proper for that type of conversation. (EVALUATION) (MEANINGS) (LIKED) (XLIKED)

4.3 The blind one, I liked that one. (EVALUATION) (LIKED)

4.4 [Couples commented on the number of sessions they thought would useful.] . . . even though 5 or 6 might be more beneficial. I think too that what was interesting for us was it wasn't on a weekend. We didn't have to leave for a weekend, we could take little pieces here and there. It also gave us time to think about each piece before we moved on to a new one. Because I don't know if we would have taken a weekend enrichment. (EVALUATION) (LIKED)

4.5 . . . it's helpful to realize you are not the only one in the situation you are in. In a group of six couples, the room is big enough that at least one other couple has a very similar situation in some instance. That makes it easier to accept what maybe right or wrong with what you are doing. So you don't feel like some sort of oddball. The idea of sharing helps. (LEARNING) (EVALUATION) (LIKED)

4.6 I still lean towards the experiential. I wouldn't want the lecture. (EVALUATION) (LIKED)

4.7 I think the exercises help a person remember better, just by reinforcement. (EVALUATION) (LIKED)
4.8 I felt the activities that seemed to work the best for me were the things we did as a couple. (EVALUATION) (LIKED) (SUGGESTIONS)

Characteristics of Cluster: Liked from Follow-up Session:

f.1 [what is helpful] listening to other couples. (EVALUATION) (LEARNING) (LIKED)

f.2 That play is important. (LEARNING) (PLAY) (LIKED)

f.3 communication and playfulness was helpful, we relaxed and did more fun things. But communication for us is a key. (EVALUATION) (LIKED) (PLAY)

f.6 I felt that you [ethnographer] had an effective part in the four week session. Helping people develop theories in their heads of assessing what had gone on to produce a better 4,6,8 week session. (ETHNOGRAPH)(LIKED)

Elaboration of the Cluster: Liked was a summary of relevant information drawn from the characteristics. Each week the ethnographic debriefing interviews of couples were transcribed and evaluated. The comments of couples were summarized. The summary of couples comments were incorporated in letters that were sent to the couples during the week following Sessions 1, 2, and 3. (See Appendix G.) Couples received the letter prior to coming the to next session. These letters were not included in the original methodology section but were added during the course of the study. The research team speculated that a summary of comments made during debriefing sessions might be useful to the couples to help them understand the session just completed and prepare them for the next session. Couples confirmed this
speculation during subsequent debriefings. Couples liked receiving the letter that was sent to them during the week. They reported that the letters helped them to focus and to be better prepared for the next session. The letters provided a link between the ethnographic interviews and the following session. The information provided in the letters clearly informed the participants that their voices were heard and valued in designing the next session.

Couples also liked the focus on communication. Some indicated that they felt it could be useful to have communication as the focus of the all four sessions of the program.

Furthermore, couples reported feeling that during sessions they always had the option to continue conversations or move on and participate in an initiative.

*Cluster: Xliked* This cluster consisted of the comments couples made that were critical or disapproving of various aspects of the program. In the first interview couples commented critically on some aspects of the program that later in the follow-up interview they commented on favorably or approvingly.

Characteristics of the *Cluster: Xliked* were identified by session and were quotations from the session that were relevant to the cluster.

**Characteristics of Cluster: Xliked from Session 1:**

1.1 *I'm thinking ahead like, let's get on with this. I can learn everybody's name in a couple of times and then let's go.* (XLIKED) (SUGGESTIONS)
1.2 . . . one of those activities would have been enough to get to know everyone's name. (XLIKED)

1.3 . . . the lead-in was dragging out. (XLIKED)

1.4 I think a big part of it that felt missing for me is the couple interaction. (XLIKED)

Characteristics of Cluster: Xliked from Session 3:

3.1 We get some really fascinating conversation that it's too bad to kind of stop it. If I had my druthers, I'd just keep going. (ETHNOGRAPH) (XLIKED)

Characteristics of Cluster: Xliked from Session 4:

4.2 . . . we wanted to keep going and I didn't feel comfortable. I didn't want to open myself up when there were all these people. (EVALUATION) (XLIKED)

4.3 And I don't think we had any warm up time, we weren't talking specifically about our relationship so much, then all of a sudden you are supposed to dive into it. (EVALUATION) (XLIKED)

4.4 . . . the story did not serve as an adequate warm up?

4.6 I had a difficult time initiating a conversation like that and not being able to continue it. (EVALUATION) (XLIKED)

4.7 . . . we just felt uncomfortable with it. I think that was very normal that we felt uncomfortable with it because the environment wasn't proper for that type of conversation. (EVALUATION) (MEANINGS) (LIKED) (XLIKED)
4.8 . . . talk about these very specific, intimate things in your relationship for the next 10 minutes. Then it's going to be stopped and I hope you continue it later. That was difficult. (EVALUATION) (XLIKED) Not that it was bad.

4.9 But that it was hard to do. (EVALUATION) (XLIKED)

4.10 We'd like to just keep talking. (EVALUATION) (XLIKED)

4.11 I felt most of the exercises did not relate well enough. (EVALUATION) (XLIKED)

4.12 It seemed like we would be in these great conversations, really moving somewhere, we'd do an exercise that would just blow us away. We'd be back to square one. We would have lost the rapport we had going in the group. As if the exercises were contrived. For me they didn't meld with the directions that we were moving in or the points being made. . . . It didn't make sense to me, none of it rang true. So I didn't care about the exercises. (EVALUATION) (XLIKED) I totally agree. (EVALUATION) (XLIKED)

4.13 [INITIATIVE] . . . it was disruptive to the group's conversation. It derailed the conversation and few times and you would have to start all over again. (EVALUATION) (XLIKED)

4.14 It was rehashing the same thing over again. I think people got frustration out of explaining what we did over and over again. (EVALUATION) (XLIKED) (ETHNOGRAPH)

Elaboration of Cluster: Xliked were summary statements of the relevant characteristics. Couples indicated that their desire to continue the group discussion, or the processing aspect of the session, was interrupted by
the need to focus the sessions. Couples indicated they really enjoyed the processing, or discussion, part of the session the most, even though they were curious about what the initiative was going to be.

Some couples questioned the meaning and usefulness of different initiatives and reported having difficulty experiencing the initiatives as connected to the focus of the session. After the first session couples were uncertain why the initiative was used and how it was going to help them in their relationship. Some couples seemed uncertain of the usefulness of the initiative in which they were asked to communicate without speaking and without seeing their partner. Some couples experienced the problem-solving initiative of session three as a chaotic process. Some saw it as a puzzle with a solution, or many solutions.

The final session on intimacy was experienced with a noted degree of discomfort by many couples. Couples indicated a desire for greater privacy for the particular initiative and expressed discomfort at having an intimate conversation as a couple while in the room with other couples who were also having a similar conversation. However, they also commented that the topic was one that often generates discomfort. Also, several couples were unable to make a clear connection between the two initiatives of the "Fairy Tale" and the "Intimate Conversation."

*Cluster: Suggestions* This cluster contained the various suggestions for program improvement made by couples in the debriefing interviews.

Characteristics of the *Cluster: Suggestions* were given by session number. The characteristics were quotations relevant to the cluster.
Characteristics of Cluster: Suggestions from Session 1:

1.1 I would have liked to have seen some time where Mike and I would have talked about what we did well with our play and how fun that was for us. (XLIKED) (SUGGESTIONS)

1.3 I'm interested in your stories and what your life was about, I would have liked to hear more about how you are making play work in your lives and how I can apply that to my life. But your names aren't as important to me as your stories. (LEARNING)(SUGGESTIONS)

1.4 Maybe if we had done 5 different kinds of activities it would have been more interesting to me. (SUGGESTIONS)

Characteristics of Cluster: Suggestions from Session 2:

2.1 If we spent two more meetings just continuing with the communication theme, that would be good? (EVALUATION) (SUGGESTIONS)

Characteristics of Cluster: Suggestions from Session 3:

3.1 we could get as much out of continuing or if not more. To keep going with the spin we are in instead of stopping. (ETHNOGRAPH) (SUGGESTIONS)
Characteristics of Cluster: Suggestions from Session 4:

4.2 . . . this was pretty heavy and you feel like these people are sitting right next to you, maybe a little bit of space, more privacy was needed for such intimate questions. (EVALUATION) (MEANING) (SUGGESTIONS)

4.3 You need to warm up to that type of conversation, also it would be easier if you could face each other and not have any distractions. (EVALUATION) (SUGGESTIONS)

4.4 I think those would be great questions to send in the letter and say, see if some time this week you can get through one or two of these. Then continue the discussion here. (EVALUATION) (SUGGESTIONS)

4.6 I would even like to see it as something to go home with and say if you have time tonight, talk about this. Set some time aside this week for some questions. (SUGGESTIONS)

4.8 I would even like to see it as something to go home with and say if you have time tonight, talk about this. Set some time aside this week for some questions. (SUGGESTIONS)

4.9 . . . let us do it on our own time. I would have appreciated a few moments, (SUGGESTIONS) I needed more. (EVALUATION) (SUGGESTIONS)

4.11 I think the facilitator needs to take the bull by the horns ... that if the group is sitting here and not talking, that maybe we need to go to some activities. But if things are going along smoothly and people are talking, giving input, the facilitator could maybe ask a question that will head it in the direction that they want it to be without actually stopping everything and going through an exercise. (EVALUATION) (SUGGESTIONS)
4.13 I would have appreciated trying the activities and experiencing something new and learning something from that. (SUGGESTIONS)

Characteristics of Cluster: Suggestions from Follow-up Session:

f.1 It seemed like time was a little bit scrunched and there wasn’t as much time as we would appreciated. Or I would have liked to have a full two hours. (EVALUATION) (SUGGESTIONS)

f.2 I think two hours would be sufficient because you are getting enough seeds in there, it takes time to let the seeds be planted. (SUGGESTIONS) (MEANINGS) So you don’t get too many seeds in one night.

f.3 I question which might be more valuable. To have longer 4 sessions, or go to 5 or 6. Or could you actually do 5 or 6 especially in the summer time. In the winter time if you found a night, any night of the week there would be a number of people that could and a larger number that couldn’t. (EVALUATION) (SUGGESTIONS)

f.4 I should keep that part in? [GROUP JUGGLE] f.5 I hate to say it, but yes. (EVALUATION) (SUGGESTIONS)

f.6 I think what I would have changed with that activity was I would have liked to have known more about people, like how many years they have been married. If we had done that, or what their jobs were. So I could have gotten to know more about people that first night. (SUGGESTIONS)

f.7 . . . it was fairly brief. With the time we had and the fact that we switched topics every week, even though at the beginning we talked about it again...to me, because they are important and take so much work, it would take more time talking about them and going through the whole realm of what
surrounds that issue in order to really reinforce that in me. (EVALUATION) (SUGGESTIONS)

f.9 I felt the activities that seemed to work the best for me were the things we did as a couple. It seemed so many things we did as a group, we all came to a group decision and it made a lot of us cold. I guess I was hoping for some more activities as a couple. I think some of the others mentioned that too. Even if you would have given us little sheets to ask questions at home. Set aside time for discussion if there is time. I think that would have been useful. (EVALUATION) (LIKED) (SUGGESTIONS)

f.10 ... it would work best if you assigned us an assignment and say we will check back with you. When we did this we solved two things that needed to be done and would have probably gone on for months if you hadn't made us stop. If you give us an assignment we are going to do our assignment. (SUGGESTIONS)

f.15 Do you think that [ethnographic interview] should be a normal part of group ... Yes. Not just as an experiment for the educational process, but as a development process for everyone that takes this course. (ETHNOGRAPH) (SUGGESTIONS)

f.16 I think it would have been beneficial to us for you [Ethnographer] to explain your relationship to Pat. (SUGGESTIONS)

f.17 [LETTERS] I was looking for one this week. (LIKED) I was too. It would have helped to reflect on this before we came in. (SUGGESTIONS)
Elaboration of the Cluster: Suggestions was a summary of characteristics from the cluster. Couples suggested that more of the initiatives needed to focus on couple interaction. The suggestion was made by couples that a homework assignment similar to the initiative be given to couples to work on prior to each session. In this way they would be more prepared and focused, and their comfort level might be higher. Couples also suggested they be given more time and privacy in the session on intimacy.

The length of time of the sessions was discussed. Couples agreed that the entire two hours could be devoted to the group. The suggestion was made to have the program run for three hours, putting in some break time and keeping the ethnographic interview as a part of the experience.

**Domain: Meanings** This domain included characteristic descriptions of the meanings couples attached to or developed from their experience of the workshop. Comments in this domain tended to be interpretive thoughts and ideas couples had regarding the workshop, initiatives, interaction with facilitators, and conversations that occurred during the group processing time. Couples' comments within this domain included a search for meaning for themselves as individuals and couples, as well as broader meanings regarding the experience as a whole and the nature of the workshop.

Characteristics of the Domain: Meanings were relevant quotations from the debriefings. Characteristics were identified by the session from which they were taken.
Characteristics of Domain: Meanings from Session 1:

1.1 . . . we try to figure out what is going on. (MEANINGS)

1.2 I don't think this is an actual experiment though. (MEANINGS)

1.3 . . . It's a curiosity about what's this program leading to...

. . . trying to figure it out. I don't feel that this is an experiment. (MEANINGS)

1.5 . . . we were thinking more along the lines of whether you were trying to initiate more talk by acting as if you didn't know what was going on. Just to try to initiate people talking more. Not to see if there was an underlying thing. (MEANINGS)

1.6 I'm starting to learn that I don't think as deeply as other people. (MEANINGS)

1.8 I think the ball thing was to prove to us that we could have fun. Have fun doing it as a group. I don't think it was for names. I think it was to show this is fun, this is relaxing, we are having a good time. I agree that going around three times was a bit much but I think for them to open up the playful thing we had to do the ball thing to get there. They couldn't say, "Do you guys play?" What do you mean play? (MEANINGS)(PLAY)

1.9 We came here tonight thinking okay, we are going to do this, and the following week will be better because we learned how to work on a relationship by doing this. Maybe we are too methodical. (MEANINGS)(EXPECTATIONS)

1.10 I didn't see that as memorizing someone's name. I got people's names memorized by the first icebreaker, I think almost everybody did. I looked at that as more of a game. I looked at it more of should I throw the ball
to her or her? So see if I was competent enough. I didn't see it as a continual icebreaker. I saw the first thing as an icebreaker and the next thing is games. (MEANINGS)

1.11 I saw it as a game. I'm not saying a game because it had a purpose, I don't think like a meaningless game, I saw it as enjoying myself and having fun. I think other people were going I know everyone's name, now tell me how my marriage is going to be better. (MEANINGS) (PLAY)

1.12 ... think part of the problem is maybe they are trying to make us realize we shouldn't be thinking what's next, what's next, next. Let's take the exercise as it comes and go with it instead of wondering let's get going, get on with it. I think we learned something from play but if we are always wondering what's next, we are not going to learn what they are trying to teach us as what we are doing. (MEANINGS)

1.13 I think we are building a base of getting to feel comfortable tonight, knowing each other's names and feeling comfortable enough to open up as time goes on. (MEANINGS) (GROUP)

1.14 I think this is enrichment, what do we need to do as a group to teach each other what each other is doing and what they as professionals can say like think about it this way. Give us a new perspective, I think that's what this is all about. (MEANINGS) (GROUP)

Characteristics of the Domain: Meanings from Session 2:

2.3 ... make it grow, what is "It?" The communication. (MEANINGS)

2.4 To be aware of why were you frustrated during this exercise or were you frustrated with the nonverbals. To show each other yeah, sometimes you
do get frustrated, your nonverbals don't always go with what you are saying.

(MEANINGS)

2.5 I thought about that all week. What the spontaneous conversation that came out at home, many of us felt like we had lost play in our marriage. I really think that was a wonderful starting point. If everything about marriage is so serious and so much work you think why bother? I thought the message was right about getting back to play. Then go back to others. So in spite of the fact that we were critical of her later, I thought what a wonderful starting point for us. (EVALUATION) (MEANINGS)

2.6 I found myself dwelling on this play thing. How we had the lack of that. That's when I came back to the idea that we were much more playful as newlyweds. We kept dwelling on the kid thing and then I thought, maybe it was there but was lost. I agree with you totally. 

(MEANINGS)

2.7 We decided that it wasn't lost and we really tried to incorporate more play in our week and have a good time and let some other things go. I think just the awareness is so important. (MEANINGS) (PLAY) (CHANGE)

2.8 ... need to lighten up and put more emphasis on relaxing.

(MEANINGS)

Characteristics of the Domain: Meanings from Session 3:

3.1 We thought we were supposed to be stressed. How we all deal with frustration. How to deal with it differently. (MEANING)

3.3 I keep asking what's the purpose? (MEANING)

3.4 ... it's easier to talk about them than to talk to them. (MEANING)
3.5 . . . bringing out the point that it was easier to come here and say I just really nice this about him. (MEANING)

3.6 To me there is a solution. Just like this puzzle. (MEANING)

Characteristics of the Domain: Meanings from Session 4:

4.2 . . . we could bend the rules. (MEANINGS)

4.4 . . . that was her intent and we should take those questions and go.

4.5 She wanted us to initiate the conversation here. (MEANINGS)

4.7 The fairy tale thing, I don't really know what purpose that had. (EVALUATION) (MEANINGS)

4.9 They were used to show us as an example of what we were going to be talking about or did talk about. (MEANING)

4.11 . . . the last activity, even though it was uncomfortable, it gave me a chance to learn, or reflect something about myself, and it's something that I can learn from Mike. (MEANING)

Characteristics of the Domain: Meanings from the Follow-up Session:

f.1 . . . taking a class at Iowa State. (MEANING)

f.2 . . . taking a class at Iowa State together. (MEANING)

f.3 . . . we have talked about ways to communicate more efficiently. (MEANING)

f.4 . . . group therapy. (MEANING)

f.5 . . . It was group interaction. I think there was some therapy in that. (MEANING)
f.6 . . . we did four different things. . . . they all relate to an aspect of marriage. (MEANING) . . . we separated the different things we talked about. (MEANING)

f.7 . . . seeds to grow. The ideas to evolve. (MEANING)

f.8 . . . lot of discussion, people telling like experiences sprinkled with activities. (MEANING)

f.10 . . . part of a research project. (MEANING)

f.11 . . . the biggest part was the night we did play. I wanted to get through it. I looked back and saw how little I play. I play with Mason, but when Mike comes home, I don't think we joke as much. The week after we did that we played a lot, but every time things start to get tense, if we can just chill out and play more. It gets kind of contagious. I think the whole time, that's the big part I have been trying to remember. (CHANGE) (MEANING) (PLAY)

f.12 I think that's one thing I've held on to too. Consciously, the play thing. I was probably the most disappointed with that when we started. That's what I have kept with me throughout the whole thing. (CHANGE) (MEANING) (PLAY)

f.13 I made my own thing (MEANING)

f.14 I think it takes more time. I don't really know that we have had any immediate changes other than the sense of play, being more aware of either the lack of it or the effect it has. In terms of intimacy or communication, that's been implanted and it takes time, you've got to form a habit. So really what it did for me was raise my awareness. We have been married almost five years and even after that time, things start sliding, you may not pay attention.
Just by having an occasional thing like this, it brings some issues up to the forefront. For us, that was my goal on getting into this. No matter what shape it took, some things started sliding and issues came up and we talked. My problem is that I can talk all day and know things intellectually but putting things into practice is a lot of work. The seeds are there. (CHANGE) (MEANING)

f.15 I wondered if the evaluation was part of it to help clarify and reinforce. (MEANING) (ETHNOGRAPH)

f.16 Because I felt it was something to really challenge me and to dig in and take a look at myself. I think for us to sit down and do this, it can be really hard. If somebody makes us do it we are going to do it and think about it. (LIKED) (EVALUATION) (MEANING)

f.18 I think she was looking for new ideas instead of rehash. (ETHNOGRAPH) (MEANING)

f.19 I think it had different meaning for everybody. (MEANING)

f.20 . . . we kept trying to figure out. How do you relate? And Dan too. (MEANING) . . . he had a role, but was more in the background. Just having that second opinion. (MEANING) (GROUP)

f.21 I was thinking his role was reviewing for Pat and he was also watching the group for interactions and reactions and see how the activities were going. I would say he was more of an observer, yet somewhat involved. (MEANING)

f.23 It was exciting! (MEANINGS)
Elaboration of the Domain: Meanings was a summary of those characteristics within the domain. Couples were curious about the project. They could not decide if they thought of it as an experiment or not. The couples attempted to develop meaning for themselves from the first session, wondering about how it applied to their own lives. They were curious about where this would take them eventually. Couples voiced uncertainty about how playing together in this group was going to help their relationship.

