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**THE REPRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF CHANGE
IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS:**

A study of homosexual and heterosexual couples

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

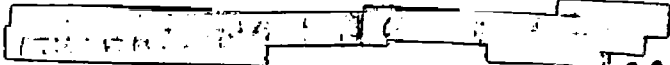
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ABSTRACT

Stemming from an interest in the process of therapeutic change in couple relationships, this study was undertaken in order to access people's narratives of change, and discover factors seen as important in their re-construction of the process. Twenty-five couples in close relationships were interviewed - eight homosexual and seventeen heterosexual. Five of the heterosexual couples were in therapy. A qualitative analysis of couple's narratives was conducted with the aim of identifying themes relevant to change as an experience; relationship changes in terms of the couple's own idiosyncratic choice of life events; and cultural discourses likely to constrain or enrich the change process. The findings suggested that couples talk about change in similar ways. However, several themes emerged reflecting discourses and presentation features that discriminated between couples. These were particular relationship themes, the comparison between past and present, the role of others, orientation issues, and aspects of interactional style. The study suggests that cultural discourses, and distinctive use of change measures such as coping strategies, are implicated in how change is accomplished and given meaning.

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PART ONE:
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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1:1 Background and Aims of the Study

An interest in the subject of change began during my work as a counsellor with Relate. Two features of this work were particularly striking. First, that whilst some couples were able - during therapy - to make considerable positive relationship changes, others were not. This led me to question the different responses. Was the nature of the outcome linked to the nature of the problem, to the influence of external factors, to some unchangeable dynamic in the relationship, or some quality of the individual partners?

A second observation arose from listening to couple's relationship stories, and their perceptions of the changes they hoped to achieve in counselling. Some couples appeared to want very different kinds of change - perhaps one partner looked for improvement in the relationship, whilst the other appeared to be contemplating its ending. In contrast, some couples were apparently motivated by shared goals, but seemed so far, unable to develop joint strategies for achieving beneficial change.

This led me to question the role of talk in developing ideas about change. Does talk construct, or reflect, each partner's perception? Furthermore, how important is it that couples 'tell the same story'? Is it important for couples to possess shared goals, and conjoint solutions? Experience with the first kind of couple suggested that mutual goals were, in some instances, vital to relationship survival. However, the relative influence of individual versus mutual factors in creating and surviving change, was unclear.

These questions led to the development of this study, and to the establishment of three basic aims:

- To study couples in intimate relationships, and the changes they experience.
- To focus particularly on their narratives - the stories they tell about their relationship changes.
- To discover the answers to some of the above questions within those narratives.

1:2 Design of the Study

A qualitative approach was adopted to capture the 'richness' of people's experiences of change, and their ways of constructing stories. In contrast, many earlier studies had employed a quantitative methodology, but it was decided that these approaches were insufficient to capture the richness, complexity, and essence of change.

The research design adopted to address the inquiry involved the use of semi-structured, *conjoint* interviews with twenty five couples - chosen on the basis of having lived together in a close relationship for at least two years. Seventeen of the couples were heterosexual, of which, five were couples in therapy. The remaining eight couples were homosexual - four lesbian and four gay partnerships. The composition of the sample developed in response to the evolving progression of the research questions, and as awareness of gaps in my thinking became apparent, choice of participants fulfilled the need for on-going theoretical sampling.

The basis of each interview involved the completion of a graph upon which couples marked significant events of their lives, and estimated the degree of closeness between them at these times. This practice enabled couples to talk together about periods of change, and provide some evaluative estimate of the relationship.

A seven-stage analysis of the data obtained involved the use of techniques based upon Grounded Theory and Social Constructionist analysis, and comprised a movement between bottom-up and top-down approaches. As the research progressed, it became clear that the methodology gave access to the meanings contained in couple's discourses of change, and

to the processes through which couples re-constructed events, and co-constructed narratives of the relationship.

The thesis traces the gradual development of this research design, and addresses the major theoretical perspectives which influenced my approach to the subject.

1:3 The Organisation of the Thesis

The argument is structured to address the factors contributing to the gradual evolution of specific aims and research questions - basic theoretical issues, previous research, the choice and development of qualitative methodology, and the presentation and interpretation of data.

Chapters 2 and 3 emphasise the focus on narratives by taking a storied approach. Chapter 2 discusses the issue of change itself - identifying some of the core characteristics evident in stories about change, and goes on to outline and critique the major psychological schools of thought relevant to a study of change. Accounts proposed by systems theory, psychodynamic, behavioural, constructivist, and cognitive perspectives are discussed in terms of basic theoretical propositions and interpretations of change. A final focus on the social constructionist perspective provides an account of the role of discourses in creating ideologies of change, and sees social constructionism as a preferred theoretical basis because it provides:

- a framework for understanding how people construct accounts together.
- an insight into the processes of change.
- an understanding of the role of context and meanings in couple's accounts of change.
- methodologies suited to the assessment of the co-construction of meanings in couple's accounts of change.

Chapter 3 advances the theoretical theme in exploring how the major psychological perspectives account for change in couple relationships. In response to the developing nature of the research, the chapter includes a critique of Attachment Theory and the role of closeness, gender perspectives, feminist theory, and the social construction of lesbian and gay relationships. Social constructionism emerges as the approach most likely to account for both the underlying patterns of interaction, and the discrete experiences of change in a couple relationship.

Chapter 4 addresses previous research findings on relationships and change, and notes that whereas heterosexual studies tend to focus on clear-cut life cycle events when addressing change, homosexual studies reveal fewer distinguishable episodes, and tend to focus on ongoing, less definable changes.

At this point, chapter 5 presents the Guiding Propositions - tentative hypotheses dealing with two central themes - one to do with couples and change; and the other proposing differences between homosexual and heterosexual partners. These propositions arose from more specific questions generated through the theoretical and research perspectives discussed in the previous chapters:

- Is a couple's management of change affected by their beliefs about it?
- Do cultural discourses have a core role in the shared stories of change?
- Will change events seen as part of the shared life cycle, be described according to unique perceptions of the relationship?
- Will there be observable differences between homosexual and heterosexual couples, in terms of gender discourses, relationship roles, the relevance of social structures, and life cycle understandings - as they talk about change?

Chapter 6 discusses in detail the procedures described in section 1:2 above. The chapter offers a reflexive account of the choice and development of methods, analysis, and validation measures as they relate to an investigation of change. Ethical issues are also addressed in the chapter.

The findings of the study are detailed in chapters 7 to 10. Chapter 7 outlines the main body of findings - presenting three major groups of themes, classified as dealing with 'change', 'relationship issues', and 'person perception'. Here, similarities and differences between couple's accounts are highlighted. Chapter 8 relates the findings to the Guiding Propositions, and chapter 9 explores an issue arising out of the main study - the interactional styles and strategies observed as couples co-constructed their accounts.

Chapter 10 presents two case studies drawn from the sample. Each summarises the narrative of the couple concerned, and provides a longitudinal, and holistic account of the themes found in the data. This allows a contrasting perspective, and illustrates how the different themes come together.

Chapter 11 interprets the findings in terms of the *content* of couple's narratives, and some of the *processes* through which narratives and their meanings are constructed. Finally, chapter 12 looks at the theoretical and methodological implications of the findings, suggesting a model of change implicit in the data, and ways in which the research may be taken forward. In view of the fundamental rationale for the study, the chapter also looks at the clinical implications which could be argued to stem from the findings.

1:4 Summary

This chapter has attempted to provide a brief account of the initial observations which prompted an investigation into change as it is experienced in couple relationships. The discussion addressed the development of the questions which formed the basis for the study, and outlined the final shape of the research design. In conclusion, the chapter summarised the approach taken in each chapter, giving a guide to the structure and presentation of the thesis.

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CHAPTER TWO:

THE NATURE OF CHANGE

2:1 Introducing an Approach to Change:

The Role of Theory

Watzlawick (1977) argued that it is a dangerous delusion to believe that there is only one reality. In effect, there are many different versions of reality, some of which are contradictory. Kelly previously took the view that each person uniquely creates his or her own actuality - like a scientist constructing theories and models of the world. He proposed that underlying consistencies in the behaviour of an individual stem from a framework of understandings contained in the system of constructs the individual builds (Kelly, 1955).

Attempts to fathom the nature of change are subject to the same processes of reality construction. On one hand we as scientists develop theories attempting to explain how people change. At the same time a hermeneutic approach emphasises that the objects of our studies are people who likewise form theories about their world - including ideas about change and how it occurs. People develop their own theories about being part of an unfolding story. Some of their theories tend to be concerned with making sense of events; others involve speculations about what responses might be possible. Underlying these conjectures there may be a set of assumptions about how successfully change can be dealt with. The interplay between beliefs and suppositions produce the realities surrounding experiences of change.

However, if the argument holds that theory has a role in all constitutive action, and if each person has his or her own theories, this has implications for research. The couples who form the basis of this study will have their own common sense theories about change. These

may be regarded as intuitive, implicit and loosely focused, but nevertheless can be expected to filter into couple's accounts of change. On the other hand, the theories developed more systematically from a research perspective will equally be used to inform and shape the discourses which describe its reality. However, the distinction between the two sources of explanation is not clear cut. Common sense theories often contain 'expert' explanations which have been internalised, and eventually become embedded in the narratives used by couples. Similarly, researchers are people, and are informed by the same implicit theories as those who are the objects of their studies. (See Potter and Wetherell, 1987).

The interrelationship between popular and psychological theories appears throughout the thesis. The research continually moves between the two. Sometimes psychological discourses appear amongst the commonsense theories - the 'folk psychology' (Bruner, 1990) through which people organise their experience; and frequently, research interpretations depend upon meanings drawn from the same system of prevalent cultural beliefs. This highlights an issue that may be faced by all social constructionist research: How can such a self-sustaining process produce a useful body of theory which transforms personally experienced 'truths' into a legitimated theoretical truth? Such issues will be discussed more fully in chapter 6.

Any attempt to develop psychological theories about the nature of change must be structured in its approach, and for this reason the subject matter has been broken down into an analysis of its various perspectives. The chapter first provides an anatomical view of change - a theoretical paradigm supplying a framework for interpreting the subject. This is followed by a discussion of ideas about change - both from the common sense perspective, and from the psychological literature. Finally, the chapter considers the implications stemming from psychological understandings for both the occurrence of change in the lives of couples, and the underlying ideological perspectives seen to influence discourses about change.

Analysing the Story

A Personal Account:

Michael Tod tells of his visit, after many years of absence, to his mother's home in Cwm Cadno, Wales. He is met with a scene of devastation - concrete and asbestos buildings, tarmac, and bare ground. The scene he previously knew well is now robbed of the profusion of nature and history that was once the old stone cottage and its tranquil garden.

He writes: 'I think " One day, if I made a fortune, I would buy back Cwm Cadno from the strangers. Replant the orchard and the beech trees, put back the hedges - the foxgloves and daffys... Replace the concrete with mellow buildings. Pennywort and harts-tongue growing in the mortar." And I stand there, a damned fool, crying for the magic of my childhood. I turn and walk away, then, over the unchanged mountain. The buzzards are still circling, the skylarks are still singing and the curlews are still calling, as they used to.' (Cwm Cadno Days. 1996)

The writer poignantly highlights the pain surrounding change. The sadness that things are not as they were, the need to re-create the lost object, and the deep desire to hold on to something that is changeless. His prose encapsulates the enduring tension between our need for stability and the inevitability of change.

The phenomenon of change is pervasive throughout life, and has been the concern of a number of writers in psychology as well as in the literary world. Some have focused on the nature and kinds of change that are possible, others have formulated theories about *how* people change - or how they can *be* changed - especially through therapy. From such writings a number of core themes have emerged which help us to define the nature of change. These are the major structuring dimensions guiding my thinking, and they will emerge and re-emerge at various points throughout the thesis.

Major Structuring Dimensions:

- *Change can be imposed upon us, or it can occur as the result of choice.* Imposed change often means that the recipient has no control over the process. The unexpected or unwanted occurs, and herein lies the grief expressed by Tod. Change occurring as the result of choice enables a degree of autonomy - valued by humanistic theory as the road to personal growth.
- *Change may stem from either external or internal sources.* The new owners of Tod's parental home were the external arbiters of change. For many of us, change comes from sources outside our sphere of control. Social institutions such as the law, the church, schools, employers, friends and family members. These external influences often create rules, systems and innovations which provoke change in the environment or in our preferred lifestyles. They often carry the negative connotations allied with imposed change and sometimes produce strong negative emotional and behavioural responses. Internal sources on the other hand may be allied to choices based upon personal needs and feelings.
- *There will be conscious and/or unconscious constituents of change.* Elements in us drive us to change, and enable us to respond to it. These impulses may be within, or beyond conscious awareness. For example, Tod is very aware of his unhappy feelings when he sees the devastation of his boyhood home. These are his conscious responses. His tears however may stem from unconscious longings for the freedom and joy of childhood. Likewise, he may not be aware of his inner need to look for life's permanencies when he turns to the unchangeable mountain and the familiar cries of the curlew. Nevertheless, his poem ends: 'I must never go back to Cwm Cadno. And I won't. Until the next time.' Here he seems to be aware of conflicting motivations - some are known and some, unknown. Such are the conscious and unconscious processes acting together in producing and negotiating transformations.
- *The study of change requires a levels of analysis approach.* In exploring how Tod reacts to change we are looking at its impact at a personal level. However, it is also possible to

take a much more integrative approach. Change affects couples, families, communities and society. The negotiation of the responsibilities and consequences involved in any transformation grows more complex as the number of people implicated increases. Furthermore, the constitutive process through which understandings are developed involves a steadily growing number of inputs, commensurate with the complexity of interactions being studied. Therefore, the nature and outcomes of any study of change will depend upon the level of analysis chosen.

- *Transformations may occur as discrete events or continuous processes.* The notion of change implies a time dimension. Whether we change our minds, our partners, our jobs, or the house we live in, we are being involved in a process that has a beginning, a middle and an end. Some changes may be termed discrete because they appear to conform to this model, and occur within a time-span which allows the change to be seen as a complete event. Others however, may be less clear cut. They may occur over a period of time when no clear structure to the process can be seen, and where the origins of the change are not remembered, or conclusions not envisaged.
- *Change produces problems or challenges which require a response.* How people respond to change is the major focus of the thesis. The ability to cope with change not only affects the quality of life, but may ultimately ensure our psychological and physical survival. Tod may mourn the loss of the childhood home as he remembered it, but unless he is able to contain his grief, or use his happy memories as positive models for his adult life, he may be unable to face the present, or create his own home and family. This suggests that there are factors which will enable us to successfully respond to change. Factors like resilience, well adapted coping strategies, or previous experiences which have left us feeling confident in our ability to control and manage our lives.

Clearly, this list of structuring dimensions may not be exhaustive, nor can it be seen as a set of discrete categories. At some points the classifications tend to overlap, or to inter-relate with one another. Like Kelly's constructs (Kelly, 1955), most conform to a bipolar model, being expressed in terms of opposites. The value of this approach is that it allows discriminations to be made between different experiences of change and therefore guides

thinking about the practical outcomes of transitional experiences, and provides a structure against which to assess the common sense and psychological theories relating to change.

Ideas about Change

The uncertainty of life is a pervasive theme found in literature, philosophy, religion and folk lore. Duck (1994) argues that the main source of anxiety resides in notions of the future. Humans can contemplate, but have no sure idea of what the future holds for them, and a great deal of effort is spent in organising life in the present, developing a system of expectations, and preparing for what the future might hold. In this way, uncertainties are kept to a minimum.

Underlying this anxiety is the sense that the future has begun already. The constant stream of changes that characterise existence remind us that processes beyond our control are occurring. We strive therefore to make life stable. One of the ways in which we attempt to achieve consistency is through the words we use. We imply stability to concepts that are primarily concerned with process. For example, we talk about the process of relating as 'my relationship'; or the ongoing experience of unemployment as 'my redundancy'.

Alternatively, we break processes of change into stages, like the seasons of the year - manageable chunks which in themselves give a feeling of constancy.

This way of dealing with change seems to be peculiar to Western cultures. The structure of our language, which focuses on 'things' rather than processes may be influential in dictating how we deal with experience. Other cultures (particularly Eastern cultures) make sense of experience in terms of continuous happenings. (Ibid. p.42) The important point however, is that reference points for dealing with change are arbitrary - peculiar to the culture in which they develop. Their value lies in the fact that they enable members of the culture to pattern experience, and to develop a system of shared ideas for understanding change. These become the common sense and pragmatic theories that guide behaviour.

As discussed above, the relationship between common sense theories and those of psychologists is complex. The ideas presented by Duck stem from his extensive studies of relationships and change. However, he also reports the ways in which people characterise life events. Duck, like other researchers in the area of relationships has moved from a positivist view - seen in his attempts to formulate change and development as a series of stages - towards a hermeneutic approach. Here the emphasis changes to a focus on what change means to the participants. Interest has concentrated on the nature of meanings implicit in beliefs and expectations, and on how they serve to create changes.

Observations in a clinical setting enable the counsellor similarly to develop models from the stories couples bring. Clients often arrive bringing a presenting problem that acts as a cover story for the real difficulty. Among other things, this may be because the couple is embarrassed about their perceived need for counselling, and need to feel safe before they disclose the real reason for their visit; or because they are unaware of the core issues that trouble them. The presenting problem can therefore be the manifestation of a symptom rather than the 'actual' difficulty.

The first task of the counsellor is to explore the client's understandings - both of the problem, and what the couple sees as its causes. Through active listening and reflecting, one attempts to hear the tale as if from within the client's head, trying to understand and accurately recall the couple's perspective. The next task is to re-play to the clients one's own comprehension of the story being told. In response, clients often clarify or modify the counsellor's perceptions, until between them clients and counsellor have a 'good enough' understanding of the narrative. The story itself therefore undergoes change in the telling, and may be seen not so much as an accurate account of reality, but more as a propositional version of meaning - open to modification as the counselling progresses.

The following case study represents an example of such an account. It depicts the story as told when, after a couple of sessions there had been opportunity to talk about the reasons the

couple came to counselling, and to gather a brief history of their relationship so far. The narrative suggests the meanings given to events during the earliest stage of counselling.

A Couple's Story:

David and Sally married twelve years ago. Their stories were that before they met, David had a low opinion of himself, and although popular with women, he was careful to avoid making advances for fear of rejection. Sally was bright, lively, and declared herself to be sure that David was the right man for her. They dated for a while, then decided to live together. Sally saw David as an ideal partner. After three years, she proposed marriage and David accepted. He suggested that although he did not love her, she had qualities which enabled him to feel good about himself - for him, a good-enough reason to continue the partnership. Furthermore, he declared himself anxious to please Sally's mother by making the couple's relationship more permanent.

At the start, the balance between them seemed to work well. Their reconstruction of this period was that Sally constantly affirmed David, and that he felt comfortable with this. The 'glue' that held them together appeared to be their mutual interest in his career, and her business ventures. However, things changed when Sally decided to end her professional enterprise just after their marriage. David argued that because of her action, and loss of professional status he lost interest in their relationship. Over time it seemed to Sally that she was the sole investor in this alliance, and David suggested he began to feel suffocated by her attentiveness. Sally reported that gradually she began to grow angry at David's self absorption, his withdrawal, and his unwillingness to agree to starting a family. Meanwhile David was becoming increasingly irritated that Sally did not seem to understand his real needs, or 'talk in his language'.

When counselling began, one of David's aims for the work was that he would be able to develop respect for Sally, but he had no clear idea of what he wanted for their relationship. Sally on the other hand seemed to have a clearer focus. She declared that she wanted David

to be committed. She hoped that he would be able to show that he cared for her, and that some improvement in their relating might lead to him agree that the couple might start a family.

Over time, David and Sally's story developed - in terms of the recall of events, and the explanations and interpretations they placed upon their actions. Features of the early story, not seen as important, began to assume a more major role as they reflected further. For example, the role of sexuality began to be seen as an important factor in their shared life. Likewise, at the early stage of counselling, the couple were unaware that the decision to get married had influenced them in any significant way. Thus, in telling their story, and re-telling it at later stages in the counselling, the narrative itself became subject to changes in structure and interpretation.

The ways in which relationships are described carry implicit evaluations and beliefs about them. According to Kurdek & Schmitt, (1986b) beliefs about how a relationship *should* function impact upon relationship quality, and this couple's story suggests that each partner had assumptions and expectations of self, other, and the nature of the relationship which strongly influenced relationship satisfaction. Some of these ideas were based upon Sally and David's personal needs; others stemmed from previous experiences with their own families and friends; still others were learned from their understandings of the wider societally shared ideas of what the 'normal' character and development of a relationship should be like. Likewise, those of us who observe this relationship and evaluate it as an *unhappy* one are not only responding to the personal sadness of each of the partners, but also signalling our assumptions and expectations of what a relationship *should* be like.

Summary

The object of the introductory section has been to set out a preferred approach to change: Firstly by arguing that theory has a role both implicitly and explicitly in enabling people in

general to develop accounts of change - and psychologists in particular to establish more self-conscious analyses of the subject.

Secondly, that as an object of study, change is argued to be best understood in terms of a framework of structuring dimensions. However, change has a variable quality when subjected to the belief systems through which it is interpreted.

The next section of the chapter looks at relevant major psychological theories and examines their approach to change - beginning with an early pragmatic perspective. The case study narrative provides propositional illustrations of the argument - along with other references to clients - James, Christine, Sue and Paul.

2:2 Major Psychological Perspectives

The Pragmatic Approach - Early Systemic Interpretations

Based in communications and systems theory approaches Watzlawick, Weakland and Fisch, in their seminal book 'Change: Principles of Problem Formation and Problem Resolution' (1974) examined the processes surrounding change as it occurs in everyday circumstances. They developed their approach as the 'pragmatics' of change - drawing on behavioural ideas of causes and consequences of actions; systemic concepts of recursive, inter-connected action; communications theory and notions of levels of communication. Most importantly, notions of hierarchies of meanings were developed. Therapeutic techniques designed to work with meanings were suggested. Among these was the strategy of 'reframing'. Habitual, unsatisfactory actions - when given new meaning, were seen to lead to a total reconstruction of thoughts, feelings and behaviour. From such insights, a wealth of creative techniques in therapy and counselling were developed, focusing on the facilitation of change through the re-organisation of meanings associated with events.

There are two ways in which change might be understood: Firstly, as a process of becoming different in one or more respects without becoming something else; and secondly, as the process of turning into, or becoming something materially different from whatever existed before. (Webster, 1966).

Watzlawick *et al.* defined these distinctions as 'first' and 'second order change'. Going beyond purely behavioural measures, their thesis focused on the ways in which group members, whether they are couples, families or larger social groups, construct joint meanings which both define and create the nature of problems and their attempted solutions. From these constructions, either of the two different kinds of change will result in response to problem situations.

The core argument is that change and persistence need to be studied together, despite their apparent antithesis. This can be seen, for example, when the ordinary difficulties within relationships and families become problems. Inherent tensions become subject to group properties working towards ensuring the stability of the group. Hence, as will be discussed in chapter 3, commonsense approaches to *difficulties* can escalate them into *problems* by applying solutions that administer 'more of the same'. This is how *first order* change occurs, and it has limited success for the couple wishing to alter a relationship they see as unsatisfying. A change may occur in the positioning between them, but it is not accompanied by newly created shared meanings which modify the character of the relationship.

Second order change has a different character. Where such change occurs the fundamental meanings which underpin the group or couple functioning become totally reorganised by the problem's solution - in Watzlawick's terminology - the situation is '*reframed*'. Often such change occurs with apparent spontaneity in everyday life. Therapeutically, the concept of second order change makes available a number of methodologies through which positive results may be achieved. However, whilst the pragmatic approach is an effective therapy,

where appropriate, for clients presenting with a deep-rooted problem - characterised by severe emotional factors - reframing techniques may have limited value. These issues will be discussed further in chapter 3.

However, from a pragmatic understanding of change it is possible to examine other accounts which scrutinise not only the ways in which transformations arise, but also the disparate therapies and understandings which can be brought to the subject. These are found in the current major psychological perspectives discussed below.

Later Systemic Approaches

Basic Theory

Systemic approaches - as the term suggests - focus on the form and nature of systems. According to the theory, family systems are made up of interconnected but distinct components operating together to maintain stability - a process regulated by the nature of the communication between the different parts (see Bateson, 1972; and Dallos, 1996a). Earlier approaches focused on observable patterns of action and actively discouraged paying too much attention to linguistic features of family communication (Minuchin, 1991, p.140, for example). Later models however, have seen that systems also have the function of creating their own pattern of meanings through talk. (For example, Anderson & Goolishian, 1988; Dallos, 1992; Hoffman, 1990)

In the context of social psychology, the systems discussed are social groups involving two or more people. Whilst much of the theory has developed as a tool of family therapy, it has applications to any human group. However, in order to understand the assumptions underlying systems theories, the family group provides the most fruitful model here.

As with any human group, family structure stems (according to Minuchin, 1974) from a set of functional demands which organise the ways in which family members interact. The

system is built up from consistent repetition of interactional episodes which eventually become patterns regulating and characterising family behaviour. For example, each time Sally told David that he was an accomplished lover or a good provider, and he assented gladly without ever returning similar compliments, the partners proposed a definition of their relationship to each other in a manner that became habitual over time. From such repetitions, a transactional pattern was developed in which Sally was characterised as giver/affirmer, and David as needy/taker.

Minuchin identified two types of transactional pattern affecting the family system. The first is the generic, or 'universal' patterns to which families are subject. For example, the hierarchies of power between parents and their children, or the complementariness sometimes found between parental figures. The second type is the idiosyncratic patterning stemming from a particular family's mode of interaction - according to Hoffman (1981) - a rich source of therapeutic solutions. Transactional patterns are argued to maintain the structure of the system, and to act as the focus for change.

A further feature of the early systemic approach is its focus on the nature of subsystems and boundaries. The individual within the family is seen to be a subsystem, but also to belong to a number of other subsystems, each having its own complementariness. For example, a woman may be a mother, a daughter, a sister etc., each subsystem carrying different levels of power and influence. Likewise, members of the family will be linked in dyadic or triadic subsystems. Mother and her children, father and his son. Each subsystem excluding the individual or persons who are not members of the group. Within and around the groups there are boundaries placed in arbitrary fashion, but they mark who participates in the group, and who does not. Such boundaries carry implications for the process of change, as will be discussed in the next section.

Early systems models provided a framework for understanding family dynamics. However, the focus on patterns of behaviour alone relied on the interpretations of a clinical observer, supplying 'expert' explanations made from an outside perspective. These overlooked the

nature of the internal interpretations made by the family itself - as Anderson and Goolishian (1988) argued, the linguistic communication enabling the family to establish shared meanings. A subsequent theoretical shift towards a hermeneutic approach has enabled systems theory to combine meanings understood from an outside perspective *with* the understandings which family members have of their relating - acknowledging that the family is more than a system determined by its social organisation and roles.

Observations of families show that each member has a sense of how he or she relates with other members - seen, for example, in the things people say when they describe their relationships. 'We are not very close.' or 'He always contradicts me when I am trying to discipline the children.' are statements signalling the underlying beliefs about how family members relate. The first indicates that closeness is one of the factors defining the nature of the relationship; the second, that parents should agree about the ways in which they handle their children.

However meanings, like actions, are fine tuned. Anderson & Goolishian describe a gradual evolution of understanding through which people come to agree that they share the same interpretation of an event. An interaction is built up between the talk about expectations, assumptions and concerns, and the development of predictable patterns of behaviour. Family members not only reflect upon their own positions within the group, but also on the understandings that each member has of the other - the metaperspectives described for example, by Laing, (1969); and Watzlawick *et al.* (1974). As the next section argues, meanings have a role in the nature of stability and change because they are implicated in the regulation of both thought and action.

Systemic approaches and change

The systems approach attempts to explain how the balance between stability and change in relationships is maintained, and argues that relational behaviour involves the repetitive use of circularities of action and meaning. Earlier medical or psychodynamic models of aetiology

were based on linear understandings - a one way flow of causality. Using the case study example, if David's behaviour is interpreted as resulting from his unhappy childhood, the ascribed causation is linear. However, if the process involves a spiral of mutual influence, the causation becomes circular. So, should David's seemingly uncaring behaviour make Sally angry, and she in turn accuses him of not showing her love, his subsequent emotional withdrawal in response to her accusations becomes yet another manifestation of uncaring behaviour. In this scenario, the behaviour of each partner provides unconscious feedback which serves to escalate the situation leading to more angry behaviour from Sally, and further withdrawal from David.

However, feedback may not necessarily produce escalation, it may lead to maintenance of the status quo (Bateson, 1972). The outcome may depend on several factors. For example, Minuchin (1974) argued that the nature of boundaries between subsystems radically effects how transactional patterns develop. Clear, well defined boundaries are most effective in enabling members to carry out their functions appropriately whereas over-diffuse or over-rigid boundaries cause problems when it is necessary for the family to adapt to change. Over-diffuse boundaries create open systems which provide no means of containment for circularities of behaviour. Sally and David operated as an open system once they had lost their early interdependency. Hence the patterns of anger-withdrawal escalated to levels which could not be controlled. In their early days however, they operated more often as a closed system. Boundaries around them were rigid and protective of their mutual neediness. During this period, the feedback system minimised any deviations from the norm. If David's behaviour elicited anger in Sally, he would attempt to placate her for fear of losing her regard for him. In order for a relationship to function well, it needs to be able to respond as each situation deserves, as either an open or a closed system. In this way, stability is maintained, but the ability to adapt to change persists.

Sally and David's story suggests however, that feedback is not limited solely to behavioural reactions. Their responses to each other were possibly influenced by perceptions of the relationship at a particular time. Their early expectations were that the relationship would be

fulfilling. Later, these understandings changed and their behaviours were motivated by different assumptions. The meaning each partner gives to what is going on between them both regulates and monitors the system (consciously and unconsciously). Although shared meaning is jointly created through circular processes of feedback, it has been argued by a number of writers that conflicts in relationships are basically 'struggles over meaning' (Eron and Lund, 1976; Fraenkel, 1997, and Watzlawick *et al.*, 1967, 1974). The partners no longer share common beliefs about their relationship.

Psychodynamic Approaches

Basic Theory

The psychodynamic approach derives from two main models - the drive, or instinct approach of classical psychoanalysis, and the Object Relations school. The term *psychodynamic* implies that the emphasis is on processes of change and development, and although both approaches focus primarily on the transformative role of the unconscious, each has come to locate the emphasis differently.

Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, is the most important progenitor of psychodynamic theory. He argued that all behaviour stems from the struggle between the drive to satisfy basic instinctual needs - especially libidinal (sexual) instincts, and the demands of civilisation. The seat of this conflict lies in the dynamic inter-relationship between three psychic structures - the id, ego and super ego. For Freud, the crucial period of personality development occurred between birth and around the age of five years. During this time, the young child was understood to be subject to the struggle between the desires of the id, the instinctual component; the demands of the outside world - as mediated through the parents; and the need to establish a strong, but realistic ego-state. The Oedipal period which occurs towards the end of the first five years was seen as a vital aspect of the growth of both gender identity and the super ego. Both developments result in internalised

constraints on behaviour, mediated through the super ego. This is the element of mental life which most of us construe as the conscience.

The role of sexuality is central to relationships in Freudian theory, and has three functions in the formation of personality. Firstly, much of development is focused around the desire for, and fulfilment of pleasurable sensations. In this respect, sexuality is linked to the pleasure to be gained from the erogenous zones which have particular importance at certain stages of life. For example, the tiny baby receives its satisfactions largely from oral contact with the mother's breast. The mouth is therefore the seat of pleasurable sensations at this stage. As the child grows, so the source of pleasure changes - hence the Freudian terms - anal, phallic, latency and genital stages. However, the relationship is not a simple one. The pleasures gained at each stage become linked to emotional and dispositional growth - a psychosexual process. Frustrations of, and desires for satisfaction lead to internal conflicts and developmental difficulties which in adult life induce the individual to seek to protect his or her vulnerable ego state. This is argued to be achieved through the unconscious use of defense mechanisms and other psychic protections.

Thus sexuality has a second function in that it influences the nature of adult interpersonal behaviour beyond instances of erotic and genital sexuality. Linked to this factor is the third function of sexuality in Freudian theory. Through the complex interplay of unconscious sexual wishes during the above mentioned Oedipal period, the young child begins to identify with the same sex parent and draws away from the parent of the opposite sex. In this way the child begins to develop his or her own sexual identity. Problems at this stage are argued to result in difficulties in adult life - such as gender confusion or problematic sexual relationships.

Freudian explanations attempted to describe how interactions within the family enable the individual to 'cope with' and 'adapt to' the society in which he or she is embedded.

However, his understanding of the dynamics of family inter-relationships involved in the

process were limited. Subsequent psychoanalytic theorists however, have developed psychodynamic understandings of intersubjective aspects of relationships.

The paradigm shift began with Melanie Klein. Her findings were in stark contrast to those of Freud. She observed that children were much more concerned with internal representations of relationships - an approach compatible with the systemic perspective discussed earlier. The 'internal object world' of the child was peopled with human relationships - the individuals or 'objects' who were significant to the child's experience. These, for her, were the 'hard-wired' structures out of which the psyche was formed. Object relations theories were developed by others such as, Fairbairn, Winnicott and Bowlby, but changed the focus - away from the first five years of life - to the first twelve months.

'Object Relations Theory' is fundamentally inter-personal in approach, since it focuses largely upon the subject of relationships. The perspective subsumes a number of theoretical positions, but common themes emerge. Developing in response to investigations of psychopathology, object relations has attempted to advance suitable therapies. Furthermore, both Freudian and object relational perspectives assumed a biological and instinctual basis. (Thomas, 1996). However, object relationists placed emphasis on the actual relationship between the child and *mother* as early caretaker, in contrast to Freudian theory where the phantasy of *father*-child relationship during the Oedipal period was critical to psychic development.

Cashdan (1988) sees this as a theoretical shift involving a significant conceptual reorientation. The experiences and conflicts which form part of normal development have come to be reinterpreted in terms of intimacy and nurturance rather than power and control. Likewise, the major features of the oedipal period - castration anxiety in the young boy, and penis envy in the girl, have been replaced in importance by events in the pre-oedipal period. The shift in emphasis has implications both for the understanding of the nature of intimate adult relationships, and for how couples cope with change during their lives together.

The role of sexuality is less central in Object Relations Theory, but appears as an issue alongside other aspects of childhood development and adult relationships. Other factors assume greater importance - the first of these being a re-formulation of the Freudian concept of *transference*. This is central to the understanding of how relationships work in Object Relations terms, and dictates the definition and constitution of any relationship. Greenberg & Mitchell, described transference as a process in which '*we continually choose and are chosen by other people on the basis of mutual role-responsiveness, and continually attempt to induce others to play the necessary parts.*' (1983, p376).

The suggestion is that we use other people to enable us to replay internal object relationships. Such processes are argued to occur unconsciously and serve to express, compulsively repeat, and perhaps repair early templates. Sexuality has a role in that the very early sensual and sexual gratifications are seen to actuate psychological development, and to be a powerful transference influence in adulthood. For example, where early emotional experiences have been flawed - as in David's story - we are left open to the possibility of major emotional and even frightening transferences in intimate relationships in adulthood with the result that sexual involvements may be problematic (Malan, 1986).

Object Relationists identify two complex processes - Introjective, and Projective Identification. These are patterns of interpersonal behaviour through which a person unconsciously maintains control in relationships. In the former, the 'other' is *introjected* - leading the self to identify with characteristics of the other. In contrast, projective identification 'is the result of the projection of parts of the self into an object' (person) (Scharff, 1982, p 221). This process serves to induce others to behave or respond in a circumscribed manner. The theory states that the *projector* engages in powerful manipulations inducing the recipient to identify with a facet of the projector which he or she disowns, but needs the other to respond to (Thomas, 1996). Projective identification is considered to be 'normal' in most intimate relationships, enabling the negotiation of differentiation and boundaries, but in severe forms may be pathological. Further aspects of the role of transferences and projective identifications will be discussed in chapter 3.

Cashdan (1988) discusses Kernberg's model of the 'internalisation system' through which processes like transference and identification occur. The internalisation system is a tripartite configuration made up of the representational self, the representational other, and its affective colouring. Internalisation systems constitute differing types of inner experience which reflect the changing nature of mother and child as they interact. The potency of this interaction stems from the individual's basic need to be loveable and acceptable, and from a successful resolution of this concern there develops a sense of security needed by both children and adults in order to function adequately in mature relationships. However, object relations theory sees this process occurring in two ways. First developmentally, as the individual comes to accept ambivalent feelings arising in response to the contradictions inherent between self and others. Secondly through the psychodynamics of relating. Each partner in an intimate relationship uses the intersubjective space - the empty territory between them - through which unconscious communication processes modify and influence self concept and the manner of relating.

Object Relations and Change

Recent object relations approaches contribute to a discussion of the nature of change more so than earlier psychodynamic theories, particularly as they focus on the dynamics of relationships. 'Mother' is replaced by 'the primary caretaker', as the foremost influence on early development. This widens the theory and avoids the criticism also levelled at Freud, that the theory contains a sexist bias.

A developmental theory, object relations suggests that there are four phases of interpersonal growth. (See Figure 2:1). Each juncture is distinguished by the elaboration of the 'goodness - badness' dichotomy characterising personal and interpersonal worlds. The first phase - *maternal splitting*, is the stage at which the new-born, being both cognitively and linguistically limited, can only perceive the primary carer in part - a part-object. The infant is unaware of others in any interpersonal sense. The carer therefore is perceived as 'hand' or

'breast' - the provider of satisfactions or frustrations - consequently, 'splitting' acts as a defence. The part-object is experienced as good or bad according to the level of fulfilment experienced. As a 'pre-linguistic' process it has powerful implications for adult life. Object relationists argue that people tend to place a 'goodness-badness' template on significant experiences that shape their lives, but have no clear understanding of their reasons for so doing. Their reactions are literally 'beyond words' - stemming from a period when language was not available for categorising thoughts and feelings, or ordering the world.

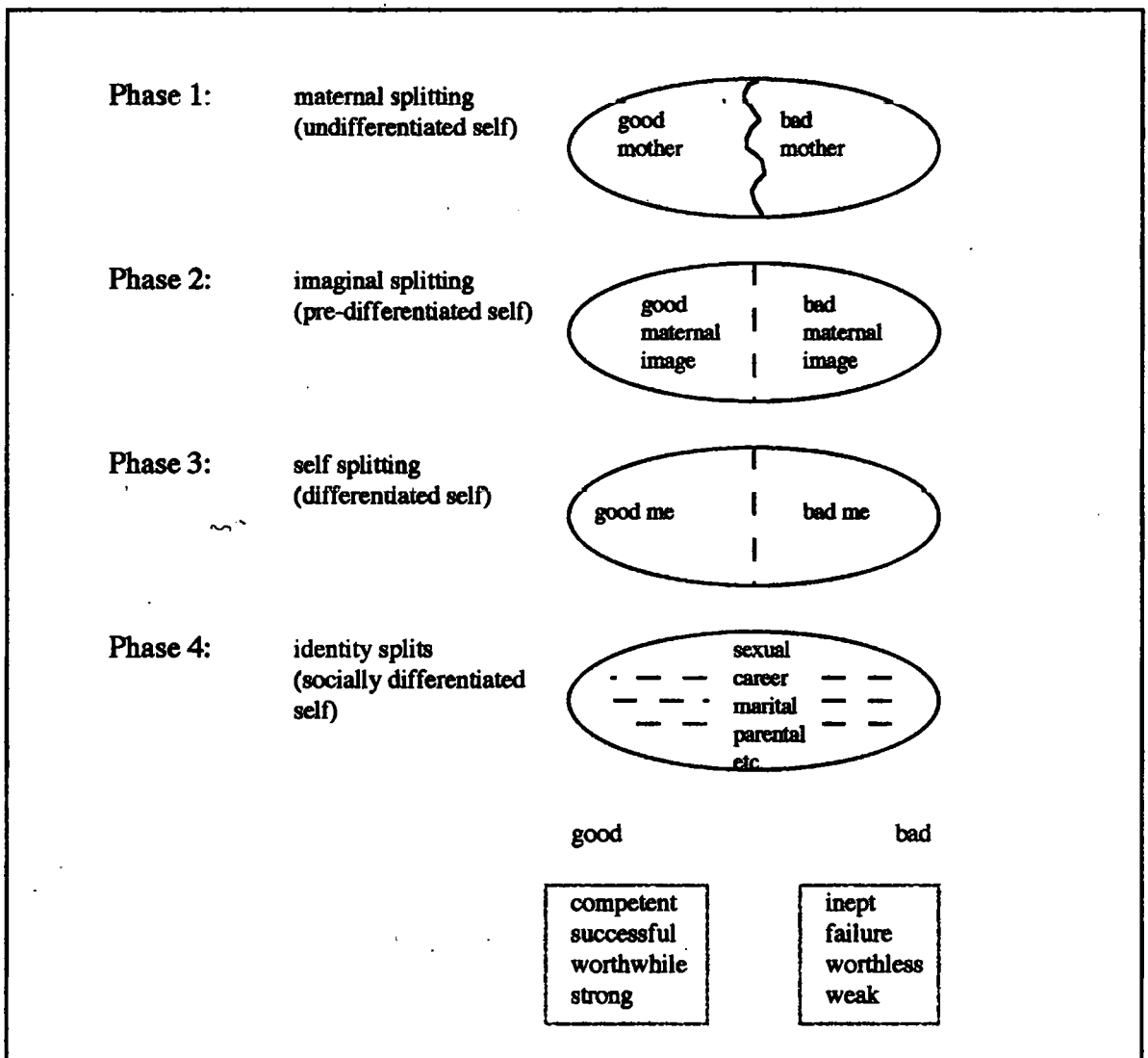


Figure 2:1. The four phases of developmental splitting according to Object Relations Theory. (Source: Cashdan, 1988, p.52)

Phase two - *preservation and imaginal splitting* is the stage at which the infant retains a strong connection to the primary carer. However, as this is a period of extreme dependency the child also experiences fears of abandonment. Anxieties are countered by game playing and the use of transitional objects - popularly seem as a normal part of an infant's repertoire. By engaging in games of hide-and-seek and 'peek-a-boo', the infant both confronts fears of loss, and gains a sense of mastery over the transitory nature of the social world. Transitional objects like a familiar teddy bear held close in the absence of the carer, enable a feeling of solace and security. The phase is argued to reach its peak when, through the development of the ability to use imagery (Lichtenburg, 1983 in Cashdan, 1988, p. 40) the child is able to internalise a mental representation of the carer. This marks a developmental milestone in the cognitive life of the child and is seen as similar to the onset of object constancy noted in Piaget's work..

Cashdan argues that once children are able to substitute and sustain an inner 'maternal' presence, they are well on their way to becoming individuals in their own right. However, the internal representation of the carer is - like the original object - liable to the same 'goodness-badness' split. Here, the task is to tolerate the ambivalence without resorting to splitting off the bad, making it reside elsewhere - even elsewhere in the family. This dynamic carries implications for how we cope with ambivalence in adult relationships.

The third phase - *Self Splitting* - rests on the development of language. At this stage, the internal image of the carer ceases to be a purely iconic representation. Language becomes included as inner conversation. At first, the child engages the internal mother or carer in talk, but gradually the process is widened to include inner conversations with a growing number of significant others. Over time, the internal relationships which develop as a result, incrementally construct an inner self. Furthermore, the self becomes subject to the same splitting as the first carer and his or her imaginal representation. The implications for adulthood are that people come to regard themselves as relatively 'good' or 'bad' depending on the experiences and defences that have accompanied splitting in the early years.

By the end of this stage, the child has normally achieved object constancy, and become skilled in the use of language. As the child develops an awareness of the self as secure, so the drive to engage with others becomes stronger. This marks the beginning of the final stage - *the phase of identity splits* - which extends throughout adulthood. It is at this juncture that the Object Relations understanding of development is most relevant to the thesis. The remainder of the lifespan is concerned with the internalisation of meaningful relationships in which attempts can be made to reconcile the goodness-badness split. In effect, continuing the attempt to deal with ambivalence about our own, and other's self worth.

The theories of Mead (1934) become relevant here. Mead argued that there is a close association between the development of the self and the individual's interpersonal relationships. He saw the self as being made up of the 'I' and the 'me'. The 'I' is the spontaneous, active and initiating aspect of the self - expressed through behaviours initially prompted by feelings and impulses. The 'me' on the other hand, is the more reflective aspect of self, carrying not only the innate characteristics of the person, but also the distillation of the social influences to which the individual is exposed. The 'I' cannot act until it has been subjected to the monitoring and modifying responses of the 'me'. This implies that an internal dialogue exists between the two aspects of the self - a symbolic interactionism leading to behaviour seen as appropriate to a given context.

Early Object Relations theory dealt largely with internal interactions with representational others in childhood. However, the theories of symbolic interactionism have been re-interpreted to explain the ongoing process throughout adulthood. Mead proposed the existence of a 'generalised other' which impinged on the evolution of the 'me', the implication being that social institutions such as marriage, school, and the family were the foremost influences. However, object relationists propose that people interact with other people rather than institutions, which suggests that instead of a single 'I - me' configuration, the self may be composed of a series of 'I - me's' - according to Cottrell (1969; cited in Cashdan, 1988, p.50) - a congregate of 'self-other systems'.

It would be more accurate to regard these systems as 'identities'. Individuals have to differentiate between a number of separate subselves - each provoked and maintained by different relationships. This is largely the task appropriate to the fourth phase of development, and like the former stages, is subject to the same goodness-badness issues. Not only do we build a set of identities - for example, sexual identity, family identity, career identity etc., but rely on relationships to establish and enhance them. Through our relationships in a number of diverse contexts, we become aware of our desirability, acceptance and self worth. The earlier good and bad feelings about the self come to be translated into good and bad feelings about our identities as good (or bad) husbands, good (or bad) wives etc. As Cashdan argues: 'What began as a central issue in the infant-mother relationship has become an issue in all relationships.'

David's story illustrates this well. He remembers the many occasions when his mother told him that he was worthless, and this description has become central to his vision of himself. The goodness-badness split is very evident in the way in which he now construes the world. His relationships and work performances tend to be characterised by a sense of his ineffectiveness. Any goodness is seen as residing in the other person - whether life partner, or colleague. It is interesting however, that the process can sometimes be reversed. The bad is in others, and the good in himself. However, it is very difficult for David to see both goodness and badness co-existing in the same person. For David, splitting and projection go together as a defence. 'Others' are used in relationships in ways which maintain a sense of self as 'good' or 'bad'. In object relations terms it is the task of the developmental process to enable us to reconcile the need for an ideal self and other with the reality that we all possess elements of both goodness and badness. These issues will be discussed in chapter 3 when the implications for adult relationships are addressed.

Object Relations theory is criticised for being a deterministic model of behaviour. With its focus on infantile processes and the lifelong ambivalence created by inner feelings of self worth, the role of unconscious processes is paramount. The model has value in providing

insights into the underlying dynamics of relationships, and explains how couples influence and shape each other, but the theory carries the implication that change is imposed in ways that are beyond awareness. Despite the narrow focus on the nature of the 'goodness-badness' split however, the position taken here is that Object Relations has value in providing understandings of the emotional dynamics of relationships.

Behavioural Approaches

Basic Theory

Behavioural theory began as an experimentally based attempt to describe the laws or principles by which human behaviour is learned. The earliest work, by behaviourists such as Pavlov (1927) and Watson (1931) (cited in Nelson-Jones, 1991, p.107; and Roth, 1990) developed the Classical Conditioning model. Pavlov's experimenters studied very simple reflex behaviours in order to produce a conditioned reflex - a behaviour that under normal circumstances would not be performed in response to a presented stimulus. The theory was further developed by Watson. He applied the Classical Conditioning model to human behaviour patterns. Watson argued that Pavlov's experiments demonstrated the strengthening of links between stimuli and responses, and that most human behaviour depends upon similar learned associations.

However, Skinner's brand of behaviourism, termed Instrumental or Operant Conditioning, regarded behaviour as a way of operating on the environment in order to generate consequences. He argued that events which increase the likelihood that certain behaviours will re-occur, are reinforcers. He also proposed that different schedules of reinforcement - that is, variations in the rate and timing of reinforcement presentation, and different kinds of reinforcement - positive, negative, etc., could produce differing patterns of behaviour outcome and maintenance. (Skinner, 1969; cited in Roth, 1990, ps.268 - 277). In contrast

to Pavlov, Skinner argued that the subjects of his experiments (usually rats or pigeons) were *instrumental* in producing a sequence of events resulting in the experimental outcome.

The weakness of early behaviourist theory was that it took no account of 'mental events' as links between stimuli and responses, or between behaviour and reinforcers. Behaviourism aimed only to study objective performance until the cognitive shift begun by Tolman (1886 - 1959) allowed for the role of cognitions, or units of information in the brain. This new approach expanded the application of behaviourism beyond a narrow focus on the nature of observable behaviours. The paradigm shift brought a change in the language used to describe the concepts and procedures of both Classical and Operant Conditioning in terms of expectancies and predictions - an acknowledgement of the mental events which give meaning to the learning process. The new model also provided explanations that allowed for the possibility of flexible behaviour in response to stimuli.

Nelson-Jones (1991) cited Bandura who adopted a cognitive view with respect to human practice. In terms of Bandura's social learning theory, human behaviour has come to be seen as a continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive-behavioural and environmental determinants. Accordingly, most of our learning is acquired through observing other people's behaviour, and the consequences that follow. Expectations about the possible outcomes of behaviours are developed and will act as reinforcers or inhibitors of learning. In consequence, the character of the learning process depends upon the interpretations people place upon the nature of stimuli, and upon the quality and effects of behaviour. Outcomes interpreted as positive will increase the likelihood that the observer will imitate the behaviour.

Behavioural Approaches and Change

Behavioural approaches provide practical applications to human problems, and achievement of change. For example, modern behaviour therapy techniques (e.g. Wolpe, 1973) have

been developed from the Classical Conditioning paradigm and are used in the treatment of phobias and other unwanted behaviours - such as nocturnal enuresis (bedwetting) which readily respond to the establishment of newly learned links between stimulus events and behavioural responses. Behaviour modification techniques have been developed from the Operant perspective, and are used in therapies aimed at changing undesirable behaviours for more desirable ones. The processes by which change is achieved are modelled upon the theoretical approach to learning. The former seeks to substitute one learned response with another; the latter attempts to reinforce new, advantageous behaviour.

The cognitive - behavioural approach has been extended in several ways for therapeutic use. Bandura, for example, developed a technique by which desirable behaviours are modelled in successively more difficult forms in order that patients may be able to overcome anxieties about complex or feared behaviours by imitating the model. Rational Emotive Therapy proposed by Ellis (1973), who combines cognitive therapy with a humanistic approach; and Reality Therapy (Glasser & Zunnin, 1973) were the forerunners of Beck's cognitive therapy used in the treatment of depression. Such therapies tackle the thinking style of the patient. Having identified negative cognitions, the therapy enables the patient to develop positive thoughts which can be systematically substituted for the negative ones. (See Dallos and Cullen, 1990; Beck and Freeman, 1990).

The foregoing argument suggests that behavioural and cognitive-behavioural perspectives provide well defined approaches to theories of learning, and clear models of change in therapy. Being accessible to empirical study, behavioural methods earn praise as objectively measurable paths to change. However, as investigative methodologies become more sophisticated, so the shortcomings of behavioural measures emerge. (Shapiro, 1996).

The approach can be seen as mechanistic, paying little attention to the emotional content of experiences of change. The narrow focus adopted leads researchers like Shapiro to argue for systematic integration with other insights - for example, the psychodynamic. Behavioural

appraisals also fail to take account of the ways in which contextual and relational factors have an impact on how people deal with change.

Cognitive Approaches

The Cognitive Approach in Context

Cognitive approaches are - as detailed above - often linked with behavioural theories. However, focusing largely on information processing models of the person the perspective holds that cognitions have a major role in enabling people to interpret events. This view coincides with Kelly's realisation (discussed below) that the person needs to understand, predict and control experience. However, cognitive information processing approaches take a more positivist view than that of Kelly. The cognitive account assumes a 'real' world which is openly available to understanding. As Heider (1944) argues, a world people may misinterpret - thereby producing dysfunctional cognitions. Kelly's approach has no concept of maladaptive construals, focusing instead on what our constructs achieve for us in making sense of the world.

The cognitive approach suggests that there are various ways in which cognitions are used to understand the world. Firstly, habitual styles of thinking lead to inferences about the characteristics of self and others. For example, when interpreting social behaviour, we need to be able to employ categories whereby we can organise what might otherwise be ambiguous actions to form meaningful experiences. The spontaneous hug given by a friend may be an attempt at comfort giving, or a fond goodbye, or even a prelude to more intimate behaviour. How we define the behaviour in cognitive terms will depend not only on its context, but also a number of other factors, such as beliefs about the nature of the person performing the act, assumptions about how people usually are, and standards - internal rules which dictate what people *should* be like (Kurdek, 1992b).

However, we not only interpret events and behaviour, but also our internal states. Much of this interpretation is concerned with self evaluation. Murray, Holmes, & Griffin (1996) argue that self schemas are developed which represent a general 'value system' guiding perception. Schemas of the self are judged by cognitive approaches to be unrealistic cognitions - having the status of illusions. Evidence is presented that individuals 'typically see themselves in much more positive, idealised ways than their actual attributes appear to warrant.' (Murray *et al* *ibid.* p 80). The counsellor is likely to meet the opposite - clients who are subject to negative self evaluations. These are often signalled by the use of words like 'should' 'ought' etc., as Nelson-Jones (1991) argues - overgeneralisations producing dysfunctional cognitions. The perception of others is closely linked to self schemas in that the evaluation of others is a mirror image of the perceived self.

The second way in which cognitions enable understanding of the world is through the medium of accounts. Harvey and Orbuch, (1990) define an account as 'a linguistic device employed whenever an action is subjected to valiative inquiry'. Crucial to account making is the attribution process - the mediating evaluation mechanism. Heider (1958; cited in Harvey, Orbuch and Weber, 1992) referred to attributions as the 'naive psychology' through which we understand observed and personal events. However, understanding of the role of attributions has widened to include the production of causal explanations, notions of responsibility and blame, and tools of persuasion. The argument is that we need causal explanations for the events of our lives, in addition to a sense of instrumentality and control. We assume that people are agents and that their actions do not occur as the result of chance. Therefore we attribute causes and responsibilities which enable us to interpret their behaviour.