During subsequent sessions couples indicated that they would go home and continue conversations begun in the group. By continuing their conversations after the training session they developed more ideas, insights, and meanings beyond what they had in the group.

Couples called their experience "attending class together at Iowa State." They talked about the workshops as a group process in which to discuss their marital relationships and explore ideas with one another for improving their marriages.

The workshops were viewed as "seed planting" experiences that in the future would "grow" into something even more meaningful. There was a tendency of each couple to experience the same group differently relative to their particular needs and view of the world. Couples continued to search for and develop meanings for themselves between the sessions as well as during the sessions.

*Cluster: Learning* This domain included those characteristic descriptions couples gave indicative of a learning experience. Therefore, the domain
included descriptions of aspects of the program that supported learning as well as individual’s and couple’s experiences and transfer of learning for themselves.

Characteristics of the Cluster: Learning were relevant quotations from the debriefings and were provided according to the sessions in which the quotations occurred.

Characteristics of Cluster: Learning from Session 1:
1.1. So it’s nice to see other married and see how other married people act with each other. See how they joke around, if they short-sheet the bed and stuff. To me it’s been enjoyable to just see other people. (LEARNING)

1.2 I think it helps to have that link with other people. (LEARNING)

1.3 I’m interested in your stories and what your life was about, I would have liked to hear more about how you are making play work in your lives and how I can apply that to my life. But your names aren’t as important to me as your stories. (LEARNING)(SUGGESTIONS)

1.4 I think these things just open up thought, like she says, and it worked tonight. Some kind of thought sparked by whether we feel we are having fun or not, that spark is there, and I’m glad it came from other people and not from a professional. I trust other people rather than one person. (LEARNING)

Characteristics of the Cluster: Learning from Session 2:
2.1. What people said about what had happened last week in their lives just because of this activity. I think that is a big help also. (LEARNING)
2.2. . . . it's interesting to hear how it affects people's lives differently. (LEARNING)

2.5. . . . what I found to be the most beneficial tonight. To hear that other people are happy and frustrated with the exact same things that sometimes I feel within individual marriages. That was really important to understand. (EVALUATION) (LIKED) (LEARNING)

2.6 You start to think that maybe you are weird. You know it's not the greatest way to act, ?? it's nice to see there are similar feelings. (LEARNING) (LIKED)

2.8 We helped each other with ideas and stuff. (LEARNING)

2.9 . . . it's nice to know someone else is experiencing these things. (LEARNING)

2.10 We talked all through the week about how certain couples reacted and talked about the married people with kids those without kids and when we have kids will be we like that? It's good for us because we are at that point, when we have kids, we can carry on this play thing when we've got them. Take in perspective from the other couples on what has happened with their kids. (LEARNING)

2.11 So you are learning from couples who have kids. What do you think they are learning from couples that don't have kids, yourselves?

   What they have lost. (LEARNING)

2.12 Was it good to have couples in this type of group, some with kids, some without? Yes. It is because it's good interaction and perspective. (LEARNING)
2.13 It's also nice to see people who have been married a long time. I look at my parents and think, I'm not sure I want a marriage like them. But then I see other people who really seem to be enjoying each other yes, they are sharing some frustration, but they are also sharing a lot of joys. (LEARNING)

2.15 . . . the richness of the different ages and stages in the group is a good thing? [yes, yes.] (LEARNING)(GROUP)

Characteristics of the Cluster: Learning from Session 4:

4.1. . . . different views. (LEARNING)

Characteristics of the Cluster: Learning from the Follow-up Session:

f.1 . . . the group helping each other rather than a facilitator or teacher/student thing. (GROUP) (LEARNING)

f.2 . . . it's helpful to realize you are not the only one in the situation you are in. In a group of six couples, the room is big enough that at least one other couple has a very similar situation in some instance. That makes it easier to accept what maybe right or wrong with what you are doing. So you don't feel like some sort of oddball. The idea of sharing helps. (LEARNING) (EVALUATION) (LIKED)

f.3 . . . helpful. Listening to other couples. (EVALUATION) (LEARNING) (LIKED)

f.4 That play is important. (LEARNING) (PLAY) (LIKED)

Elaboration of the Cluster: Learning was a summary of information generated in the characteristics within the cluster. Couples liked seeing other
couples in action and learning from one another. The couples indicated following several sessions that they particularly valued learning from one another. They considered the range of couples included in the group as particularly useful since they learned from one another's different experiences. The group punctuated the differences among the participants as couples with children and ones without, commenting that this difference also enhanced their learning experiences.

Couples indicated that learning from one another occurred primarily during discussions among the group members. That is where couples felt they gained the most benefit.

Couples liked having the opportunity to learn from the range of couples involved in the sessions. They also appreciated the experience of shared meanings, the sense of belonging, and recognizing they are not "alone" in their struggles to make a marriage successful.

**Cluster: Play** This cluster included those characteristic descriptions of couples' perceptions and experiences of playfulness as a recurring theme in the group that developed out of the first initiative, "Group Juggling."

Characteristics of the Cluster: Play were relevant quotations from the debriefing sessions that followed each session.

**Characteristics of the Cluster: Play from Session 1:**

1.2 It was an exercise in showing us as a group what playfulness or interacting in a fun way can do in a relationship. It's made me think about it.
We do a lot of it. But it's made me look at it from a different perspective of other couples, and the lack of it. (PLAY)

1.3 We are not playful, there is no time. (PLAY)

1.4 I think the ball thing was to prove to us that we could have fun. Have fun doing it as a group. I don't think it was for names. I think it was to show this is fun, this is relaxing, we are having a good time. I agree that going around three times was a bit much but I think for them to open up the playful thing we had to do the ball thing to get there. They couldn't say, "Do you guys play?" What do you mean play? (MEANINGS) (PLAY)

1.5 I think personally that fun is good. I think Cindy loosened up a little bit tonight. (PLAY)

1.6 I saw it as a game. I'm not saying a game because it had a purpose, I don't think like a meaningless game, I saw it as enjoying myself and having fun. (MEANINGS) (PLAY)

Characteristics of the Cluster: Play from Session 2:

2.1 . . . we really did do a lot more playing and I think more than we usually do. We talked a lot of how people that don't have children seemed to do more playing. (PLAY)

2.2 We had a really fun week. (PLAY)

2.3 We decided that it wasn't lost and we really tried to incorporate more play in our week and have a good time and let some other things go. I think just the awareness is so important. (MEANINGS) (PLAY) (CHANGE)
Characteristics of the Cluster: Play from Session 3:

3.1 It was sort of playful. (PLAY)

Characteristics of the Cluster: Play from the Follow-up Session:

f.1 . . . the biggest part was the night we did play. I wanted to get through it. I looked back and saw how little I play. I play with Mason, but when Mike comes home, I don't think we joke as much. The week after we did that we played a lot, but every time things start to get tense, if we can just chill out and play more. It gets kind of contagious. I think the whole time, that's the big part I have been trying to remember. (CHANGE) (MEANING) (PLAY)

f.2 I think that's one thing I've held on to too. Consciously, the play thing. I was probably the most disappointed with that when we started. That's what I have kept with me throughout the whole thing. (CHANGE) (MEANING) (PLAY)

f.3 I was more conscious of the fact that there are things that are barriers that you have to consciously overcome. I was thinking about that more all the time and it was frustrating because you could not remove those barriers. A lot of the barriers were the weather, the fact that we were busy, just a variety of things. I think it helped. They were just in the front of my mind. From trying to be more playful to your nonverbal responses you give to people. Just all those things we talked about. (CHANGE) (PLAY)

f.4 I would associate being affectionate with play. So after we did the play thing I think we were more affectionate. (CHANGE) (PLAY)

f.5 That play is important. (LEARNING) (PLAY) (LIKED)
Elaboration of the Cluster: *Play* was a summary of information generated within the characteristics of the cluster. Couples described the first initiative (Group Juggling) as an activity that motivated playfulness in their relationship. They saw it as a reminder to have fun together. The theme of playfulness in relationships was repeated in subsequent sessions. They described how they had incorporated more playfulness in their relationships since the first session.

At the follow-up session, couples indicated that the first initiative promoting playfulness was initially frustrating and bewildering, but ultimately was seen as vital and one of the most significant experiences of the workshop.

**Domain: Group** This domain included those characteristic descriptions of what couples experienced in the context of a group. This domain included descriptions regarding group formation, cohesion, and usefulness that occurred in this workshop.

Characteristics of the Domain: Group were relevant quotations from each session debriefing.

*Characteristics of the Domain: Group from Session 1:*

1.2 *Through a group experience, figure out your weaknesses and strengths. See what you lack or like.* (GROUP)

1.3 *... we were trying to figure out how to work together as a group. I was feeling like we were being asked to make a lot of decisions as a group. Then after that, I felt like we were working together as couples, talking about how our individual relationships are.* (GROUP)
1.4 We were making group decisions, we were asked which ball we wanted to throw first and we all had to come to a consensus about that.
(GROUP)

1.5 We were still a group then, (GROUP)

1.7 We started doing these group things (GROUP)

1.9 I think we are building a base of getting to feel comfortable tonight, knowing each other’s names and feeling comfortable enough to open up as time goes on. (MEANINGS) (GROUP)

1.10 I think this is enrichment, what do we need to do as a group to teach each other what each other is doing and what they as professionals can say like think about it this way. Give us a new perspective, I think that’s what this is all about. (MEANINGS) (GROUP)

Characteristics of the Domain: Group from Session 2:

2.1 We have to be comfortable with each other first before we could move on with being comfortable with the most intimate person in your life. (GROUP)

2.2 Comfort level had to be reached for all of us. We all came in and though who is she, who is he? (GROUP)

2.3 I think that play helped us lighten up and not think so much about who they are but try to get the ball to them. It just allowed us to laugh and open up your stress level goes down and you are not so worried about what is happening. (GROUP)
Then coming back this week and knowing everyone's name. I think the comfort level builds and you become more willing to share. Your innermost thoughts. (GROUP)

Characteristics of the Domain: Group from Session 3:

3.1 It's also easier to tell the group things that you don't like about them or problems that you are having because it neutralizes it. It makes it less direct. It's not like saying, "You don't listen to me!" You can say, "He really doesn't..." He'll pick it up, but I am not saying it to him. (GROUP)

Characteristics of the Domain: Group from the Follow-up Session:

f.1 the group helping each other rather than a facilitator or teacher/student thing. (GROUP) (LEARNING)

Elaboration of the Domain: Group was a summary of information generated within the characteristics of the domain. Couples described the first group initiative as one that facilitated getting to know each other, learning about one another and encouraging group development. Couples described feeling more comfortable with one another as a group with each session they attended. Group cohesion was well established by the time the group met for the second session.

Couples felt comfortable to talk in the group about their relationship. Some commented that being in the group made it is easier to say nice and/or negative things about their spouse. Couples described the group as a context
that supporting them in talking about their spouses rather than to their spouses. Many couples viewed this as helpful.

The couples valued learning from the group members rather than having a didactic, lecture workshop in which the "expert" provided information for couples to learn.

**Domain: Ethnography** This domain included those characteristic descriptions of participants' experiences of the ethnographic interviews. The domain included comments regarding the usefulness of the interviews and/or the redundancy of the interviews as perceived by the participant couples.

Characteristics of the Domain: Ethnography were relevant quotations taken from debriefings of each session.

**Characteristics of the Domain: Ethnography from Session 2:**

2.2 . . . you [Ethnographer] are like an intermediary to get our ideas vs. what they have. (ETHNOGRAPH)

2.3 . . . we might not say it to the facilitator but we might say it to you. Which was expressed. (ETHNOGRAPH)

**Characteristics of the Domain: Ethnography from Session 3:**

3.1 i think it's important thought because I don't think we would say some things to Pat that we would to you. (ETHNOGRAPH)

3.2 i don't think we would tell her this playful stuff isn't important. We wouldn't say it to her. (ETHNOGRAPH)
3.4 I'm not sure what is happening in this part of it. It seems like you are asking questions to get us to repeat what we have already said and taking us away from a direction we are going and happy going. (ETHNOGRAPH)

3.5 That is my perception of this group. Getting us to look at it and thrashing it back through. A check to recover something. (ETHNOGRAPH)

3.5 So would it be better if this part wouldn't be involved at all.

Yes. (ETHNOGRAPH)

3.6 I don't agree with it. (ETHNOGRAPH)

3.7 I think this part is rehash. This is not necessary. (ETHNOGRAPH)

3.8 . . . it is necessary for you, not for me. (ETHNOGRAPH)

3.9 After we rehash it, like she said, it is repetitive, I don't think it's repetitive in terms of synthesizing what we have done. If we were looking at it and trying to synthesize it and come to conclusions, but I don't understand that as the purpose either. So I'm willing to go along with it. I see this as simply repeating. And I am willing to do it. But the group is more interesting. (ETHNOGRAPH)

3.10 I see it as clarifying (ETHNOGRAPH)

3.11 I like it but I see their frustration. We all know what went on so we throw something out, then spend 15 minutes trying to explain to you what happened. (ETHNOGRAPH)

3.12 I think we waste a lot of time bringing you up to where we are at. I think it's necessary for us and you. Because it helps me think about what I have talked about. Think about what's been said. It helps me to repeat the things that people have thought about. It draws everything to a close nicely. It helps understand, especially on that first day, it was very important for us. I
wouldn’t have ever known that some people weren’t comfortable with what we did the first day if it weren’t for this part. (ETHNOGRAPH)

3.13 I agree that it made a difference on the first day for me, but the last two times it hasn’t been clarifying or really that helpful. (ETHNOGRAPH)

3.14 I think for me it helps congeal some of the ideas, solidify some things. (ETHNOGRAPH)

3.15 So for you the closure is nice, but it is also a waste of time.
   Yes. (ETHNOGRAPH)

3.15 I think it’s helpful for Pat, it gives us a chance to wrap things up, talk about the evening in her absence. Then she can review the tape and put it into letter form which is helpful for us to read it. (ETHNOGRAPH)(LIKED)

3.17 But I always thought we talked to you for your benefit. It doesn’t hurt us at all to reflect on what we have said. (ETHNOGRAPH) But I think we could get as much out of continuing or if not more. To keep going with the spin we are in instead of stopping. (ETHNOGRAPH) (SUGGESTIONS)

3.18 I think it’s important for us. But it’s more important for you guys. (ETHNOGRAPH)

3.20 . . . didn’t know the first week that a lot of us didn’t enjoy it, I didn’t know. Until we all sat around and said this isn’t working for me, or this is working for me. We are a well mixed group of people. What works for one of us doesn’t work for another. I think it gives Pat perspective on looking at other couples. (ETHNOGRAPH)
Characteristics of the Domain: Ethnography from the Follow-up Session:

f.1 I wondered if the evaluation was part of it to help clarify and reinforce. (MEANING) (ETHNOGRAPH)

f.3 I think some it helped clarify. Personally it was a valuable part. (EVALUATION) (ETHNOGRAPH)

f.4 I'm curious about the redundancy. How did that come up?

f.5 Because we had already heard it all. (ETHNOGRAPH)

f.6 . . . it seemed we were repeating what we just experienced. (ETHNOGRAPH)

f.8 By a wrap up, it gave us a chance to sit around and someone would say this is what we did and a lot would shake their head. You hear it again. Every time you hear it you think about it. Kind of like Mike explaining that the activities made him think about a certain process or thing you need to work on. I think it helps us to realize what we talked about as a wrap up. (ETHNOGRAPH)

f.10 I am taking the philosophy that it was a wrap up which helped us. I think some people felt it was redundant. (ETHNOGRAPH)

f.11 I was like sitting and watching a video tape. It's playing and then you pop it in again and it's the same thing, it's boring. We just saw that, we don't need to see it again. But it cemented some of the issues for me and it was a conclusion. But it's boring, especially since so many times we were on such a stimulating thing. (ETHNOGRAPH)

f.13 I felt that you had an effective part in the four week session. Helping people develop theories in their heads of assessing what had gone on to produce a better 4, 6, 8 week session. (ETHNOGRAPH)
f.13 Do you think that should be a normal part of group...?

Yes. Not just as an experiment for the educational process, but as a development process for everyone that takes this course. (ETHNOGRAPH) (SUGGESTIONS)

Elaboration of the Domain: Ethnography was a summary of the information generated from within the characteristics of the domain. Early in the study some couples questioned the value of the ethnographic interview and its purpose. When couples recognized their ideas, comments and suggestions were used to inform subsequent sessions, they described the ethnographer as an intermediary. Couples described feeling listened to, valued, and included in the process of developing the model. They liked knowing their ideas are being used.

Also, couples indicated that it was easier saying things about the process to the ethnographer than it would have been to say some of those things to the facilitators or the researcher. Some couples described this as a parallel or analogous experience to the difficulty couples have in talking with one another.

There was some ambivalence in the group regarding the ethnographic interview experience. Some saw it as useful and helpful to the overall workshop experience while others viewed it as redundant and unnecessary. The overall consensus was that it was valuable, useful, and should be retained in future workshops as part of the workshop experience. The ethnography was considered useful as a "wrap-up" and to reinforce, clarify, and congeal the experience of the workshop.
Domain: Outcome This domain included characteristic descriptions of what couples experienced as changes in their relationships or themselves that occurred over the time they were involved in the training.

Characteristics of the Domain: Outcome were relevant quotations taken from debriefing sessions.

Characteristics of the Domain: Outcome from Session 2:

2.1 . . . for us it sparked a lot of conversation (CHANGE) ... how we would like to change. (CHANGE)

2.2 . . . we just savored it [RELATIONSHIP] more, (CHANGE)

2.3 Instead of when I real busy and his playfulness would get on my nerves, I would think no, this is really fun and one of the things I really like about him. It was nice to focus on that. (CHANGE)

2.4 . . . we realize we don’t communicate enough, it’s not because we are making excuses, it’s just because children have a tendency to interrupt that list of positive verbal and nonverbal communication. (CHANGE)

Characteristics of Domain: Change from Session 3:

3.1 That was a lot easier than before we came here. To look at each other and say, there is something I really like about you. (CHANGE)

3.2 It was easier for me, and I brag about him all the time. I don’t always tell him how much I appreciate him. (CHANGE)
Characteristics of the Domain: Outcome from the Follow-up Session:

f.1 . . . we really tried to incorporate more play in our week and have a good time and let some other things go. I think just the awareness is so important. (MEANINGS)(PLAY)(CHANGE)

f.2 I think we have made more of an effort to get together. (CHANGE)

f.4 . . . the effort of patience. (CHANGE)

f.5 . . . the biggest part was the night we did play. I wanted to get through

I looked back and saw how little I play. I play with Mason, but when Mike comes home, I don't think we joke as much. The week after we did that we played a lot, but every time things start to get tense, if we can just chill out and play more. It gets kind of contagious. I think the whole time, that's the big part I have been trying to remember. (CHANGE) (MEANING) (PLAY)

f.6 I think that's one thing I've held on to too. Consciously, the play thing. I was probably the most disappointed with that when we started. That's what I have kept with me throughout the whole thing. (CHANGE) (MEANING) (PLAY)

f.7 I think it takes more time. I don't really know that we have had any immediate changes other than the sense of play, being more aware of either the lack of it or the effect it has. In terms of intimacy or communication, that's been implanted and it takes time, you've got to form a habit. So really what it did for me was raise my awareness. We have been married almost five years and even after that time, things start sliding, you may not pay attention. Just by having an occasional thing like this, it brings some issues up to the forefront. For us, that was my goal on getting into this. No matter what shape
it took, some things started sliding and issues came up and we talked. My problem is that I can talk all day and know things intellectually but putting things into practice is a lot of work. The seeds are there. (CHANGE) (MEANING)

f.8 I think I have made a real conscious effort, through the discussions and some activities I have realized some of the negative patterns I have gotten into and I have made a real conscious effort to try to remember and stop and to alter some words. (CHANGE)

f.9 And I believe I am more patient.

f.10 And you have made an effort to be more responsive. (CHANGE)

f.11 I was more conscious of the fact that there are things that are barriers that you have to consciously overcome. I was thinking about that more all the time and it was frustrating because you could not remove those barriers. A lot of the barriers were the weather, the fact that we were busy, just a variety of things. I think it helped. They were just in the front of my mind. From trying to be more playful to your nonverbal responses you give to people. Just all those things we talked about. (CHANGE)

f.12 Instead of he is a terrible person, personalizing it, it's not working, it's the relationship, I found myself saying it's not working, we are so tired. Some external thing instead of a relationship problem. We would not be this way if we were rested or if we weren't working on this project that isn't going well. It was more external than truly a him and I problem. (CHANGE)

f.13 I have been focusing more on the fact that he can't read my mind and he has been enjoying it. (CHANGE)
f.15 I don’t think I have changed anything. I’m being frank here and that goes back to the seeds being planted. It just takes me more time to think about these things and to get them planted, rather than doing it one night and I’m going to be perfect. That’s not the case, it takes time. (CHANGE)

f.16 When we do go to problem, not be so personally involved, focus on the subject. Or when Mike starts saying the nonverbals that make me feel uncomfortable then I will ask about it. When we do problem solve it seems calmer. (CHANGE)

f.17 It’s better, yes. (CHANGE) [affectional/sexual relationship]

f.18 I would associate being affectionate with play. So after we did the play thing I think we were more affectionate. (CHANGE) (PLAY)

Elaboration of the Domain: Outcome was a summary of the characteristics from the domain. Couples described changes in their relationships relative to their attendance at the workshop. Changes indicated by couples were:

1. Using playfulness when things were stressful
2. Letting their partner know he/she was appreciated
3. Communicating more clearly
4. Making an effort to be more responsive
5. Solving problems more calmly
6. Depersonalizing problems
7. Increasing playfulness to enhance affection
8. Being more attentive
A more thorough discussion of these outcome indicators is contained in the Discussion chapter of this document.

**Weekly post-training peer debriefings**

Synthesis statements were gathered from the textual analysis of the transcripts of the team and trainers' debriefings. A domain analysis of the team and trainers' debriefings revealed four domains of meaning. Several of the domains were similar to those generated from the couples' debriefings. The overall domains that emerged from the peer debriefings were: (a) Model Evaluation, (b) Group, (c) Trainers, (d) Consulting Team. Within the domain of Model Evaluation, two clusters of meaning emerged. The clusters were (a) *Process*, and (b) *Suggestions*. Within the domain of Group, two clusters of meaning emerged. The clusters were (a) *Process*, and (b) *Group Cohesion/Diversity*. Within the domain of Trainers, two clusters of meaning emerged. The clusters were (a) *Phenomenological Experience*, and (b) *Role of Trainers*.

Results of the domain analysis of peer debriefings are given in Figure 3. The domain of Model Evaluation corresponded to that of the domain Evaluation from the preceding couples' debriefings. Also, the domain Group generated from team debriefings corresponded to the domain Group from the couples' debriefings.
Domain: Model Evaluation  The domain of Model Evaluation included those characteristic descriptions of the consulting team members and trainers evaluation of the program model process. Furthermore, the domain of Model Evaluation also included suggestions made by team members and trainers during their debriefings.

Characteristics of the Cluster: Process were relevant quotations from the debriefings that followed each session.

Characteristics of the Cluster: Process from Session 1:

1.3 The two of you seemed to work together as far as allowing the story to be created around this playfulness and trying to let each of the couples decide what that meant to the relationship.

1.4 I had the feeling that this play thing is neat. . . . It was kind of an aura in there . . .

1.5 . . . the discussion moved from the actual content of the game to the process of being playful with your spouse.

1.6 It went right from the activity to personal stories about playfulness.
1.12 All in all I think it went very well. I'm satisfied.

1.13 It went better than I expected. I was somewhat skeptical. There's something beyond just reading it. It's experiential.

1.14 I thought we were playful and not perfectly smooth, not like some slick nightclub act. I think that was good. I think we modeled some nervousness, etc. If it's like a Hollywood production, I don't think this is the format to do a slick standup routine. Kind of create as you go, being a little giddy and goofy along the way, it encourages them to do the same.

1.15 I thought you did a real good job. . . . showing that you appreciated their coming and going through this.

Characteristics of the Cluster: Process from Session 2:

2.2 I wonder if they feel comfortable enough from the first session that everybody knows each other's names and they don't say them. Or if there is something about saying names.

2.3 Some might have forgot the names, I know I forgot some names.

2.4 That's interesting, after a week going by of all the emphasis on learning names, that we forgot them.

Characteristics of the Cluster: Process from Session 3:

3.18 Sally - The other thing, you do pay attention to the time and you get them out of there on time. I know they might like to go on, but I think that's important.
Characteristics of the Cluster: Process from Session 4:

4.1 I liked the process until this last one. I had a feeling that things got left hanging. I don't know that that's bad, but it was a sense that I was picking up from the folks. There wasn't much of a sense of closure. Maybe the storm had something to do with it.

4.2 I thought tonight in comparison to the two weeks previous, seemed flat.

4.3 They were pretty quiet. Before we began anything it was in a different state of mind.

4.4 . . . there was a different air in the room tonight.

Elaboration of the Cluster: Process was a summary of the characteristics of that cluster. The team's evaluation of the first group initiative was positive. The first session met the expectations of the trainers and the team members. The team and facilitators evaluation of the first session was that it went well. The team commented that the initiative generated playfulness and group cohesion. The team also observed that the group generated meanings for themselves from the session. It was noted that meanings generated were somewhat implicit or analogical in nature. For example, the "Group Juggling" initiative was described as a game, and more than a game couples described it as a way to be playful in their relationship.

The team commented on the difficulty in providing closure at the fourth session. Various factors influencing closure were considered. These factors included:
1. The nature of the initiative used
2. The storm that occurred toward the end of the session
3. The need to do post-testing following the session
4. The time factor - short amount of time

Characteristics of the Cluster: Suggestions were relevant quotations from the debriefings that followed each session.

Characteristics of the Cluster: Suggestions from Session 2:
2.5 . . . another goal would have been to not become more familiar with names as with people. Interact with them through this exercise.

Characteristics of the Cluster: Suggestions from Session 3:
3.6 Marc - It might be interesting to sit across from each other in the circle, strategically place them. So they can talk and look at each other. You said they talk about each other when they are sitting next to each other, but to talk to each other is more difficult. When they sit across the room in a rather tight circle, they have to look at their partner. More so.

3.13 Marc - Using the words digital and analogic, I don't know if that has meaning for them at this point. I'm not sure if they are clear what you mean. So you may want to clarify that if you want to use those words again.

Elaboration of the Cluster: Suggestions was a summary of the relevant characteristics of the cluster. The team members offered some suggestions for program improvement. Suggestions included paying closer attention to use of
language familiar to the group members and further development of initiative meanings.

**Domain: Group** This domain included those characteristic descriptions of team members and trainers perceptions of the group development and process. This domain included two clusters of meanings, (a) *Group Process*, and (b) *Group Diversity/Cohesion*.

Characteristics of the Cluster: Process were relevant quotations from the debriefings.

**Characteristics of the Cluster: Process from Session 1:**

1.1 *I was nervous about that. I felt a couple of times I thought they were getting into advice-giving.*

1.2 *I just got nervous early on that it would be "pick on couples" time.*

**Characteristics of the Cluster: Process from Session 2:**

2.17 *Marc - I think the group would take care of that [peripheral position of a couple in the group].*

2.15 *What I've seen is some personal therapy kinds of issues in questions that have come up. In advice that's coming from the couple. There's been a couple of times that I've just gone yikes! What are we doing? An enrichment focus or a therapy focus? I see right now those two things are going on. It could get confusing, it is confusing for me, trying to sort it out as a team member that shifts in and shifts out. I don't know that that's bad, except I've really seen that focus on [husband] and [wife]. I would be real*
curious to see how they are feeling about that. Then we [referring to group members rather than trainers] shift into this therapy mode and are asking more direct or poignant questions or giving advice that seems to be directed towards them. Or less toward the other members. Maybe there’s some question that their marriage is substandard or in some trouble. I don’t know that that’s what is going on, but am curious about if that is the group’s perception. Or why that particular direction is being pursued.

**Characteristics of the Cluster: Process from Session 3:**

3. 7 Jeff - . . . it’s a lot tougher to fight when you are sitting next to each other than when you are sitting head on.

3.10 I wonder how that would have been different if the seating arrangements had been the same. But there’s very much of structural mood, either consciously or unconsciously, and things were qualitatively different with how things were tonight

**Characteristics of the Cluster: Process from Session 4:**

4.11 So if we create a context in which they can talk with each other here, I’m wondering if we create a context in which they can more likely communicate with one another outside of here.

Elaboration of the **Cluster: Process** was a summary of the characteristics from the cluster. One couple in the group was less active and appeared to be reluctant participants even though all participating couples initiated enrollment in the group. However, the team commented on the group process that tended
to, at times, focus on this one couple. Team members commented on the ambivalence apparent for trainers and participant couples as to what would be helpful to this particular couple. The team was interested in generating ideas to draw this couple into the group process.

There was some question about whether or not the trainers actually intruded on the group process by introducing an initiative, maintaining a focus, by imposing structure, and adhering to time constraints.

There was discussion among the team members regarding the use of names of members of the group. In the second session it seemed that few people called one another by name, even though the first session initiative was designed to get to know and use the names of everyone in the group.

Characteristics of the Cluster: Cohesion/Diversity were relevant quotations from the debriefings that followed each training session.

*Characteristics of the Cluster: Cohesion/Diversity from Session 2:*

2.1 I noticed carrying over from last week they divided into people with children and couples without children. Then they moved to years in marriage,

2.6 There were also a couple of comments that I wondered if, "it must be a female thing" the expressiveness or whatever it was.

2.7 I wanted the group to do something with that rather than me posing a gender issue. They went with it and flowed with it a little bit.

2.8 I think they did as much with it [gender] as much as they wanted to, then decided how much relevance it had. It seems like they dismissed it as not being relevant.
2.9 I kind of was interested in it. I would have liked to hear the guys muster up some voice.

2.10 I thought it wasn't so much male and female, but the things people are interested in. That may be divided along gender lines, I don't know.

2.16 Those two have taken up a peripheral role in that group. Last week she was openly critical that it was too much fun and we should get down to business. And he has been quiet as a church mouse the whole time. So the group maybe doesn't know quite what to do with them. They don't say much and when they do, it's almost caustic. I think their position in the group is they don't know quite what they think or what the group thinks.

2.18 Pat - I am struggling with how do I interact with this couple. I'm not sure whether to be joking and playful or serious and therapeutic. I think the idea of the group taking care of it is probably right.

2.19 Marc - I think the group is having some similar struggles. You two are part of the group and we are on the periphery, kind of in the back seat. We don't have that same emotional thing, but I can create or somehow observe this struggle going on. Trying to figure out how to get them in there.

Characteristics of the Cluster: Cohesion/Diversity from Session 3:

3.9 Marc - It seemed to me that there was a very clear agenda that the group had tonight. I was aware of that right at the beginning. First of all there was a lot of chatter when we came into the room. Not between the couples, but the couples were talking around and to each other.
Characteristics of the Cluster: Cohesion/Diversity from Session 4:

4.8 They are most interested in each other.

4.9 . . . they had a great variety of things, little tricks and things. They really picked up on that one with another. It was a very great variety.

4.10 They were getting a lot from talking with each other.

Elaboration of the Cluster: Cohesion/Diversity was a summary of those characteristics within the cluster. Trainers expressed some concerns about the group membership. There was some initial concern that couples were attempting to give advice to one another. This generated some concern among the team members regarding how the group formation and cohesion would develop. The team members observed that the group members defined themselves in relation to their years of marriage and/or whether they had children or not. The team members also were curious about gender issues brought up in the second session group process. The group seemed to do what they needed to do with that issue and moved on. The trainers allowed them an opportunity to discuss gender issues but did not focus on it when it came up.

The team commented on the diversity of couples in the group. The consensus among the team members was that the couples appreciated learning from one another and seemed particularly pleased that there was a diversity of couples to learn from.

Also, the team commented on the group cohesion. The group seemed to be working well together by the end of the third session. For example, by the end of the third session one member of the group invited all participants to
share their phone numbers with one another to they might get together at another time. As a result of that invitation a good-natured humorous letter "poking fun" at the program was generated by one group member. The participants and trainers all enjoyed the letter and experienced it a playful way of describing the group experience and as a means of further enhancing group cohesion. (See Appendix G.)

**Domain: Trainers**  This domain included those characteristic descriptions of the trainers' participation in the program. The domain was generated from descriptions regarding the phenomenological experiences of the trainers. Also, descriptions of the role of the trainers as perceived by the team members and the trainers themselves are contained in this domain. Furthermore, the domain included those descriptions of expectations trainers and team members had of the trainers. Finally, this domain incorporated descriptions of the team members' and trainers' perceptions of the participants expectations of the trainers. There were two clusters of meaning within this domain. The two clusters were (a) **Phenomenological Experience**, and (b) **Role of Trainers**.

**Characteristics of the Cluster: Phenomenological Experience** were those relevant quotations generated during the peer debriefings following each training session.

**Characteristics of the Cluster: Phenomenological Experience from Session 1:**

1.10 I felt the two couples beside me, there was a connection.
1.11 I felt the least connected [wife] with [husband].

Characteristics of the Cluster: Phenomenological Experience from Session 2:

2.20 Pat - we got from the first session was that they had a good time and they had more of a good time than they should have. Some of them wanted to get down to work. From what I have gotten today, some of them thought about it and thought there was more to it than just throwing the ball around.

Characteristics of the Cluster: Phenomenological Experience from Session 3:

3.1 Pat - It is really hard sitting by you [Dan] because I don’t see you and it’s hard enough as it is because I feel so responsible that I forget.

3.8 Pat - . . . I think there’s some subtle messages that we give each other about, is there something you have to say now Dan?
You can’t do it when you are sitting next to each other.

3.12 Jeff - . . . you seemed to normalize the idea in the end that there are different styles. You both reinforced that and I think that was very meaningful. Critical. . . . give them the message that there really isn’t a right way.

3.16 Pat - . . . it’s hard for me, in this setting, to be relaxed. Let things flow, because I know there is such a responsibility that weighs on me.
Characteristics of the Cluster: Phenomenological Experience from Session 4:

4.5 Dan - I felt like I was going to come up short no matter what I did.
4.6 Pat - I don't feel like the time frame for me is right yet.
4.7 Pat - It seemed real hairy and pressured to get things done. . . . a lot to accomplish in two hours.

Elaboration of the Cluster: Phenomenological Experience was a summary of the relevant characteristics from the cluster. The trainers described a sense of connectedness with some members of the group and not with others. Various aspects of the experience of the trainers was discussed. For example, the trainers commented on the seating arrangement in Session 3. The couples left two chairs for the trainers side-by-side. This seemed to create a different experience for the trainers. The team commented on how this arrangement was parallel to that of the participants. Trainers described both positive and negative experiences of this seating arrangement. Also, there was discussion of the comfort level of the trainers in this session and various factors affecting their level of comfort in this session.

Couples asked questions regarding the personal experiences of the trainers. The team members observed and commented that the couples were curious as well as somewhat challenging of the trainers' roles. The team and trainers followed up with a discussion of what they thought to be appropriate disclosure by the trainers.
The team commented on what they observed couples doing to develop meanings from their experiences of the group. The observation was made that couples seemed to be applying meanings in other contexts outside the group.

Characteristics of the Cluster: Role of Trainers were the relevant quotations generated during debriefings following each training session.

Characteristics of the Cluster: Role of Trainers from Session 2:

2.11 . . . there is usually some challenge of the leader and they want to know about you and challenge, like why should we listen to you? I think that validated for them that we both had marital experience, that we do know something.

2.12 If you guys had been doing co-therapy, would you have been that evasive? Say you were doing co-therapy with a family or a couple.

Pat - I don't think I would have been that evasive.

Sally - What's the difference?

Pat - Part of the difference for me was I didn't have time. I didn't want it to be a discussion about me. I felt like it was more important to get on with what they needed to do.

2.13 Pat - I would want to know what is useful for you to know about me. Let me know what is useful for you. How would you deal with it?

2.14 Dan - I'd go for it. Because they have disclosed. I'd not give them a 15 minute answer, but I'd answer the question.
Characteristics of the Cluster: Role of Trainers from Session 3:

3.4 Dan - Did somebody say they wanted us to sit together. Or did they leave two seats?

3.5 Sally - . . . why should you guys be in any privileged position? I think they might like that parallel.

3.11 Pat - . . . you are thinking that our sitting together somehow was a message that we were working together?

3.13 Dan - The teachers were talking. So maybe we should have stayed out more.

3.14 Pat - That's a question. Because part of what they are expecting is to get some opportunity that is like a learning experience, where they are being taught. Getting information giving over to them.

3.15 Dan - Can we mention that to them next time? Like we are caught in a dilemma and that is, we sometimes think we talk too much but then we think you expect something from us so we think we should speak, but we feel like we stifle conversation. Say this is part of our processing this week, just see what. . .

3.17 Dan - I think that's an issue in any form of group. To know how much to be directive, structure activities, time keeping, make sure this and that happens vs. letting that flow. It's a very delicate thing. You want to maximize the flow but yet you have some constraints and have to get certain things done. It does inhibit the talk. . .

Elaboration of the Cluster: Role of Trainers was a summary of the characteristics relevant to the cluster. Team members made observations of the trainers. The team commented that the trainers did a good job of
normalizing couples' experiences. The team viewed this as critical for the couples. Also, the trainers reinforced for couples the idea that there was not a "right" way of doing the initiative nor of having a relationship.

The team discussed the dilemma that trainers had of choosing to allow the group process to evolve and continue unimpeded, or to impose some structure and a focus for the group.

**Domain: Team** This domain included characteristic descriptions of consulting team's and the trainers' observations and perceptions of their roles and experience of the team in the context of the marital enrichment model.

Characteristics of the Domain: Team were quotations generated during peer debriefings following the training sessions.

**Characteristics of the Domain: Team from Session 1:**

1.7 I'm still not sure what the role of the team is in there. It feels rather awkward to me. Sitting there and feeling very much aware.

1.8 ...it doesn't feel like something I would want to continue if I were building a program out of this.

1.9 I have a thought or hypothesis about the usefulness or potential usefulness of the team so you put in the team and just let it go. See the feedback. If it's awkward, if it's uncomfortable, negative, but you will only know if you do it. The model will build itself.
Elaboration of the Domain: Team were a summary of the characteristics from the domain. Members of the consulting team voiced some discomfort with their roles. However, the usefulness of the team was determined only through the inclusion of the team in the model development. The consensus was that the team was useful in the model-building process and may also be considered useful as a permanent feature of the model itself.

Weekly model development meeting

Analysis of the transcripts of the weekly model development meeting between the investigator and the ethnographer resulted in primarily redundant information. Consequently, no new domains emerged. However, elaborations of the interviews were provided. Elaboration of the weekly model development meeting was a summary of relevant information generated during the meeting. The elaboration is developed from each session.