Rusbult, Yovetich and Verette (1996) suggest that attributions of causality fall into three groups. The *controllability dimension* rests on perceived intentions and responsibility. In relationships, this relates to how far a partner is perceived to have control over his or her actions, and carries implications for possible responses. However, the ascription of control may also be a mechanism through which we deny powerful social pressures that constrain

our actions. For example, Sally and David's story is laden with causal explanations in terms of the behaviour and wishes of each partner. Very little consciously emerges about, for example, cultural expectations that partners 'fall in love', 'have babies' etc.

The *locus dimension* places causality as internal or external to the actor. This has implications for the seriousness of the attribution. Explanations based upon internal, dispositional factors where causes are seen in terms of needs, intentions, personality etc. may be regarded as unchangeable. Those founded upon external, situational considerations - the environmental circumstances within which an action is performed may carry minimal implications. For instance (a recent client) James, who sees himself as unable to 'chat up' the girls he *really* fancies observes himself as being shy, inept and unworthy of a 'desirable' girl. This provides an internal - and rigid explanation for his lack of success. However, if he attributes his failure to the fact that prospective partners are already in relationships, the possibilities for change are improved.

The *stability dimension* refers to the relative permanence implied by an attribution, and is important to thinking about change, as discussed below. Harvey & Orbuch (1990) highlight the role of experience and suggest that 'episodic memory' (described by Tulving) is an important determinant of attributions. Expectations of permanence arise from past experience and combine with factors in the immediate context, such as emotional responses to events, a desire to reduce uncertainty, and the need for control, in order to effect a behavioural outcome. These factors operate together at an unconscious level.

Seligman (1975) suggested that the ability to feel in control of events is vital to successful functioning. A lack of control leads to feelings of helplessness which in turn produces a tendency towards a negative explanatory style. He argued that *learned helplessness* develops either from exposure to persistent negative thinking in childhood, or from experiences of life events which have consistently proved to be beyond the person's control. Supporting evidence for his approach has been found in studies for example, of the attributions proposed by partners in relationships characterised by violence. (See Holtzworth-Munroe,

1992; & Andrews, 1992). The former study discovered that causal attributions offered by maritally violent men for their actions highlighted stimulus events in which they felt powerless or belittled; the latter, that women who were the victims of marital violence made attributions of self blame when subject to feelings of helplessness - either promoted by the ongoing presence of the violent partner, or as a result of childhood experiences of repeated physical and sexual violence.

According to Lalljee (1996), the language used in describing events often appears to imply causality in a particular direction. For example the phrase '*Ted helps Paul. Why?*' is more likely to be explained in terms of Ted; whereas '*John likes Peter. Why?*' is more likely to be seen as down to Peter. Lalljee argues that the reason lies in the nature of the words 'helps' and 'likes'. There is no adjectival form available to describe someone who is helped by most other people, or who goes round liking other people. Hence there is a less accessible form of language for ascribing causality. However it could be alternatively argued that such instances may be seen as examples of an imbalance of power. Ted and Peter may be seen as the more powerful figures in the situations described. Consequently, they may be seen as more likely to be agents of causality.

The cognitive approach seeks to explain how people interpret events and thereby gain control of their lives. Cognitions are seen to enable the individual to predict how others will act, or how successful their own actions will be in dealing with problems and behaviour. The attributions and explanatory styles of the individual are argued to have developed from experiences and interactions with others throughout life. The approach focuses on the nature of thinking as unrealistic and flawed, but open to change as the next section proposes.

Cognitive Approaches and Change

Transitions produce feelings of uncertainty and unpredictability which present us with fruitful possibilities for explanation. Feelings of helplessness, and the experiences that

produce them are seen as influential in a person's ability to cope with change. Attributions of causality - or more particularly, the *explanatory style* people employ - give interpretative colour to the explanations given for events. Here, the work of cognitive-behaviourists such as Bandura cited above, or humanistic psychologists such as Ellis, employing notions of functional and dysfunctional, rational and irrational explanatory styles are relevant.

Nelson-Jones (1991) argues that people assign causal explanations systematically, in ways that have consequences for subsequent feelings and behaviour. As the above discussion has highlighted, there is an *internal-external* dimension to attributions and explanatory styles. Vangelisti (1992) found that partners who reported high levels of relationship satisfaction resorted to explanations in terms of external factors. Low satisfaction levels were linked to internal causal attributions. However, interpersonal attributions - for example, perceptions of one partner by the other failed to show significant links with perceived relationship satisfaction, but provided additional interactive information, providing attributions relevant to negotiation of change.

Two explanatory styles are particularly relevant to transitions. These are causal attributions presented in terms of *stability* and *globality*. A *stable* cause will be likely to continue over time whereas an *unstable* one will be subject to change. Therefore, an explanation couched in *stable* terms may be likely to inhibit change. For example, the couple who see their difficulties stemming from dispositional explanations which assert that 'he is a selfish person,' or 'she is an angry person', may believe that such characteristics are unchangeable. In contrast, if their story were that they each have times when they are angry or selfish, potential for transformation is available. Seligman found that people prone to depression tend to use stable explanations which result in difficulties in contemplating change.

A *global* cause is one that leaves no room for other influences. In contrast, a *specific* cause is mutable. For example, 'We row because we are both hot-tempered', leaves the couple less free to change the situation - rows can be expected to continue; whereas 'We had a row because money is tight at the moment' leaves space for remedial measures. The implication

is that when there are fewer money worries, rows will subside. Vangelisti suggested that global explanations for dissatisfaction are more likely to occur in relationships that have gone beyond a certain threshold of conflict - suggesting that partners reach a point of no return.

It could be argued that if we consistently adhere to a particular explanatory style, the process may be counterproductive when we are confronted with situations of change. Transitions may demand a change of style in order to enable us to build up a new predictive framework. Andrews (1992) for example found that self-blame among women who were victims of marital violence changed once the oppressive relationship was over. Attributions of responsibility became centred upon the ex-partner. This suggests that attributions were more realistically focused, and likely to prepare the woman for a more self-fulfilling lifestyle. Use of therapeutic interventions producing a change in explanatory style is accepted as an effective form of treatment in cases of depression, and other personal and relationship problems. (See Clarke, 1996; Strong, 1978; Nelson-Jones, 1991)

The cognitive approach then has value in that its principles suggest how people explain change when it happens to them. Furthermore, ideas about explanatory style may give clues to some of the ways in which people successfully cope with change. Lastly, as studies of the relationship between attributional style and depression demonstrate, cognitive approaches have something to say about the value of cognitive restructuring - both as a therapeutic technique, and as a process necessary in dealing with situations of change.

However, as an empiricist approach, it uses methodologies which fail to catch the nuances of the things people say. Its focus on thinking as flawed takes no account of the role of personal realities involved in how we construct the world. Little attention is paid to process - either in terms of the social development of accounts, or in the acquisition of attributions of change. These are issues more typical of the social constructionist perspective outlined next.

Constructivist Approaches

In common with systemic perspectives discussed earlier, constructivist approaches see stability and change as central to human functioning. Basic to constructivism is the philosophical approach of George A Kelly who both attempted to comprehend how humans perceive the world, and developed a framework for the investigation of experience. As Stevens (1996) suggests, Kelly offers a means of understanding the unique perceptions of the individual, and provides an 'outside' perspective enabling access to the individual's construction of events. His ideas have been of specific relevance to therapeutic work with individuals (see Fransella and Dalton, 1990); and families (see Dallos, 1991).

Central to Kelly's philosophy is the notion of 'constructive alternativism'. He argued that a number of possible ways of construing reality are individually available. How we see the world depends on our beliefs about its possibilities - our personal constructs. Every person has a unique understanding, and some constructions are more successful than others. In part, the options available will be limited by contextual factors and previous experience, but the nature of our constructs will have implications for the ways in which we act. For example, James believes that he cannot develop relationships with a young woman if he fancies her. He can only feel relaxed with those in whom he has no interest. This construction limits his attempts to find a suitable girl friend. He becomes shy and tongue-tied, and is left feeling despondent. In effect, James has set up a self-fulfilling prophecy. The theory however offers positive indications that change can be achieved through the development of alternative constructions. These may result from a changing social context which presents us with new alternatives, or from the ability to elaborate existing constructs.

Kelly suggests that we behave 'as if' we were scientists. Our common sense theories attempt to make sense of our worlds, and daily activities are based upon the predictions and hypotheses we seek to test out in behaviour. James' hypothesis is that girls who are attractive *to* him will not be attracted *by* him. His behaviour tests, and generally supports the prediction. However, if the outcome of behaviour fails to support the hypothesis, the theory

is revised. When James finally dates the girl he really fancies, he can no longer trust the original supposition.

The theoretical framework of Kelly's approach is a well organised system based upon a Fundamental Postulate which he elaborates with eleven corollaries. The postulate states that '*a person's processes are psychologically channelised by the ways in which we anticipate events.*' In other words, the personality of the individual is guided by the theories that direct everyday expectations and predictions. Such a view is not only based upon Kelly's constructivist theoretical perspective, but also upon philosophical assumptions about the nature of the person.

These suppositions stem from the existential approach of humanistic psychology. The first is that the individual is rational, and capable of taking the psychological initiative in directing his or her own life. The second, that the person needs to be seen as a whole being. Kelly's view is one that bridges the gaps often found in other psychological theories. For example, there is no dichotomy between mind and body, or thoughts and feelings. As Fransella and Dalton (1990) argue 'Construing is not thinking *or* feeling - it is the act of discriminating.' All behaving involves anticipation and testing out, but mind and body are not separate, together they work to produce perceptions - sensing, looking for similarities and differences in events, often responding in emotional ways; all actions working together in the process of construing and re-construing.

Unlike psychodynamic approaches to the person, Kelly's perspective does not focus upon early childhood events, or powerful unconscious motivations. However, the personal construct system does allow that much of the process of construing may be unconscious. We may not be aware of our personal constructs, or how they inhibit or provide a range of choices. Furthermore, personal construct systems provide a link between past experience, present cognitions and future expectations.

Constructs are the building blocks of each person's system of construing. Fransella and Dalton define *construing* as the process of predicting and making sense of the personal world, whereas a *construct* is the term used for the precise basis on which a prediction is made. However, a construct involves an individual's acceptance of a concept, an impetus for action and an understanding that each concept carries an awareness of opposites. In other words, all construing is bi-polar - having two extremities. If one construes oneself as 'shy', the construction carries the implication of a contrasting quality, and in defining the opposite, the construct is clarified. For example, James may see 'brash' to be the opposite of 'shy'. Therefore he may predict that any attempt to change his shy behaviour will end in unacceptable outcomes, so he might be inhibited from being other than shy with a potential mate. Another person might see the opposing pole as 'confident', and therefore to cease being shy may be seen as positive. In understanding the nature of both poles of the constructs people hold, the individual's world view is accessed.

Constructs operate cohesively in our decision-making processes. Linked in a hierarchical formation, together they form the basis for predictions and explanations. However, it may be argued that constructs are also laterally inter-connected beliefs through which we view reality. A study of the narratives we use reveals clusters of constructs connected as interpretative systems. For instance, another client, Christine declares: 'No-one ever wants to listen to me when I'm depressed because I am always there to listen to *their* troubles. They can't believe that *I* have problems.' Here, she links her constructs about her friends - *they never want to listen to me*, and *can't believe I have problems* with one about herself - *always there to listen*. These constructs explain events for Christine, and lead her to predict that she will be unable to find help when she needs it. Moreover, the example illustrates the qualitative difference between constructs. Certain constructs are more central than others. Some of Christine's core constructs became evident as her narrative progressed. 'Depressed' was her key self-characterisation, with 'good at listening' a subordinate construct. Each of us has a unique construct system, and it has been argued (e.g. Dallos, 1996; Reiss, 1981) that the success of a relationship depends upon the ability of partners to share and validate each other's core constructs.

Relevant here are the two corollaries which deal with interpersonal and social behaviour. These are the *sociality* and *commonality* corollaries. The former refers to the ways in which social processes involving another person are influenced by the manner in which one person construes the construction process of the other. The latter corollary refers to the extent to which one person utilises a construction of experience which is similar to that of another. Kelly argued that these inferential concepts are fundamental to the experience of being in a relationship. They form the basis for the development of shared constructs which give a sense of the nature of the relationship and how partners jointly define such concepts as 'we', 'you', 'the future', 'change' etc. This theme will be explored more fully in chapter 3.

The Constructivist Approach to Change

Personal Construct Theory distinguishes between 'transitions' and 'cycles of change'. A transition is the period during which change takes place. As the process and character of change, a transition is the focus for emotional responses. Kelly identified transitions as those periods in a person's life when core constructs are threatened, or when the construct system seems no longer adequate as a basis for prediction. For example, Martin faces the prospect of losing his job because he can no longer cope with the stress involved. This may damage his construct system in two ways. Firstly his core construct built around the notion of his 'success' will be threatened; and secondly, the new experiences may be outside the range of convenience - i.e. the narrow focus - of his current construct system. Such experiences of stress are responded to in emotional ways, and are usually encountered as threat, fear, anxiety, guilt, aggressiveness or hostility. In contrast, positive emotions like joy and happiness result from experiences which validate the person's constructs.

There are three cycles of change described in PCT. There is considerable overlap between each cycle although each deals with a different aspect of change. *The experience cycle* describes the ways in which constructs themselves may be changed. As Fig 2:2 shows, the constructs we hold lead us to anticipate the outcomes of behaviour and events. We may not

be aware of such *anticipations*, but they colour our expectations. The second stage - of *commitment* refers to those occasions when we allow ourselves to experiment with a new event. The third stage - of *encounter*, involves a process of extensive construing of the new event. This is followed by *confirmation* or *disconfirmation* of the expected outcome. The final stage of *constructive revision* determines the nature of the change achieved. Confirmation of original anticipations will modify the construction and include the new event. Disconfirmation may lead to a revision of how we see ourselves. In either case, change has been achieved.

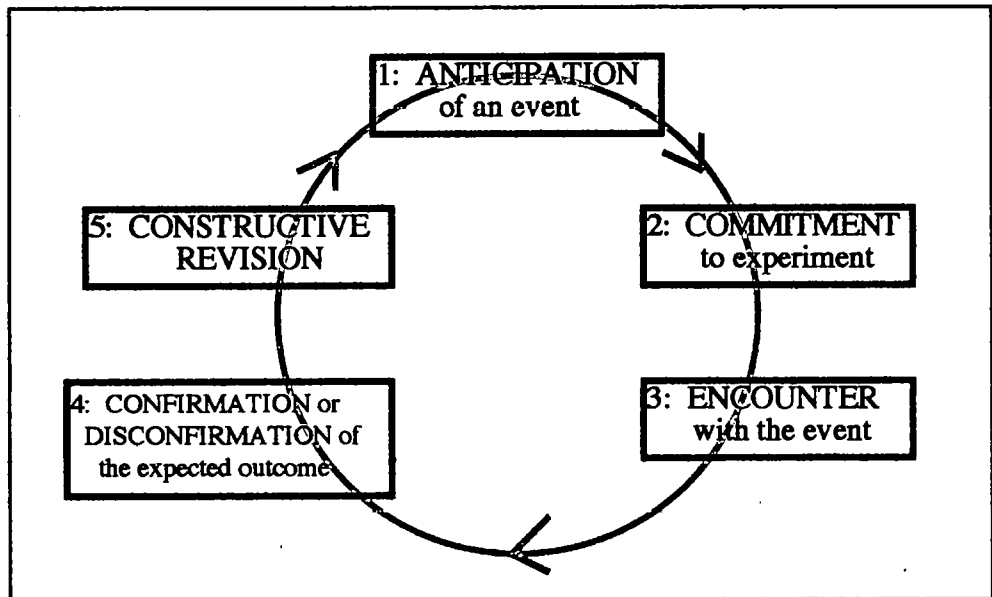


Figure 2:2 The Experience Cycle. (cited in Fransella and Dalton, 1990, p. 42.)

The creativity cycle refers to the qualitative nature of construing. If we have a set of unvarying, narrowly focused predictions, these are argued to be a result of 'tight construing'. Sometimes this kind of construction is valuable because it consolidates and protects certain aspects of our worlds. Other construing is 'loose'. Here we will have varying predictions which allow us to be flexible or to cope with changes over time. However, it is necessary for us to alternate between tight and loose construing in order to deal creatively with reality. Sue created a tight construction of Paul as a heartless betrayer when he left her for her best friend. This enabled her to legitimately express her anger and eventually divorce him, although her feelings of love for him were still very strong. Over

time, she was able to 'loosen' and see that other factors - for example, stress at work, and serious ill health - were implicated in his behaviour. This allowed the two of them to meet and talk with a view to 'getting back together'.

The CPC cycle is seen as a tool for understanding the decision making process and refers to the details of events rather than construing. (Fransella & Dalton. 1990. p. 12). 'C' - for circumspection refers to the process of weighing up the options available and the possible outcomes of choice. 'P' - refers to pre-emption which is the process of extracting the most important features from the earlier phase in order to focus on the final choice - 'C'.

Problems may occur when people become stuck in the circumspection stage, or when they leap to the choice stage without first adequately circumspecting. As an explanatory device the CPC cycle has value in making sense of the conscious, choice orientated experience of change.

Personal Construct Theory provides a comprehensive model of change - based upon a clearly defined body of theory. However, there is a need for a systematic investigation of the contextual factors which contribute to the cycles and processes Kelly describes. Almost inevitably, for example, constructs are developed within a social environment, and negotiated in linguistic transactions with other people. Therefore, a contextual and inter-relational investigation of the development of constructs would go some way to explaining how elements of change might be construed in relationships.

The Social Constructionist Perspective

The social constructionist view of the person is particularly valuable in this context because it includes both theory and methodology appropriate to the study. Theoretically, social constructionism moves away from the search for a 'real self' as a unified, relatively discoverable being, towards a view of a changing self, constructed through a continual

process of social interaction. (See Croghan & Miell, 1992; Wetherell & Maybin, 1996). Assigning a central role to discourse and language, social constructionism has developed methods of discourse analysis as useful tools for investigating the role played by language in person construction.

The basic notion of social constructionism is that the self, and indeed relationships, are not separate from the social world. This contrasts with popular views of the individual, and some of the perspectives taken by other psychological approaches which see the self as private, self-contained and separate from the cultural connections. The implications of the social constructionist approach are that the person needs to be studied *in context*. Bruner (1990, p. 109) argues for a 'distributed self', following the view of Kenneth Gergen that the person is always changing, behaving as a different individual in the company of different others.

The role of language is central in this process. White and Epston (1990) suggest that people give meaning to their lives by *storying* their experience. This is graphically illustrated by cultural studies which suggest that language, and the cultural ideologies it conveys, have the power to define the person. Clark, (1996) documents the diaried attempts of Anne Lister, an eighteenth century lesbian, to construct an identity. Clark argues from a historical perspective, and whilst the study cannot directly access the spoken word, several interesting features emerge from the textual investigation.

Firstly, that lack of cultural discourses to explain and define homosexuality denied homosexuals the tools with which to define themselves. Relationships between two women were sanctioned as respectable friendships - sex between females was thought impossible. Subcultures developed in which homosexuals constructed their own discourses and understandings. Foucault argued that late nineteenth century psychiatrist's and sexologist's causal explanations for homosexuality provided the first cultural definitions - either as mental illness, or as learned 'sexual scripts' - both interpretations carrying discourses of deviance.

However, not being part of a homosexual subculture, left Anne Lister 'free' to construct her own identity - from three different perspectives. Her comfortable material circumstances enabled her to control her own life plan - suggesting that economic power and influence is implicated in available possibilities for self expression. Her awareness of her own temperament and sexual desires drove her to seek appropriate relationships - implying an inner drive to engage in same-sex intimacies; and her need to construct a meaningful sense of self motivated her to seek out available cultural representations. The latter revealing that the first two conditions alone were not sufficient to construct a complete sense of self.

At the time, the repertoire of available selves was more restricted for women than for heterosexual men - marriage and motherhood being the only 'respectable' roles. Cultural role models were mainly transmitted through religion and literature, and in the latter Anne Lister sought to establish self identity. However, although much of the literature dealing with lesbianism was censored, Anne gleaned the words and concepts to describe and inform the relationships in which she was involved. Her lesbian identity remained concealed - except to her numerous sexual partners, and a few close companions. She searched for causal explanations - for example exploring biological material. Her reading and continual dialectic with those who knew her secret influenced her to develop a masculine persona - enabling her to develop a role within a close relationship, but also - possibly - to identify with the privileges that maleness brings.

Over time, Anne's behaviour changed from the 'rakish' pursuit of mistresses to a settled relationship secured by a ritual commitment. Her conduct reportedly veered between parodying male heterosexuality, and behaving duplicitously - denying and criticising lesbian identities - suggesting confused notions of masculinity and femininity. However, in interpreting Anne's search for a sense of self in social constructionist terms it is clear that she was involved in a continual process of interaction - both with sources of information, her sexual partners, and with those who knew nothing of her secret identity. Consequently, her created self was always changing - never unified, but constructed in the ongoing

dialectic between self, others, and the cultural discourses which constrained the form her identity should take.

The role of cultural discourses in the creation of gender behaviour is discussed further in chapters 3 and 4. However, theories dealing with the social construction of the self highlight the role of 'talk' in the process - for example, Duck (1994). He argues that we form, develop and dissolve relationships largely through talk. Thus he implies the social constructionist argument that language not only *states* things, but *does* things. (Wetherell and Maybin, 1996) In the case study example, David presented his case for marrying Sally. She would fulfil his need to be constantly affirmed in order to counter his pervasive self doubts. In so doing, David not only described an 'objective' view, he defined and constrained Sally's role in their relationship.

Talk - along with writing and other symbolic forms of communication - fulfils various roles in the formation and expression of common-sense theories. Belief systems are given character and potential. Language opens up possibilities or closes down options. Furthermore, talk adopts a vantage point from which processes of change can be evaluated and managed according to the personal and shared cultural meanings brought to the process. Therefore, talk is not neutral. It is used as a persuasive tool. Talk presents a desirable view of the self as an arbiter of, or responder to, change. It also induces others to attempt transformations.

Talk also has a role in our emotional lives. We assume that feelings arise spontaneously in response to experiences, but the social constructionist view is that understanding and expression of emotions comes from cultural sources. Oatley (1994) argues that innate temperamental dispositions colour emotional expression which is crucial to social development. Through a process of social referencing (responding to the emotions of others) and emotional role taking (for example, engaging in co-operative behaviour based upon one's own, or another's emotion) meanings around emotional expression are elaborated and developed.

Staske (1996), and Wetherell and Maybin (1996) suggest that we not only learn the social rules which govern the *display* of emotion, but also through narratives, talk and interaction, we learn how to *experience* feelings in ways that are culturally shaped. Gergen (1994) suggests that emotional performance would either be meaningless, or non-existent if divorced from ongoing relationships. These arguments suggest that emotions are divorced from feelings - a separation of performance and experience. However, many experiences can be argued to be beyond language - for example, the pre-verbal experiences emphasised by psychodynamic approaches. As White and Epston (1990) argue - narrative can never encompass the full richness of our lived experience.

According to Duck (1994) talk *does* things through the evolution of shared meanings - a process of unfinished business. Meanings are not established in a once-for-all manner but remain 'perpetually incomplete'. (p.15). They are constructed through a recursive relationship between the ability of each speaker to take the perspective of the other, to go beyond the given in talk, and to negotiate the differences between what is known and what is given in any communication. Metaphor has a powerful role in the process. It enlivens speech, enabling communicators to present complex ideas in a simple way, and allows the adoption of a vantage point from which to link disparate ideas. Metaphors are embedded in cultural explanations. They illuminate understanding, but can sometimes limit choices and perceptions. The study of the use of metaphor leads to valuable insights into the active construction of relationships, and will be discussed further in chapter 3.

The argument is that social constructionism sees people and relationships as being constituted through an interactive process carried out largely through the medium of language. As a result, *discourse* - defined by Parker (1992, p 5) as 'a system of statements which constructs an object.' - is the subject matter of investigation for the social constructionist. The approach however, goes beyond the Chomskian study of language as a system of grammatical patterns, and is closer to the notion of 'speech acts' as defined by Austin - a functional approach to linguistics. (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Discourses provide

the source of negotiated cultural meanings, and are used by speakers to produce causal explanations, justifications etc. Cultural explanations may be drawn from the discourses of 'experts' - for example, biological, psychological, religious origins - which become part of popular vocabulary. These form the rhetorical devices through which normative expectations are transmitted.

According to Gergen (1994) narrative accounts are the rhetorical vehicles through which the constructive work of talk is done. Narratives have a particular structure in establishing storied goals; selecting and ordering relevant events; maintaining a stable identity over time for characters and objects included in the tale; providing explanations, and using conversational markers to signal boundaries to the account. Narratives occur in social situations, and as Croghan and Miell (1992) argue, shape relationships; reflect contextual issues to do with power and control, and become social, not personal accounts.

Social Constructionism and Change

Social constructionist theory is partly built upon understandings of the development of children as social beings. Some of the theoretical support for this approach is based upon the work of Mead and Vygotsky who both saw language as crucial in the process. Their approaches differ slightly in that Mead (1934) argued for ever-modifying social processes in which the child takes in the attitude of the other towards itself, thereby developing a sense of self from reflexive experience. Vygotsky (1978) suggested that cognitive functions develop through the internalisation of social interchanges. Both share a view of language as important in the process, and present the idea that the young child internalises social beliefs and values through dialogues with others - leading to the formation of individual thought. However, as psychodynamic approaches suggest, the process can be pre-verbal. Furthermore, as the story of Anne Lister demonstrated, development is not 'once for all'. Language meanings are constantly reformulated.

Social constructionism may therefore, be concerned with change in four ways. Firstly, in terms of the nature of the changes which children undergo as they develop into social beings. Children are increasingly seen as active agents in their own socialisation. Through interactions with others, and involvement in cultural practices, the child is part of a dynamic process of meaning-making and the construction of beliefs. Consequently, the notion of change as an interactive process runs through the social constructionist view of development from birth, and continuing throughout adulthood.

Secondly, social constructionism provides an understanding of the language through which change is experienced. Ideas of the inter-relationships between context, social action and the social construction of the self as an identity - or a behaving person with an emotional life - mesh with notions of the role of language as an interpretative medium. For this reason, narrative therapy has gained ground. (See for example, Eron and Lund, 1996; Hermans and Hermans-Jansen, 1995; White and Epston, 1990; Zimmerman and Dickerson, 1996).

Thirdly, social constructionism provides an explanatory framework for understanding change. The narratives and discourses through which people present their experiences of change include ideas about what is appropriate behaviour in the circumstances. Sally talked of her decision to get a job as a fitting response to David's continuing inability to invest in their relationship. Her sense that such action was 'right' and 'fair' gave her permission to make the change, and to see it in positive terms. Furthermore, the narratives employed had something to say about appropriate ways to conduct a relationship. Notions of 'give and take' are often found in relationship discourses. Inherent in the conversations, stories, and discussions between people, there are explorations of beliefs and values, as well as elements of self presentation. All of these features may be seen in the talk about experiences of change.

Finally, as Usher (1989) argues, because experience is constituted through language in a social context, experience may have more than one meaning, and those meanings are

themselves subject to change. This suggests that discourses - the source of meanings - not only interpret change, but also change interpretations.