Elaboration - Session 1 In Session 1 the ethnographer and interviewer agreed that the expectations of the participants needed to be addressed. Participants appeared to be in two different "camps" regarding their expectations. Some members of the group were perfectly happy with less structure and a more emergent experience. Others wanted to have more structure, along with some "expert" information provided to them, that is, something more didactic. The ethnographer and investigator discussed ways to meet the needs of both "camps." Since the participants who were less concerned with structure were not opposed to structure, it was decided that the trainers would impose a bit more structure and focus.
Model development - Session 1  Out of the debriefing between the ethnographer and investigator grew the decision to send a letter summarizing the ethnographic interview with the couples, describing the focus of the next session and giving the couples some information to use in the next session.  (See Appendix G.)

Elaboration - Session 2  The ethnographer and investigator agreed that participants had expressed satisfaction of their overall experience of the sessions so far. The couples seemed comfortable in the group and group cohesion was apparent by this session. Also, there was discussion regarding evidence of the couples appreciation of the "richness" of the group membership.

It was also agreed that the group appeared to be finding their experience useful and transferable to other contexts outside of the group. The investigator and ethnographer commented on the evidence of transfer of learning occurring for couples along with the couples use of analogy to help develop their experience beyond the initiative itself.

Furthermore, the usefulness of the letter sent to participants was evident. These letters were an emergent aspect of the model. The letters served to connect the ethnographic interview of the couples that followed the session to the enrichment program development and the needs of the participants. The investigator and ethnographer agreed that the couples appreciated a focused agenda for the session, as well as time for the group to talk together.

Model development - Session 2  As a result of the debriefing between the ethnographer and investigator following Session 2, it was agreed
that another letter summarizing the couple debriefing and providing information for the next session would be used. Therefore, another letter was developed and sent to the couples following each subsequent session and before the next session. (See Appendix G.)

Elaboration - Session 3  The investigator and ethnographer reviewed the session together. Observations made were that the group process appeared to be very influential and important to the participants during this session. Their conversations from the group processing of the initiative spilled over into the ethnographic interview. The interviewer felt intrusive and couples described the interview process as redundant for them. The investigator and the ethnographer observed that the group was so cohesive during the session that the trainers and the ethnographer both experienced their involvement as somehow intrusive.

The model development meeting clarified the usefulness of the letters sent to couples during the week and the need to continue sending them as planned. The ethnographic interview of couples was discussed. It was evident that the group was ambivalent about the interviews, that is, some found it useful and others redundant and intrusive. The investigator was informed by the ethnographer that some of the couples expressed appreciation for the role of the ethnographer, finding it helped to talk to the ethnographer rather than to the trainer about things they wanted to see done differently in the program. During the meeting the observation was made that couples were now seeming to use the ethnographic interviews to further inform their own experience of the session and enhance their experience. By this time there in the training there
was evidence that the debriefing interviews with couples were experienced by participants as an added initiative.

It was at this stage in the model development that the investigator and ethnographer were ambivalent about what the focus of the next session needed to be. During this meeting the discussion included comments regarding the dilemma the investigator faced regarding whether to focus the next session again on problem-solving and communication or to move on to a focus on intimacy.

**Model development - Session 3** It was decided that the focus of the next session would be intimacy. The session would provide an opportunity for couples to draw on previous training in communication and problem-solving by involving couples in intimate conversation. Again, a letter was sent summarizing couples' prior comments. The letter also provided information to the couples regarding intimacy and let them know this would be the focus of the next session. (See Appendix G.)

**Elaboration - Session 4** During the model development meeting that followed the final training session, the investigator and ethnographer agreed that the session on intimacy had created a more subdued group experience. Couples indicated a need for more privacy for their intimate conversations.

The observation was made that couples felt respected because they were asked to make choices regarding how the group might proceed during any given session. The ethnographer and investigator commented on how couples were able to evaluate and indicate the perceived fit between initiatives offered in a particular session and the focus of that session. Again the expectations of couples were discussed. It was agreed that their expectations were not all the
same within the group, thereby challenging the creativity of the investigator to further develop the model.

The ethnographer and investigator commented on the observed cohesiveness of the group throughout the program. It was agreed that the group's experience of their comfort level with one another in the various sessions and the ethnographer's experience of his comfort level during debriefings seemed to be parallel.

**Model development - Session 4** From out of the four debriefing sessions emerged a consensus that the letters were a vital and necessary component of the model. Using some form of ethnographic interview to debrief the couples was also considered useful not only for research on model development, but for inclusion within the model itself.
ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

This model of experiential enrichment was developed through this study. The model itself is unique from other models of marital enrichment in that the model was based on experiential learning methods and was grounded in the phenomenological experiences of participants. While other existing models use some aspects of experiential learning (Guerney, 1977; L’Abate & Weinstein, 1987; Miller et al., 1975), they do not use experiential learning as their primary training modality. Neither have other training models been grounded in the experiences of participants. It is in regard to these two aspects of the study that the model developed through this study contributes to the field of marital enrichment.

First, the analysis provided a flow chart (Figure 4) that described the model-building process which was based on established marital enrichment programs, experiential learning and therapy models, and theory. From the framework the researcher designed the first session. Following the first session the debriefings and ethnographic interviews produced responses that were transcribed and analyzed. From the transcript analyses, using the DRS developed by Spradley (1979), emerged the domains of meaning, their characteristics and the elaborations. With the transcript analyses the model emerged and was used to inform subsequent sessions. Finally, following the same sequence of analysis, the follow-up led to the emergence of the resultant Model of Experiential Marital Enrichment. The model is found in Figure 5.
Finally, Figure 6, Model Analysis, indicated references from previous research and practice that corresponded to and supported the various aspects of the model.

Model Description

The model description is a manual to guide trainers conducting future experiential marital enrichment programs. This model is the final result of this study, that is, a combination of what was done with couples in the study along with changes suggested by participant couples and the other research team members. Trainers using this model for future programs are encouraged to follow the model when possible or modify it to fit the needs of participant couples. The reader is referred to Figure 5 for an outline of the model components that are described.

Pre-session

Prior to the first session, provide information to couples regarding the nature of the program. Let couples know that because they will be participating in a program that includes activity that it is important to wear comfortable shoes and clothing. Additionally, to let couples know they will work together both in a group and as couples. Inform couples of the time and place, and give clear directions to the location. Inform couples how much time each session will involve, how many sessions will be held, and any cost to the couples for the training program (Borgers, Tyndall, 1982; Corey & Corey, 1987; LeCluyse, 1983; Miller & Scott, 1984).
Provide participants with a brief description of the trainers, the trainers' professional training and experience, and the trainers' relationship to one another, that is, colleagues, husband and wife, or supervisor and supervisee (Bednar, Melnick & Kaul, 1974; Corey & Corey, 1987; Dye, 1987).

**Session 1**

When couples arrive welcome couples cordially with introductions. Show couples the room in which to meet and provide them with seating. Arrange seating in a circle without any obstacles in the center of the circle. Select a room large enough to accommodate the group and provide space for activities. If the program is conducted indoors, a gym is preferable. Provide each waiting couple with written information about the program and any paper work they will need to complete prior to beginning the session such as a client agreement form or demographic form (Corey & Corey, 1987).

Be seated and ready to begin the session at the appointed time. Do not wait for latecomers. Begin on time. Introduce yourself and inform the group of any group rules. It is helpful, but not necessary, for trainers to be seated across from one another to provide opportunity for eye contact (Corey & Corey, 1987; Dye, 1987).

Discuss the importance of rules of confidentiality. Indicate and discuss any other rules considered important. Let the group know that they as a group may decide on other rules they feel are important to them (Corey & Corey 1987, Yalom, 1983).

**Phase I - Warm up** Continue the first session with brief introductions around the circle. Invite everyone to give at least their first names. Trainers
may choose to invite couples to provide further information about themselves at this time, but keep it brief (Corey & Corey, 1987; Dye, 1987).

**Phase II - Initiative**  Provide transition for the group from the warm-up phase into the initiative phase. The timing of the transition from warm-up to initiative is a judgment call on the part of the trainers. However, always give the group an opportunity to choose if they are ready to move on to the initiative phase or not (Dewey, 1938; Dye, 1987; Gillis & Bonney, 1986; Gillis & Gass, 1993).

**Session 1 - Initiative: Group Juggling**

**Goal:** To remember something important about others in the group. To develop group cooperation and cohesion. To keep as many balls in the air as the group can, keeping the pattern going faster and faster.

**Equipment:** Several balls and/or small soft items to toss.

**Rules:** Stand in a circle facing the center, with hands raised and ready to catch and/or toss. Starting with one ball, catch it and throw it, establishing a pattern. One person tosses the ball to someone on the other side of the circle. He/she tosses it to a third person who tosses it to a fourth and so on, until everyone has tossed and caught the ball once. (Each person drops their hands after they have had a turn.) The last catcher tosses the ball back to the person who started the pattern. The group runs through the sequence again for practice. Now the real juggling can begin. The person tossing the ball calls the name of the person to whom the ball is tossed.

When one ball has gone all the way around the group, another ball is added, so two balls are in the air following the catch and toss pattern. Next
another ball is added. The goal is to keep as many balls in the air as possible. If one ball is dropped, instruct the group to pick it up and keep going.

**Options:** Increase the rate of speed of completing the tossing pattern. Send one ball one direction and another in the opposite direction. Add hula-hoops over the head and resting on shoulders interlocking entire group.

**Safety:** Choose soft balls and/or or objects to toss. Toss underhanded. Stay alert.

**Process:** Cooperation, self-esteem, participation, competitiveness (Dye, 1987).

**Phase III - Processing** Foster a context in which conversation among the participant couples occurs (Goolishian & Anderson, 1992). Encourage the generation of analogy and metaphor from among the group members during the processing of the group juggling initiative (Gaw, 1979). Among the ideas to include in the processing of this initiative are playfulness, getting acquainted, group cooperation and cohesion, responsiveness, and attentiveness (Dye, 1987; Gillis & Bonney, 1986; Gillis & Gass, 1993).

Encourage participants to identify relationships between the experience, metaphors generated during the experience, and everyday life experiences and spouses' relationships with one another (Bruner, 1969; Gaw, 1979; Gass, 1985; Hammel, 1979).

Devote the last five minutes of the processing to closing the group, that is, summarizing the experience and wrapping up. The trainers may summarize or may encourage a group member, or members, to summarize (Corey & Corey, 1987; Yalom, 1983).
Debriefing

Take ten to fifteen minutes following the session to conduct an ethnographic interview in which participants are asked for an evaluation of the session. Encourage comments regarding their experience and suggestions for the following session. Ideally the debriefing is conducted by someone other than the trainers. However, if the trainers conduct the debriefing some change of context is preferable, that is, moving to a different room, moving to a table for the discussion, or some variation to delineate a change in the focus from training to debriefing (Brown, 1992; Joanning et al., 1987; Lashley, 1993).

Interim

Determine the focus of session two. This model suggests communication as the focus. Use information gathered from participants during the debriefing, as well as information gathered during training, to assist in developing the focus of the following session. Incorporate a summary of the participants comments into a letter, along with information for the intended focus of the next session. Include information regarding effective communication in this interim letter. (See Appendix G.) Mail the letter to participants so that they get it in time to read it a day or two before the next session. Include a brief related homework assignment that couples can complete before the next session. A suggested homework assignment is for couples to spend five minutes discussing a problem that has been difficult to resolve. Ask couples to use throughout their conversation components of
nonverbal and verbal communication that add to communication quality
(Joanning et al., 1984).

Session 2

Determine the focus of Session 2. It is suggested that the focus remain communication. The goal is to establish communication as valued by, important, and helpful to couples. However, again use debriefing information to guide the session focus (Brown, 1992; Lashley, 1993).

Phase I - Warm-up Provide a context in which participants may discuss unfinished business from prior session, indicate their emotional and physical well-being, and discuss any thoughts and feelings that emerged between sessions (Corey & Corey, 1987; Dye, 1987).

Phase II - Initiative Give participants a choice to continue in conversation or move on to the initiative. Make the transition from conversation to initiative as smoothly as possible. An initiative is not mandatory. The group may choose to continue their conversation if they are finding it more useful or important to do so.

Some initiatives to choose from for Session 2 are "Getting the Message," "Dumb and Blind," "Almost Infinite Circle," "Two by Four (2x4)," "Stand Off," or "Blindfold Lineup" using anniversary dates, years married, or number of children for their lineup criteria. Keep the initiative couple focused.

Phase III - Processing During processing of the experience include trainers' observations of participants' comments and/or behaviors. Encourage participants to develop metaphor and analogy that relates the initiative to the participants' experience as a couple in their daily lives. Pay attention to
communication patterns of participants and use observations as "grist for the mill" during processing (Corey & Corey, 1987; Yalom, 1983). Ask participants for their own observations of the experience as well as communication styles and patterns they observed during the initiative.

**Debriefing**

Following each session conduct a short debriefing of the experience. Summarize information collected during the debriefing and include in the next letter to participants as a means of informing the following session (Corey & Corey, 1987, Lashley, 1993).

**Session 3**

Follow the same format of Phase I - Warm-up, Phase II - Initiative, Phase III - Processing, and Debriefing. However, Session 3 focus will vary according to the information participants provide during Sessions 1 and 2 debriefings. Use the focus couples' indicated they desired. Couples may want more on communication, or they may indicate a desire to move on to a different focus such as intimacy or problem-solving. Therefore, there is no suggested focus for Session 3.

If couples indicate a desire to continue with communication, select any one of the initiatives on communication that was not used for Session 2, or develop your own initiative.

If couples indicate a desire to focus on intimacy or problem-solving, select a related initiative. However, it is important that any initiative chosen be couple oriented. Furthermore, be creative in developing new initiatives.
word of caution when developing any initiative, that is, remember the initiative must be success oriented. Success oriented initiatives are solvable, useful, and valuable to the participants always keeping in mind the mandate to "do your client no harm" (Dye, 1987; Gillis & Bonney, 1993; Gass, 1985).

Develop another letter from the debriefing material following Session 3. In each letter summarize participants' comments, provide information regarding the focus of the next session, and provide a brief homework assignment to prepare participants for the next session (Corey & Corey, 1987; Lashley, 1993).

Session 4

Allow time at the end of this session for termination (Corey & Corey, 1987). Couples may choose to establish relationships outside of the program. It is suggested that the last session include a social time at the end. Couples may choose to go out to eat together, bring food and/or refreshment to the location, or some refreshment might be provided by the program as a final initiative.

Couples participating in the model development indicated an optional fifth, or even a sixth session. As an alternative to a social time at the end of the fourth session, provide an opportunity for couples to plan an additional session as a time to socialize. A suggested initiative is for couples during the fourth session to determine what they would like to do socially during the fifth session and how they would do it.

The preceding is a pattern to follow in experiential martial enrichment training. Obviously, the model is intended to be relaxed rather than tightly
structured. The pilot study to develop the model indicated that couples appreciated a focus. They liked having input and choices regarding that focus. Therefore, leaving the precise focus and initiatives open allowed couples and trainers options so that the program was "fit" to the needs of the participants.

Model Analysis

Refer to Figure 4 for a diagram of the process of the study from which the model evolved. The researcher developed a model framework from previously researched marital enrichment programs and experiential learning and theory. The model framework provided the format of the first session. Peer debriefings and ethnographic interviews followed the first session. Responses from debriefings were transcribed and analyzed. The analyses generated domains, characteristics and elaborations that were used to further develop the emergent model. The emergent model provided the format and focus of Session II. The process was repeated for each session and the follow-up. After the follow-up debriefing, transcripts were analyzed and the final model was formed.

Figure 5 is an outline of the final model components. Finally, Figure 6 is a condensed view of the model components and corresponding prior research and literature. Each aspect of the model was either grounded in the experience of participants and/or supported by prior research and literature.

The model analysis provided the reader with the connections made between the developed model and prior literature and research. Each aspect of the model framework was based on prior practice and research in the fields of marital enrichment and experiential learning and therapy theories. Therefore,
the model that resulted from the study drew upon such practice and theory throughout the model development process. Furthermore, the model that was ultimately developed was grounded in the experience of participants. Consequently, this model and its various aspects, while supported by literature and research, was uniquely established based on what participants told researchers was useful or not useful in their experience. The analysis continues with an in-depth discussion of each aspect of the model, supporting research and theory, and/or the phenomenological experiences of participants.

Pre-session Couples were informed group procedures and rules at the pre-session. They also were given an opportunity to indicate their expectations and goals. Corey and Corey (1987), in their extensive work with groups also reported the value of a pre-session as a means of establishing procedures that facilitate group process. Also, Corey & Corey (1987) agreed that during the pre-session was a time members may be encouraged to express their expectations of the group experience. Furthermore, Borgers and Tyndall (1982), LeCluyse (1983), and Muller and Scott (1984) concur that group members who are given pre-group preparation generally experience greater benefit than do those participants who are unprepared. Additionally, Bednar, Melnick & Kaul (1974), LeCluyse (1983), and Yalom (1983), confirmed that prepared members tended to have increased faith in the group, increased more awareness of appropriate group behavior and role, and lower levels of anxiety. The prepared members were more willing to disclose, as well as give and receive feedback. In agreement with these researchers, participants in this study were observed to readily disclose as well as give and receive feedback. Yalom (1983) asserted that group leaders can do a great deal to prevent the
unnecessary anxiety that clients experience when there is ambiguity. The participants in this study agreed with these assertions and indicated an appreciation of the pre-session information they had been given.

Furthermore, participants suggested that the pre-session information be expanded to include specific information regarding the trainers professional experiences and relationships to one another was. This brought up a question about disclosure by trainers. How much disclosure was too much? Was it important to disclose and, if so, why?

Corey & Corey (1987) supported authenticity and genuineness on the part of group leaders. A group leader models self-disclosure to the group by being open with the group. The trainers, according to Corey & Corey (1987), by letting others know who they are, encouraged and invited members to make themselves known. Dye (1987) agrees, asserting and further indicating that self-disclosure on the part of the trainer supports and encourages trust within the group.

The questions remains, how much self-disclosure? Corey and Corey (1987) tell us that disclosure by trainers does not entail an indiscriminate sharing of one's private life with participants. However, authentic and appropriate self-disclosure encourages the rest of the group to be open also.

Participants in this study told us they wanted some clarification of the roles and relationships of the trainers. The trainers provided that clarification which then satisfied the group members needs and expectations. Therefore, the model indicated that demographic information regarding the trainers be included as part of the pre-session information given to participants.
Other information indicated by this model to include in the pre-session was a description of the program, the time and duration of the sessions, location of the sessions, and what participants should wear. Giving such information, according to Corey & Corey (1987), provided a frame of reference for the participants through shared expectations. Again, this information decreased anxiety and provided clarification that allowed members to experience trust. Also, Dye (1987) tells us that when conducting experiential groups it is important to let participants know to dress comfortably so they may move about freely during the initiatives. Dye (1987) also encourages experiential group participants to eliminate wearing jewelry during initiatives to avoid accidental injury by snagging or scratching someone on a ring, earring, or necklace. Couples in this study appreciated that information. Initially couples were curious about why they should not wear jewelry and the important of dressing comfortably. After couples became participated in some of the active initiatives they understood more clearly the pre-session directions regarding appropriate attire for this "different" kind of marital enrichment.

Session format The session format was developed based group process literature and research. Corey and Corey (1987) reported that beginning the group with a warm-up such as Phase I provided a context in which couples could get acquainted. Repeating this phase in each session promoted reacquaintance. Corey and Corey (1987) also indicated that the initial stage was important for giving members an opportunity to determine if the group was a safe place. Couples in the study indicated that the warm-up phase was something they appreciated and enjoyed. The participants told us that it was difficult at times to leave Phase I because they enjoyed their
conversation with one another. The group appeared to become quite cohesive only after one session and were very "chatty" during the warm-up phase of Session 2. The study participants' experiences agreed with Dye (1987) who indicated that the warm-up phase promoted group formation. Furthermore, Dye (1987) indicated that the warm-up phase in experiential group work was important in setting the stage and making the transition to the initiative. The warm-up gave couples the opportunity to let the facilitators know if and when they were ready to move on to the initiative. Couples indicated that the warm-up gave them an opportunity to let the trainers know if and when they wanted to move on to the initiative. Couples indicated that they felt respected because they knew that during the warm-up the couples would set the pace they wanted for moving on to the next phase of the training.

When couples indicated a readiness to move into the initiative, trainers selected initiatives that were symbolic or metaphorical for couples experiences based on information couples shared about themselves throughout the pre-session, warm-up, and debriefings. Dewey (1938) suggested, "To learn from experience is to make a backward-forward connection between what we do to things and what we enjoy or suffer from things in consequence." (p. 41) Gaw (1979) told us that:

- Experiential learning provides activities that have
  - the potential to involve the whole person in the
  - educational process. Each stage of the experiential
  - learning cycle has objectives that move toward the ultimate
  - goal of increasing the options available to a person in
  - the face of new but similar situations. (p. 147)
The initiatives provided the clients an opportunity to experience the concrete and overt realities, while simultaneously engaging in a symbolic or metaphorical experience (Dye, 1987; Gillis & Bonney, 1989).

Couples indicated the value of the initiatives and told the researcher that, indeed, they did find the symbolism and metaphor useful in transfer of learning. Couples indicated that engaging in the initiative was a more useful learning experience for them than what they usually experienced in traditional learning that is generally didactic, concrete, and based primarily on digital communication. The initiative allowed participants to generate from the initiatives meanings relevant to their phenomenological experiences of reality.

The final phase of each session was the processing phase. Processing is considered a very important element in experiential learning. Hammel (1986) indicated that processing was what promoted integration of learning and provided a sense of closure for the participants. Hammel (1986) indicated three general characteristics to assist in transfer of learning.

(a) Present processing sessions based on the student's/client's ability to contribute personally meaningful responses.

(b) Focus on linking the experiences from the present and future learning environments together during the processing session.

(c) When possible, debrief throughout the learning experience and not just the at end of it, allowing the students to continually focus on the future applicability of present learning.

These characteristics were included in the processing phase of training and thereby promoted a context in which participants' learning was enhanced. Participants indicated that the processing was useful to them in generating
meaningful responses to the experience of the initiatives. Their experiences agreed with the assertions of Gass (1985) and Gaw (1979) that processing helps participants link present and future learning aspects of their experience, couples often reported new meanings being generated between sessions providing new learning opportunities in other contexts. Furthermore, couples used the processing to link the learning environment of training to their daily lives. Consequently, the processing successfully promoted learning transfer as expected.

**Debriefing** The debriefing aspect of this model was an ethnographic interview with participants. The ethnographic interview, described previously, was the means of informing the researcher and co-trainer of the participants' phenomenological experiences of the training. During debriefings, couples provided their evaluations of the training. Debriefings included information to the trainers regarding whether or not expectations of participants had been met. Couples experienced the debriefings as redundant at times, but ultimately agreed that the debriefings were a context in which they especially felt heard and valued. Consequently, the participants indicated that the debriefings gave them a sense of satisfaction with the program. Furthermore, couples also indicated that the debriefings enhanced the learning experience of the training itself. This finding is consistent with the research of Lashley (1993) and Newfield, Kuehl, Joanning, and Quinn (1988) who, using ethnographic interviews found that their clients also reported greater satisfaction with treatment and intensified results.

**Interim** The interim phase of the model emerged from the study, that is, it was not a part of the format when the study began. The interim phase
developed from the debriefings conducted with couples, consulting team, and trainers. When considering how the debriefing information might best be used to develop the model, it was decided to summarize for couples what was generated during the debriefings, include it in a letter, indicate the focus of the next session, and provide a brief corresponding assignment for couples to do before the next session. Couples indicated that the letter contributed their sense of connectedness to the process. Furthermore, it was speculated that the letters also contributed to participant retention which was 100% for this study. Six couples were recruited for the study and all six couples completed the training. This finding was similar to Lashley's (1993) report that ethnographic interviews when used to inform clients throughout treatment promoted client interest, participation, and retention. In this study, the interim letters were the means of informing clients.

Giving clients a homework assignment is a familiar practice in family therapy as well as marital enrichment programming. Guerney (1977) used homework assignments as a part of the Relationship Enhancement program. L'Abate & Weinstein (1987) also included homework assignments in approach to marital enrichment. Among the family therapists well-known for homework assignment are Selvini Palazzoli (1978) of the Milan Systemic approach to family therapy, and Jay Haley (1987), the father of Strategic Family Therapy. Commonly, Palazzoli would send her clients home with specific tasks to accomplish before returning. Jay Haley (1987) was noted for his clever paradoxical interventions and ordeals he might prescribe for a client.

The participants in this study indicated a desire to have homework assignments that would prepare them for the next session. Couples indicated
that having practiced before coming to the training helped them feel less anxious and more at ease during the session. Furthermore, couples indicated that they liked a preview of the focus on the next session. Essentially, the letters served a similar purpose as the pre-session information given to couples at the beginning of training. Therefore, as Corey and Corey (1987) had indicated, the pre-session training for participants provided trust and established rapport with clients. Consequently, the interim aspect of the model continued and reinforced that rapport and trust in each subsequent session.

In conclusion, the various aspects of this model were not only supported by previous research and practice, but more importantly, were based on and grounded in the phenomenological experiences of the participants themselves. In this regard the model was tailored to the participants, their needs, their evaluations, their expectations, and their realities as they were constructed throughout the process of this study.
Building a Model of Experiential Marital Enrichment

Marital Enrichment → Experiential Learning & Therapy

Model Framework → Session I

Peer Debriefings → Ethnographic Interviews with Couples

Session II

Session III

Session IV

Responses → Transcripts

Domain Analyses

Characteristics

Elaborations

Emergent Model

Follow-up

A Model of Experiential Marital Enrichment

Figure 4 Model Building Process
Pre-session
Trainers' Demographics
Program Description
Time & Duration of Sessions
Location
Attire

Session Format
Phase I - Warm up
Phase II - Initiative
Phase III - Processing

Debriefing
Ethnographic Interview

Interim
Summarize Interviews
Letters to Participants
Homework Assignments
Next Session Focus

Figure 5 Model of Experiential Marital Enrichment
**Supporting Documentation**

Pre-group preparation generally provide participants greater benefit from the group experience than those who are unprepared (Borgers & Tyndall, 1982; LeCluyse, 1983; Muller & Scott, 1984).

Preparation increases participants' faith in the group, provided awareness of appropriate group behavior and roles, and decreases anxiety. The prepared participants are more open, self-disclosing and more willing to give and receive feedback (Bednar, Melnick & Kaul, 1974; LeCluyse, 1983; Yalom, 1983).

Promotes trust by informing group of pertinent information about the leaders; models appropriate self disclosure; trainers decide for themselves how much to disclose (Corey & Corey, 1987).

Careful introduction of trainers and some detail about trainers promotes group formation (Dye, 1987).

Shared expectations provide participants a frame of reference (Corey & Corey, 1987).

**Model of Experiential Marital Enrichment**

**Pre-session**

**Trainers' Demographics**

**Program Description**

**Time & Duration of Sessions**

**Location**

**Attire**
Initial stage of the group allows members to get acquainted, explore fears and hopes, identify and clarify personal goals and determine if the group is a safe place (Corey & Corey, 1987).

This phase promotes formation and reformation of the group with each training session (Dye, 1987). It also provides a lead-in to the initiative (Dye, 1987).

The initiative provides clients an opportunity to experience two separate realities simultaneously, that is the concrete, overt realities of engaging in the initiative and symbolic or metaphorical experience of the initiative (Dewey, 1938; Dye, 1987; Gillis & Bonney, 1989; Gaw, 1979).

Processing provides opportunity for participants to integrate their learning and experience a sense of closure (Hammel, 1986).

Processing also provides opportunity for participants to disclose personally meaningful aspects of experience and to link present and future learning aspects of experience (Gass, 1985; Gaw, 1979).

Figure 6 (Continued)
The ethnographic interview is a means of informing the trainers of important and useful as well as insignificant and non-useful aspects of the session. The ethnographic interview serves to inform the treatment, intensify results and provide greater client satisfaction (Lashley, 1993; Newfield, Kuehl, Joanning & Quinn, 1988).

Participants of this study provided concurrence regarding the debriefings indicating that they felt heard, respected and valued because information they provided in the interview was used to inform the next session as well as the overall model development. (See Results chapter).

Debriefing
Ethnographic Interview

Figure 6 (continued)
The interim aspect of the model emerged from the study through the application of qualitative methodology and ethnographic interviewing. Therefore, this aspect of the model was grounded in the phenomenological experience of the participants of the study. (See Results chapter).

Interview information provided in the ethnographic interviews was summarized and included in the letters to participants, along with homework assignments, and the focus of the next session. Summaries were used to draft a letter to the couples. This aspect of the model emerged through the weekly post-training peer debriefings and the weekly model development meetings.

Letters sent to participants were an emergent aspect of this study. The inclusion of letters between sessions emerged from conversations during debriefings with team members and trainers and between the ethnographer and the co-trainer/investigator. Therefore, this aspect of the program was grounded in the experience of the participants. It was through the letters participants were informed and the link is provided between sessions to promote client interest, participation, and retention (Lashley, 1993).

Figure 6 (continued)
Participants also informed the researcher of the desire to have homework assignments. The use of homework assignments was a common practice both in therapy and martial enrichment (Guerney, 1977, Haley, 1987, L'Abate & Weinstein, 1987, Selvini Palazzoli, 1978).

Providing couples with information for the next session focus set the stage for that session similar to providing pre-session information. Couples knew what was expected, therefore were curious. Providing this information further promotes trust and rapport with the participants similar to what is accomplished by providing pre-session information (Corey & Corey, 1987).

Furthermore, this aspect of the model was grounded in the experience of the participants, that is, participants informed the researcher of the usefulness of including it in the model. (See Results chapter.)

Figure 6 (continued)
DISCUSSION

This study was designed to answer eight questions posed to assist in the development of a model of experiential marital enrichment. The discussion section was organized in response to those eight questions. Responses to the research questions were drawn from the data generated through debriefings with couples provided in the data analysis section of this document.

Responses to Research Questions

* Question 1 - What was the phenomenological experience of the couples who participated in the experiential marital enrichment training?

Couples described their experience as "taking a class at Iowa State." Other descriptions couples had of their overall experience was that it was "group therapy" or "group interaction." Another descriptor was "It was exciting."

Couples indicated that their overall experience was useful and positive. It was obvious that their experience became more meaningful from session to session (Gass, 1985). Couples expressed a overall sense of "fit" for everyone; that is, during the sessions, even with a diversity of couples, the consensus was that something was provided or generated in the context that "fit" the couples' needs (Gass, 1985; Gillis & Bonney, 1986).

Couples indicated having a sense of respect from the trainers, ethnographer and team members. In particular, the couples felt heard as a result of using information generated from the ethnographies (Brown, 1992; Joanning et al., 1986; Lashley, 1993).
Early on in the training couples expressed confusion regarding the use of certain initiatives (Gaw, 1979; Papp, 1982). However, later, after couples had talked about and thought about those initiatives outside of the context of the training, a deeper level of meaning was generated (Bruner, 1960; Gaw, 1979; Papp, 1982). Couples then returned reporting new ideas that had sprung from those initiatives and that they had incorporated into their daily living (Gillis & Bonney, 1986; Gillis & Gass, 1993). For example, couples were critical of the first initiative, "group juggle" following the session. Initially, couples were not able to explain the usefulness of the group juggle in the context of marital enrichment. However, at session two, couples reported having used the idea of playfulness in their relationship as a way to reduce tension and stress. They talked about having recognized the need to be more spontaneous, playful, and jovial as a way to enrich their relationships.

These experiences of couples corresponds to information and prior research of analogical communication as a reference for understanding and experiencing relationships both analogically and digitally (Watzlawick et al., 1967). The information is not directly accessible as indicated by Papp (1982). As intended, the training provided couples experiences that symbolically represented salient aspects of their relationship. Metaphoric transfer of learning was obviously a part of the couples' experience (Bruner, 1960). The training experience was described by one participant as "planting seeds" that he expected to "grow" as time went by. The group agreed with the metaphor and expressed appreciation that the learning experience was on an analogical level that allowed each individual and couple to develop meanings for themselves rather than be provided with some "expert" advice.
Couples also agreed that they experienced the dynamics of the group context as important and useful (Corey & Corey, 1987; Yalom, 1983). Couples indicated that the diversity of the group was enriching and provided a fuller learning opportunity (Corey & Corey, 1987; Yalom, 1983). Couples indicated that they found hints, ideas and experiences given by members of the group to be particularly beneficial (Lieberman & Lieberman, 1987). These couples' experiences agreed with Corey & Corey (1987) and Goldenberg & Goldenberg (1991) who indicated that a group experience was more potent than work done with a single individual and/or couple. Also, these couples' experiences agreed with Lieberman and Lieberman (1987) who contended that group members were potential "therapists" for other group members.

Furthermore, couples described occasions in which the group experience resembled or corresponded in some way to experiences in their daily lives (Bruner, 1960; Gillis & Gass, 1993). For example, couples indicated that talking in the group about their spouses felt more comfortable than talking to them, which was similar to their experience in their everyday lives (Lieberman & Lieberman, 1987). They also indicated that the playfulness was for some similar to their own habit of playfulness in their relationship. Others indicated that the playfulness in the training afforded them an opportunity to renew that aspect of their relationships that had been dormant or unattended for a while (Guerney & Maxson, 1990; Miller et al., 1976). These couples told of incorporating play into their everyday lives to alleviate stress and tension when it arose (Bruner, 1960; Gillis & Bonney, 1986; Gillis & Gass, 1993).

Couples indicated that they experienced frustration in the group during the problem-solving initiative. This frustration corresponded to similar
experiences of frustrations in their daily lives when attempting problem solving. They agreed that their style of problem solving became more obvious to them as a result of the training (Lieberman & Lieberman, 1986; Miller et al., 1976). Therefore, the training provided an opportunity for couples to be more accepting of their partner's style of problem solving. This acceptance fostered greater cooperation with one another in the area of problem solving experiences of daily living (Guerney, 1977; Kesselheim, 1976; Miller et al., 1976; Wampler, 1982).

These couples' descriptions of their phenomenological experiences agreed with the view of Lieberman and Lieberman (1986) who indicated that the group context provided a forum in which couples are more comfortable in discussing issues in their relationships that were difficult or volatile. Also, in agreement with Corey and Corey (1987), the group dynamic experience of this training prompted couples to recognize their differences and become aware of commonalities with other participants.

From the conversations of couples and the content of the ethnographic interviews, by the second session couples indicated a strong sense of cohesion as a group (Corey & Corey, 1987; Dye, 1987). The group found it difficult to get started at the second session because they were simply interested in chatting and visiting. By the end of the fourth session the group began making plans to get together when the training was over. Couples indicated that the first initiative not only introduced playfulness as a part of their relational experience but helped to form the group and get acquainted with one another in a playful and non-threatening way (Gillis & Bonney, 1986; Gillis & Gass, 1993). Couples indicated that this experience was useful to them because
initiative promoted cooperation, cohesion and playfulness both in the context of
the group and in their daily experiences. These comments were similar to the
findings of Bruner (1960).

Question 2 - What changes, if any, occurred in the marital relationship of
participant couples?

There were several changes in couples relationship as a result of the
training. Couples said that they talked and listened to one another with greater
frequency, clarity and attentiveness (Brock & Joanning, 1983). They indicated
that a sense of playfulness had brought them closer and reduced tension in
their relationships (Brock & Joanning, 1983; Miller et al., 1976). Couples
expressed having become more patient with one another and that they praised
their partner more openly and frequently. Couples described having a greater
sense of awareness in their relationship along with a need and a desire to be
more attentive to their partner and their relationship in general. Couples also
described being more responsive to their partner’s needs.

Question 3 - What changes if any occurred in the communication of
participant couples?

Couples indicated being more careful about words they used with one
another and avoiding negative connotation and language (Brock & Joanning,
1983; Joanning et al., 1984; Miller et al., 1976). They described spending
more time in conversation with one another (Guerney & Maxson, 1990).
Couples indicated that they were more aware of the need to be congruent in
their non-verbal and verbal communication (Joanning et al., 1984). Couples
eliminated the "mind reading" method of communication and opted for clearer
communication methods, like asking their partner for what they wanted (Joanning et al., 1984; Watzlawick et al., 1967).

Questions 4 - What changes if any occurred in the problem-solving activities of the participant couples?

Couples indicated that they had begun to externalize problems rather than see them inside their partner or as residing in their relationship. Rather problems became something outside of themselves and their relationship. Therefore, problems became more manageable, solvable and less conflict ridden. This experience corresponds to the work of Michael White (1990). The work of Michael White (1990) emphasized that externalizing the problem depersonalized it and made it more manageable for the client. Couples indicated that their problem solving became "calmer."

Questions 5 - What changes, if any, occurred in the affectional/sexual aspects of the relationship of the participant couples?

Couples indicated that playfulness was associated with affection. Couples became more responsive to their partners (Guerney & Maxson, 1990; Zimpfer, 1988). Couples verbalized that their sexual/affectional relationship improved throughout the course of training. Couples attributed this improvement to increased attentiveness, playfulness, responsiveness, and clearer communication (Guerney & Maxson, 1990; Otto, 1976; Wampler, 1872; Zimpfer, 1988).

Questions 6 - What, if anything, was helpful to participant couples?

Couples indicated that the introduction of playfulness in their relationship was helpful (Guerney, 1977; Miller et al., 1976; Otto, 1976; Zimpfer, 1988). They also appreciated the richness provided by the diversity of the group,
finding it helpful to learn from one another (Corey & Corey, 1987; Yalom, 1983).

Couples described the letters sent to them between session as very helpful. They experienced the letter as a link between sessions as well as between their comments and the model development. Couples indicated the letters were evidence that their voices were heard and their experiences were important to the model development (Lashley, 1993). Couples appreciated having information to discuss during the week and use for the focus of the next session (Corey & Corey, 1987; Haley, 1987; L'Abate & Weinstein, 1987; Selvini Palazzoli, 1978).

Couples indicated that they found it helpful to do the ethnographic interviews. This gave them another way of wrapping up their experiences of the evening and of reinforcing the learning (Brown, 1992; Joanning et al., 1987; Lashley, 1993). Couples indicated that they were pleased with and found it helpful that the sessions were held one night during the week rather than on a weekend. Couples voiced concern that a weekend workshop would be especially difficult for families with children. Couples appreciated the initiatives as a means of enhancing their learning experiences (Bruner, 1960; Gillis & Bonney, 1986; Gillis & Gass, 1993; Gaw; 1979). Initiatives that were couple focused were said to be particularly helpful (Gillis & Bonney, 1986; Miller et al., 1976; Papp, 1982).

Question 7 - What, if anything, was not helpful to participant couples?

The first thing couples described as not helpful, or something they did not particularly like, was that the first initiative seemed too long. Couples indicated a desire for more initiatives that were couple focused (Gillis &
Bonney, 1986; Miller et al., 1976; Papp, 1982). Also, couples indicated that the length of the sessions was too short. Couples wanted more time to do the initiatives and to have conversation (Corey & Corey, 1987; Dye, 1987; Gillis & Bonney, 1986; Gillis & Gass, 1993). Couples indicated that the session that focused on intimacy was difficult and uncomfortable for them (Guerney & Maxson, 1990; Brock & Joanning, 1983).

Question 8 - What changes need to be made in the model based on information from participant couples and consulting team members?