2:3 Building a Model of Change

A discussion of relevant psychological theories leads to the question of how far it is possible to develop a synthetic model of change which represents each of the approaches. From diverse perspectives each contributes to understanding, but in the context of the study, some are more appropriate than others.

It may be possible to develop an integration of theories which explain change at different levels of analysis. As Shapiro (1996) suggests, different perspectives are appropriate to different aspects of change. For instance, the systems approach looks at change in terms of communication - involving any kind of behaviour, but mainly language. The mechanics of the processes of change are clearly described, and give the researcher / clinician the tools with which to observe and introduce change in family and couple contexts. Systemic models may enable an understanding of the tensions which lead to a resistance to change, and highlight useful insights into the nature of circularities, but the disadvantages are that it provides a hierarchical model which so far has done little to question assumptions about the 'rightness' of proposed subsystem dynamics. Hence, little attention has been paid to gender discourses, cultural expectations, and issues of power in relationships.

The psychodynamic approach suggests that change is dictated by early developmental processes, and that transitions in adult life are a reflection of these dynamics - replayed in the transferential space between people. Whilst taking account of observable behaviour, unconscious motivations are the primary focus. The role of internal conversations rather than external 'talk' is considered to be crucial; and although a social theory, it fails to

explain how cultural expectations impinge on adult relational life. Stein (1995) suggests that psychoanalytic theory deals with static, inert, and change-resistant structures rather than process. However, she argues that change *does* occur over the long term - and is almost always second order change.

Cognitive and behavioural approaches understand change as it is described in talk.

Attributions are seen as important aspects of the process. Learned behaviour, and positive and negative thinking patterns are argued to be significant factors in coping with change. However, these approaches pay almost no attention to the creation of attributions or exchanges between people. Accounts - for the former approach - are devices containing attributions used to evaluate self and others. The behavioural perspective focuses on the role of observation and modelling rather than linguistic factors, and centres on the behaviour of individuals.

Constructivist theories present a good model of change. Taking an individual approach, constructivism distinguishes between transitions - periods of change during which core constructs are under threat, and cycles of change where new constructs are developed, and decision making occurs. This approach enables a structured analysis of how individual changes take place.

The social constructionist approach is based upon an understanding of people as constructing intentions and interpretations through discursive practices occurring in the context of interaction. The focus is on the instrumental role of language in mediating experience, and conveying cultural discourses which constrain or permit action. Although not specifically concerned with change, the approach provides tools of investigation - the analysis of discourses. However, the focus is upon *what* discourses do, rather than *how* discourses are negotiated within the interactive context. Nevertheless, investigating the role of discursive practices may lead to insights into the co-construction of encounters with

change, understandings of contextual factors in the experience, and an appraisal of subjectivities created by talk.

Conclusion: A Chosen Model?

This chapter has been concerned with some of the major psychological theories and their relationship to ideas about change. These have been presented as the theories developed by specialists, researchers and practitioners in the field. However, it has also been suggested that people who are not psychology professionals also have their own theories about human behaviour. One of the arguments of the chapter has been that there is an inter-relationship between the two sources of theory - each drawing from the other.

The object of this research is to take a hermeneutic approach to the theories that people use to guide action. This means looking at how people talk together about change, how they interpret events and contexts, and includes exploring the role played by narratives in the process of change. This means that some psychological theories are more useful than others as interpretative devices. Theories differ in ability to fulfil the following criteria:-

- To provide a framework for understanding how people construct accounts together.
- To provide an insight into processes of change.
- To allow for the role of context and meanings in couple's accounts of change.
- To provide methodologies suited to assessing the co-construction of meanings and interactions in couple accounts of change.

Social constructionism partly fulfils the first criterion, and provides a qualitative methodology capable of fulfilling the second and fourth criteria - as will be discussed in chapter 6. In terms of the third, *meanings* are central to social constructionism. They are seen to result from the interaction between personally generated, and culturally determined discourses, and are essential to the construction of experience. Meanings are dependent upon context, and only accessible through talk. Social constructionism allows for an investigation of narratives through which meanings about change are given form.

Systems theory provides an understanding of how people relate as units within a system. Interaction is the subject of external observation but dynamics are understood in terms of movements between parts of the system. The focus is on repetitive episodes of talk rather than an ever changing flow of communication. However, the approach presents a model of change - useful to this study. The theory involves an appraisal of the role of the wider context in the lives of couples and families as well (in later approaches) as the role of meaning in couple dynamics. The latter is described in terms of action and reaction - the process of circularity which neglects how meaning and context interact together. Systemic approaches fulfil most of the criteria, but lack a methodology to access internally produced stories of change.

Cognitive and behavioural approaches have value in stressing the role of inappropriate thinking styles as factors in people's ability to cope successfully with life. These approaches therefore, may be helpful in identifying how negative thinking patterns, such as *learned helplessness*, lead people to conceptualise and deal with change in unsuccessful ways. Cognitive approaches are particularly concerned with the role of perceived control in the management of new and stressful circumstances. However, notions of agency are narrowly interpreted in the cognitive approach, and behavioural understandings of change are limited to simple examples. Whilst cognitive and behavioural accounts allow for the role of meaning in the language people use, its role is seen in restricted ways - in terms of attributions and causal explanations in the former, and positive and negative cognitions in the latter. Use of meanings therefore has a narrow focus - for example, issues of power and control are seen in simple behavioural terms.

In terms of the first criterion, a constructivist approach acknowledges that the constructs containing the individual's perception of the world have shared elements in order that each of us may have a predictable environment. However, the approach says little about how constructs complying with the *commonality* and *sociality* corollaries may be interactively produced. The role of talk in the construction process is not developed in the theory. As

stated above, the constructivist approach fulfils the second criterion. With respect to the third, constructivism stresses the unique quality of personal experience. Construing is a form of personal meaning related to acting. However, the theory fails to define how the cultural context influences an individual's construing process. The constructivist approach has valuable methodologies for observing and analysing qualitative data. The focus is on an individual methodology - useful for obtaining unique realities. However, the requirement of this study is to access the mutually negotiated structures and priorities which couples bring to their stories of change - an internal and co-authored perspective.

An object relations approach partly fulfils the first criterion, but much of the theory rests upon recognition of unconscious elements in inter-relational behaviour. Language constructs an internal account - enabling the person to determine the self in a social world. The perspective therefore relies on an awareness of psychodynamic processes, which may be difficult to discover during a single interview with couples. Being a largely developmental theory, object relations may have little relevance to a pragmatic study of change. The theory suggests that internal conversations and transference processes mediate personal change. The basic context for such approaches is the relationship. Wider contextual influences are seen in terms of the *generalised other* placing constraints on personal desires. Identity is the focus - rather than meanings, and *talk* is not a subject of study.

Neither the behavioural, cognitive, or psychodynamic approaches provide methods sufficient to achieve the fourth criterion. Behavioural and cognitive perspectives stem from a positivist tradition which is inappropriate to the data required here. In contrast, methods of the psychodynamic approach are unfocused and too time-consuming to be of value in accessing couple's interconstructed narratives.

In Summary

Object relations understandings have an internal consistency and relational insight valuable to the understanding of relationships, but may be less helpful in understanding the co-construction of change. Cognitive and behavioural approaches bring useful, but narrow, individualistic comprehensions to the subject matter, and are methodologically inappropriate.

Constructivist perspectives are useful particularly in understanding aspects of change, but having an individualistic approach may not be helpful in contextual and relational matters.

Systems theory offers a good account of how stability and change are maintained in relationships, and how levels of meaning are constructed. However, the approach is weak in failing to determine how couples intersubjectively construct themselves and their life events.

Social constructionism is helpful on all counts. However, this has to be balanced against the approaches' view of experience as *determined* by cultural discourses, its neglect of the role of unconscious motivations, and a possible failure to acknowledge that couples may have a degree of control in how far they accept cultural givens.

Continuing these themes, chapter 3 will draw together two aspects of the study - change and couple relationships - and how the different psychological perspectives tackle these issues. Given that a social constructionist approach stresses the importance of cultural practices in determining experience, this issue will be addressed with respect to gender, and to the nature of homosexual relationships. The chapter ends with a discussion of the implications these factors may have for couples experiencing change.

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CHAPTER 3:

COUPLE RELATIONSHIPS AND CHANGE

3:1 Introduction

The argument of the previous chapter is that change can be examined using expert theories developed within each of the major psychological perspectives; and/or through the lay ideas about change presented by people who are not psychologists. Common-sense explanations and psychological understandings may be seen as mutually influential. Similarly, it becomes clear that 'explanations' presented in the public domain are absorbed into private accounts between couples, and - according to the social constructionist viewpoint, are moderated and then disseminated back into the social world in an active, and interactive process of meaning making. In this way, 'expert' theories provide the meanings through which we all make sense of the world.

However, another feature of the chapter is that it focuses on the role of the story as a tool of meaning making. The narratives of Michael Tod, and Sally and David not only illustrate theoretical points, but also convey the explanations, interpretations and expectations of the story-tellers. The theme of the role of storying is continued in the current chapter both as an example of the development of ideas and as an illustrative tool.

This chapter begins with the case study of a couple whose relationship was in difficulty as a result of a number of changes. Then the major psychological theories discussed in the previous chapter will be drawn upon to demonstrate the implications of each approach for an understanding of change in couple relationships.

Finally, the chapter looks specifically at the social construction of gender; focusing on a major theme of the study in considering the nature of gay and lesbian relationships. This

forms a prelude to chapter 4's evaluation of research into the constitution and life cycle of heterosexual and homosexual couple relationships.

Case Study: A Couple's Story of Change

Simon and Anne attended six counselling sessions together. Simon was referred by his doctor due to 'depressive-type' symptoms, which were thought to be leading to a deterioration in his relationship with his wife.

Simon asked that Anne attend the counselling sessions with him. During the first meeting he was anxious that she should tell her own story. Anne recounted how one of her daughters 'many years ago' had commented on the frequent bickering between the couple. Following this remark, Anne decided to become silent about the things that bothered her.

Anne now 48, and Simon 50: as their story unfolded it emerged that changes in their lifestyle over the past seven years had brought problems. When the children were small, Anne devoted herself totally to their nurture. At weekends, Simon would leave the family to follow his sporting interests - a practice both envied and hated by Anne. Now, however, 'the tables had turned' in ways that neither partner had fully recognised.

When the children were old enough to need her less, Anne decided to take up teaching. She wanted to do something 'for herself'. She soon gained promotion to the status of deputy head. Simon was well qualified as an engineer and worked in a job which provided stimulus and enjoyment. However, changes in the company led to redundancies and although Simon was able to keep a job, he was separated from former colleagues, and given a mundane post which failed to make use of his valuable skills.

However, other changes were evident. Simon had been very successful in his sport, and as Anne started to be free of the child care role, she joined him. She described the change in the following terms: 'At first I was the little wife at home, looking after the children, and Simon

was away training all the time. Then, I began to win races, and if Simon didn't win too, he got very upset'.

Despite his negative responses to Anne's interest in the sport, Simon encouraged her to develop her skills and enrol for training courses. However, both partners were dismayed by his response on her return from such events. Simon would be angry and withdrawn and - particularly if training required Anne to be away from home for several days - it would take him as many days to 'thaw out'. Simon saw his behaviour as irrational and wanted to understand his responses.

Implications of the Theoretical Perspectives for Couples and Change

Anne and Simon came to counselling unhappy with their life together, but unaware of why this was so. Clearly, from Anne's opening remarks their relationship had been characterised by strife until her conscious decision to 'shut up, and put up' with things as they were. Simon's depression was offered as the presenting problem, but neither the basic character of their relationship, nor the impact of change upon their lives had been articulated between them.

Every relationship is subject to change, and the ability to adjust to shifting patterns will often dictate whether or not the relationship survives. Bolger, Foster, Vinokur and Ng (1996) suggest there are limits to the effectiveness of close relationships in responding to crises. Couples appear to expect - but don't always attain - mutual support. However, while transitions produce stress and can lead to unhappiness and relationship dissolution, they also provide us with opportunities to learn about ourselves, to improve our lives, and to move to more fulfilling circumstances. Psychological theories offer explanations and understandings of the processes at work in choosing particular options.

3:2 The Systemic Approach

Whilst the Systemic Approach focuses largely on the dynamics of the family as a self-regulating system (Jackson, 1957), it has relevance to couple relationships. Systems theory both clarifies circularities and behavioural rules implicit in relationships, and identifies patterns of communication which inform and direct relationship style. To this end, much of systemic theory deals with how a shared reality is constructed in families. However, for the purposes of this chapter, the implications of the approach will be interpreted in terms of its relevance to long-term intimate partnerships.

As highlighted in chapter 2, a central concern is with the role of communication within systems - identified in behaviour, and the verbal and non-verbal transmission of meaning. Dallos (1991) argued that any behaviour in the presence of others is a form of communication; and Watzlawick *et al.* (1967) suggested that as behaviour is continuous - one cannot *not* behave, - so is communication. The value of the systemic approach is in providing models for understanding and interpreting the nature of communication.

Behavioural aspects of communication have been classified variously - for example, according to a distinction between *content* and *process*. 'Content' refers to *what* each partner may be doing in an interaction, and includes the implicit message carried by the 'doing'. In the first session, Simon presented himself as depressed, evidenced by sad feelings and sleepless nights. The implicit message was perhaps about feelings of loss. 'Process' however, refers to *how* an interaction proceeds. Anne said little and appeared to be unmoved by Simon's distress, whereas Simon was voluble and looked frequently at Anne, as if for reassurance. When couples come to counselling, it is likely that the presenting problems will be the content issues - the substance of the inter-communication between them. Process issues are probably quite difficult for the couple to see because they are unable to achieve the kind of outside perspective open to the therapist.

However, looking at the process behind the content of what clients bring can be informative in providing clues as to the dynamics of the relationship, where problems might lie, and what therapeutic interventions to produce change may be helpful. Processes at work in one area of the relationship - the presenting problem - will also be present in other domains. For instance, couples going through divorce proceedings will tend to behave and communicate in ways typical of their relationship prior to separation.

The content of a couple's communication reveals the beliefs specific to the relationship (Dallos, 1992), taken-for-granted social rules, and 'myths' - the idealised guiding principles which construct meanings from patterns of action (La Gaipa, 1982). A study of process shows how such meanings are created.

Patterns of belief can be detected in the content of the stories that couples proffer. Adjectives, metaphors and phrases give colour to the relationship being described. However, as each partner responds to the other, an edifice of meanings is created. When couples arrive for therapy, it soon emerges that mutually presented patterns of beliefs have hardened into a circular contingency through which problems are unwittingly maintained.

Anne talked about the changes in her life in positive terms. She was 'going somewhere' - the relationship would 'probably not stop changing'. Her growing confidence conveyed in her stated beliefs. Simon's responses were fearful. 'Where will it end?... I worry about where its leading.' As Anne talked, Simon's words increasingly displayed anxiety and a concern for stability. Non-verbal communication reflected their thoughts and feelings. Anne sitting calm and bolt upright, as if unaware of Simon's distress; Simon hunched forward, gesturing towards her as if reaching out.

Implicit in such communication is the notion that each partner is monitoring the other. Laing (1967) describes the process thus: 'I do not experience your experience. But I experience you as experiencing. I experience myself as experienced by you. And I experience you as experiencing yourself as experienced by me. And so on.' - a spiralling process of *recursive*

metaperspectives, through which causal attributions, understandings and beliefs are developed.

Goldsmith & Baxter (1996) and Harré & Secord (1972) argue that people organise their interactions as communication *episodes*. These are chunks of action largely unconsciously defined by the participants. They may be lightweight events like 'taking a break', or more significant occurrences such as 'having a row'. Episodes occur in relationships as partners extemporise mutually created patterns of meaning and behaviours. They include features that are culturally sanctioned, individually understood, and jointly produced.

Circularity is a constant theme to be found in content and process aspects of communication in relationships. Meta-communications and episodes are composed of strings of interactions between partners. As Watzlawick *et al.* (1967) argue: 'An interactional sequence between partners may be seen as punctuated (by the participants or the observer) into a pattern of one-way causality, (but) such a sequence is in fact circular, and the apparent response must also be a stimulus for the next event in this inter-dependent chain.' First and second order change (as defined in chapter 2) become evident in the circularities between couples.

Sally and David's story illustrates the process: As figures 3:1(a), (b), and (c) suggest, perceptions of love and commitment between them were skewed, and remained so even after change occurred.

Figure 3:1 (a) represents the *approach - withdrawal* circularity prompted by Sally's approach-need to care and be close, and David's withdrawal further into himself. Figure 3:1 (b) represents the change occurring when David begins to perceive Sally's attentions as suffocating. He then adopts a different form of withdrawal - looking to other relationships, and interests outside the home. Figure 3:1 (c) shows the circularity changing direction when Sally, distressed by David's lack of interest, takes up her new job. She becomes the withdrawer and David, the pursuer - concepts suggestive of attachment behaviour. (See next section).

Figure 3:1 (a) Circularity in construing between Sally and David.

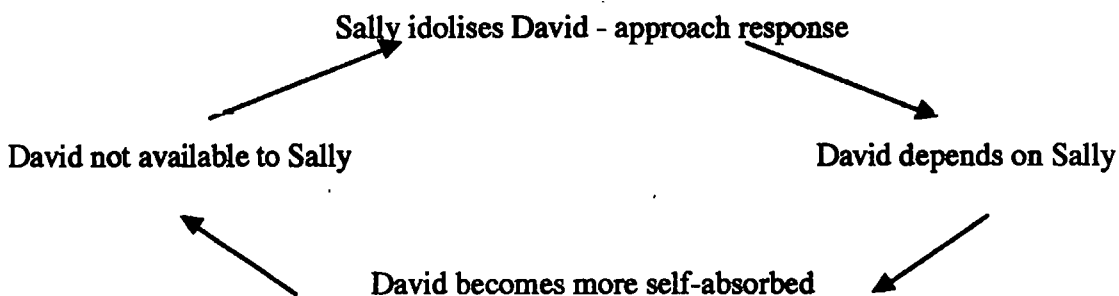


Figure 3:1 (b) Transition in circularity between Sally and David

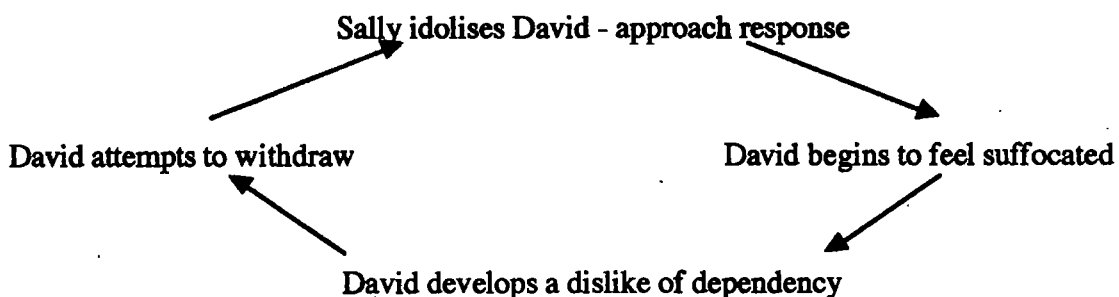
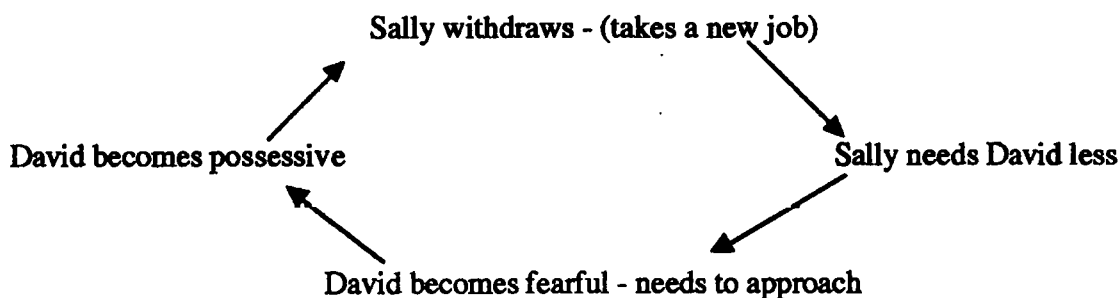


Figure 3:1 (c) Circularity changes direction between Sally and David.

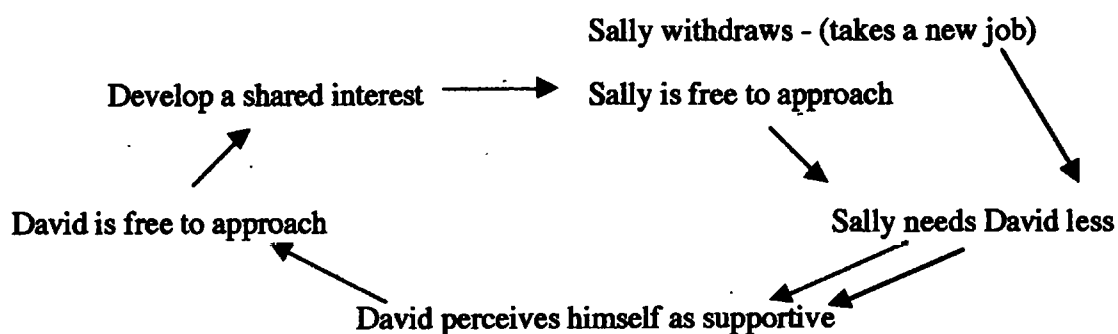


These examples represent attempts to find solutions which have resulted in 'more of the same' - a first order change. The solution has left the problem unchanged. The couple have changed roles, but inter-personal patterns of approach and withdrawal have remained.

Such change can be seen as an example of *homeostasis*, 'punctuated' by partner's interpretations of each other's behaviour - the nodal points (in the diagrams) - which push the cycle to the next stage; or as *coherence* - seen by Dell (1982) as the couple or family's internal 'fit'. Homeostasis maintains the couple relationship in a state of equilibrium by means of a self-correcting tendency - a resistance to change. Coherence ensures a constant instability in which the fit is maintained despite change, and affects the system both internally and externally.

In 'second order change', the attempted solution totally re-organises underlying meanings. In a hypothetical interpretation of the above instance, the couple may begin with the same constructions of their relationship - (blue line), but when Sally finds her confidence and begins a personal change, David might construe himself as a supportive partner, enabling Sally to grow - as one might a child or protégé - (yellow line). He ceases to fear her transformation, but becomes part of it. She senses his attentiveness, and the couple begin to talk about a shared reality and are more able to relate as equals - each able to give to the other. Thus Figure 3:1 (c) is replaced by 3:1 (d)

Figure 3:1 (d) A hypothetical example of second order change.



The example illustrates the role of changed levels of meaning. Shifts evident in first order change are enacted at one level only. Second order change occurs when there is a change in meanings occurring at a superordinate level. According to Watzlawick (1977) however, the partners engaged in the scenario have no shared basis of communication at the defining

moment of second order change. The person who makes the first move - in this instance David - has to invent meaning in such a way that the other partner will be able to discover its significance.

Second order relationship change often occurs spontaneously, but can be achieved therapeutically by various means. Methodologies stem from the co-constructed meanings which define the problem, and its solution. Watzlawick suggests that change can be achieved by strategies applied to solutions, rather than to presenting problems. Therapeutic techniques work by reconceptualising the whole situation, and initiating a different level of reality for the couple. The creation of confusion, introducing paradoxes, encouraging resistance, or providing worse alternatives to those presented by the problem result in reframing. They place the problem situation into a different context of meaning, thus breaking the previous cycle of frustrated attempts at change.

Watzlawick's approach to change deliberately avoids attention to causal issues - being based on the philosophical approach of Wittgenstein (1958; cited in Watzlawick, 1974, p84), and cybernetic theories. Wittgenstein advocated a pragmatic approach to language, and argued that meaning resides in how language - words, phrases, etc. - is used. Watzlawick's strategies were based on knowledge of antecedents and consequences of presenting difficulties and any previously attempted resolution. He supported the 'black box' principle. It was not necessary to know *why* a behaviour occurred, only *what* was happening. This renders the theory particularly vulnerable to oversimplification.

Poster (1978, p 119) argued that Watzlawick sees 'the group' as a neat system of interactional patterns, existing on a surface level of reality. Hence, tensions arising from the emotional closeness of the nuclear family, or from intergenerational attachment patterns repeated in the lives of privatised couple relationships are discounted. However, these issues are addressed by other systemic theorists who attempt to integrate the pragmatic approach with the psychodynamic.

Among these is Ferreira (1963) who suggested that the family system develops a 'constructed unreality'. In other words, the family develops its own collective unconscious fantasy which sometimes serves to falsify experience. Ferreira coined the term 'family myth' (not to be confused with the myth as understood by La Gaipa - above) to describe how bad experiences to which parents, grandparents and the wider family have been subject in the past are defensively re-interpreted in ways which protect the family from disruption and change in the present. For example, the 'deserter', shot whilst running away is storied by the family as a brave soldier, killed by the enemy whilst he was on a mercy mission. Although such myths distort reality the family is not aware of the collective defense.

Ferreira's work links systems and psychodynamic theories by regarding the role of the collective unconscious fantasy as a homeostatic mechanism; and in illustrating the dialectical relationship between cognitions and emotion. The family myth serves to interpret feelings and emotions. Some families, for example, see themselves as not given to emotion. Bereavements, traumatic changes, and situations which provide cause for anger are interpreted as occasions to be ignored, not spoken about. Tears, and other demonstrations of emotion are frowned upon as weakness or shameful. Hence a tight control upon visible emotion is maintained, and family expectations are sustained. The initial cognitions place an important restriction on how emotions will be felt and interpreted, and this in turn dictates further cognitions of such events.

Byng-Hall (1981) links systems with an attachment theory approach (discussed below) by introducing the concept of the 'family script'. Family scripts are seen as interaction patterns invoked in particular contexts. They concern the roles and behaviours of each family member, and are particularly linked to patterns of attachment within the group. Byng-Hall argues that homeostasis is maintained because changes in the family structure serve to threaten the security of attachments of individual members who respond by seeking to quickly re-establish emotional safety. The first order change represented in figures 3:1 (a - c) may be interpreted in these terms.

Anne and Simon's story may illustrate the working of the family script. Anne's move away from the domestic role could have created fear of loss of attachment for Simon. Becoming very distressed when Anne attended week-long training courses may have been Simon's attempt to pull the relationship back into balance - perhaps even to stop Anne from repeating the experience. Byng-Hall argues that the script is shared. An overlap between each person's script enables the players to co-ordinate behaviour. Anne may have responded coolly in order to establish a new pattern of attachment. Alternatively, her behaviour may have been an unconscious attempt to retrieve the earlier balance in their relationship when *she* was the stay-at-home partner and Simon was more independent. However, their shared scripts 'meshed' together in their attempts to deal with the changing story-line.

Summary

The Systemic Approach focuses upon the nature of communication, as continuously occurring through any kind of behaviour - both within the family, and between couples. Issues of content and process demonstrate the role of couple's communication in change. Content is seen through the formation and maintenance of beliefs, and process through the interactional patterns creating circularities, or maintaining stability. The next section continues the theme introduced by Ferreira and Byng-Hall by exploring the implications of the attachment approach for couple relationships and their experience of change.