Pre-Training. First, it was suggested that pre-training information include a descriptive vignette of the trainers and their professional experience (Borgers & Tyndall, 1982; Corey & Corey, 1987; LeCluyse, 1983; Muller & Scott, 1984). Also, the pre-session information needed to describe the focus of the first session (Bednar et al., 1974; Corey & Corey, 1987; LeCluyse, 1983, Yalom, 1983). Consequently, couples would need to know that they would be active, moving about, and sometimes in close contact with their partner and/or other group members during an initiative (Gillis & Bonney, 1986; Gillis & Gass, 1993). Therefore, the introductory materials should clarify the need for couples to wear comfortable clothing so they may move about freely. Furthermore, couple needed to be informed that it was preferable to come with little or no jewelry because bracelets, dangling earrings, or sharp rings could get snagged on a shirt sleeve or scratch their partner or themselves (Dye, 1987).

Session 1. The first session needed to remain focused on getting acquainted (Corey & Corey, 1987; Gillis & Bonney, 1983; Gillis & Gass, 1993; Yalom, 1983). The consensus of the couples, trainers, and team members was that the "Group Juggling" was an ideal initiative. (See Appendix C.) However,
this particular group of participants agreed that it could be briefer with more time afforded to conversation focused information shared by the couples about themselves.

**Session 2.** The couples indicated that the session on communication was particularly helpful and no changes were indicated (Joanning et al., 1984; Miller et al., 1976). Couples did indicate that having two more sessions on communication would be useful to them instead of only a single session (Miller et al., 1976).

**Session 3.** Couples felt it would be useful to provide more time for conversation (Dye, 1987; Hammel, 1986; Gass, 1985; Gaw, 1979). Furthermore, during Session 3 on problem-solving, a group-focused initiative was used. Couples indicated a desire for a couple-focused initiative in this session (Papp, 1992). Therefore, session 3 needs to be changed to a couple-focused initiative such as "Almost Infinite Circle." (See Appendix C.)

**Session 4.** This was the most uncomfortable session for couples. The topic was intimacy (Brock & Joanning, 1983; Corey & Corey, 1987; Yalom; 1983). This session concluded with post-testing. Therefore, the time for the session itself needed to be lengthened to a full 120 minutes. According to couples, a pre-session assignment would be helpful in preparing them for this more uncomfortable focus on intimacy (Bednar et al., 1974; Borgers & Tyndall, 1982; LeCluyse, 1983). That is, couples needed to have an opportunity prior to the session to work on an assignment related to intimacy. By the time the couples got to the session they would likely be more comfortable with the focus on intimacy in the group setting (Bednar et al., 1974; Borgers & Tyndall, 1982; LeCluyse, 1983). Also, the initiative that promoted intimacy needed to
be conducted in such a way that couples perceived a sense of privacy. Therefore, this initiative could be done by asking couples to take a brief five to ten minute walk together while they have their conversation. Or, couples might separate into several rooms so only one or two couples are in a room providing each couple a greater sense privacy for this initiative.

In conclusion, suggested changes included expanding the sessions to a full two, or perhaps even three hours with a break in between, provide homework assignments for couples to do during the week in preparation for the next session, and, conduct five or six sessions rather than only four.

In addition to answering the research questions, further ideas were generated for inclusion in the discussion. First, the couples who participated in the training were all white, middle class, educated, professional couples. They were all screened prior to the training to eliminate couples who had marital problems. However, one couple who was included in the group apparently was experiencing some difficulty in their relationship and that became apparent during the training. However, this couple had answered the screening questions so as to permit their inclusion in the training. As a result, this couple fleetingly functioned as a "scapegoat" for the group (Corey & Corey, 1991). The group tended to give them advice at times and urge them to conform to the group. The facilitators skillfully encouraged the group dynamics to become more inclusive and the group responded by moving on to a working process. However, this couple remained less involved and negatively focused throughout the training. There were risks for any couple participating in an enrichment program that their participation in such a program could contribute to the emergence of relationship problems (Corey & Corey, 1986;
Guerney, 1977; Guerney & Maxson, 1990; Wampler, 1982; Zimpfer, 1988; Yalom, 1983). This was an obvious concern particularly regarding this couple. This couple declined to participate in follow-up.

"The Couple Communication" and "Relationship Enhancement" programs were focused on communication (Brock & Joanning, 1983; Guerney, 1977). These programs were limited to communication skill training and were time limited. Researchers (Brock & Joanning, 1983; Guerney, 1977) have questioned how generalizable this training is for couples to their everyday experience of their relationships. They suggested including experiential analogic components in enrichment programs to enhance the generalization to everyday life. The experiential marital enrichment program attempted to and appears to have impacted couples at an emotional and analogical level and to have generalized to everyday life. However, while the experiential marital enrichment program model developed in this study demonstrated some overall gain in the analogic component, it did not focus on communication skill development per se. A greater focus on communication skill development would be appropriate given participant couples' request for such training.

The model developed herein corresponds to a seven-point rationale for adventure therapy developed by Gass (1992). Gillis and Gass (1993) identified these seven points and they are:

1. action-oriented
2. conducted in an unfamiliar environment
3. positively uses stress (eustress) that provides a healthy context for change
4. uses observable assessment information
5. conducted within a small-group format
6. solution and success focused
7. involves the therapist actively in the process.

These seven points were incorporated into the experiential marital enrichment model that was developed through this study.

The study was a pilot designed to develop a model of marital enrichment that integrated initiatives similar to adventure experiences. According to Gillis and Gass (1993):

The integration of adventure experiences into the marriage and family therapy and enrichment field is clearly uncharted territory. The explorations accomplished to date offer the promise of new therapeutic innovations to come. Many questions remain for practitioners and researchers, and we hope that this attempt to chart a course for the future extends the invitation for further travel. (p. 284)

The study was certainly a response to such an invitation. Furthermore, the invitation remains open to others who may choose to further refine the model.
CONCLUSIONS

Limitations

The study was conducted with a small group of participants who were all Caucasian, educated, and from the middle socio-economic class. Couples who participated responded to an advertisement and were not randomly selected. The participants were couples who had an interest in doing something "different."

Furthermore, couples were informed of the purpose of the study and that they would evaluate the process as part of the study.

Finally, the study was a pilot study. Therefore, no comparison groups were used in order to compare this model with any other model of marital enrichment.

While the pretest and posttest data were useful descriptors, they were not useful for any statistical analysis.

Strengths

The qualitative methodology used throughout the study was especially well suited to model building, the goal of the study. The study also applied the methodology rigorously through careful analysis of the data by using Spradley's DRS. Also, the researcher provided numerous member checks, kept a careful audit trail, and had an auditor versed in the methodology review the study. (See Method chapter, Analysis of verbal data from ethnographic interviews.)
Additionally, this study was conducted with a range of participants in order to both provide a range of experiences within the group itself and to enhance robustness or transferability of the model developed (Guba, 1981).

Six couples were selected to participate in the study and all six couples were retained throughout the study. This may be attributed to the cohesiveness built during the first session through the "group juggling" initiative (Dye, 1987; Gillis & Bonney, 1993). Another contributing factor to the retention of all participants may have been the attentiveness of the researcher and research team members (Brock & Joanning, 1983).

The qualitative research methodology for this study included numerous member-check permutations that brought the data to a saturation point early in the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A weekly review with the participants, the ethnographer and trainers, and the team members, of the information generated rapidly revealed redundancy. This effort promoted a sense of cooperation and collaboration among all involved and allowed the model development to occur quickly.

Furthermore, the study was undertaken through the efforts of the researcher and with the participation of a research team, that is, the consulting team members, the co-trainer, the ethnographer, and the participants themselves. Consequently, due to the involvement of the research team the study provided an especially well-grounded model because it emerged from the phenomenological experiences of all involved in the training (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
Implications for practice and further research

An implication for future research was to combine traditional communication skill training with experiential learning. Indications were that by combining both types of learning experiences one would be more likely to affect both the emotional and intellectual learning experiences of participants (Gaw, 1979). Such an effect would likely provide a more generalized learning experience indicative of experiential learning (Bruner, 1960; Gass, 1985; Gaw, 1979). For example, couples, during training, participated in the initiative "group juggling" in which they formed a circle and tossed balls to one another in a fun and playful way. Couples then generalized the idea of fun and playfulness to their relationships and activities at home.

The qualitative research methodology applied to this model development provided some indications that the ethnographic interview was another initiative experience wherein couples' learning experiences were enhanced. This finding was supported by the findings of Lashley (1993) and Newfield, et al., (1988). Implications for clinical work corresponded to the findings of Lashley (1993). That is, the ethnographic interview served to inform the treatment, promote briefer therapy, and provide greater client satisfaction. In clinical practice, field notes could be used to obtain adequate data for informing the next session.

Outcome research using a larger number of participants and comparing the experiential marital enrichment to other traditional models of martial enrichment was also indicated for future research. The study invites further research of this type in order to compare the model and to obtain outcome data.
REFERENCES


Paul, J. & Paul, M. (1983) *Do I have to give up me to be loved by you?* Minneapolis, MN: CompCare Publications.


APPENDIX A: ADVERTISEMENT AND CORRESPONDENCE WITH COUPLES
EXPERIENTIAL MARITAL ENRICHMENT

Thursday Evening, 7 to 9 p.m.

June 17, 24, July 1, 8

Department of Human Development and Family Studies

Iowa State University

Contact: Patricia Keoughan, 432-9253
after 6 p.m. or weekends

No Charge to qualifying couples

This four week program is designed for married or co-habitating couples who want to improve the quality of their relationship. The format involves active participation in exercises designed as an enjoyable learning experience. This program is not appropriate for couples experiencing serious relationship problems.
June 5, 1993

Dear

You are officially registered for the Experiential Marital Enrichment Program to begin June 17. Enclosed are some guidelines to help you prepare for our first meeting.

We anticipate having a good time while learning and working together during our four training sessions.

I am looking forward to meeting each of you and getting acquainted. Thanks for your participation in this new and exciting program.

If you find you will be unable to attend, please call Pat Keoughan at 432-9253 as soon as possible so we may contact others who are on our waiting list.

Sincerely,

Patricia Keoughan, M.S.
Clinic Coordinator
Guidelines for Experiential Marital Enrichment Participants

1. Training session will begin promptly at 7:00 p.m. and end no later than 9:00 p.m. Please try to come about 15 minutes early to our first meeting. We will meeting for four Thursday evenings (June 17, 24, July 1, & 8). Approximately the first half-hour of our first meeting will be taken up with preliminaries and paperwork. All participants will need to complete these preliminaries before our training session may begin. Therefore, please try to be prompt.

2. Please plan to be at each training session. Because the training sessions are based on cooperative efforts of all members as a group, it is essential that all participants are committed to attendance at each session.

3. Plan to dress comfortably. You will be active during many of the groups. It is suggested that you wear comfortable slacks or pants, loose fitting shirt, and athletic footwear. You may also prefer to leave your jewelry at home.

4. Patricia Keoughan, M.S. and Dan Wulff, M.S.W. are your facilitators. We look forward meeting you and to a fun-filled learning-by-doing opportunity for marital enrichment.

5. Please do not hesitate to call Pat Keoughan at 432-9253 if you have any further questions. Enclosed is a map to help you find us. If you should get lost on your way to your first session, please call 294-0487. We will be meeting in Elm Hall at the Family Therapy Clinic on the ISU Campus. Elm Hall is located on the north side of Richardson Court. You will need to go to the north door of the northwest wing of Elm Hall. A small parking lot is available next to the dormitory. Be sure and ask for a parking permit when you come in.
EXPERIENTIAL MARITAL ENRICHMENT

A REMINDER

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU
THURSDAY, JUNE 17, AT 7:00 P.M.
AT ELM HALL
IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
FAMILY THERAPY CLINIC
Please come a few minutes early!

The number to call if you get lost is: 294-0487
The number to call if you are unable to attend is: 432-9253
EXPERIENTIAL MARITAL ENRICHMENT

Certifies that

and

successfully SURVIVED the
First Training Program
June 17, 24, July 1 & 8
and are herewith awarded this
Certificate of Training & Survival

______________________________  ________________________________
Patricia Keoughan, M.S.        Dan Wulff, M.S.W.

________________________
Date
APPENDIX B: INSTRUCTIONS TO TRAINERS, ETHNOGRAPHERS, AND CONSULTING TEAM
INSTRUCTIONS TO TRAINERS

Overview:

Trainers are expected to be versed in group development theory. In the experiential group process used in this marital enrichment program, there are two levels of experience operating for the couples involved. The couples will be involved in the activity and group processing that occur on a concrete and overt level. However, the activities themselves are designed to generate a psychological experience that is symbolic or metaphorical.

It is the trainers' role and responsibility to set the stage for the metaphorical experience through their presentation of the initiative. Trainers will observe interactions between couples and among group members. Observations will provide information to use during the processing of the experience. Trainers will use their observations to stimulate conversation that supports and encourages development of metaphors, abstractions, and promotes generalizability of the couples' experiences in the group to other life events.

The first concern of the trainers is to establish rapport and trust with the participants. Therefore, trainers will interact with couples and the group to put them at ease and encourage conversation.

Phase I - Introductory Phase:

The first segment of each training session will be devoted to introduction.

Session One will require time to get acquainted. It is important the trainers promote a sense of trust and establish rapport with the participants. It is also the responsibility of the trainers to put the group at ease with one another by encouraging and supporting interactions among all the group members.

Phase I of subsequent sessions will be introductory, but the focus will be on reforming the group. Time will be spent checking out how group members feel emotionally, how comfortable they are in the setting and with the group members, what concerns or issues they need to discuss before the group
continues, and any unfinished business from the previous session. The trainers' job is to provide a context that facilitates such a conversation among group members. This segment of each session sets the tone. It is the trainers' job to create a context in which the participants feel safe (trusting) enough to want the group to continue to the next phase.

During Phase I the trainers will ask if the group has issues to discuss, information to share, or concerns to bring to the group before moving on.

Trainers will assess the readiness of the group to move into the initiative phase. Once the trainers are satisfied that the group is ready to move on to the next phase the trainers will introduce the initiative. The trainers are expected to facilitate a smooth transition of the group from Phase I to Phase II.

Phase II - Initiative

The trainers will introduce the initiative to the group. The trainers are expected to introduce the initiative so as to stimulate curiosity among participants, provide participants with clear directions for the initiative making sure participants have a clear understanding of what they are being asked to do, and make available to participants any special equipment necessary to complete the initiative. It is usually safer for participants to remove jewelry when engaged in an active initiative. Participants will also need to disclose any physical condition that may limit their mobility and/or be exacerbated by any active initiative. SAFETY IS FIRST, both physical and emotional.

Trainers will need to listen to conversations that occur among group members and between partners during initiatives. Trainers need to be able to use quotations from group members during the processing phase of the group.

Trainers will need to observe group members' actions and behaviors during the initiative. It is important to note positive, new, different, negative, useful, and caring behaviors displayed by participants. The trainers may comment about these observations during the processing phase.

Trainers will also help the group to relate the initiatives to life experiences. Trainers may ask the questions of participants, "What does the experience you just had have to do with your life? Relationship? Family?"
Processing - Phase III

It is during the processing phase of the training session that trainers are responsible for creating a context in which conversation among participant couples occurs. The trainers are responsible for focusing the conversation on the couples experience of the initiative. Trainers will draw on observations made during the initiative to stimulate questions and generate conversation relative to the initiative and the couples participation in the initiative. Trainers will support participants' development of metaphor and analogy from the initiative experience. Trainers encourage participants to identify relationships between the initiative and their relationship and other life experiences.

Closing:

The last five minutes of the processing phase of the training session will be devoted to closing the group. The trainers will encourage and support the group to develop a closure "ritual" appropriate to the group.

Tips for Trainers:

Phase I.

Groups should be seated in a circle with co-trainers seated on opposites sides of the group. This arrangement provides a context for conversation, affords the trainers a view of the groups members, and provides that the trainers have eye-contact with one another.

The groups needs leadership and direction when getting started. The trainers will establish a leadership role and maintain leadership. However, the group will require less directive leadership from session to session. The trainers must strike a balance in maintaining leadership without over-controlling the group and stifling creativity, spontaneity, and group development.

Phase II.

Plan ahead. Trainers will have initiative(s) in mind the to use in each session. There will be more than one initiative selected so that the trainers have options to draw on based on what the group seems to be presenting as a need. The trainers will practice the initiatives ahead of time. To avoid
confusion among the group members, the trainers will give all details and procedures before beginning and initiative.

Trainers will pay attention to the group's pacing of an initiative. They should calm, or slow down, groups that are "fast" or "impulsive" in their approach to an initiative. Trainers will facilitate calmness by modeling (e.g. tone of voice, verbal exchange).

Phase III.

Processing provides an opportunity for the group to share their experience. However, some group members may be shy, reticent, or less verbal. There may be periods of silence. Sometimes the topic of conversation will be uncomfortable. Trainers will encourage the group to tolerate the discomfort of issues and silence, thereby encouraging members' own disclosure.

Trainers will provide an opportunity for all members to speak, encouraging more reticent members to participate. Trainers will be sure that only one person speaks at a time. Once this is established, the group will take over the responsibility themselves.

Trainers will facilitate the group's maintaining focus. That is, the trainers will be aware of distractions members may use to avoid conversation relative to issues at hand and avoid getting side-tracked.
INSTRUCTIONS TO THE ETHNOGRAPHER

The ethnographer is central to the study. It is the goal of the ethnographer to elicit information from the couples regarding their phenomenological experience of the experiential marital enrichment program.

The ethnographic interview is defined by Spradley (1979) as a speech event. The speech event of an ethnographic interview is similar to a friendly conversation. The interviewer establishes rapport with the informants so that he/she may use the context of a friendly conversation to introduce the ethnographic questions that will elicit the information relevant to the study. The interviewer needs to introduce the new elements at a pace that is comfortable for the participants so that rapport between interviewer and informants is maintained.

The following elements taken from Spradley’s *The Ethnographic Interview* will serve as a guide for the ethnographer:

1. *Greetings* (establish rapport)

2. Give *ethnographic explanations*
   
   2.1. Give *project explanations* -
   
   The project is designed to offer an enrichment experience to couples and in the process learn from the couples their view of this type of program so we might improve it.

   2.2. Give *question explanations* -

   Therefore, I want to ask you some questions about reaction to the training session today.

   2.3. Give *recording explanations* -

   I'd like to tape record our interview so I can go over it later. Has everyone signed the consent form that permit taping?

   2.4 Give *native language explanations* -
I'd like you to talk with me today as if I were a friend or neighbor who is curious about what it is like to be involved in this program.

2.5. Give interview explanations - this would come in a later interview, perhaps during the follow-up debriefing.

I'd like to ask you a different kind of question. (Comparing terms, sorting terms, or contrasting terms used in previous interview responses)

3. Asking ethnographic questions

3.1. Descriptive questions - provides sample of informants language;

Could you describe the session you attended?

As the title implies, descriptive questions ask the "informant" to describe their experience more fully. For example,

"Could you tell me what you mean by 'talk more openly now'?'"

3.2. Structural questions - how informants organize their knowledge (domains). Structural questions are designed to ask the informant to further define possible "domains," that is, broad categories of meaning.

For example,

"You've talked about having different kinds of arguments. Would you tell me more about these different kinds of arguments?"

3.3 Contrast questions - Contrast questions are designed to further define the meaning implicit in symbolic language used by informants by finding out how one symbol is different from other symbols. For example,

"You've used the words, 'argument,' 'heated discussion,' and 'love talk.' How are these three things different."
4. *Asymmetrical turn taking* - interviewer asks questions, the informant talks about his/her experience.

5. *Expressing interest* - occurs verbally as well as non-verbally
   I find what you're talking about very interesting, keep talking.

6. *Expressing cultural ignorance* -
   Go on, I'm not bored, you're not telling me something I already know.

7. *Repeating* - repeat questions; For example:
   Can you think of any other things you liked (didn't like) about this training session tonight?

8. *Restating the informant's terms* - repeat things informants have said, in their language. For example:
   You call this program a "marriage booster".

9. *Incorporating informant's terms* - For example.
   What would you tell your friends about getting a "marriage booster"?

10. *Creating hypothetical situations* - used to place the informant in the scene

11. *Asking friendly questions* - provides information and helps relax the informants. For example:
   How did you two get started playing golf?

12. *Taking leave* - Lets the informant know he/she knows more than she/she thinks and can teach the ethnographer more. The ethnographer expresses interest in what has been discussed and that there is much more to learn, the interviewer identifies topics
he wants to know more about to follow up on in the future. Example:

I have learned a lot today. I am also aware that you know a great deal more. There are some details we didn't get to discuss. I'm sure there are a lot of other things, too. After I go over my notes, I'm sure I'll have other questions. It is really interesting to hear what you have to say about the program.

The interview will end when the couple has shared all relevant information, that is, until the couple begins to repeat themes.
INSTRUCTIONS TO CONSULTING TEAM

The purpose of the consulting team is to observe the group process and offer to the trainers ideas and comments for improving the process. The interactions of the couples with one another and with the group in general will provide "grist for the mill". The consulting team will be able to observe from a meta-perspective unavailable to the trainers.

The trainers will break from the group briefly to consult with the team members behind the one-way mirror. The break should be no longer than five minutes. Therefore, the consulting team will need to prepare their ideas and comments.

The consulting team will need to maintain their focus on the group process. The team members may comment to one another while observing. However, the team is asked to keep their comments to one another focused and brief so that conversation does not become distracting from the objectives of the project. During the training sessions, the consulting team will be asked to refrain from conversation with individuals who are not part of the consulting team or training process.

Following the training session, while couples are debriefing with the ethnographer, the trainers and the consulting team will debrief one another. This debriefing will be audio taped. The focus of the debriefing is to assess the training process to that point, stimulate conversation and ideas to improve the program, and ascertain perceptions of trainers and team members of each session. Therefore, it is important the consulting team members be present for each of the four training sessions.

Audio taped debriefings will be transcribed, analyzed and used to inform the model development from session to session.
APPENDIX C: GROUP INITIATIVES
GROUP JUGGLING

Goal: To remember something important about others in the group. To develop the group cooperation and cohesion. To keep as many balls in the air as the group can, keeping the pattern going faster and faster.

Equipment: Several balls and/or small soft items to toss.

Rules: Stand is a circle, facing the center, with hands raised and ready to catch and/or toss. Starting with one ball, catch it and throw it, establishing a pattern. One person tosses the ball to someone on the other side of the circle, say, and he/she tosses it to a third person who tosses it to a fourth and so on, until everyone has tossed and caught the ball once. (Each person drops their hands after they have had a turn.) The last catcher tosses the ball back to the person who started the pattern, and we run through the sequence again for practice. Now the real juggling can begin. The person tossing the ball calls to name of the person to whom the ball is tossed.

With one ball all the way around, another ball is added, so two balls are in the air following the catch and toss pattern. Next we add another ball. We want to keep as many balls in the air as we can, but if one drops pick it up and keep going.

Options: Increase the rate of speed of completing the tossing pattern. Send one ball one direction and another in the opposite direction. Add hula-hoops over the head and resting on shoulders interlocking entire group.

Safety: Choose soft balls and/or or objects to toss. Toss underhanded. Stay alert.

Process: Cooperation, self-esteem, participation, competitiveness.
Getting the Message (Analogic Communication)

Goal: To develop an appreciation of the ambiguity of analogic (nonverbal) communication and the strength of influence of our nonverbal communication.

Equipment: A clear, brief universal message to assign. The message needs to be on a small piece of paper that can be handed to the speaker. The message could be: Please get me a drink of water.

Rules & Safety: Ask the members of the group to work as couples. Partners will face each other. You may remain seated or stand, whatever is comfortable. Ask the couples to decide who will be the speaker and who will be the listener. Next, describe a scenario in which the speaker and the listener both have lost their ability to speak or move their lips. They are also unable to use their hands to write. Tell the couples that the speaker will be given a message to convey to the listener. The listener will need to respond appropriately to the message in a way that lets the speaker and others know they have understood the message. Neither the speaker nor the listener can speak or write the message down. Hand the message to the speaker asking the speaker to convey the message to the listener through nonverbal (analogic) communication methods. As the couples remain silent until everyone has completed the initiative. Give the couples enough time 10-12 minutes to accomplish the task. When everyone is finished ask the various listeners to state the message as they understood it.

Processing: Nonverbal communication, frustration, anxiety, patience, breaking the rules, lack of congruence between nonverbal (analogic) communication and digital (written communication).
Dumb and Blind

Goal: To use analogic communication, develop alternative modes of communication, and experience the dilemma of communication on a different level than usual.

Equipment: A universal message written on a small piece of paper to give to the speaker. The message needs to include a number.

Examples: I want to eat a six o'clock
We have been married ( ) years

Rules & Safety: Couples will face each other, sitting or standing. They will be asked to decide who will be the speaker and who will be the listener. They will then be given a scenario that describes the listener and the speaker both as unable to speak and the listener is also unable to see. The couples will be asked to determine a signal that will let the speaker know the listener understands the message. Ask the couples not to talk until everyone has completed the initiative. The listener will be blindfolded or asked to close their eyes. The speaker will then be given the message and asked to convey the message to their partner in whatever ways they can without speaking. Give the couples enough time to complete the initiative 10-15 minutes. When everyone has finished the exercise, ask the various listeners to state the message as they understood it. Compare this to the message as written.

Processing: Frustration, being without sight and voice, alternative modes of communication.
**TRAFFIC JAM**

**Goal:** Have two groups of people exchange places on a line of squares that has one more square than the total number of people.

**Rules:** Have the groups stand at opposite ends of the line, one person to a square. Both groups should be facing toward the center (extra) square. The initiative is completed when both groups have exchanged places following these rules:

1. Only 1 group member can move at a time.
2. Only forward moves are allowed. None may move backwards.
3. You may move into an empty square directly in front of you, or into an empty square directly behind a person going the opposite direction. You may not move around anyone facing the same direction as you.

**Illegal moves:**

1. Any move backwards.
2. Any move around someone facing the same way you are; i.e., you are looking at their back.
3. Any move which involves two persons moving at once.