3:3 The Role of Attachments

Attachment Theory models - first proposed by Bowlby, (1969, 1973, 1980) - claim that adult attachments are based on childhood attachment experiences, carrying implications for how we manage change. Good attachments are replicated in adult relationships. However, poor ones promote a continuing drive to improve on early attachment figures - either through choosing more satisfying adult relationships, or by making attempts to 'win-over' adult

attachment figures who are as rejecting as those in childhood. The basic need for affection and security is seen to originate from an innate drive to form and maintain emotional attachments. For this reason, the balance between two intimates remains safe whilst stable and unchanging, but a variation - either in one of the partners, or in the context and form of the relationship causes the couple to articulate anxieties which serve to 'resist' the transformation. However, any change in a relationship is likely to be de-stabilising, but couples who have formed secure attachments may be more likely to cope well with change.

Bowlby (1991) argued that emotion has a central function in relationships - enabling us to communicate about the present. Each partner draws on emotional experiences of the past and these form working models for current expectations. The two relationships described so far - Sally and David, Anne and Simon - are likely to reveal certain differences between the ways each relate. Sally and David could be argued to have operated at a level of deep emotional intensity which resulted in unconsciously motivated patterns of collusive behaviours from which they were not able to escape. Anne and Simon on the other hand, *appeared* to be less emotionally intense. Each partner lived their separate lives for several years before their positions of personal power and dependency reversed, prompting extreme anxiety in Simon.

Attachment Theory provides away of interpreting the dynamics between the two partnerships. There has long been a recognition in the literature that relationships can be seen as subject to the workings of *the attachment system*. As Hazan & Shaver (1987), and Pistole (1994) argue, attachment behaviour is biologically based. The tendency to seek romantic love and close relationships are behaviours that have an evolutionary function. Attachments help to ensure the protection and survival of the young. Once a strong emotional bond with the attachment figure is formed, it provides a safe base from which the individual can explore the environment.

It follows therefore that couple relationships provide and sustain closeness. However, as much clinical and research literature highlights (for example, Fish, 1996; James & Wilson,

1986; Mattinson & Sinclair, 1981; Oppenheim, *et al.*, 1996; Shapiro, 1996), attachment is often problematic and a source of relationship distress. Difficulties arise in satisfactorily balancing closeness and distance between partners. Pistole suggests that within the attachment system there is a control mechanism sensitive to the availability of the attachment figure. Each partner in the relationship needs a tolerable amount of space between self and other. If space is sufficient, the attachment system is calm. If however, one partner perceives the other as not being close enough, then he or she experiences threat and separation anxiety. At this point, felt emotion triggers behaviour designed to re-establish a sense of connection and security. Anger, protest, crying, and clinging are some of the attachment behaviours likely to occur, although as Fish (1996) discovered, adult expressions of attachment behaviour may be more subtle and complex. However, manifestations of distress diminish or cease once a comfortable closeness has been re-established.

Pistole argues that an internal 'cognitive-affective schema' acts as a working model organising attachment-related information, and integrating experiences of relationships past and present; beliefs about the worthiness of the self; and expectations concerning the responsiveness and caring qualities of the partner. Attachment research has highlighted different styles of attachment stemming from the individual working models employed.

Founded on the work of Ainsworth *et al.* (1978), Hazan and Shaver (1987) identified three adult attachment styles: secure, anxious/ambivalent, and avoidant. *Secure* attachment is characterised by a schema in which the self is seen as worthy of care; the partner is respected, and seen to be responsive to attachment needs. Such a relationship is judged to be able to handle negative emotions competently in problem-solving and social contexts. *Anxious/ambivalent* and *avoidant* attachment styles are characterised - in the former, by inconsistent attachment behaviours; and in the latter, by strategies which aim to damp down or obstruct the attachment system.

Attachment styles regulate the degree of closeness/distance between partners. Secure attachments are distinguished by a comfortable amount of closeness and accessibility. However, other attachment experiences can be problematic. There may be difficulties in distance regulation between couples who each have a different attachment style, and a third party may be enlisted to keep distances comfortable. (See Byng-Hall, 1980). Furthermore, experiences of stress or illness are likely to prompt a greater need for proximity even in relationships identified as being characterised by secure attachment. Similarly, anxious/ambivalent or avoidant attachment styles are more likely to be accompanied by relationship difficulties as the partners seek to regulate a tolerable amount of distance in order not to encounter separation anxiety. (Birtchnell, 1986)

One may speculate that Simon in pursuing his sporting interests and committing himself unstintingly to his work was exhibiting a measure of avoidance behaviour - ensuring a comfortable amount of distance between himself and Anne. Her attempts to persuade him to share more of the family responsibilities may have been evidence of Anne's need to have increased closeness and therefore reduce separation anxiety. Their subsequent bickering may have been an indication of attachment behaviour in response to the joint struggle over issues of closeness and distance. Simon's depression and - in his words - 'irrational behaviour' could be seen as a role reversal. Now that Anne was achieving a greater level of distance, Simon was forced into being the approaching partner in an effort to try and maintain closeness.

Furman and Flanagan (1997) suggest the value of an attachment perspective as an assessment tool, and a focus for intervention in couple's therapy. Whatever partners bring as the presenting problem, the regulation of closeness and distance will be implicated. Although a proportion of work with couples involves arbitrating in practical disputes about roles, money, or the children, a significant part of the therapy relates to emotional issues - particularly distance struggles. The role of the remedial process is to bring to awareness the emotional meanings of each partner's behaviour, and highlight the ways in which each inadvertently contributes to the struggle. Patterns similar to the operation of 'punctuation'

(as Watzlawick - discussed above) may emerge, thus providing the opportunity to develop strategies aimed at stopping self-perpetuating behaviours from occurring. Here Attachment Theory shares common ground with Systems Theory.

Pistole suggests several strategies open to use - for example, where a choice exists between prospective partners a client may be helped to make a realistic decision based upon distance/closeness information; the more appropriate partner being the one with whom a comfortable distance can be maintained. In other cases, clients may be encouraged to see distinctions between early attachment relationships of childhood, and those existing in the present. The realisation that in adult life one has more power to negotiate distance issues than was possible in childhood can be freeing. In ideal circumstances, second order change may result.

Figures 3:1 (a - d) (pps 71 -72) may be reinterpreted according to attachment theory. Figure (a) represents Sally and David's attempts to maintain a mutually comfortable attachment system. The achieved distance may not necessarily *feel* comfortable, although it may be perceived as less disturbing than other forms of proximity. Figures (b) and (c) represent possible strategies for positive change contingent upon each partner's attempt to break the cycle. Had either been able to understand their approach - avoidant behaviour as masking a deep need to be close - stemming from early dysfunctional attachments, figure (d) may have resulted. Sally - able to trust that her own distancing left David freer to approach. David - able to feel emotionally strong enough to be supportive of Sally's new life style. Thus the couple may have learned new and more positive ways of negotiating mutual proximity.

Attachment issues may emerge in other guises, for example in struggles over power, or gender issues. Foreman (1995) argues that intimacy and power are related - partners may be more able to feel close when they also feel equal, empowered within the relationship. Boon and Griffin (1996) suggest that decision making in relationships can be framed positively or negatively according to attachment styles - with *secure* partners more able to take risks.

Furthermore, once an attachment style is adopted, it may be difficult to change. Partners need the ability to view themselves differently, work together, and engage in the shared learning of new behaviour patterns before making a new dynamic possible. Such changes are fairly drastic, since attachment issues are central and affect every area of life. Hence, therapeutic strategies designed to help an anxiously-attached partner to find succour in music, exercise or friendships - as Pistole suggests, may be destined to failure. The person's basic need for a close supportive attachment figure may not be addressed by such practices. However, attachment interpretations do provide understandings of emotional needs in close relationships, and offer explanations for resistances to change.

3:4 The Psychodynamic Approach

Psychodynamic perspectives - especially Object Relations approaches - are particularly relevant to understanding the internal dynamics of relationships, and have well-documented approaches to therapy with couples. In Object Relations terms, the need for a stable relationship is a reflection of an innate drive to 'relate'. Klein argued that 'object relations' arise out of interactions with external and internal (real and imagined) other people, and fulfil the compulsion to satisfy emotional and psychological drives within the individual (Greenberg and Mitchell, 1983). The need for a 'good-enough' love object in adult life reflects the earlier need for 'good-enough' mothering and is vital to the sense of self as complete. These needs are negotiated through the inter-psychoic processes which typify close adult relationships.

Inter-Psychoic Processes

Three aspects of psychodynamic theory have particular relevance to the debate. The first is *transference* - a concept describing a largely unconscious process constituting a central feature of everyday relationships. Transference is a form of communication, but more

specifically is seen as having a defensive function. Chapter 2 suggested we place into others our own unwanted painful feelings, and act in ways which evoke specific behaviours from our partners. Transferences can be beneficial in close relationships, creating a mutual support system - according to Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) - useful attachment behaviours. However, Thomas (1996) suggests that couples can be caught in a collusive dynamic in which they become trapped in cycles of destructive, reciprocal behaviours. The transference of bad feelings from within oneself to another can result in the other person being undeservedly blamed, abused or feeling 'dumped on'.

Transference has a dual role in therapeutic change. The client is given a neutral context in which to project emotional expectations on to the therapist. In turn, as Gomez (1997) argues, the therapist needs to be aware of personal feelings and responses to the client - and alert to possible urges to 'act out', or collude with the client's defensive systems. Awareness enables the therapist to identify unconscious communication. The term *countertransference* has been used to conceptualise the conscious feelings, and unconscious processes arising in the therapist in response to patient's transferences. Countertransference - once seen by Freud as a hindrance to the therapeutic process, is now argued to have both diagnostic and remedial value.

In both arenas - the close couple relationship, or the therapeutic one - the processes of transference and countertransference involve unconscious *identification* - defined by Thomas as the potential that is released when the boundaries between self and other are loosened. Each person is enabled to experience the sense of *being* an aspect of the other. In other words, each enters the other's subjectivity and creates an intersubjectivity in the space between them. The commonest manifestation of intersubjectivity is experienced in feelings of *empathy* - defined by Squier (1990) as '...the ability to take another persons point of view, and the capacity to become aroused by the emotions of another person.'

In relationships, this can occur as *Projective Identification* - referred to in chapter 2 - and involves the forceful, but unconscious creation in another of one's own state of mind.

Projective identification can be beneficial in producing empathy between people, but also has negative effects. The recipient of the projection may not only experience the other's bad feelings, but also behave as the projector directs. The receiver can feel manipulated, and relationships can become collusive leading to a resistance to change, or imposing added stresses during transitions. The relationship between David and Sally may have involved projective identification - focused on dependency. David seemed to feel incapable of succeeding in many areas of his life, hence his need to constantly look to Sally for affirmation and support. Sally may have colluded with David's need to be dependent, until she finally refused to remain in her role as David's caretaker. Having broken the projection however, the couple were unable to construct a workable dynamic between them. This suggests that projective identifications sometimes ensure relationship survival.

The third concept relevant to the nature of relationships, therapy, and change is that of the *relational mind*. Thomas (1996) argues that the relational mind is a container for the internal others who provide living templates for our own behaviour. Skynner (1976) suggests that parents - *as a couple* - provide a conscious, internalised model upon which partners base their own relationship. However, where the parental relationship-model has included violent or frightening experiences, these may be denied, split-off or repressed, and emerge in the current relationship - affecting partner choice, and sometimes producing uncharacteristic behaviours - for example - violence in an otherwise gentle spouse. Dicks (1967) argues that hidden internal programming leads us to seek relationships in which each partner finds lost aspects of primary object-relations.

The relational mind therefore holds powerful emotions - primitive in the sense that they have the overwhelming quality first experienced in the young infant. Consequently, close relationships are likely to elicit powerful emotional responses re-activating responses experienced, or observed in the first close relationship. However, these responses are used to modify painful encounters - both past and present. The dumping of painful feelings into the other person - the partner - carries an unconscious intention not just to be rid of the pain, but to communicate a state of mind to the other in order to receive feedback. The need is for

the partner who has been handed painful feelings to modify them, and render them less painful. The feelings may then be re-introjected - now converted into a more acceptable form. Hence the relational mind conveys messages about the self and emotional needs, and provides a crossover of communication through which they are satisfied.

The case studies may illustrate the operation of the relational mind. Arguably, David frequently 'dumped' his feelings of distress and inadequacy onto Sally, who comforted him, stressed his positive qualities, and attempted to interpret his perceived inadequacies more realistically. Thus the crossover of communication enabled David to function positively for a little while longer - until the next time! In contrast, no such crossover seems to have occurred for Anne and Simon. Their reported early 'bickering' may have stemmed from Anne's attempts to communicate her painful feelings about the relationship - attempts resolutely avoided by Simon. He may have failed to accept, modify and return her projections, leading Anne to internalise his behaviour as rejecting.

The stories also illustrate the function of the relational mind in supporting change in the self and the internal world. Jung (1990) characterised therapeutic change as the dialectical process through which unconscious internal relationships are exposed. The conscious acknowledgement of troublesome inner relationships 'forms a bridge' to enable healing of other aspects of the relational mind. Although ordinary close relationships have qualities different to those of therapeutic alliances, similar interpersonal processes occur, and changes can be argued to stem from the inter-communication between minds. Once a couple begin to relate, they create between them a new inter-subjective pathway.

This section has attempted to address psychodynamic explanations which have implications for couple relationships, and for natural and therapeutic change. The role of inter-psychic processes has been addressed in two ways: Firstly, in terms of the unconscious processes of transference and counter-transference occurring in any dyadic communication. Secondly, in focusing on the concepts of identification and relational mind, a brief attempt has been made to understand how transferences operate. The theoretical implications are that in a

relationship we are not free to make or deal with changes, but constrained by powerful unconscious forces of which we are unaware - unless we obtain help in making them conscious. In comparison, the next section looks at the practical implications of behavioural theory for couple relationships and change - whether natural, or therapeutic.

3:5 The Behavioural Approach

Behavioural theories focus on current mutual behaviour patterns in relationships. No account is taken of past influences - whether in childhood, or past relationships. Social exchange theorists such as Epstein, Baucom and Daiuto (1997); Thibaut and Kelley (1959) and Weiss and Heyman (1997) suggest that relationship interactions occur as a reciprocal process of mutual causality - maintained by behavioural reinforcement and principles of exchange - 'give and take'. This suggests that people assess their relationships on the basis of investments versus returns, and carries implications both for the assessment of relationship satisfaction, and choice of partner. *Benefits* refer to anything construed as a reward - from gifts of flowers, to compliments. Anything seen by the recipient as valuable. Costs may be experiences deemed to be unpleasant. The balance between costs and benefits is seen as an outcome measure. Thus, as James and Wilson (1986) argue, to be successful a relationship must have a higher reward/cost ratio than other competing relationships or activities.

Kurdek (1995) argues that according to the interdependence perspective developed by Rusbult & Buunk (1993), the level of *investment* made by each partner in a relationship is also crucial. Someone who has invested heavily in the partnership will be committed to it. Investment may be seen in intrinsic elements like time, emotional energy, or self disclosure; or extrinsic elements such as shared possessions or mutual friends. Miell & Croghan, (1996) argue that rewards and costs tend to be recurring and transient features in a relationship, whereas investments by nature are more stable. Investments are diminished or lost if a relationship comes to an end. Consequently, investments serve to increase

commitment and stabilise relationships. Morton & Douglas (1981) and Rusbult, Yovetich & Verette (1996) argue that interdependence theory explains that through interaction, couples change from maximising personal self-interest to an emphasis on shared, interdependent outcomes.

Equity theory is a version of the exchange approach, and is based upon the comparison of outcomes enabling partners to judge the equivalence between them. Equity is a measure of outcome compared with effort invested. Where partners experience equal outcomes, but evidence shows that one of them has put in more effort than the other, the exchange between them is deemed inequitable. This leads to feelings of dissatisfaction - painful for those concerned in two ways. The partner who experiences less outcome compared with effort invested will feel anger or sorrow. However, distress is equally present for the partner who receives more outcome than his or her effort merits, leading to feelings of guilt. If the partner who invests more effort also experiences more outcome, and the partner who invests less effort receives less outcome, the exchange is judged equitable. Effort alone is not the only measure of equity - for example, intimates who have a wide age difference between them may suffer feelings of inequity. (Steinman, 1991)

Although declared to be relevant to any kind of relationship, exchange theories have been criticised on the grounds that they ignore the beliefs people may have about the role of love. Many would argue that rational calculation of costs and benefits is unlikely in intimate relationships. The discourses of love suggest that as a characteristic it involves 'giving', 'is painful' etc. - a selfless emotion held to be necessary in a close relationship. Love presupposes unconditional commitment. Cunningham and Antill (1981) argue that couples may use the term 'love' to signal that they are no longer closely monitoring relationship equity - that as people fall in love, the *equity equation* becomes transformed to imply that exchanges will have equally weighted value for each partner.

Exchange and learning theories account for change in relationships in terms of positive and negative reinforcement. Equitable exchanges act as positive reinforcement and are argued to

produce more of the same. However, as Hinde (1981) argues, the model is oversimplistic in that some positive behaviours - such as love, may be followed by a partner's rejection. James and Wilson (1986) suggest that distressed couples tend to use negative reinforcements (for example, paying inordinate attention to unwanted behaviour) to improve their relationship - without success. For this reason, use of positive measures is suggested for attempting therapeutic change. These may be for example, training in bargaining and reciprocity.

Over time, basic understandings of exchange theories have changed. Early versions held that costs and benefits could be 'objectively' defined. However, it has been increasingly realised that this approach was problematic. The nature of advantages and disadvantages within a relationship are now seen as those elements *perceived* as such. Consequently, experiences of relationship satisfaction and dissatisfaction are interpreted according to the notion of *fair exchange*. It might be argued for example, that the initial inequity between Sally and David was perceived as a satisfaction - both partners having needs fulfilled. Growing awareness of inequity as no longer a fair exchange led to changes being made.

A behavioural approach to relationships may be criticised on several counts. Models of change are based upon the notion that one partner's change produces similar effects in the other. However, this ignores the theoretical understanding that each partner sets up a contingency for behaviour of the other. Therefore, changes will arguably work only if they occur simultaneously in both partners. Furthermore, exchanges are based upon the assumption of reciprocity. However, as Sally's story hints, reciprocity is often absent in relationships. Thirdly, despite a recent focus on cognitive aspects of behaviour, the role of expectations and perceptions is deprecated. Behaviours are treated as causes when they may be seen more appropriately as symptoms of underlying pathology.

3:6 The Cognitive Approach

As chapter 2 argued, the cognitive approach takes a positivist view, based in an empirical research tradition. Cognitive perspectives stress an objective reality about which the person is expected to make cognitive discriminations on the grounds of explanatory realism.

Attribution theory is one aspect of the approach attempting to provide a general account of how people in relationships make causal explanations. Not concerned with meanings inherent in discourse or action, nor with reflexiveness or meta-perceptions, attribution theory seeks to explain how couples are able to predict their actions in the future.

Chapter 2 discussed the stability, controllability, and locus dimensions of attributions in relationships. (Rusbult, Yovetich & Verette, 1996). The implication is that we have a range of explanations from which to choose appropriate ones. The choice will be made based upon many factors, such as the presence of a stimulus event, experience of the partner's behaviour in the past, awareness of one's own motives etc. In casual relationships it may be difficult to know how another person functions, or to understand our own role in interactions. However, it is likely that in long term relationships we have more intimate understandings of self and other. Communication will largely be concerned with finding explanations for actions and events and will include discussion of attributions. This may mean that attributions with respect to self and other will share similar qualities. However, greater self knowledge may be balanced against emotional and motivational factors having a more powerful influence in the relationship.

Attributional research has tended to support these arguments. For example, Murray, Holmes, and Griffin (1996) found that couples engage in 'a certain degree of idealisation or *illusion*'. The authors suggested that self deception is an integral part of satisfying relationships, and that partners apply positive - but by implication, misguided - interpersonal attributions to each other. Whilst distinguishing between an objective reality, and the subjective reality of couples, the researchers appear to assume that there may be such a thing as a veridical attribution. In contrast, as Noller, Beach and Osgarby (1997) suggest, couples

in difficulty tend to interpret partner's intentions and affect as more negative than it actually is - leading to an escalation of negativity. However, it remains unclear whether negative attributions stem from experiences within a negative relationship, or whether a tendency to make negative attributions creates an unsatisfactory alliance.

Although useful, such studies tend to oversimplify the nature of attributions, and neglect the role of meta-cognitions in the attributional process. However, cognitive factors may provide a locus of causality and a number of therapeutic possibilities for relationships in distress. For example, an investigation of assumptions underlying client's attributions, may lead couples to adopt more advantageous approaches. In research and practice, it is also important to discover how couples arrive at the attributions colouring their communication. Historical patterns may be implicated here, or the dynamics of the present relationship (for example, a mutual struggle for control) may be significant. Both factors have been ignored by the cognitive approach and may be implicated in attributional styles in partnerships.

Attribution theory also tends to oversimplify the interpretation of ascriptions. To define a dispositional attribution as such involves different levels of meaning which have differing implications. A wife who defines her husband as 'an irritable person' is not only making a statement about his personality (which may or may not be a biological 'given'). She may also be implying that he has made a choice to be so. Implicit in her definition there may be an understanding of the context and history of the present statement, and possibly an awareness or a denial, of her own input into his way of being. Dallos (1996) suggests that attribution theory produces concepts that act as snapshots in time, and therefore fails to address issues surrounding the context and development of ascriptions.

Finally, attribution theory has a major shortcoming in assuming that attributions involve short, pithy statements which make direct pronouncements linking people, actions and causes. As Foreman (1995) discovered, people tend to produce attributions in narrative form. This implies that attributions are more complex. They are presented as stories or accounts not only offering explanations, but also justification for one's own - or another's -

behaviour, all presented in terms of events over time. However, one may argue, as Gergen & Gergen (1992) do, that accounts may take two forms - the justifications, denials and excuses which follow the typical attribution approach. These assume a 'true' vs. 'false' view of the world: Or the stories which aim to 'help one understand or describe a situation'. These are the accounts which respect the storyteller's interpretations, focus on the process of relating rather than on individual perceptions, and allow for the influences of social interdependence.

Read and Collins (1992) argue that attributions about relationships are best understood as embedded in accounts. The writers suggest that attributions arise against a background of social knowledge, and are integrated into coherent stories - constructed to ensure that everything 'fits together'. Couples make inferences about relationships based upon detailed social and physical knowledge which involves elements such as scripts and plans, resources, goals, traits - even knowledge about situations, and culturally shared beliefs etc. Using computer simulation models, the researchers have suggested that accounts are developed according to a spreading activation process in which certain causal links become strengthened (See also Collins and Loftus, 1975; and Collins and Quillian, 1969; both cited in Cohen, 1990, ps. 608-609). Their approach allows for modification of interpretations when new knowledge is gained, or when unexpected events promote the need for re-interpretation.

However, Read and Collins focus on the individual account-maker. The partner draws knowledge from the social and physical context, and presents the account for public consumption. No allowance is made for the mutual negotiation of accounts, or how the spreading activation process is shared between partners. In contrast, the constructivist approach discussed next suggests that couples have specific ways of developing cognitions which will enable them to understand and explain events in their relationships. An important part of this process is the ability to 'frame' experience - in other words, to develop theories or hypotheses which place different constructions upon events.

3:7 Constructivist Approaches

The constructivist approach is discussed in some detail because it has particular theoretical relevance to understanding change. Aspects of the theory deal specifically with interpersonal processes of construct development. Kelly's approach to construct formation implies that constructs have two purposes; they are *constitutive* - addressing the meaning inherent in actions; and *regulative* - they pre-formulate available responses. Shared constructs have particular meaning in couple relationships since, as Dallos (1991) argues, 'families have an immense power to construct the experience and beliefs of their members.' Couple relationships exist within the context of the families of origin of both partners, and as Laing (1969) suggests, early familial experiences are mapped on to our later relationships. Families actively construct their own reality and by various means, regulate the construing processes of each family member.

This section attempts to look at the most important corollaries in Kelly's theory which are particularly relevant to relationships; and then to discuss the constructivist view of escalations, and the interpersonal beliefs through which couples maintain escalating cycles.

For Kelly, *commonality* and *sociality* were identified as critical features of a couple's construction of experience. The commonality corollary states: 'to the extent that one person employs a construction of experience which is similar to that employed by another, his psychological processes are similar to those of the other person.' (Kelly, 1955). The statement suggests that one person is capable of sharing a view of the world which is similar to that of another. This shared perspective not only implies similar ways of thinking, but also leads to similar behaviours. As Duck (1975) argues, couples are likely to be attracted to each other because they share a similar approach to the world. However, commonality suggests both a similar approach, and similarity of construing. Dallos (1991) argues that this produces three effects - couples *interpret* events; *discriminate* between events; and interpret the *implications* of events in the same way.

Sociality deals more with the ability to construe the construction process of another person. This enables some degree of predictability, and in relationships has a role in the expectations one partner may have of the other. This is not to suggest that couples will necessarily replicate each other's constructive process, but that mutual understandings of the way in which a partner attempts to construe the world will have an effect upon the nature of the relationship.

The implication therefore is that commonality and sociality have an important function in the making of effective relationships. Duck (1994) suggested that couples are continually generating new meanings in an effort to understand each other and provide explanations for daily events. Commonality enables couples to reach agreement about the roles appropriate to each of them. They share understandings which portray the assortment of choices open to them when dealing with everyday activities or times of change. However, the degree of sociality may shift from time to time, and commonality may be absent in some areas.

Duck argued that much can be learned about the character of a relationship from an analysis of the discrepancies in partner's constructs; and Ryle (1975) found research evidence which pointed to frequent differences in commonality between couples - associated with their understandings of how their own parents related to each other as a couple. Whereas it is likely that all couple relationships are influenced by constructions of parental alliances, it may also follow that the influence of such constructions on troubled relationships will have a more damaging effect.

Experiencing therefore, is not passive. Couples are engaged in an active, dialectical construction of reality taking place through an exchange of information both at explicit and implicit levels. As the sociality corollary suggests, this involves a constant process of conscious reflection and anticipation of each other's actions and thinking. At a less conscious level, commonality is developed through the interlinking of constructs into coherent and hierarchical understandings which provide the couple with explanations for their joint action and a sense of safety.

The need for relationship security appears to be central, as the attachment model would suggest. In constructivist terms, security stems from feelings arising as a result of validation of constructs. Feelings engender emotional responses. Thus, emotions and constructs are indivisible. The partner who feels that his or her constructs are not validated by the other experiences negative emotions such as anxiety or anger, and may respond with 'pre-emptive' construing - a kind of 'tunnel vision'. This leads to the rigid application of constructs signalled by use of adjectives such as 'always', 'never', 'every' to describe the partner's behaviour. 'You *never* listen to me.' 'You *always* try to control me.' etc. Alternatively, the sudden invalidation of constructs as a result of change may lead to fearfulness, and perceptions of construct system breakdown. This may be true for Simon and his worries about how far the situation with Anne would go. His construction of Anne as fulfilling a particular role in his life appeared to be destroyed, and it seems likely that he no longer felt able to predict their life course.

In contrast, the validation of constructs enables partners to construe in less rigid, more propositional ways. For example, Sue (cited in chapter 2) responded to Paul's betrayal as behaviour intended to hurt her. Constructs of their relationship as stable, loving and safe were invalidated. Her only available response appeared to be to cut him out of her life. The 'tight' construing of the situation appeared to leave her with few options. However, she was eventually able to construe Paul's negative behaviour towards her as due to the problems of overwork and depression, and the previous relationship construct was reinstated. This enabled the couple to explore new possibilities for their relationship, and to develop what Kelly termed a 'working hypothesis' - re-constructing new meanings between them. Thus, looser construing enabled a more flexible response. Relationships which have a high proportion of mutually validated constructs along with less rigid constructive styles may be freer to develop and to cope with the stresses of change.

Constructs are implicated at every level of relationship development. The couple poised at the edge of a new relationship are likely first to be attracted to each other on the basis of

what can be seen - and/or imagined. There is evidence that as the relationship grows the couple engages in a mutual 'filtering process' whereby similarities and differences between them are explored through self disclosure. (Morton & Douglas, 1981). Partners mutually share core constructs typical of their own family, and the disclosure of concrete information not only begins to regulate the new relationship, but also produces an exchange of constructs. . The couple uses information about each other's past history to interpret current interactive behaviour. From this is developed a set of constructs for the interpretation and construction of 'a shared model'. This provides jointly modified explanations and expectations as the relationship continues to develop. Pearce and Cronen (1980) described the process as a 'recursive loop'. Events in the present lead to a re-negotiation of meanings which retrospectively change the meanings previously given to past events, and provide new interpretations for the future.

One of the main tasks in a relationship is that of managing patterns of *escalation*. Most key areas in relationships are open to the possibility that events may spiral out of control. For example, struggles over power, boundaries and intimacy within the relationship can become stuck in escalating cycles which leave the partners unable to negotiate a satisfactory balance. The constructivist approach sees these critical domains as involving the core constructs relevant to the relationship.

Bateson (1972) outlined two mechanisms relevant to the escalation process. These are the *symmetrical* and *complementary* patterns of interaction. Couples interacting symmetrically emphasise the need to maintain an equality between them. This can produce a *quid pro quo* mechanism ensuring that positive aspects of the relationship are reciprocal. 'If you wash up the dinner plates, I will go with you to take the dogs for a walk.' However, in negative situations for example, in struggles for control, the symmetrical pattern may lead to an irreversible cycle of escalation. This is because both partners are likely to act in similar ways - either the primary, 'one-up'; or secondary, 'one-down' position described by Watzlawick (1964). If relationship escalations are based around symmetrical struggles over power, couples may engage in 'one-up' battles characterised by mutual attacks, accusations and

counter accusations. If 'one-down', partners may - for instance - vie for the position of 'most disadvantaged', basing their mutual constructions of events around notions of powerlessness and neediness.

Complementary patterns of interaction are distinguished by partners who enjoy (or suffer from) the differences between them. Complementarity has positive benefits in relationships. As Watzlawick argues ' - people exchange behaviour which together forms the same sort of gestalt as day and night.' In escalations arising from power struggles however, this means that one partner may be accusing, while the other withdraws or behaves passively. This results in further accusations from the former, and stalemate ensues. Imbalances of power may appear to work satisfactorily in situations where one partner is dominant and the other submissive, but such relationships are likely to face problems if there are no opportunities for roles to alternate, or if the powerful partner becomes coercive.

Complementarity and symmetry operate in relationship intimacy - and are subject to processes of escalation. Bateson has suggested that complementarity and symmetry work together in regulating emotional distance between partners. A period of complementarity might be ended by the symmetrical response of one partner. For example, Simon may act for a time as if he is very happy for Anne to follow her sporting interests, but when she absents herself for a week of training, he responds with anger and withdrawal turning a pattern of complementarity into one of symmetry. On occasions, complementary and symmetrical patterns in themselves are not subject to change, but rather, the *meaning* or definition of behaviour may change. For example, in the context of their early relationship David's behaviour was defined as 'needy'. However, as the context changed over time, his behaviour came to be defined as 'selfish'. Such definitions possibly reflected the changing levels of intimacy between the couple.

The concept of escalation models the role of behaviour in construct development. However, other, internal factors in the form of belief systems are seen to be implicated in maintaining escalating cycles. For example, Reiss (1981) suggests that we have a basic need for a set of

convictions which display consistency and agreement. Inconsistency in one's belief system is unpleasant, and provokes anxiety. It would seem likely therefore that the need for consistency of beliefs is particularly prominent in close relationships.

Belief systems involve awareness of one's own beliefs and those of the other. Beliefs are not clear cut, or stable over time, but subject to change, and contain varying layers of meaning. Beliefs are the building blocks of the construction process, providing us with explanations of other people's actions and intentions (meta-perspectives) - ensuring that we make informed choices. Relationship meta-perspectives can have either positive or negative effects. Watzlawick (1964) suggested that a partner may choose a *meta-complementary* relationship - deliberately choosing to accept a 'down' position for example, in order for the relationship to function well. This may have occurred when Anne decided to 'put up and shut up' after her children had commented on the bickering between herself and Simon. Her silence ensured that the family functioned well for a while.

In contrast, some couples may experience negative consequences in the form of inconsistency between them. For example, one partner may be unaware that his or her perspective is not shared by the other, or may misinterpret the other's views. In effect, this may have been true for Anne and Simon. He was not aware of her unhappiness over his self-interested sporting activities, and appeared to interpret her silence as acquiescence or approval. An apparent agreement which eventually created anxiety - for both partners.

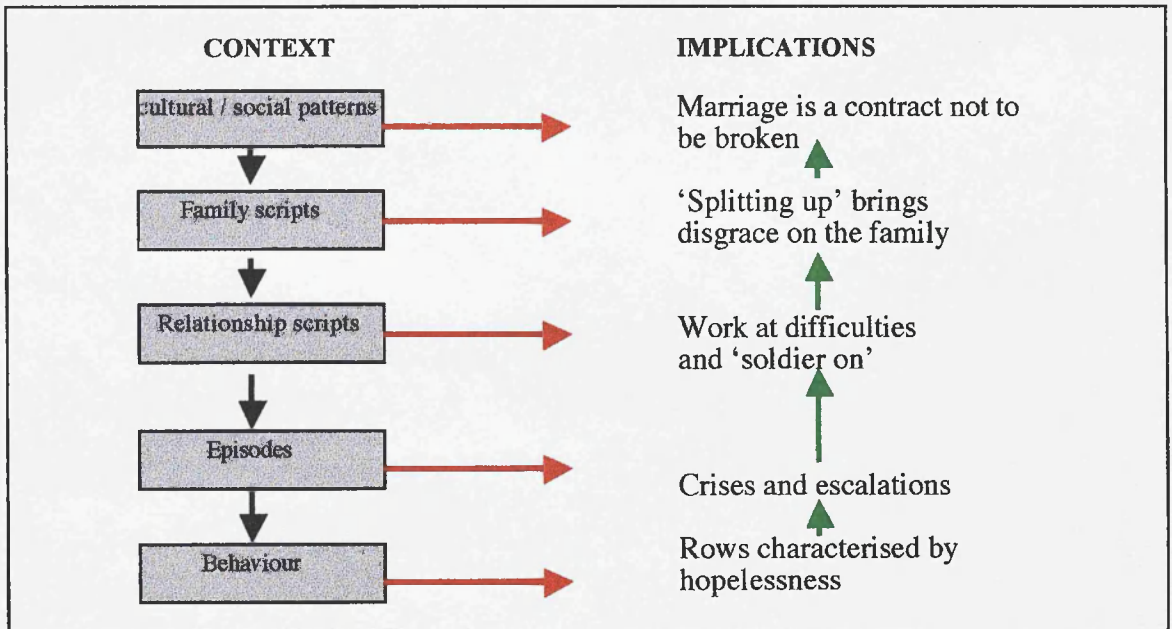
Problems in relationships often arise from the meta-constructs of partners. Heyman and Shaw (1976) define meta-constructs as 'mutually interlocking patterns of demands, expectations and actions in couples'. Identifying four basic constructs of relationships as being characterised by either *reciprocity*, *egocentrism*, *altercentrism* or *exchange*, they suggest that each construct outlines the distinguishing quality of the relationship, or one or both partner's preferred style of relating. Altercentrism for example, is typified by a partner acting as 'caretaker' in the relationship. Problems arise when one partner's style is inconsistent with the other, or when both partners adopt a similar but mutually damaging

style. This occurs for example, when both partners are egocentric - each insisting that his or her needs come first. Although a limited number of basic constructs is suggested, the permutations available to a couple are many. Each partner will have a preferred style of construing, but also will construe the constructs of the other. The success of a relationship is dependent upon the ability of partners to negotiate preferred constructs, and to revise them when necessary.

Other problem areas can occur in relationships which contain communication which is ambiguous - for example, the 'double bind' outlined by Bateson, (1972) and Watzlawick (1978) Whereas the double bind may have creative value in examples of humour, it can be damaging in the context of a negative relationship. It occurs where there is a confusion between levels of meaning - for example, a declaration of love swiftly followed by physical rejection. The recipient of such communication is left confused and unable to construct a consistent and predictable understanding of the other. Laing (1967) argued that the double bind was one of the primary factors in the aetiology of schizophrenia.

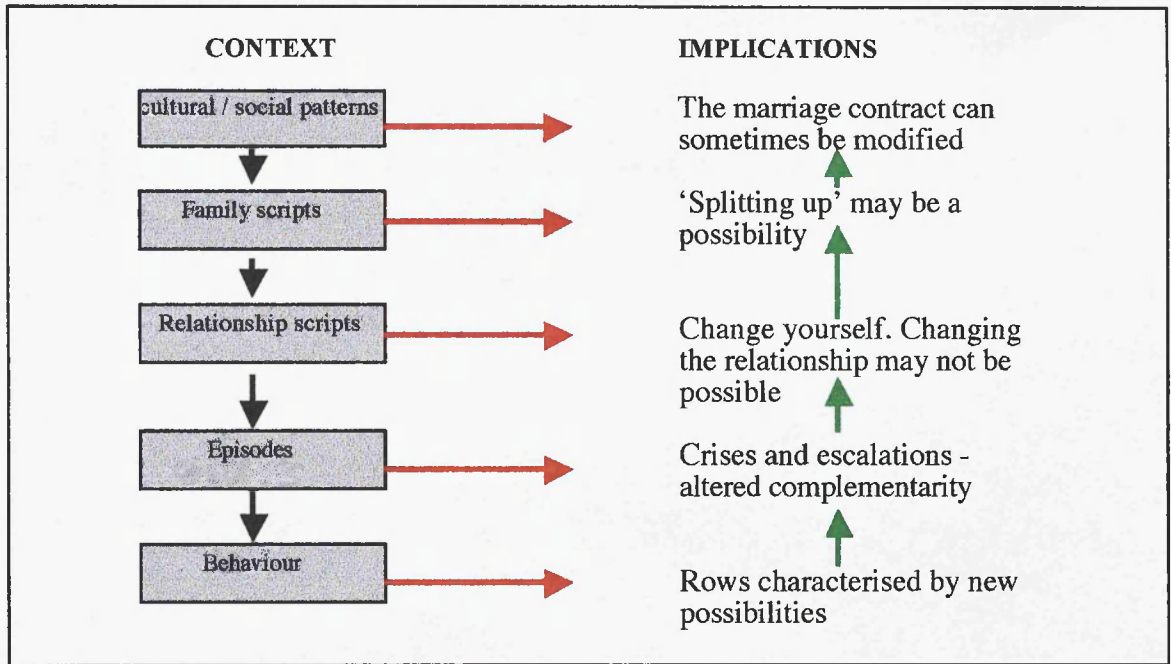
Finally, the beliefs informing a couple's construction of reality are subject to influences and restrictions from two sources - context, and associated hierarchies of meaning. Pearce and Cronen (1980) suggested that the context of any relationship is supplied by past and present relational experiences. Consequently, communication in the present is coloured according to the character of the context. Simon's question 'Where will it all end?' could be interpreted as a cry of desperation borne out of his experience of uncontrollable change. The relationship had hitherto been stable and predictable. In another context, the question could suggest anticipation found- for example - in a new and exciting love affair. Similarly, as Dallos (1991) argues, the beliefs held by a couple are subject to levels of meaning stemming from the cultural context, through family and relationship scripts, to specific episodes and their behavioural examples. [See Figure 3:2(a)].

Figure 3:2(a) An example of a hierarchy of beliefs and its influence on a couple relationship applied to Sally and David. (Adapted from Dallos, 1991: p 88)



Sally and David may have struggled to stay together for twelve years because their social group expectations were that marriage is a life-long commitment. Family scripts suggested that divorce or separation were unacceptable. Members who attempted such action brought disgrace upon the family. The relationship therefore may have appeared unalterable, with the result that each time escalations between the partners occurred, their mutual anger was intensified by feelings that there was no escape. Sally's decisive action created change - opening up possibilities of reconstructing or ending the relationship. She influenced the meanings inherent at every level, challenging the superordinate constructs of family and social group, and affecting the lower order constructions surrounding confrontational episodes and angry behaviours between them. (See Figure 3:2(b))

Figure 3:2(b) The possible changes at each level due to Sally's personal change



This section of the chapter has attempted to argue that the constructivist approach has particular relevance to an understanding of relationships. Kelly's commonality and sociality corollaries provide a heuristic for understanding how joint construing is possible between couples. The construction process is vital in the early stages of the relationship, but also a key element in ongoing interactional processes as it develops. The couple's preferred construing style is implicated here and determines how successfully couples manage communication between them, enable the relationship to feel safe, and regulate the momentum towards escalation. The underlying building blocks of the dynamic are the belief systems from which constructs are formed and adapted.

These factors have implications for change. Inevitably, behaviours in the relationship undergo transformations - couple's constructs need to have a measure of tolerance and permeability to enable the partners to adapt to change. Therefore a realistic approach is necessary, where the *ideal* may be sacrificed in favour of the *possible*. Some relationships will undergo a change in definition. Simon was probably beginning to see his relationship with Anne as less secure than in the past. Perceptual changes can lead to overwhelming

negativity leading to the break-up of the relationship. Furthermore, the natural changes which occur in the life cycle of a partnership can result in substantial reconstructions of the whole system. For example, with the birth of the first child, new parents are constrained to re-define their roles, and adapt to the more complex interaction of triadic communication.

Therapeutically, the constructivist approach offers several remedial measures. Seeing individual beliefs as part of a *semantic holism* - a broad system of meaning - constructivism enables change at the level of underlying assumptions, in the layers of meaning which constitute and regulate belief systems, and in the dynamics of escalations. (Neimeyer & Neimeyer, 1993). Among the therapeutic techniques used are those suggested by Watzlawick *et al.* (1974) - paradox, the therapeutic double bind; and reframing measures. An example of the former might be to encourage a couple to adopt a rule forbidding sexual intercourse for two weeks, where one partner appears to have lost all sexual desire. An instance of the latter may be to re-interpret one partner's anger at the other as concern rather than antagonism. Such measures need to be congruent with the couple's existing construction of the situation, and to provide an insight that makes sense in terms of the nature of the communication surrounding the problem.

However, the constructivist approach also highlights difficulties inherent in changing. As Pearce and Cronen (1980) argued, couples build up a set of anticipations of each other's actions and responses over a period of time. These become the historical context providing regular, predictable patterns enabling couples to feel some measure of control in their relationship. Consequently, as found with other approaches, there is powerful resistance to change, and an impetus to restore the *status quo* should changes occur. Furthermore, meanings derived from cultural contexts may inhibit change - as they may have done for Sally and David - tending to restrict the voicing of new possibilities should it be necessary to reconstrue the relationship. The relative weighting given to these issues may depend upon the idiosyncratic nature of the couple, and the importance they attach to such factors. A therapeutic approach may therefore have to find ways of evaluating resistances before addressing presenting problems.

3:8 The Social Constructionist Perspective

Social constructionism provides a medium for integrating the major approaches included in the above discussion. As argued in chapter 2, the approach maintains that the self is constantly refashioned through social and cultural interactions, language being central to the process. The narratives and discourses which form the basis of everyday conversation are argued to construct our notions of who we are, and expectations of ourselves and others. Thus the self is seen not as an autonomous being but as an identity constrained by social realities.

Couple relationships are developed and maintained not as the result of 'private' arrangements agreed between partners, but as defined and constrained by public social norms and values. These are mediated in the discourses conducted with the wider family, friends, colleagues and social institutions. However, as Duck (1994) argues, couples not only appropriate normative information, but also actively mediate and modify social discourses within their own conversations. Barieh and Bielby (1996) for example, found (in a twenty seven year study) that couples retained traditional expectations about the role of love, affection, and economic security in marriage, but signalled changing expectations about the role of women - possibly resulting from public feminist discourses of the 1960s. This suggests that couples may have limited opportunity to be creative in producing unique interpretations of how their relationship will be. Allan (1996) argues that although many couples attempt to create a pattern of relating that is different from the relationship norm, few succeed.

Social discourses have a normative power in that narratives and stories employed by communicating couples often imply that a penalty is exacted if cultural rules are broken. Such beliefs may be validated by experience since 'deviants' may not only be discriminated against in law, but also in public and social interaction. For example, a society arguing for the nuclear family as a basic unit of social organisation and control is likely to organise key factors in relationships such as appropriate roles for partners. This means that issues of

gender and power - and by implication - the identity of each individual as person and as partner become crucial. The social constructionist perspective sees discourses and narratives acting as vehicles through which meanings, attributions, constructions, and memories are exchanged. These make up the day-to-day conversations between partners and become the vehicles for justification, explanation, interpretation and regulation of intimate lives.

Issues Relating to Gender

In his reinterpretation of psychoanalysis, Jacques Lacan (cited in Weeks, 1995, p. 170: See also Turkle, 1979) portrayed a philosophy in which the individual is located in the social world as a result of a complex interaction between the development of sexual identity and language. Others - for example, Juliet Mitchell (1971; 1974) developed the theme from a feminist perspective to highlight how far this process creates a distinction between the biological definitions of male and female - 'sex', and the parallel and socially unequal division into femininity and masculinity - 'gender'. (Ann Oakley, 1982).

The debate about the origins of gender looks for causality. Are the behaviours of women and men due to genetic predispositions or socio-cultural influences? Hinde (1996) argues that the issue is complicated, and evidence supports the view that both factors are implicated in a complex interaction. The biological argument is defended by those who suggest that natural selection favours the survival of any sexual - and by implication - gender differentiated behaviour ensuring reproductive success. In some instances, biological explanations can be beneficial. For example, Mason-Schrock (1996) found that in their narrative constructions of identity, transsexuals presented a biological view of gender - arguably to provide convincing evidence of their 'true' sexuality.

However, an alternative approach sees gender in terms of roles - cultural constructs defining appropriate male and female behaviours. There is a large body of evidence and argument to support the view that from the moment of birth, children are responded to in different ways -

depending on gender. (For example, Money and Ehrhardt, 1972; cited in Oakley, 1982, p.53). Chodorow (1978) suggests that fathers rather than mothers for example, encourage their daughters to adopt feminine heterosexual behaviours. Gender appropriate behaviours are also modelled and the child soon learns to imitate. Stereotypes of adult roles are reinforced even by early reading schemes at school (Oakley, 1982). During puberty the young adult is likely to be strongly influenced by media images and peer sanctions which encourage gender stereotyping.

The effects of socialisation and cultural influence are particularly evident in gender roles within the family. Croghan and Miell (1992), Miell and Croghan (1996), and Barnes (1990) note for example, that child care and domestic work are seen as a woman's responsibility, despite current moves towards sharing of child care duties. In contrast, the role of the male partner is less clear cut. In the past he may have been defined by the 'breadwinner' discourse, as responsible for providing material support. Gittins (1985) suggests that the ideology creating a separation between work and home stems from eighteenth century patriarchal attempts to ensure that households remained under male control. Keen (1992) argues that men are now beginning to explore new definitions of manhood. However, traditional expectations ensure that women generally negotiate the amount of help required with domestic and nurturing duties, whilst men may be left feeling marginalised within the home. Some men of course, may gladly reject household duties on the grounds that their assistance is optional.

Perelberg (1990) argued that biological determinism has ensured that women are stereotyped according to the demands of their biological roles, whereas men are defined by their social acts. Consequently, men are generally seen as more assertive than women; more likely to initiate sex, and more likely to rate physical appearance an important factor in choice of mate. In contrast, women are found to be more acquiescent; and in choosing a partner, more likely to look for status and reliability. Such differences are evident even in childhood where play activities are marked by a preference for relationships in young girls, whereas adventure and competitiveness has a predominant appeal for boys.

Social constraints enforce gender stereotypes in two ways. Firstly, in verifying them in law and institutional practice - for example couples involved in untypical relationships find themselves the object of institutional and social discrimination. Gittins (1985) argues that the Welfare State was based upon the notion of women and children as dependants, having the effect of ensuring that the work of women and children was to be less well paid. Secondly, in discourse, where individuals who behave in ways seen as more 'appropriate' to the opposite gender, are subject to public or private criticism.

Social discourses perpetuate gender differences in several ways. Firstly by negatively labelling 'deviant' behaviour. The man displaying emotion or gentle feelings may be labelled a 'sissy' - implying that such behaviour is more appropriate to women, and somehow inferior to a 'normal' male response. This creates a sense of men as emotionally superior. The use of derogatory terms such as 'he's an old woman' - or worse, descriptions in terms of female anatomy - are discourses which imply that womanhood itself is somehow inferior. O'Brien (1990) contended that the struggle to achieve masculinity as defined in a patriarchal culture often leads to a fear of regression to femininity. Hence the need to devalue femaleness. Whether explicitly or covertly, discourses are used to create women's - and men's - experience (Walters, 1990).

Private discourses reflect cultural expectations about relationships. For example, committed relationships are represented socially as mutually supportive. The 'romantic' discourse labels and constructs the heterosexual relationship as loving and committed, leading to expectations that each partner will contribute to its quality and character. (Wetherell, 1990; cited in Miell and Croghan, 1996 p. 305). The nature of intimacy within relationships is regulated by the social discourses which formalise acceptable practice. Discourses which suggest 'closeness' and 'sharing' construct notions of the form that intimacy should take. However, within this general expectation there is a gender differential. Women are expected to be more emotional, insightful, and open to feelings. Men on the other hand, are seen as

rational, and able to be more selective about the expression of feelings - anger being more acceptable (even in the current cultural climate) than tears (Baker Miller, 1976).

In addressing the issue of sexual intimacy, Foucault (1976) pointed out that norms and values change over time, or vary between cultures. He highlighted the role of educators, medicine, and the church in dictating and constraining sexual practices. The discourses regulating adult sexuality and defining gender roles, have changed from casting females as sexually passive and males as acceptably promiscuous, to a less differentiated model. Many texts offering instruction to couples wishing to improve their sex lives contain accounts stressing the necessity to take responsibility for one's own pleasure, taking turns in pleasure-giving. Such recommendations suggest a measure of autonomy and equality between the genders, but also imply that good performance is essential to creating a superior level of intimacy.

Thus, cultural expectations with respect to relationships have powerful effects in terms of the possibilities for experimentation and creation of idiosyncratic gender behaviour. On the one hand, 'normal' and 'natural' behaviours are suggested - leading to positive benefit in creating predictable patterns of behaviour. However, established norms can lead to inflexibility, inequality and a division of labour producing domains of influence which partners may find it difficult to share or interchange.

The arrival of the first child signals the practical implications of such inflexibility. The nurturing parent is likely to be the mother. Even if she takes paid work, she is likely to be responsible for domestic duties; will be paid proportionately less for her work than would her male partner, and is likely to be denied opportunity of following a career. Thus her additional obligations and her restricted access to economic resources leave her in a dependent position. By implication, this suggests that the relationship can become an unequal one, and as Allan (1996) argues, despite the intention of many couples to achieve equality between them, a growing inequality tends to be the prevalent experience for most couples after they produce children.

Unequal relationships infer an uneven balance of power. However, although the feminist argument (discussed below) suggests that power rests largely with men, there is evidence that power relationships take different forms, and are subject to a shifting symmetry. For example, there are forms of dependency other than economic reliance. In some relationships there may be a powerful emotional dependency. This may have been at the root of Simon's distress and his fear of the potential loss of Anne.

Perelberg (1990) distinguishes between 'power' and 'authority'. Power lies in the ability to impose one's will upon another. Authority implies legitimisation - the right to take particular decisions. These are not equivalent forms of influence. They are expressed differently, and linked to access to resources which enable an individual or group to control and influence others. Resources can take many forms. Economic, emotional, and physical resources. Resources achieved through education, or status earned as a result of a successful career. Even demographic factors create differential resources - for example, that women live longer on average than men creates a scarcity factor which makes men a 'rarer commodity' and therefore a prized resource as a group within the elderly population (Harris, 1978; cited in Dallos, 1996a, p. 259). Each resource base enables a distinctive kind of power. Some are more easily attained by men, others by women.

These factors have implications for relationships because changes over the couple life cycle generate shifts in the balance of power affecting *both* partners. Gender effects may be seen in the distinction between 'internal' and 'external' power. The former may occur during the childrearing stage when the woman tends to possess power over events within the home. Her partner may be promoting his career development and financial stability - gaining power from external sources. Thus changes in family structure have a differential effect for each. For example, the consequences of a child leaving home will impinge to a greater extent on the woman whose role has been 'homemaker' and 'carer'. The event changes her control of emotional and affective resources, leading to an attendant loss of power. However, the

balance may change in other ways - as happened when Anne began to assume external power at a time when Simon's influence in that domain had begun to wane.

Perelberg (1990) identifies a particular form of power wielded in relationships characterised by the dominance of one partner. 'The power of the weak' is an oblique form involving behavioural strategies which take power indirectly. Simon's 'irrationality' and bouts of depression may be interpreted as such. Flights into illness, or tearfulness may be unconscious strategies for achieving authority, and are more likely to be a woman's strategy since she has little access to more direct power resources. 'The power of the weak' is a controversial concept since it suggests autonomy whilst at the same identifying inequality and implicit *powerlessness*.

The foregoing argument suggests that gender is a cultural construct arising from connections between the family, economy and State. Patterns of behaviour are legitimised through cultural stereotypes, and inequalities between male and female are evident in most societies. Whatever the kinship and economic structures involved, value and status are given to the roles and activities of men. (Perelberg, *ibid.* p. 43). The feminist and constructionist view is that language creates and maintains power differentials between the sexes. Discourses legitimate concepts of 'superiority' and 'inferiority' which evolve into notions of 'domination' and 'subordination'. Baker Miller (1976) argued that a dominant group has the greatest influence in determining a culture's overall philosophy, morality, social theory, and science. The dominant group thus legitimises unequal relationships and incorporates them into society's guiding concepts. As will be argued below, feminist theory sees this process as particularly powerful with respect to gender roles in all aspects of society, and especially in close relationships.

The Role of Feminist Theory

Rogers (1998) defined Feminist theory as a dialectic between an activism concerned with the commonality of women's experience, and a scholarship devoted to the systematic understanding of the relationship between gender and society. Feminist theory subsumes a number of approaches which have increasingly become concerned with issues of social justice widely relevant to communities and individuals who live in positions of inequality. However, the conceptual insights stemming from a feminist approach add colour to the theoretical understanding of relationships. Not only is there a concern with the nature of power, but also with *patriarchy* - a particular form of power.