**Legal Moves:**

1. Any person may move into an empty space in front of him/her.
2. Any person may move around a person who is facing him/her into and empty space.

```
----->   [1]   <-----
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a.

Here 1 or 2 may move into the empty space.
Here 1 may move into the empty space, because two people are facing one another.

Safety: Make sure that the group knows that this is a cerebral problem and not one in which physical solutions are needed, i.e. lifting, jumping, etc.

Variations: The problem can be set up anywhere. You can use squares, pieces of paper, draw squares with chalk, or outline the squares with tape. Make sure there is one more square than persons. Challenge the group by getting them to solve the problem more smoothly. An additional change can be that after everyone "understands" the solution have them try to talk through the solution while holding their breath. Usually there is a need for a leader to be designated to keep things in order. Don't tell the group this, let them struggle. If they don't come up with this idea on their own, try to get them to this solution through questions. Having to physically pass each other stepping only on the squares is a more physical challenge.

Processing: Leadership, organization. Communication, problem-solving, personal contact, following vs leading, leadership selection process.
A Fairy Tale

Goal: For couples to develop a story with a happy ending as an analogy for intimacy in their own relationships.

Equipment: A good imagination, communication skills and a willingness to risk.

Rules and Safety: Tell the story to the couples in the group. Ask the couples to take a few minutes (about 5) to rethink the story and together develop an alternative happy ending to the story. Ask for volunteers from among the couples to share their new story. Give an opportunity to retell the story to as many couples who would like to do so. After all the couples who want to have told their story, give the group an opportunity to process the retelling of these stories and the meanings that were generated for them in hearing and telling the stories.

The Fairy Tale

A long time ago in a land far away the King and Queen of Amore' had a daughter who they decided should marry the son of the King and Queen of Agape. The King and Queen of Agape were of like mind. So together the two families provided many opportunities for the young princess and prince to be together. Fortunately, as children, the young princess and prince seemed drawn to one another. Their parents had high hopes that their marriage would not only seal a bond between the two kingdoms, but would also be a loving relationship.

The young princess liked the prince and thought he was very handsome. However, she was too shy to express her affection. She thought it was unladylike of her to make the first move and express her fondness for him. Likewise, the young prince thought the princess was beautiful beyond his dreams. He tried to express his affection towards her by doing many things for her. He brought her gifts which he left with her lady in waiting because he was also too shy to speak to her directly. His unspoken desire was to do whatever the princess wanted of him, but he was too shy to ask.

The princess, in turn, was very appreciative of the gifts that the young prince brought her. However, what she really wanted was for him to speak the love that she suspected he held in his heart for her. If only he would say what was
on his mind and share what was in his heart. But, being a proper young lady she could not bring herself to ask for what she wanted.

In kind, the young prince felt that she cared for him but was confused because she was always coy. He wanted so much to grant her heart’s desire, but was afraid to tell her so. If only he could find the courage to share his inner most feelings. His shyness was driven by fear—fear that she might reject him.

This stand-off continued for many years. The young prince and young princess orbited around each other but never touched ground. Their parents observing this became concerned. Perhaps they weren’t a good match. Maybe they didn’t care about each other. When the parents asked the young prince and princess how they felt each was too shy, or too frightened, to speak up.

Sadly their parents finally decided that their hope for a match was not to be. The parents found different mates for the young prince and princess who they eventually married. Both the prince and princess were crushed. Their true love so close but taken from them.

Obviously, this story just won’t do. After all, this is a fairy tale and fairy tales always turn out happily-ever-after. Your task is to retell this story so it has a happy ending.

Processing: Closeness in the relationship, vulnerabilities, willingness to share feelings and desires with one another, unspoken expectations.
Developing Intimacy

Goal: For couples to engage in intimate conversation.

Rules & Safety: Couples will be asked to discuss and negotiate, using communication skills previously introduced, the following issues:

1. What I do not want to change about myself. Aspects of me I want to retain in our relationship.

2. What I want to change about myself. Aspects of me I would like to be different.

3. What I don't want you to change. Aspects of my partner I want to remain the same.

4. What I do want you to change. Aspects of my partner I would like to be different. AND what can I do to help my partner make these changes.

Processing: Feelings experienced during the conversation, difficulties in talking together about intimate concerns, vulnerability, trust, openness, closeness, anxiety.
Title: Developing a Model of Experiential Marital Enrichment

Purpose: The purpose of this project is to evolve a model of experiential marital enrichment. The project is a joint effort of the Department of Human Development and Family Studies and the Family Therapy Clinic at Iowa State University.

Procedure: Six couples will participate in four group treatment sessions lasting from 90-120 minutes. The couples will meet once a week for a total of four sessions. All sessions will be videotaped for later analysis. Couples will complete paper and pencil instruments designed to assess aspects of relationship functioning. Couples will be audiotaped during brief communication assessment tasks and debriefing interviews following training sessions.

Training sessions will include an experiential component (initiative); that is, an activity or a problem. Two group trainers will facilitate the group. The trainers will be two experienced therapists enrolled in the doctoral program in Marriage and Family Therapy at Iowa State University.

Additionally, a consulting team of three therapists will observe each training session from behind a one-way mirror and offer suggestions designed to improve the training process. The consultants will be experienced therapists who are enrolled in the doctoral program in Marriage and Family Therapy at Iowa State University.

At the end of the final session, an additional half-hour will be used for administering posttest behavioral and self-report measures.

A follow-up interview will be conducted with each couple two to three weeks following the final training session. The interviews will consist of open-ended questions designed to elicit information about the couples' experience of the training sessions.

Approximately one month later couples will be contacted by telephone and asked to respond to summary comments regarding findings of the study.

Risk: The interventions used in the study present a small amount of risk of psychological stress as couples interact during training exercises. However, because the interventions are designed to be enrichment experiences as opposed to therapeutic and because the couples selected for the study are in stable, satisfying relationships, psychological stress should be minimal.
**Benefits:** Couples will receive training at no cost. The training received from this project will assist couples to improve the quality of their relationships.

**Confidentiality:** Every effort will be made to insure confidentiality of the participants. All scores on all measures will be stored in the computer memory by code number rather than name. Videotapes will be stored in a locked research laboratory. Project staff are experienced therapists who adhere to professional ethical guidelines regarding confidentiality.

Video and/or audio recordings generated by this study will be used only by the principle and an associate investigator. Any other use of these recordings, such as classroom instruction or workshop demonstration, will require explicitly written consent of the participants prior to such use.

Participant Name__________________________________________

Participant Name__________________________________________

Witness____________________________________________________

Date ______________________________________________________
DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

1. Name: ___________________________ 2. Age: ______

3. Spouse/Partner Name: ______________ 4. Age: ______

5. Address: __________________________


9. Home Phone: ________________ Work Phone ________________

10. Religious Affiliation (please circle):

   1. None
   2. Assembly of God
   3. Baptist
   4. Catholic
   5. Church of Christ
   6. Church of God
   7. Disciple of Christ
   8. Episcopal
   9. Jewish
   10. Latter-day Saints
   11. Lutheran
   12. Methodist
   13. Nazarene
   14. Non-denominational
   15. Pentecostal
   16. Presbyterian
   17. Seventh-day Adventist
   18. Non-denominational

11. Race (please circle):

   1. American Indian
   2. Black
   3. Mexican American
   4. Oriental
   5. White
   6. Other (please specify) ____________________________

12. Highest level of education (please circle):

   1. some grade school
   2. finished grade school
   3. some high school
   4. finished high school
   5. some college
   6. 2-year college degree
   7. 4-year college degree
   8. graduate or professional training
13. How long have you been in this marriage or relationship? ____________

14. Have you ever been divorced _____ Yes _____ No

15. How many years were you married previously? (skip this question if you have never been divorced).
   First marriage ______________
   Second marriage ____________
   Third marriage _____________

16. Do you have children? _____ Yes _____ No

17. Children's Name  Age  Sex
   ________________  ______  _____
   ________________  ______  _____
   ________________  ______  _____
   ________________  ______  _____

18. How many people live in your home? ____________

19. If someone other than your spouse and/or children live in your home what is their relationship to you? (e.g., grandparent, aunt, sister, brother, parents, stepchild)

   How long in your home?  Name  Age  Relationship
   ____________  ____________  ______  ____________
   ____________  ____________  ______  ____________
   ____________  ____________  ______  ____________
20. Circle your professional area:

1. Professional
2. Management
3. Clerical or sales
4. Agricultural

Other ________________

5. Blue collar
6. Homemaker
7. Unemployed
8. ________________

21. What is the best estimate of your total family income last year? (please circle)

1. less than $10,000
2. $10,000 - $15,000
3. $16,000 - $20,000
4. $21,000 - $25,000
5. $26,000 - $30,000

6. $31,000 - $35,000
7. $36,000 - $40,000
8. $41,000 - $45,000
9. $46,000 - $50,000
10. over $50,000
APPENDIX E: INSTRUMENTS (CRAS AND DAS)
**DYADIC ADJUSTMENT SCALE**

Most persons have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Always Agree</th>
<th>Almost Always Agree</th>
<th>Occasionally Disagree</th>
<th>Frequently Disagree</th>
<th>Almost Always Disagree</th>
<th>Always Disagree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Handling family finances</td>
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<td>2. Matters of recreation</td>
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<td>3. Religious matters</td>
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<td>4. Demonstrations of affection</td>
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<td>5. Friends</td>
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<td>6. Sex relations</td>
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<td>7. Conventionality (correct or proper behavior)</td>
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<td>8. Philosophy of life</td>
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<td>9. Ways of dealing with parents or in-laws</td>
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<td>10. Aims, goals, and things believed important</td>
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<td>11. Amount of time spent together</td>
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<td>12. Making major decisions</td>
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<td>13. Household tasks</td>
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<td>14. Leisure time interests and activities</td>
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<td>15. Career decisions</td>
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<td>16. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship?</td>
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<td>17. How often do you or your mate leave the house after a fight?</td>
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<td>18. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?</td>
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<td>19. Do you confide in your mate?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Do you ever regret that you married? (or lived together)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
21. How often do you and your partner quarrel?____ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______
22. How often do you and your "get on each other's nerves?"____ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______
23. Do you kiss your mate?____ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______
24. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?____ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______

How often would you say the following events occur between you and your mate?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All the time</th>
<th>Most of the time</th>
<th>More often than not</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

25. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas____ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______
26. Laugh together____ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______
27. Calmly discuss something____ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______
28. Work together on a project____ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______

These are some things about which couples sometimes agree and sometimes disagree. Indicate if either item below caused differences of opinions or were problems in your relationship during the past few weeks. (Check yes or no)

Yes No

29. ______ ______ Being too tired for sex.
30. ______ ______ Not showing love.

31. The dots on the following line represent different degrees of happiness in your relationship. The middle point, "happy," represents the degree of happiness of most relationships. Please circle the dot which best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

Extremely Unhappy Fairly Unhappy A Little Unhappy Happy Very Happy Extremely Happy Perfect Happy

32. Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the future of your relationship?

_______ I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and would go to almost any length to see that it does.
_______ I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do all I can to see that it does.
_______ I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do my fair share to see that it does.
_______ It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but I can't do much more than I am doing now to help it succeed.
_______ It would be nice if it succeeded, but I refuse to do any more than I am doing now to keep the relationship going.
_______ My relationship can never succeed, and there is no more that I can do to keep the relationship going.
**COMMUNICATION RAPID ASSESSMENT SCALE**

Koval, James and Joanning, Harvey, 1979

**INSTRUCTIONAL FORM** Rate the following tapes using the 5-point scale provided below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RATING</th>
<th>RATING DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+2</td>
<td>mutual personal information sharing and/or mutual problem solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>person speaking asks for information or a response from the person listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>each person shares his/her personal point of view (thoughts and feelings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>each speaker is tolerant of the other person's point of view and responds without judging that point of view</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RATING</th>
<th>RATING DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+1</td>
<td>intolerant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>some mutual personal information sharing and/or some mutual problem resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>person speaking sometimes asks for information and a response from the person listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>each person shares some of his/her personal point of view (thoughts, feelings, intentions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>each speaker tends to be tolerant of the other person's point of view but sometimes sounds judgemental</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RATING</th>
<th>RATING DESCRIPTION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>neutral communication (no impact upon the relationship)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>avoid this category if borderline; go +1 or -1 according to relationship impact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RATING</th>
<th>RATING DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-1</td>
<td>limited mutual personal information sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>one person suggests a solution to the problem with minimal consideration of the other person's point of view (each person tries to tell the other person what to do)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>each person is somewhat attacking and intolerant of the other person's point of view</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RATING</th>
<th>RATING DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-2</td>
<td>virtual dominance of speaker time by one speaker or nearly constant battling for &quot;air-time&quot;, that is, speaker demands or forces the other to listen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>speaker's tone of voice sounds very harsh, angry and uncaring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>each person implies &quot;I'm right and you're wrong&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>virtual absence of mutual personal information sharing and/or mutual problem solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>one person tries to force their solution to the problem on the other person with no consideration of the other person's point of view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>neither person asks for information or responds to the other person in a tolerant, caring way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>each person attacks the other person's point of view and is very judgemental</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Discussions that foster the relationship: 
  - couple stays with an issue
  - few if any interruptions
  - relatively equal speaking time or one person chooses to listen only
  - speaker's tone of voice conveys caring and interest
  - each person implies, "our opinions are simply different, not right or wrong!"

- Discussions that diminish the relationship: 
  - issue or topic discussed tends to vary
  - many interruptions
  - virtual dominance of speaker time by one speaker or nearly constant battling for "air-time", that is, speaker demands or forces the other to listen
  - speaker's tone of voice sounds very harsh, angry and uncaring
  - each person implies "I'm right and you're wrong"
Consider the conversation as a whole, do not allow one statement or behavior to be the basis of your decision; rather, rate your impression of the overall conversation. Try to be as consistent as you can and not mix categories, such that a category applies equally to all couples rated at that level.

1. When rating, first decide if the conversation is neutral. If conversation is neutral, rate as 0. If not neutral, move on to step 2.

2. If the conversation has an impact on the quality of the relationship, decide if the overall impact is negative or positive. Rate + or -.

3. Rate the degree to which the conversation is negative or positive using the categories described previously. Rate as 1 or 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tape or Couple #</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Degree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
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<td>no</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>+</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

DATE: ___________  JUDGE #: ___________
APPENDIX F: SYNTHESIS STATEMENT PROVIDED TO COUPLES AT FOLLOW-UP
Four domains of meaning were evident in the data generated by the couples' debriefings that occurred following each of the four training sessions. The overall domains are (1.) Program evaluation; (2.) Meaning development; (3.) Group cohesion; and (4.) Ethnographic interview. Within the domain of Program evaluation, three clusters of meaning were identified. The clusters are (1.a.) Changes suggested; (1.b.) Things couples liked; (1.c.) Things couples didn't like.

Also, within the category of Meaning development were two clusters. Those clusters are (2.a.) Learning from others, and (2.b.) Playfulness.

**Program evaluation**

Within the domain of overall program evaluation couples identified what was helpful and what was not; what they thought could be changed to make the program or a particular session better.

Couples discussion of the overall program revealed that they were curious about the initiatives and therefore wanted to participate in them. However, they indicated that they particularly appreciated the discussions among the group members. It was during the discussions, pre- and post-initiative processing, that couples indicated they gained the most from the experience.*

There was indication from the couples that some of the initiatives were not as well connected to prior or later initiatives or the process in general as they would have liked.

Couples views on the final session on intimacy were that it was more thoughtful, serious, uncomfortable and difficult.

**Suggested Changes:**

Couples suggested that initiatives involve more couple interaction.

The suggestion was made by couples that a homework assignment similar to the initiative be given to couples to work on prior to each session. In this way they would be more prepared and focused, and their comfort level might be higher.

Couples felt they needed more time and privacy in the session on intimacy.
**Things couples liked:**

Couples liked receiving the letter that was sent to them during the week. They reported that it helped them to focus and to be better prepared for the next session.

Couples also liked the focus on communication. Some indicated that they felt it could be useful to have communication as the focus of the all four sessions of the program.

Couples reported feeling that they always had the option to continue conversations or move on and participate in an initiative.

**Things couples didn't like:**

Couples indicated that their desire to continue the group discussion, or the processing aspect of the session, was interrupted by the need to focus the sessions and/or by the facilitators. Couples indicated they really enjoyed the processing, or discussion, part of the session the most, even though they were curious about what the initiative was going to be.

Various couples questioned the meaning and usefulness of different initiatives. Couples reported having difficulty experiencing the initiatives as connected to the focus of the session. After the first session couples were uncertain why the initiative was used and how it was going to help them in their relationship.

Also, some couples commented after the second session that they weren't convinced that the initiative in which they were asked to communicate without speaking and without seeing their partner was useful to their relationship.

Some couples experienced the problem-solving initiative of session three as a chaotic process. Some saw it as a puzzle with a solution; or many solutions.

The final session on intimacy was experienced with a noted degree of discomfort by many couples and, therefore, required more privacy for participant couples. Couples expressed discomfort having an intimate conversation in the context of the group. However, they also commented on the topic being one that generates discomfort in general. Also, several couples were unable to make a clear connection between the two initiatives of the "Fairy Tale" and the "Intimate Conversation."
Meaning development

Couples were curious about the project. They couldn't decide if they thought of it as an experiment or not. The couples attempted to develop meaning for themselves from the first session, wondering about how it applied to their own lives. They were curious about where this would take them eventually. Couples voiced uncertainty about how playing together in this group was going to help their relationship.

When couples returned to subsequent session they indicated that they would go home and continue conversations begun in the group. By continuing their conversations after the training session they developed more ideas, insights, and learning beyond what they had in the group.

Learning from one another:

Couples liked seeing other couples in action; learning from one another. The couples indicated following several session that they particularly value learning from one another. They considered the range of couples included in the group as particularly useful since they learn from one another's different experiences. The group punctuated their differences among the participants as couples with children and ones without.

Couples indicated that their learning from one another occurred primarily during discussions among the group members. That is where they felt they gained the most benefit.*

Playfulness:

Couples described the first initiative (group juggle) as an activity that motivated playfulness in their relationship. They saw it as a reminder to have fun together. Ideas about playfulness in relationships were repeated. They described how they had incorporated more playfulness in their relationships since the first session.

Group cohesion

Couples described the first group as facilitated getting to know each other, learning about one another and encouraging group development. Couples described feeling more comfortable with one another as a group with each session.
attended. Group cohesion appears quite well established by the time the group meets for their second session.

Couples felt comfortable in the group to talk about their relationship. Some commented that being in the group made it easier to say nice and/or negative things about their spouse. Couples described the group as supporting talk about their spouses rather than to them. Many couples viewed this as helpful.

Ethnographic Interview

In the beginning some couples questioned the value of the ethnographic interview and its purpose. When couples recognized their ideas, comments and suggestions were used to inform subsequent sessions, they described the ethnographer as an intermediary. Couples described feeling listened to, valued, and included in the process of developing the model. They liked knowing their ideas are being used.

Also, couples indicated that saying things about the process to the ethnographer it was easier to than it would be to say some of those things to the facilitators or the researcher. Some couples drew an analogy to the difficulty couples have in talking with one another.

*theme present in more than one domain
I have finished reviewing the tapes of our first session and would like to thank you for your cooperation. The information you provided both during the session and during the debriefing has been very helpful to me in understanding how you experienced Session #1. The information has also been useful in planning for Session #2. Let me briefly summarize your comments regarding Session #1.

Couples in both groups reported having fun in the first session. Consequently, I feel we have met one of the goals for the session. Couples also reported getting to know one another and becoming comfortable with the group. Thus we accomplished two additional goals of the first session. Several couples also commented that the time spent on introductory exercises went too long. My reason for spending so much time on introductory initiatives was to make sure that everyone felt reasonably comfortable in the group. Past research has shown that it is critical to the long-term success of a group such as yours to make sure everyone is at ease. I apologize if this was tedious for some of you.

An additional goal for the first session was to remind you of the importance of play and adopting a playful attitude when dealing with each other as couples. That goal was obviously reached in that many comments were made about the importance of play.

A few comments were made regarding participants’ expectations that they would be taught skills in traditional ways. Some of you may have been expecting a classroom type of experience, a lecture and discussion. Research on enrichment groups has clearly indicated that learning-by-doing is far superior to lecture discussion in developing long-term learning. Activities which require you to do something develop learning at a biological as well as an intellectual
level thereby increasing long-term retention. Our goal is to generalize learning to your day-to-day experience.

A number of couples talked about wanting to get on to specific activities that will be useful to them in their marriage. This will be a primary goal of the next three sessions.

The next session will focus on what most theoreticians and therapists consider to be the most important building block of a good marriage, namely communication. Enclosed with this letter you will find a three-page summary of the components of good communication and bad communication. Please read this summary paper carefully before the next session. The information provided is dense, that is, there is a lot of information contained in this rather brief paper.

During the next session you will be involved in initiatives designed to teach you more about good communication in marriage. Reading the enclosed paper will give you an idea of what we will attempt to help you develop during our next session. Please bring any questions that you might have after reading the paper. If you would like more information to read, additional references will be provided during the next session.

I look forward to seeing you Thursday evening. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Pat Keoughan
432-9253 (6-9pm or weekends)
Improving Couple Communication

Over the last thirty years researchers and therapists have studied the components of effective communication within intimate human relationships, most notably married couples and families. The information provided below summarizes this research.

Communication can be divided into two general categories, analogic and digital. Analogic communication is more commonly known as nonverbal communication. Most animals communicate exclusively analogically. Human beings and possibly whales, dolphins, and some primates also communicate digitally, that is, they use sounds to represent meanings. The most common of these sounds is words. Consequently, digital communication is generally referred to as verbal communication.

The following are descriptions of components of nonverbal and verbal communication that add to communication quality, preceded by a + sign, or components that take away from or degrade communication, preceded by a - sign.

Nonverbal Communication (Analogic)

+ Both speakers maintain eye contact most of the time, especially the listener, the speaker may glance away while thinking about what they are saying.
- Both speakers avoid eye contact or glare (angry stare) at each other.

+ Both speakers use appropriate and congruent facial expressions, that is their facial expressions agree with what they are saying.
- One or both speakers display facial expressions that don't agree with what they are saying (e.g., an angry glare while saying "I love you").

+ Both speakers give numerous positive head nods.
- Both speakers give few or no head nods.

+ Both speakers lean forward (about 25% lean).
- One or both speakers lean backward (less than 30%).

+ Both speakers are 12-27 inches from each other.
- Both speakers are over 60 inches from each other.

+ Both speakers are in an open, upright (no slouching) posture.
- One or both speakers slouch a great deal, or are in a closed position with arms and legs crossed, and face turned away.
Both speakers refrain from excessive hand movements such as scratching, and face/hair touching.

One or both speakers excessively scratch or touch their face/hair.

Arms/legs of each speaker are uncrossed.

One or both speakers move arms and legs excessively (crossing, uncrossing, fidgeting, etc.)

Hand movements of both speakers are relaxed and appropriate.

One or both speakers have constantly tense hands (fists) or hand movements.

Both speakers demonstrate an absence of fidgeting in their chair and do not swing their feet.

One or both speakers excessively fidget in their chair or swing their feet.

**Verbal Communication (Digital)**

Discussions that foster the relationship.

Discussions that diminish the relationship.

Both speakers stay with an issue.

The issue or topic discussed may vary rapidly.

Few if any interruptions.

Frequent interruptions.

Both speakers have relatively equal speaking time, or one chooses to listen only.

One speaker virtually dominates the speaking time; or both are battling for "air-time", (i.e., the speaker demands or forces the other to listen).

The speaker's tone of voice conveys caring and interest.

The speaker's tone of voice sounds very harsh, angry and uncaring.

Each speaker implies, "Our opinions are simply different, not right or wrong!"

Each speaker implies "I'm right and you're wrong".
+ There is mutual personal information sharing and/or mutual problem solving.
- There is a virtual absence of mutual personal information sharing and/or mutual problem solving. One person tries to force their solution to the problem on the other person with no consideration of the other person's point of view.

+ The speaker asks for information or a response from the listener.
- Neither person asks for information or responds to the other person in a tolerant, caring way.

+ Each speaker is tolerant of the other person's point of view and responds without judging that point of view.
- Each person attacks the other person's point of view and is very judgmental.

Reference

Thank you again for your participation. I was very happy to see everyone return this past week for our second meeting. I have just finished reviewing the tapes from our second session. Your comments are very helpful.

Couples in both groups reported having spent time thinking over the meaning of the first session before coming back for the second one. Many reported having found some meaning for themselves that went beyond the obvious. Some reported using the idea of fun and play to enrich their relationships. You also let us know that it playing together helped provide a greater level of comfort with one another in a group and as couples working within the context of the group.

The consensus among members of both groups is that some structure is helpful. Also, you indicate having the letters to inform you of the focus of the next session and some information to guide you is helpful.

The initiatives we provided were reported to have been meaningful and thought provoking. Both groups were satisfied with the focus on communication. I encourage you during the week to refer to the communication guidelines we provided and continue practicing those skills that have a positive influence on your relationships as you discuss those things that draw you together.

The focus of the third session will be problem-solving. I have enclosed some guidelines for problem-solving that I would like you to read over. You will use the communication skills you are have learned, along with the problem-solving techniques offered in this information, during the initiative(s) we have in mind.
At the beginning of Session #3 we anticipate taking some time to discuss your experience of the preceding week. Then, when the group is ready, we will first provide a group initiative focused on problem solving. Following the group initiative we will spend some time talking about your experience of that initiative. Next, we will provide an initiative in which you work as couples to do some problem-solving. Following that initiative we will discuss the experience. Finally, we will provide an initiative focused on problem-solving that we will ask you to do as a homework assignment. Remember, it is helpful to use the communication skills as you problem-solve.

I look forward to seeing you again Thursday evening. Please call if you have any questions, concerns, or comments.

Sincerely,

Patricia Keoughan
(432-9253) 6-9 p.m.
GUIDELINES FOR PROBLEM-SOLVING

A problem is defined as a question raised for inquiry, consideration, or solution; an intricate unsettled question; a source of perplexity, distress or vexation. Problems may or may not impinge on our lives so as to demand solutions. However, when a problem that influences lives requires a solution the following guidelines will be helpful.

Every day each of us has problems to solve and decisions to make. Sometimes we have plenty of time to make a decision or come up with a solution, other times a decision must be made quickly and the problem resolved with dispatch. The following guidelines are useful in solving any problem. By applying these problem-solving skills in situations that are not serious or urgent, you become familiar with the process and are prepared to use it in more serious, urgent and/or difficult circumstances.

When a problem requires an urgent solution and the person(s) involved do not have the resources to develop a solution, the problem may become a crisis. Sometimes a crisis is unavoidable. However, most problems can be addressed before becoming a crisis.

Whatever the problem, the following steps can be helpful in developing a solution.

**Five Steps to Problem-Solving**

- **Step 1. Identify the Problem**

  Be very specific. State the problem clearly and briefly.

- **Step 2. Apportion**

  Tease out the various aspects of the problem. Identify the components of the problem, separating the various issues that intermingle and overlap to make up the problem. This provides a view that allows you to work on the problem piece by piece. The problem becomes more
manageable, results can be seen rather quickly, and resolution becomes more accessible.

- **Step 3. Prioritize**

Once you have the components of the problem identified, it will become much clearer which ones need attention most immediately. Select one or two aspects of the problem that need urgent attention. Decide what, if any, of the other components of the problem can wait. The problem becomes less overwhelming and more manageable.

- **Step 4. Identify Resources**

For each component of the problem, identify personal (both external and internal) resources for handling that component and identify other resources that may be helpful. Consider the availability of potential resources.

- **Step 5. Identify Options**

Develop several solution options for the problem. This may require compromises. Some solutions may be more appealing to you, while others that are less appealing may be more accessible. Be willing to consider more than one solution.
1. **Define the Problem:**
   a. Identify the problem specifically:
   
   b. Clarify the problem (Gather information):

2. **Apportion:**
   a. List various components of the problem:
   
   b. Identify components that overlap and influence one another:

3. **Prioritize:**
   a. List the two most important components of the problem you need to address.
   
   b. In order of priority list other components of the problem that can wait to be dealt with later.
4. **Identify Resources:**

   a. Beginning with the components identified in 3.a., list the resources needed to address the various aspects of the problem.

   Resources:

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<th>b. Availability</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>External</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Resources</th>
<th>Availability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
5. **Identify Options:**

   a. Brainstorm your options (be creative):

   b. List several options:

   c. Develop possible consequences of each option (both + and -):
      Take into consideration attitudes, values, risk levels, habits,
      feelings, pressures of family, job, and finances.

   d. Select a solution option.

      Plan:

      Take Action:

      Evaluate:

      Repeat process if necessary.
FELLOW MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT TEST RATS:

Listed below are phone numbers of marriage enrichment experts if at any time a crisis happens in your marriage of any nature please feel desperate enough to contact one or any of these individual's. They have been expertly briefed on how to throw balls (depends on what type your considering), to communicate with blind and or deaf individuals and on occasion will use these skills on their spouses, they have been drilled on how to adequately break down any problem that may need or may not need to be fixed, they have the ability to read minds (they think) and on occasion will use the ESP knowledge against you or their spouses. Some of these women have the ability to double your form of birth control because of their horror stories about their child rearing experiences.

They are in the process of psyching themselves up to use a rope for some form of communication or problem solving or could be some down right kinky business. None the less they are basically a pretty balanced (when they are not trying to play twister or you pass her no he passes me kinda of mind games) group of real nice people. For those of you who wish to commune and or pick the knowledge these test rat's now possess lets plan a get together and get away from the laboratory and our mad scientist's and see if our marriage's can really be enriched or if they are just using these videos and tape recordings as evidence that the marriage arena is in shambles.

Besides we really need to justify Jeff's purpose for Pat-Pat and we need to prove to Stressed out Cindy that playing can happen outside the playpen and that she will get a full nights sleep this decade!!! So for all our enriched marriage's sake it might do us good to see if we can actually use these skills outside in the real world!!!

NOTE: I SUGGEST WE MAKE CLARE OUR SOCIAL DIRECTOR!!!!!!!!!!!!!
July 5, 1993

Dear

Having your comments from the last session and the debriefing with Jeff, it is quite evident that the group is feeling much more comfortable with one another. This is clearly one of the expected experiences for any group that works together over time. It is also clear that you are working very hard as couples and as a group. This is a time when group autonomy and imposed structure for the group are delicately balanced.

Some of you report wanting more time to talk with less interruption by the trainers and/or the initiatives. Others report appreciating the structure and initiatives.

Some of you report that the debriefing seems redundant and superfluous. Others of you have drawn analogies for yourselves from the debriefing experience as well as the group experience and initiatives.

I was impressed with how as a group you to make a decision to continue to discuss rather than move on to another initiative. However, I am uncertain about how you would like to proceed for the next group. Therefore, I am going to ask you to consider the following options and on Thursday be ready to come to a consensus as a group on how we should proceed.

The first 15 - 25 minutes will be used discuss the previous week, including thoughts, feelings, concerns that may be left over from our prior session and/or in-between experiences. Next the group will need to discuss and come to consensus regarding the rest of our last session considering the following options.
Option #1. Continue with problem-solving and do the ropes initiative.
Option #2. Focus on intimacy in marriage and do intimacy initiative.

We will not have time for both options so the group will need to determine the direction to go. You already have materials on problem-solving. I have also enclosed some information on intimacy for you to look over.

I look forward to seeing you on Thursday.

Sincerely,

Pat Keoughan
INTIMACY AND THE MARRIED COUPLE

Definitions:

1. We can be who we are in a relationship and allow the other person to do the same. "Allowing the other person to do the same" means we can stay emotionally connected to that other party who thinks, feels, and believes differently, without needing to change, convince, or fix the other.

2. An intimate relationship is one in which neither party silences, sacrifices, or betrays the self and each party expresses strength and vulnerability, weakness and competence in a balanced way.

   A goal of intimacy: To have relationships with both men and women that do not operate at the expense of the self and have a self that does not operate at the expense of the other.

(The above are quotations from The Dance of Intimacy by Harriet Goldner Lerner, 1989)

A Guide to Intimacy

Contributors to intimacy will be indicated by a + and detractors from intimacy will be noted by a - :

+ A clear sense of self; that is, being me in a relationship rather than becoming what others want, need, or expect me to be. Allowing others to do the same.

- Focusing on the relationship to the neglect of my own goals and life plans; i.e., the self becomes subsumed by the relationship.

+ Seeking solutions together with the help of my partner when problems or conflict arise. (This requires respectful listening and speaking; i.e., communication skills)
- Distancing from my partner when problems or conflict arise. Be unwilling to include my partner in developing solutions and resolving conflicts in the relationship.

+ Developing a respect and appreciation for the different realities my partner and I bring to our relationship.

- Disregarding and/or negating the different realities of my partner.

+ A willingness to know and be known in a relationship. Sharing experiences, including how experiences affect me and my experience of our relationship.

- Remaining uninterested and unaffected by my partners experiences, activities and/or feelings. Be unwilling to discuss how my partner affects me and my experience of our relationship.

+ Take turns caring for one another.

- Take care of me exclusively or take care of my partner to the neglect of taking care of me.

+ Respect for my partner's individual freedom. (Be willing to explore whatever anxiety this may evoke.)

- Attempting to restrict my partner's individual freedom. (Think of how this might occur.)

+ Be willing to risk pain and/or rejection in my relationship.

- Avoid all risks and any possibility of rejection and/or pain in the relationship.

(The above guidelines were developed from ideas found in the book, *Do I Have To Give Up Me To Be Loved By You?* by Jordan and Margaret Paul, 1983.)