Wetherell (1996) suggests that according to feminist theory, patriarchy is a set of social practices which legitimate the collective power of men, and underpin the developed identity of each individual man. In turn, the identities of women and children as 'not-men' are defined through patriarchal conventions. As Connell (1995; cited in *ibid.* p. 333) sees it - 'Men gain a dividend from patriarchy in terms of honour, prestige and the right to command. They also gain a material dividend.' In practice this means that although a number of individual males may attain *small* dividends, the expectations of such privilege underpin male attitudes to each other, and towards women; and may lead to dissatisfaction and unhappiness for both when such expectations are not fulfilled.

The couple relationship provides a major setting within which we wrestle with the costs and benefits of asymmetrical privilege. Here social practices legitimating patriarchy operate to constrain our most private experiences. Butler (1998) for example, argues that patriarchy supplies the *regulatory practices* of gender formation and division which not only constitute identity but also maintain relations of coherence and continuity. In other words, the practices which define gender identities are used to create social cohesion and stability.

The feminist view is that patriarchy is implicated in relationships in three ways. Firstly in terms of economic and material power - particularly in a capitalist economy. Mason and

Mason, (1990) noted that the economic organisation of society strongly influences the behavioural expression of masculinity - dictating a need that men are strong, self-disciplined and emotionally controlled characteristics developed from the prescribed division between the workplace and home. Barnes (1990) argues that modern capitalist structures create differing experiences for men and women, and dissimilar expectations for working class and middle-class families. Segal (1988) suggests that capitalism creates images of men as powerful and women as passive in order to market its commodities, and thereby it harnesses sexuality for its own ends. Similarly, economic structures become legitimated through political and legal sanctions, and even through religious dogma and practices. Indeed, Weber (1930) argued that the *spirit* of capitalism developed from a particular set of Protestant beliefs and practices, particularly Calvinism, which promulgated a belief in a God-ordained, and hierarchical, ordering of society. Therefore the production and marketing methods of capitalism create social structures which produce the needs and expectations impinging on our most intimate relationships.

Secondly, the influence of patriarchy is seen in sexual relationships. These form the basis upon which men's social control over women is founded. For example, a public acceptance of the reality of women's sexuality outside of marriage was not admissible until the 1960s. (Segal, 1988) As predominant law-makers, men could largely be held responsible for creating this state of affairs. Furthermore, an ongoing debate has maintained that women's experience of sexual pleasure has been dictated by men. For this reason, penile penetration has traditionally been regarded as the peak of sexual fulfilment. Therefore, an act which might be interpreted as a purely biological operation is seen to be subject to social dictates similar to those constraining other interpersonal behaviours. However, such interpretations have implications for men too. Men's sexuality and self-presentation is equally constrained. Speaking of the experience of men Wetherell states, 'Bodily experience is not simply present. It involves a lot of interpretation, the recognising and labelling of sensations, and developing a narrative around them.' (1996. p. 326). The power inherent in social expectations of sexual and interpersonal behaviour lies in the need for social approbation.

Such constructions of the gendered self are part of the daily communication of partners in couple relationships.

A third area of debate relevant to couple relationships entails the role of partners with regard to their children. Feminism sees parenting as a social rather than a biological act, but views are divided with respect to the implications of this in perpetuating the patriarchal system. Chodorow (1978) demanded that fathers become involved in parenting their children in order to break the divisions in gender relationships, whilst others pressed for the total exclusion of fathers from fatherhood - which they saw as the *source* of patriarchal power. (Ehrensaft, 1998). The arguments discuss the discourses of parenting - with the verb 'to mother' being seen either as a patriarchal attempt to see parenting as women's work only; or more positively to be valued as an expression of women's expertise which now must be shared by men in order to produce a healthy society.

In practical terms the discussions about parenting seem - according to Ehrensaft (1998) - to be linked to the needs of different groups rather than attempts to achieve a clear understanding of how children should be nurtured. However, to support either view reflects the power of social practices to constrain people's lives. For example, if feminists support the child's need for a father, the patriarchal system is given leave to punish single and lesbian mothers. If, on the other hand it is argued that parenting is most powerfully accomplished by women, then it is likely that mothers will continue to carry the major burden of childrearing. For this reason, contemporary feminist theory favours the increased involvement of fathers in their children's upbringing.

Overall, feminist theory has had positive effects in drawing attention to the ways in which women have been (and still are being) oppressed by patriarchal structures. The result has been not only to influence women's expectations but also to mobilise women to act together to change things. Some changes have had positive benefit - for example in promoting equal opportunities issues at work and at home; but even the positive changes have had negative outcomes in that the 'feminisation of the workforce' brought about by more opportunities

for female paid employment, has been followed by the 'feminisation of poverty' because more men have opted out of their responsibilities towards their families. (Walby, 1990; cited in Wetherell, 1996, p. 337).

In searching for a feminist interpretation of the case study relationships, one may argue that Sally and David were both caught in the patriarchal expectations that he should be strong and dominant, and she would have babies so that together they could be a 'family'. The disappointments that stemmed from the lack of fulfilment of either of these expectations may have led to disillusionment and the eventual breakdown of their relationship. The outcome of their story was unequal in that David continued in his well-paid job, kept the house, and the good standard of living. Sally was left with reduced income and housing due to her less well-paid employment, and inability or unwillingness to press for a fairer deal. A feminist interpretation would probably suggest that Sally's status and economic well-being had been vitally linked to that of David. Her opportunities for her own success being constrained by the patriarchal organisation of economic factors, and her unequal position within the private patriarchy of their relationship.

The effects of capitalist economic organisation were evident for both Anne and Simon - in that home and work had been clearly separated. Simon 'worked' and Anne stayed home to look after the children. Simon chose to follow his interests at the weekends, and although this appeared to be acceptable behaviour, Anne was clearly angry that she had no say in the matter. At this point, their relationship seemed to sustain an unequal balance of power. Anne's work within the home was unpaid, and arguably devalued. Although after leaving school she trained as a teacher, Anne suffered loss of status and appeared to feel that she had no means of changing things, once a mother. The situation altered when Simon, at the mercy of market forces lost *his* job. His extreme unhappiness at not being a 'real' man reflected his loss of status, feelings of powerlessness in a man's world, and his loss of 'breadwinner' role in the family. Anne's return to paid employment made matters worse - even though her earning power was still less than his.

The feminist view of social constructionism contains elements of political activism seeking to address inequalities between men and women. However, with respect to the internal dynamics of couple relationships, radical feminism may produce discord rather than harmony. Nevertheless, the approach highlights the almost unconscious assumptions underpinning gender-related expectations and behaviour, and asserts the self worth of each partner in the relationship. With the growth of 'cultural feminism' there has been a move away from politicised radicalism towards a belief that women will be freed through the development of an alternative women's culture. This has meant two things: A close relationship has developed between feminism and lesbian activists, since lesbian relationships provide women with 'male-free' ways of answering attachment and sexual needs. As Taylor and Rupp (1998) argue, 'lesbian relationships are a means of subverting male domination', (p. 351). Secondly, feminist understandings have contributed to a theoretical comprehension of lesbian relationships, and to an awareness that a proliferation of sexualities, which under patriarchy are labelled as deviant, need to be made more culturally acceptable. Some of these issues underpin the discussion that follows.

3:9

The Social Construction of Gay and Lesbian Relationships

Establishing Homosexual Identities

Any discussion of homosexual relationships must first address the issue of homosexual identity. Writings concerning the growth of homosexual awareness are based upon historical and ideological developments. Until the nineteenth century no concept of homosexuality identity existed, but once identified, homosexual subjectivities became the focus of social, political and religious construction. (Foucault, 1976; Weeks, 1981a). Following the identification of homosexuality (almost entirely seen as a male reality - the female version being largely ignored), cultural responses were concerned with defining and shaping the role it should take, and conferring labels of deviance. The latter construction grew largely from

Christian and legal disquiet about buggery, and medical preoccupations with behaviour seen as abnormal.

The literature debates the *true* nature of homosexuality. McIntosh (1968) identifies two controversies - whether homosexuality is a *condition*, and if so, what causes it? The former argument is rejected by McIntosh, and also by Kitzinger (1995) in favour of the view that both homosexuality and heterosexuality are not biological and behavioural 'givens', but socially constructed identities. Many societies, for example, are aware of homosexual behaviour, but have no concept of the role of the homosexual. McIntosh argues that as a culture creates a role, so it creates expectations of the role which in effect become self-fulfilling prophecies. Those who fit the definition are expected to conform to the role.

The causal argument oscillates between biological/ genetic explanations, and notions of learned behaviour or dysfunction in nurturing or patterns of socialisation. McIntosh suggests that there are no clear answers - largely because they stem from the wrong questions. The implications of her arguments, and those of Kitzinger, Foucault, and Weeks (1995), are that homosexual behaviour and feelings are potential to all of us, but in creating an identifiable set of behaviours as belonging to a group, they can be labelled and controlled. As Foucault remarks, 'The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species.' (1976, p. 43). From a unification of disparate experiences, homosexuality became a social construction (Weeks, 1981b).

However, gender inequalities persist in homosexual awareness. For instance, just as 'man' serves as a generic term denoting both male and female, so 'homosexual' is a masculine noun incorporating lesbian subjectivities. Faraday (1981) identified the lack of research into lesbian consciousness - a reflection not just of attitudes to lesbians, but to women. Until the early twentieth century, lesbian partnerships were perceived as perverse relationships between women who were essentially heterosexual. (Brown, 1995). Weeks (1981a) argued that lesbians were largely ignored throughout history because of social attitudes to female sexuality. Dominant perspectives on sex were based on assumptions about male sexuality.

Notions of drive, aggressiveness, and the centrality of genital sex were transferred to understandings of women. Lesbians were expected to be masculine in behaviour (as depicted in Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*) since lesbianism challenged heterosexual norms of passivity in women, and by implication suggested an assertive female sexuality. As a consequence, lesbianism carried the label of deviance on the grounds that the women involved were abnormal in not desiring sexual relationships with men.

Persistent gender inequalities amongst gays - and heterosexuals - have led feminists to adopt a ideological stance with respect to lesbianism - leading Kitzinger (1987) to argue that lesbian identities are social constructions necessitating a political response. Faraday (1981) suggests that lesbianism is not predetermined, but rests upon a conscious choice to reject oppressive relationships with men, and to develop a feminine model of sexuality which challenges the male prototype.

Social attitudes to homosexuality are gradually changing as gays become more visible. Hennessy (1998) asserts that in the USA gayness is receiving a growing coverage in the media - newspapers, film, fashion etc., thus contributing to a looser definition of the links between sexuality and gender. Patriarchal capitalism in effect is seen to benefit by adopting the gay culture as a niche market. Gays as consumers are a powerful economic resource - therefore tolerance is desirable. However, the economic differential between men and women in the heterosexual community is mirrored among gays.

3:10 Relationship Patterns and Difficult Issues for Same-Sex Couples

The terms 'gay', 'lesbian', 'homosexual', and 'heterosexual' are meaningless as labels for individuals. They become effective only when applied to the relationship between two people. Denoting a gendered preference for a particular type of companionship and/or sexual relationship, they still carry implications of deviance and normality. As Weeks, (1996)

argued, priority given to reproduction ensured that heterosexuality traditionally topped the hierarchy of value. This suggests that heterosexual couples are more likely to enter their relationship having a sense of social approval. They will be supported and legitimated by a set of rituals and social practices. Homosexual couples on the other hand, are more likely to be aware of social disapproval and inquisitiveness, and will have fewer prescriptions to guide the development of their relationships (Berzon (1992). A glance at a relationship manual for gay couples reflects these concerns (Sanderson, 1994).

Heterosexual couples generally have parental role models from whom they learn the expected patterns of relating. Homosexual couples usually have no such examples, hence the need to develop friendships as alternative sources of support (Nardi and Sherrod, 1994). Berzon argues that same-sex couples may have difficulties, because males are socialised to expect that nurturance, caring and affection are the prerogative of women. Lesbians, on the other hand will have been socialised as women to focus on the development of relationship skills. Consequently, same-sex partnerships can find themselves faced with specific difficulties stemming from these patterns. Typically, gay couples find their relationship characterised by *competition* because neither man is comfortable with the nurturing role. In contrast, lesbian couples can become overdependent because both partners focus too intensely upon their relationship.

Nevertheless, as Kurdek (1995) argues, many of the underlying expectations typical of heterosexual relationships are held by gay and lesbian couples. Berzon states, 'gay people have the same needs as nongay people' (1992a, p. 15). For example, in choosing a partner, homosexual couples are likely to make similar choices, based upon the same feelings - physical attractiveness, similar interests, etc. - as their heterosexual counterparts. Furthermore, the gender stereotypes characterising heterosexual relationships are seen in lesbian and gay partnerships - with women being more emotionally attuned and men being more physically (sexually) active (Hulbert and Apt, 1993). More disturbing is the claim that evidence of gender discrimination among homosexual groups is responsible for the flight to feminism amongst lesbian groups (Lorber, 1998).

There are special difficulties for same-sex couples in a patriarchal society. Kitzinger (1987, 1995) argues for a *subversive* lesbianism to counter moves to control lesbian identity. Firstly, partners need to establish an identity which challenges the heterosexual stereotype. Savin-Williams (1995) states that individuals are aware of 'feeling different' during childhood or adolescence. (Berzon, 1992a) notes that with growing awareness, a slow process of deprogramming occurs. The cultural stereotypes of gay lifestyles are confronted and internalised, and the discourses of deviance which present an inaccurate picture of the reality of gayness may be challenged. Some homosexuals however, may retain persistent beliefs that their lifestyles are 'unnatural', 'sick' or 'threatening to children'. The latter discourse is particularly pernicious in that it accounts for much of the heterosexual fear of gays. The evidence is that homosexuals are no more prone to molest children than are non-gays (Turner, Scadden and Harris, 1990).

Toder (1992) suggests that one of the dilemmas facing a same-sex couple is the decision to 'come out.' Speaking of lesbian couples, Toder highlights the stress involved in seeking to keep the true nature of the relationship secret. The decision to 'tell the family' for example, can be traumatic. Some families respond in horror, whilst others approve. Very often, the lover remains an outsider to the family for some time. 'Coming out' also involves decisions about how to be seen in public, and discussion of the practical implications - for example - whether or not to divulge details of sleeping arrangements to visitors to the house. Savin-Williams (1995), speaking of individuals, noted that empirical evidence suggests that coming out to self leads to an improvement in feelings of self worth. After initial anxiety, coming out to others - especially to friends - results in more positive responses than expected.

As already stated, gay and lesbian relationships share similarities with heterosexual ones. For example, couples in same-sex relationships experience the same kinds of pleasure, satisfactions, frustrations, ambivalence and difficult dependencies as those experienced in straight relationships (Segal, 1987; Shernoff, 1992). However, the gay and lesbian

relationship has little precedence against which to plot its course. As Berzon argues, the nuclear family track is marked by events that signify how far one has come and how far one has yet to travel (1992, p.14). In contrast, the same-sex couple has no courtship, engagement, wedding, or childbirth events. Consequently, lovers need to develop their own ritual events and symbolic markers to chart their progress. Some couples organise ceremonies of commitment (Kurdek, 1995). Studies by McWhirter and Mattison (1984), and Clunis and Green (1988) identified developmental relationship patterns not attached to particular events. (To be discussed in chapter 4).

Many straight couples expect that at some stage they will start a family. The decision to become parents is not so clear cut amongst gay couples. Both lesbian and gay partners may have children from a former, heterosexual marriage, but it is more likely that lesbian mothers will have their children living with them. The gay parent is likely to live with the constant threat that the children may be taken away. (Kurdek, 1995; Toder, 1992; Turner, Scadden, and Harris, 1990). Carron (1992) states that children from former heterosexual marriages are less likely to be parented by fathers in gay partnerships due to social fears about abduction or sexual abuse. Ehrensaft (1998) notes that in the USA, two thirds of contested custody cases are won by fathers. Accusations of lesbianism figure high on the list of strategies used as supporting evidence.

The lesbian mother may also find (as her heterosexual counterparts sometimes do) that her partner does not share her commitment to her children. Lesbian couples deciding to rear a child of their own may be met with social disapproval. Patriarchal norms demand the presence of a father (no matter how ineffectual) and the heterosexual community expresses fears about children being brought up with an 'unnatural' view of committed and sexual relationships. Furthermore, parenting may be a lonely task. The gay and lesbian community is itself not aware of the special needs of parents in their midst. Despite these difficulties, findings show that there are few significant differences between homosexual, and heterosexual parenting outcomes (Turner *et al.*, 1990).

Certain relationship issues arise for gay and lesbian couples which may be present in heterosexual relationships, but in the latter attract less comment. As Kimmel and Sang (1995) suggest, the gay community has no images or models for the 'successful' relationship and those who achieve a more or less continuous commitment become positive role models amongst their friends. Other issues yield different stresses for homosexual partners to those experienced by heterosexuals. For example, the heterosexual pair once married become family to each other. The same-sex couple are unlikely to achieve kinship status. Friendship groups rather than family provide support for the couple. However, older lesbians, and gay men may be called upon to look after ageing parents on the grounds that unlike heterosexual siblings, they have no other dependants (Kimmel, 1992).

Inequality may exist in same-sex relationships. For instance, economic disparities may be a problem. Toder, speaking of lesbian relationships argues that many couples are reluctant to share their incomes - each partner keeping rigidly separate accounts. Berger, (1990) suggests that inequalities of power stemming from disparate financial resources are more likely to be troublesome in a gay male relationship - neither partner being happy to be 'supported'. Similar problems may arise if work and career opportunities are unequal for each male partner. In heterosexual relationships, imbalances are likely to be seen as part of an established contract entailing the woman's dependency.

In lesbian relationships there may be a tendency for partners to engage in role-playing reminiscent of traditional heterosexuality - evident in past lesbian relationships for example, when 'bitches' far exceeded the number of 'femmes'. Arguably, this imbalance stemmed from a need to assume some of the power and privilege accorded to males. Alternatively, as Reilly and Lynch (1990) argue, the adoption of the male (butch) role by one of the partners may have been a symbolic attempt to signal the expendability of men in the face of society's oppression of lesbian couples.

The role of sexuality can also be problematic for the gay and lesbian couple. The decision to be monogamous or non-monogamous stems from the open and social life style amongst the

gay community. There are proscribed meeting places for friends, such as bars, clubs, and particularly for gay men in search of casual sex, assignations in public toilets. These social practices form the context for homosexual relationships. (Bronski, 1992). Lesbians tend to withdraw from the community and form close dependencies (Kurdek, 1995), whereas male-to-male couplings have in the past been more likely to be transient and changing. However, according to Berger (1990), and Shernoff (1992), with the onset of AIDS, gays have stepped back from uninhibited and promiscuous sexual affiliations, and moved towards the development of enduring relationships. However, both lesbian and gay couples can be haunted by fears that a partner may take another sexual mate.

Although aware of being labelled deviant in a heterosexual world, gay and lesbian couples experience advantages, along with disadvantages in the social construction of homosexuality. McIntosh (1968) suggests that the homosexual welcomes his cultural definition since it protects and legitimates his position. Same-sex couples may be stereotyped according to the mythology surrounding what is for most heterosexuals, an unknown lifestyle. This may (and does) make homosexual couples the object of fear and discrimination. However, their lifestyles may result in being less proscribed. They are free to construct unique life paths. There is an opportunity to challenge gender inequalities and define their own roles with relationships.

Nevertheless, the lack of established expectations and role models can lead to uncertainty - as the biography of Anne Lister illustrated. This suggests that no matter how inadequate, some socially constructed expectations of a gendered self is beneficial. Alternatively, it is clear that overarching patriarchal structures, and discourses perpetuating inequalities and limiting freedom, create problems for untypical relationships in placing very real barriers to creativity.

3:11 Implications for change

This chapter has focused on different psychological approaches to couples and change. Common themes about change as a process, efforts to resist change, and the role of communication are evident. Some interpretations are less useful for this study because they cannot construct a narrative account of how couples manage change. Approaches such as attribution, learning, and exchange theories, fall into this group.

However, a focus on the social construction of gender, and 'abnormal' versus 'normal' relationships, provides an interactional view of change. Couples dealing with transition are subject to the regulation of behaviour and choices through the absence or presence of social structures. Same-sex couples are therefore vital to the study. Evidence of the positioning of couples through a complex interaction of cultural practices, discourses and relationships is more accessible in contrasting homosexuals with heterosexuals. Furthermore, the comparison is likely to supply a richer source of meanings in narratives of change than is likely if studying a single group.

Psychological theories are seen as appropriate to two aspects of the investigation. Firstly, in taking a broad view of the changes occurring during the lifetime of the couple, the psychodynamic, constructivist and social constructionist approaches account for fundamental patterns of behaviour occurring in every aspect of the couple's life. However, the latter two perspectives are also relevant to discrete change events in couple's experience. Constructivism provides understandings of the change process, and constructionism of the ways in which couples co-construct meanings as they negotiate transitions.

In contrast, systems, behavioural and cognitive approaches may bring insight into couple's interpretation and management of individual change events. A systems perspective will contribute to an understanding of intercommunication between partners, but the cognitive/behavioural approaches are more circumscribed and individual in their applicability.

The Role of Closeness

One theme important to the structure of the research, is that of *closeness*. Theories about closeness have emerged from several different perspectives. For example, Staske (1996) found that the narrative construction of emotion in couple relationships dictated and maintained the intensity of their emotional experience. From a cognitive perspective, Aron and Aron (1992, 1996) found that closeness between partners was related to the extent to which they were aware of sharing behavioural traits.

Attachment theory particularly deals with closeness as it affects a couple's ability to cope with change. Green and Werner (1996) suggest that *intrusiveness* is a negative form of closeness stemming from insecure attachment. Wright and Wright (1995) found that some experiences of closeness in response to trauma in a relationship created a collusive *codependency* - one partner being totally manipulated by (codependent on) the other - a pathological enmeshment. Lyons and Meade (1995), investigating partner's responses to illness, and found that withdrawal - the opposite of codependency was an attachment behaviour likely to produce relationship dissolution. The researchers argued that *interdependence* was a desirable attachment position - where partners were able to coordinate the meeting of each others needs and goals.

Attachment and closeness are seen in the literature as being important elements in the remodelling of relationships after trauma (Lyons and Meade, 1995). Good attachments provide a stable base for goal directed activity (Weiss, 1991), enable good memory and reasoning functioning (Main, 1991), promote the ability to be reflexive (Fish, 1996), and enable an individual to cope with bereavement (Murray Parkes, 1991).

Given that change involves loss, and a need to reconstruct and adapt to a new order, understandings of closeness therefore, can be argued to provide a useful - if imperfect - guide to attachment issues in the relationship, and possibly to the effectiveness of individual/couple coping mechanisms.

3:12 Conclusion

Continuing the theme of differing relationship dynamics, long term relationship change, and the single events which characterise experience of change on a daily basis, chapter 4 examines a number of studies dealing with homosexual relationships - identifying similarities and differences with heterosexual relationship processes. Secondly, some of the research into couples and their life cycle changes is discussed, followed by an examination of some of the life cycle models proposed for both groups. The chapter finally suggests how the processes identified carry implications for the current project.

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CHAPTER 4:

RESEARCH FINDINGS: RELATIONSHIPS AND CHANGE

4:1 Introduction

The last chapter explored differing psychological explanations for relationship experiences. Change is essential to couple dynamics, and therefore theories seeking to explain how people function, by implication, say something about the process of change. This chapter however, is more concerned with findings emanating from research into change itself. Studies have varied in their theoretical orientations, or have been drawn from a relatively eclectic mixture of theoretical positions.

The chapter discusses several ways in which relationship processes and change are modelled in partnerships. Dealing first with research into comparisons of process in homosexual and heterosexual relationships, the chapter then turns to contextual themes. These are firstly, some of the research dealing with typical transitions, analysing differing impacts upon the couple. Secondly, life cycle and stage models - taking a longitudinal, overall view of relationships - are considered.

4:2 Studies of Homosexual Couples

Much of the early work on change relates to heterosexual couples. Research dealing with homosexual relationships is fairly limited. Kurdek (1995) suggests that the latter studies fall into two groups - descriptive reports dealing with relationship related variables, and more theoretical approaches, based upon cognitive interpretations.

Three factors are important in assessing research on gay and lesbian couples. Firstly - most studies are small-scale, conducted amongst participants drawn from a white, middle class and American - context. Even social constructionist research suffers similar limitations. Secondly, research needs to be understood in its historical and cultural context, simply because cultural changes in attitudes towards gays have been marked in the last thirty years. Furthermore, the existence of AIDS has prompted lifestyle changes - particularly for gay men. Hence, some of the findings may feature age-related differences - older gay and lesbian couples having different understandings from their younger counterparts. Thirdly, much of homosexual research has been conducted with gay males and generalised to cover the experience of lesbians. The assumption of homogamy between the two groups is however, questionable.

Very few studies of homosexual couples deal with change as a central issue. Those that do are discussed later. Nevertheless, the studies enable an exploration of the structure of relationships, and allow a 'teasing out' of what different relationship factors may have to say about processes and change. Consequently this section gives a brief summary of how researchers typically address gay and lesbian relationships.

Descriptive studies provide useful demographic data (for example, Bryant and Demian, 1990), and are relevant to the findings of this study. For example, that female respondents (27%) were more likely than males (19%) to have been heterosexually married before their current relationship. That both gay males and lesbians are likely to have met either through friends, or social events; with the bar providing an additional meeting place for males, and work for females. That gay males may mark their relationship by the wearing of a ring (36%) or by some kind of commitment ceremony (11%). The figures for lesbian couples are 57% and 19% respectively. Thirty six percent of male couples and 32% of female couples were found to own their own home; and 82% of male couples and 75% female pooled their incomes. The data refers to a USA survey.

Other common themes emerged with respect to the nature of relationships:

Friendships

Data from questionnaires and surveys revealed that couples from both groups reported other gay and lesbian friends as the first line in social support - followed by siblings, mother and then father. Couples were more likely to choose other couples as friends. (Berger, 1990), and long-term homosexual partnerships featured as role models for newly formed relationships, (Kurdek, 1989). Nardi and Sherrod (1994) found that - unlike heterosexual men and women, gay males and lesbians enacted friendships similarly - except when engaged in sexual or conflictual behaviour. At such times, more stereotypical male/female behaviour towards friends was evident.

Sexual Behaviour

Three aspects of sexual behaviour are included in the literature - the differing experiences of sexuality between lesbian and gay male couples; the influence of gender differences; and the prevalence and effects of open- and close-coupled.

Blumstein and Schwartz (1983) provide the most comprehensive research on the first category. Studying both lesbians, gays, and heterosexuals, they found that gay males were more sexually active at the beginning of the relationship than either heterosexual or lesbian partners. This declined however, and after ten years fell below the level of heterosexual couples. Lesbian couples were less active sexually than either of the other two groups - a finding supported by Hurlbert and Apt (1993) - argued to be because genital sex may be less important to female couples, with other kinds of intimacy being more valid. These arguments of course, raise issues around the definition of sexual behaviour, and suggest that the research assumes a masculine -penetrative model - of physical enjoyment.

Differences in sexual behaviour are interpreted in terms of gender differences. Berger (1990), Deenan (1988), Engel and Saracino ((1986), and Kurdek (1988), highlight the

importance of gender expectations which lead men to see genital sex as important, and women, to value emotional intimacy. Hurlbert and Apt (1993) however, noted that heterosexual women complied to a greater extent to male models of sexual behaviour for example, providing evidence of greater sexual assertiveness, and stronger sexual desire. Blumstein and Schwartz (1983) suggested that lesbians may have two difficulties with engaging in sexual behaviour. Firstly, having negative views of sexuality and/or bodies, they may be more inhibited. Secondly, a fear of reproducing the inequality of heterosexual relationships may inhibit partners from initiating sex. However, the researchers found no evidence of homosexuals habitually assuming 'active' or 'passive' roles in sexual encounters.

Several papers address the issue of exclusivity in homosexual relationships. Berger (1990) studying males, defines 'close-coupled' as relationships characterised by close, monogamous bonds mirroring the pattern of the 'happily married man' in a heterosexual relationship. 'Open-coupled' are those partners who live within a stable relationship, but have other sexual encounters. Open-coupled are assumed to have less satisfying relationships. However, the number of open-coupled has declined since the onset of AIDS. Kurdek (1988) and Kurdek and Schmitt (1986a) found that gay males in 'open' relationships stayed together for longer. All of the lesbian couples studied however, were sexually exclusive. Hawkins (1990) suggested that sexual jealousy was less likely amongst homosexual males (as distinct from heterosexual males) because exclusivity was not an expectation for gay couples. Kurdek and Schmitt identified the relationship context as being influential in exclusivity choices. Where gays were numerous and visible, openness was found to be more likely.

The papers quoted above are quantitative - depending on the results of surveys and questionnaires. Of the eight mentioned, only four address the experience of lesbians. The findings suggest that gender stereotypes pervade homosexual relationships, and that in mapping their relationships, couples attempt to deconstruct normative assumptions around sexuality in order to achieve a preferred relationship pattern.

Relationship Quality, Satisfaction and Commitment

Apart from research into the effects of AIDS on the homosexual community, relationship quality and satisfaction is a major source of interest. The bulk of relevant research is based on cognitive perspectives and focuses on individual differences - as covered by interdependence theory (e.g. Rusbult & Buunk, 1993), and relationship styles - as explained by conflict resolution perspectives, (e.g. Gottman, 1994). The first argues for an association between assessments of the relationship (e.g. perceived rewards, costs, investments and attractiveness of alternatives), and commitment to it. The second, deals with problem-solving abilities and dysfunctional strategies.

Relationship quality research looks at differences - firstly within gay relationships. The major findings here relate to the open and closed distinctions mentioned above. Kurdek and Schmitt (1986a) found that male partners in closed relationships reported higher relationship quality than those in open relationships - especially in terms of dependency, lack of tension and positive attitudes towards the relationship. In other respects there were no qualitative differences between the two types of relationship which suggests that external factors may be responsible for the shorter duration of closed couples.

Other differences were identified in terms of gender. Kurdek (1988 & 1989) found evidence of enhanced relationship quality in lesbian compared to gay male relationships - consistent with findings of earlier research which showed that reciprocal expressiveness and equality of power are salient themes for lesbian couples (Kurdek and Schmitt, 1986b). Duffy and Rusbult (1986) compared homosexual and heterosexual relationships and found that women in both groups reported higher levels of investment and greater commitment to their relationships than men. Lowest levels of these factors were found amongst gay males. The researchers concluded that gender was a more important predictor of relationship satisfaction than orientation. This suggests that gender expectations and socialisation lead women to value and invest in relationships more than men.

The last group of differences were evident in comparisons between heterosexual and homosexual couples. Amongst these groups it was expected that heterosexual cohabiters would show similar effects to homosexual couples in terms of relationship quality. (Kurdek and Schmitt, 1986b). This is because both groups are neither legally or socially sanctioned - which may be argued to affect relationship satisfaction. The researchers found that married couples reported a greater number of barriers to leaving the relationship; gay and lesbian couples reported less support from family, and fewer barriers to separation. Cohabiting heterosexuals reported lowest relationship satisfaction and love for partner. However, marital status was predictive of subjective well-being for heterosexual couples (Kurdek, 1989).

In other respects the groups were found to be similar. Duffy and Rusbult (1986) found few differences in measures of relationship quality and satisfaction between heterosexual and homosexual couples. Kurdek (1992b) suggested that heterosexual and homosexual couples adopted similar cognitive processes when attributing causes for dissatisfaction in the relationship. He also found that perceptions of rewards, costs and benefits in homosexual relationships paralleled those of heterosexuals (1992c). Taken together these findings suggest that homosexual and heterosexual couples perceive their relationships in similar ways. However, legal and social sanctions may persuade couples that their relationship is less secure leading to practical effects on its longevity.

Methodologically, the papers cited are positivist. Each uses questionnaires to obtain data. Interpretation focuses on generalisation and the predictive relationships between variables. Whilst offering useful, (but sometimes confusing) data, they have one major deficiency. Although one of the studies (Kurdek 1988) claims to use the *couple* as the unit of analysis, the common practice is to present each partner with a questionnaire to be completed separately. Whilst this protects the data from 'contamination' - because partners provide collaborative responses, the results are likely to produce individual perceptions - as the researchers require. The measures used tend to dictate the nature of the research findings

(Kurdek, 1995: p. 424). An external perspective - a comparative description - is offered, but little information is gained about how couples themselves would *together* describe and construct an understanding of relationship quality.

However, the research does suggest that similar normative assumptions underpin both homosexual and heterosexual relationships. Expectations of relationship quality are similar, and subject to similar gender effects. The research also shows that legal and social sanctions place constraints on couple's choices.

Equality Between Partners

Two measures of equality have been the focus of lesbian and gay research - the nature of power in the couple relationship, and the division of labour between partners. Again, the understanding of the homosexual relationship has been clarified through comparison with heterosexual experience.

Studies of power have focused on the nature of personal autonomy, handling of finances, and sexuality. Kurdek (1995, p. 419) for example, points to a link between equality and autonomy. He defines *equality* as the extent to which one perceives that power in, and responsibility for, the relationship are shared. *Autonomy* is the degree to which one perceives that the self as an individual is separate from self as a partner in the relationship. Kurdek found that an increase in autonomy heralded relationship dissolution, and deduced that equality and autonomy co-vary as core qualities in a relationship.

Findings with respect to the relationship between money management and power are conflicting. Kurdek (1995) found that financial issues were a source of conflict for both gay male and lesbian couples. Berger (1990) produced similar findings with respect to gay males, and men in heterosexual relationships were found by Blumstein and Schwartz (1983) to equate money with power - and a source of the imbalance located in heterosexual

relationships. However, Reilly and Lynch (1990) and Blumstein and Schwartz found that money was not a source of competition between lesbian partners.

Sexual issues have been discussed above, but issues of power have been identified in terms of initiation and frequency of sexual experience. Blumstein and Schwartz (1983) found that men in heterosexual relationships usually initiated sex, although examples of equality in initiation were evident. Of the three groups, decision-making about initiation and frequency were found to be most unequal in lesbian relationships. Difficulties were seen to stem from the fact that as both partners were socialised to be sexually passive, initiation was perceived as synonymous with sexual aggressiveness. Sexual assertiveness therefore could be the source of power struggles. Reilly and Lynch (1990) suggest that the rejection of 'butch' and 'femme' roles in lesbian ideology stemmed from the need to establish equality in lesbian relationships, and to reject the male/female symbolism which perpetuated heterosexual power imbalances in their own partnerships.

Steinman (1991) investigated male homosexual relationships characterised by two partners separated by a large age disparity. He found that the younger - usually less economically independent partner, tended to maintain control by means of withdrawal of sexual favours. Steinman interpreted this behaviour as reminiscent of similar conduct in women experiencing equally dependent economic circumstances, who may gain some influence by sexual refusal. Foreman (1995) however, found that heterosexual women were not aware of using sexuality so deliberately.

Studies differ in their assessment of power relationships in couples, but the differences tend to reflect the particular aspect of power being studied. For example, Kurdek (1995) reports that he found that both lesbian and gay couples used similar strategies in order to resolve conflict. Reilly and Lynch (1990) suggested that competitiveness was a feature of all couple relationships except for lesbians. Of all the groups studied - gay, lesbian, heterosexual married and heterosexual cohabiting, lesbian couples were found to strongly endorse an ideology of equality. However, Reilly and Lynch found a discrepancy between ideal and

actual measures of power sharing in lesbian relationships. The researchers argued that age, income, education and asset differences were not shown to be related to power imbalances - leading to the view that the personal characteristics of individual partners are more likely to be implicated.

As argued in chapter 3, partners in heterosexual relationships hold certain expectations of their domestic and economic roles. Once children are born gender roles are emphasised further. Gay and lesbian partners can be argued to have similar understandings of relationships, but are required to adapt role-related behaviours to meet their own needs. Research suggests that this happens in several ways. Blumstein and Schwartz (1983) compared gay, lesbian and married couples, and found that of all partners who were in full time employment, wives engaged in domestic duties to the greatest extent, and husbands were least involved. Gay partners reported involvement in housework to a greater extent than lesbians.

McWhirter and Mattison (1984) detected a change over time. At the beginning of homosexual relationships partners shared household duties, but after a period, tasks were assigned on the basis of relevant skill. However, Blumstein and Schwartz (1983) discovered that lesbian couples shared duties equally at any stage of the relationship - a practice stemming from several sources. Sharing housework may signal a backlash against heterosexual imbalances, an ideal of equality, or gender socialisation which sees housework as women's work.

The studies in this section are mainly descriptive, but produce useful information about the structure of homosexual relationships compared to those of heterosexuals. They also deal with common relationship processes against which other experiences of change are set. Some of the studies (e.g. Kurdek, 1988, 1989, and 1995) attempt a longitudinal approach in order to establish some measure of change. Although providing a 'snapshot' of discrete relationship qualities, they also serve as a focus for the identification of change over time -

for example, changes in power between partners - and suggest where normative assumptions about relationships are most influential in modifying the process of change.

The next sections look at some of the research into transitional experiences in couple relationships. Most focus on key stages in the couple life cycle rather than discrete change events.

4:3 Couples in Context: Life Cycle Changes

A life cycle approach assumes that relationships cannot stand still. Relationships develop, and change in character as a result. However, life cycle models focus on key stages of change - the transitions at which major shifts are seen, and major choices made. The empirical studies of heterosexual life stage changes have themselves matured over time from a positivist, to a constructivist, and subsequently, social constructionist approach. This suggests a move from describing life cycle changes, to an approach identifying how couples construct the change process. (Compare for example, Duck & Gilmour, 1982, and Duck, 1994). In contrast, homosexual research has difficulty in identifying clear life cycle changes, and retains a largely positivist, descriptive approach.

Heterosexual Studies

Formation of relationships

Several theories attempt to account for transitions occurring with the formation of new relationships. For example, *filter theories* - using a cognitive approach - suggest that self-disclosure enables individuals to 'filter out' unsuitable prospective partners from the 'field of eligibles'. (Kerckhoff and Davis, 1962). Couples begin by looking for similarity of values, but later make judgements of suitability on the basis of complementarity of needs. Research

(e.g. Huston, Surra, Fitzgerald and Cate , 1981) suggests that personal adequacy, spousal role expectations and sexual compatibility are further characteristics upon which choice of mate is based. Filter theories suggest a sequential decision-making process. One stage must be successfully completed before the next can be attempted. The desired result is a comfortable relationship 'fit' with the partner who has survived the procedure.

Filter theories are useful ways of conceptualising the dynamics of relationship formation, but have been criticised as inadequate predictors of relationship survival. (Huston *et al.*, 1981). They ignore the influence of other factors - such as family members, and fail to take account of unconscious elements - like the effect of the interrelationship dynamics of childhood. Duck (1973) suggests that the models lack theoretical precision, and Shotter (1992) argues that relationships, from the beginning, involve an ongoing joint construction of meaning through the conversations and interactions of the partners. McCarthy (1981) states that there is a lack of substantial evidence to support filter theories, which may be a factor underlying the varying interpretations of the process.

Surra and Huston, (1987) are critical of approaches which reduce dating and courtship behaviour to a set of stages. On the grounds that transitions necessarily involve 'processes', their research into mate selection as a social transition focused on change as movement over time. Dating and choosing a partner is not a process confined to the couple involved, but one producing multiple simultaneous changes in status for members of the groups to which each partner belongs. Furthermore, prospective partners are seen as embarking upon a set of role changes that can neither be practised or experienced before the transition has been completed. Therefore, in searching for predictors of a successful relationship, objective measures - such as evidence of a period of successful cohabiting - may not forecast a healthy marriage. (Newcomb, 1981).

Taking a cognitive approach, Surra and Huston researched couple's assessments of their chances of marriage at various key moments during the courtship period. Subjective inferences and attributions about changes in commitment were obtained and coded. The

findings demonstrated that couples tended to attribute positive alterations in mutual trust to factors within their relationship; whilst diminishing commitment tended to be attributed to external influences. Additionally, the effect of social networks were seen to be implicated in couple's inferences when rapid negative changes in their relationship commitment were reported. Circumstantial factors on the other hand, tended to be linked to moderate changes in the progression of the relationship.

Useful generalisations emerged from the Surra and Huston study. Firstly, an analysis of relationships based on *styles* of courtship revealed a link between inferences about the nature of causality and the way in which commitment developed. For example, partners moving smoothly and quickly to a point where they were certain to marry, tended to use a higher proportion of intrapersonal and normative explanations for key events in their romance. Secondly, effects of cultural influences on couple's attributions emerged in indirect and often unconscious ways. Thirdly, inferences with regard to social network (family and friends) effects were often imagined or anticipated rather than actual. Fourthly, the mention of circumstantial influences was made 'as if' such factors were beyond conscious control, and generally due to chance. These points suggest that external factors, such as cultural influences, are powerful in the newly developing relationship - both in perceived, and in real terms.

The New Couple

Wamboldt and Reiss (1989) argue that immediately after marriage a couple has two major tasks - to define a family heritage, and create a new relationship identity. In order to investigate how this occurs, the researchers studied conflict management and interactional processes between new couples.

Their study included a semi-structured interview, a set of questionnaires, Q sorts and a follow-up questionnaire after twelve months - strategies which provided measures of the influences of family of origin on current interactional processes; the couple's consensus

building skills, and the role of gender as a catalyst between early marital interaction and family background. Findings were interpreted according to two models specially for the research - a 'Kellyian' *social* constructivist explanation and an understanding in terms of socialisation. An awareness of the interactive nature of knowledge was evident, but the researchers were less interested in how a meaningful present was mutually constructed from each partner's distinctive history. Consequently; issues such as the role of family myths about marriage, negotiation of intimacy etc. highlighted by McGoldrick (1989) were ignored.

Wamboldt and Reiss concluded that as the couple define the family heritage they also determine their own separateness. Family becomes 'them', as distinct from 'us' as a couple. A new relationship identity is constructed. However, characteristics of origin family are important. If the couple's focus was on the male's family of origin, their own relationship was less likely to be satisfying. Furthermore, the nature of interaction within the female's origin family was found to have an influential effect on the couple's interactional disposition. Wamboldt and Reiss suggested that women are generally expected to be 'relationship specialists' and as such, need a good relationship role model in their own families in order to be successful negotiators of the new relationship identity. In constructivist terms this suggests that past experiences have a powerful role in constructing present reality.

Dyads to Triads

Studies of different aspects of this first major couple event have been many. (See for example, Congress, 1996; Fitzpatrick, Vangelisti, and Firman, 1994; Higgins, Loeb and Ruble, 1995; MacDermid *et al.*, 1990). Most tend to link the onset of parenthood with a decline in marital satisfaction - for example, the majority of divorces occur at this time (Carter and McGoldrick, 1989). However, MacDermid, Huston and McHale (1990) have argued that findings in long term studies of childless and parental couples suggest that such a decline is typical of the early years of marriage - with or without children. Their findings

have led to a more optimistic assessment of the influence of children upon a couple's relationship.

Fitzpatrick *et al.* (1994) studied couple's perceptions of marital interaction and change during pregnancy. The major consistency to be found was that women worry more than do men on becoming pregnant, and that tendency to worry is not linked to type of relationship. However, the researchers found that pregnancy and childbirth may be experienced in very different ways by spouses who hold differing views of marital communication. Expectations of marriage and variations in gender roles were particularly reported as important influences upon the evaluations couples make of their relationships, and their experience of pregnancy and childbirth.

The researchers argued that measures of marital satisfaction alone are not sensitive enough to explain the full nature of couple's experience during change and therefore may produce inadequate data. For example, ratings of marital satisfaction were higher for one group of wives than for another, and yet closer examination revealed that the former reported more relationship difficulty during this period than did the latter.

The findings of Fitzpatrick *et al.* were based on questionnaire responses which failed to access directly the elements which couples *themselves* chose as significant in the experience of change. However, the research does point to the diversity of responses to change which varies - not only according to past influences and social expectations, but also in line with the types of communication patterns couples employ.

In contrast, a study by Oppenheim, Wamboldt, Gavin, Renouf, and Emde (1996) studied couple's narratives in recalling - three years on - their child's birth. Although the focus was not concerned with cultural influences on co-constructed meaning, the researchers found that there was an association between couple's narratives and their marital well-being. They also noted that agreement between partners resulted from a transactional process of mutual negotiation and reciprocal regulation. Couples appeared to agree upon the 'world' they were

going to construct. (p. 19). The narrative procedure was backed up by questionnaire data, and provides useful insights into the role of joint narratives in enabling couples to adapt to change.

Adolescents leaving home

A later period of the family/couple life cycle - the launching of adolescents - has often been viewed as a time of low marital satisfaction and high stress, (Anderson, 1990) - albeit not wholly because of launching issues. Other stresses may be present at the same time - for example, parent's own mid-life anxieties. (McCullough and Rutenberg, 1989)

Anderson (1990) criticised previous approaches to child launching on the grounds that they have ignored gender effects, and the role of birth order of the adolescent in the launching transition. Previous findings focused largely on the changing roles, rules and behaviour promoted by the adolescent leaving home, and on the perceptions of the adolescent as the separation progressed. In contrast, a focus on the parent-adolescent relationship or on parent's own views, has tended to show that child launching can have positive consequences for parents.

Using a questionnaire methodology, Anderson investigated two groups of parents of young adults who were about to attend college. He found that stress levels for the whole family were lessened once the adolescent had begun the college course. For those leaving home, the first experience was more stressful than subsequent leavings. Birth order effects were present in that both mothers and fathers had a better level of communication with the student if he or she were an older - rather than a younger child leaving home. The child's gender affected parental communication in that parents had more communication with sons, and fathers were influenced more by a son's departure. In contrast, girls made more effort to maintain contact with parents and were better able to protect their own identity if they remained at home than were boys. Added stressors - such as economic hardship or employment problems negatively affected parent-adolescent and marital communication.

Anderson suggests that more attention needs to be paid to the unique characteristics inherent in the family, and their dealings with the transition. It may be argued that such uniqueness can best be identified in the language which couples use to account for such transitional events.

Ending Relationships

Traditional family and couple life cycle models have tended to assume that the story of a relationship ends with the ageing and death of the partners. However, increasingly, these approaches have proved inadequate to explain the reality for the proportion of couples whose partnerships end in separation, and/or divorce. The literature covering relationship dissolution is diverse, and of particular interest here since the divorce process signals a dramatic systemic change - not only a stressful life transition for the couple and family concerned, but also having serious public as well as private implications.

Many writings focus on *theories* of relationship breakdown (for example, Duck, 1982; Levinger, 1979; and Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980). Researchers are generally reluctant to investigate the dynamics of the process as it happens in case their work actually promotes dissolution. For this reason, as Miller and Parks (1982) argue, research is often retrospective.

Theoretical approaches tend to be concerned with explanations for the relationship breakdown whether stemming from pre-existing characteristics of the partners (Duck, 1982), or their inability to conduct and maintain the life of the relationship (Mattinson & Sinclair, 1981). Alternatively, their focus may be on the role of separation/divorce and remarriage as an issue of family re-development. (Burgoyne and Clark, 1984).

Some theoretical approaches suggest models which delineate the stages of relationship breakdown according to cognitive interpretations. (For example, Duck, 1982 and Johnson,

1982). Others focus on specific features of the process. Examples are: Rodgers (1987) detailing how the families of the separating spouses are affected; Peck and Manocherian (1989) investigating the differing effects of divorce as experienced at different stages of the couple life cycle; and Herz Brown (1989) analysing the stresses for each partner in negotiating new lifestyles after the divorce.

In looking at how people conceptualise the experience of break-up, Harvey, Weber, Yarkin and Stewart (1982) reported that after the break-up, partners tend to agree about the *external* influences on the dissolution (for example, an extramarital affair) whilst they tend to disagree about *internal* attributions (for example, their differing interests and backgrounds). Furthermore, they found that women invoke more causal attributions than men; and partners who instigated the break-up tended to report less severe emotional after-effects. These findings suggest that partners will perceive or ascribe reasons for the break-up in very different ways.

Hagestad and Smyer (1982) researched couple's accounts of their relationship break-up - seeking to develop an inside perspective, reflecting the complexity and diversity of partner's experiences. The researchers looked at divorce in mid-life, and investigated the time taken between the anticipation of divorce and its actual occurrence, the perceptions of ex-partners with respect to their perceived control over the divorce process, the ending of the shared routines of daily living, and the withdrawal of emotional attachment.

A number of differing accounts of each of these experiences were identified, but for the purposes of this study the findings with respect to gender are significant: Women perceived themselves as having more control over the divorcing process; eighteen months after the divorce they were less likely to be emotionally attached to their former partners, and more able to disentangle themselves from the spousal role than were men. As a result of their study Hagestad and Smyer concluded that social expectations of men and women at mid-life, and the emotional preparedness of women, gave women a psychological advantage for coping with divorce.

Sometimes divorce follows an orderly pattern reflected in the theoretical models mentioned above, but in other examples, the process is disorderly, inconclusive, and unstructured. As a transition it has no 'right time', but is subject to the effects of time. It has no culturally defined sequence of endings, or ritual marking, and therefore is accompanied by very few public legal and social support systems. In addition, the legal dissolution of a marriage represents the loss of status and role definition which - Hagestad and Smyer argue - still carries some stigma.

Homosexual Studies

Given that lesbian and gay relationships contain few clearly defined and objectively measurable stages - apart from 'meeting' and 'dissolution', research has focused on general aspects of change, and (as mentioned above) relationship quality. Consequently, homosexual stage models have no transitional events stemming from age-related needs or cultural expectations. There are no cultural markers, few expectations, less clear family contexts and no models to provide an established tradition upon which gays may base intentions for their lives together.

Adelman (1991) proposed a transitional model dealing with processes and events in the life of the gay or lesbian *individual*. Episodes are linked to the relevance and awareness of gayness as important markers of adult homosexual transitions. Development begins with the first awareness of gay feelings. This is followed by the first same-sex experience and the moment of self-identification as a gay person, through an eight-stage evolution which ends with the degree of disclosure to others of one's sexual orientation. However, the internal dynamics and development of the *couple* relationship seen in homosexual stage models, contribute to an understanding of the personal meanings which attach to the experience of being homosexual. Life-cycle themes shared with heterosexual couples are discussed below.

Formation of Relationships

There is an expectation in the literature that lesbian and male gay relationships will be short-lived and uncommitted. Saghir and Robins (1973) for example, described homosexual relationships as 'affairs' and assumed that almost all were short-lived. Berger (1990) however, surveyed gay male couples and discovered that relationships amongst those studied lasted from less than one year to thirty five. Looking at the beginning and maintenance of gay relationships, he produced similar findings to those obtained in interviews used in heterosexual studies.

He found that the gay bar was a common meeting place for prospective partners, and that 'moving in together' had a special significance as a marker of relationship development. Few couples had experienced a commitment ceremony - although more than one third of couples surveyed were interested in the possibility were it to be offered. The suggestion is that gay and straight couples may share similar expectations, but that social structures and the nature of social sanctions may impel the gay couple to seek fulfilment of these expectations in idiosyncratic ways.

In contrast to heterosexuals, homosexual couples lacked a clear definition of their relationship, and a variety of strategies were employed as descriptive devices. For instance, couples often referred to each other as 'lovers' - a term which carries connotations of illicit sexual activity, but Berger found no clear consensus about how to name their relationship to friends. More formalised measures - like wills, powers of attorney and relationship contracts - have been utilised to give the partnership substance. Descriptive discourses have yet to be developed within gay sub-culture.

The Role of children

Children form the central theme of heterosexual life cycle models. However, although gay and lesbian parents exist, the presence of children in same-sex relationships is less

predictable. It has been estimated that in the USA there are a staggering number of children who have either lesbian mothers or gay fathers (between six and fourteen million (Turner, Scadden and Harris, 1990). In most cases, the children are the offspring of a previous heterosexual relationship. Kurdek (1989) suggests that absence of children creates differing effects for homosexual couples. Their roles - unlike those of the typical heterosexual couple - are less complex. They cannot assume behaviours associated with biological parenthood, and therefore are not called upon to manage the negotiation of spouse, worker and parent roles.

Research in this area is limited. However, Turner, Scadden and Harris (1990) conducted interviews with a small sample of *individuals*. Ten gay fathers and eleven lesbian mothers. They found that gay fathers tended to provide sex role models for their children more than did lesbian mothers. Knowledge of their parent's gayness affected a small proportion of the children, but most homosexual parents reported that divorce from the heterosexual partner was more problematic. Lesbian mothers were seen to be little different from heterosexual mothers. Gay fathers tended to be more attentive and egalitarian than their heterosexual counterparts. Economic differences were evident in line with gender examples - lesbian mothers being poorer than gay fathers. Whilst providing useful descriptive data, Turner *et al.* say little about the effects of children in the intimate relationships of homosexuals.

In contrast, Stein (1988) reviewed the literature on new family forms linked to homosexuality. He too argued that lesbian mothers parented as heterosexual mothers do, but were subject to social oppression such as discrimination, lack of social support, and unfair custody rights. Stein reported that almost no research exists on gay fathers. The little available deals with the father's characteristics rather than his behaviour in the parental role. This may reflect social disapproval concerning gay men as parents - for example, fears of sexual abuse - repeatedly demonstrated by research as unfounded. Whilst Stein argued that available material suggests there may be problems to do with emotional fusion in lesbian relationships, other effects of lesbian parenting are as yet unknown. Both Stein and Turner *et al.* highlight the need for longitudinal studies of homosexual parenting. The material

available is therefore very sketchy. Whereas there is extensive coverage of the effects of children in the lives of heterosexuals, there is little available with respect to homosexuals.

Relationship Dissolution

Homosexual, like heterosexual relationships, are sometimes subject to dissolution. Gay separations carry even fewer cultural markers than are found in heterosexual experiences. However, in other ways, relationship breakdown is similar in both groups. Kurdek & Blik (1983; cited in Kurdek 1991, p. 275) found several shared themes. Both groups offered non-responsiveness of the partner, or absence and/or emotional distance as a primary reason for separation. Similarly, both groups reported feelings of loneliness, relief that conflict was over, and personal growth, as post-separation experiences. Financial stress was a post-separation problem; but couples who were prepared for dissolution were found to adjust satisfactorily to the new situation.

Kurdek (1991) found that couples experience relationship loss in ways very similar to former relationship experiences. One interesting difference - a recurring theme throughout the literature - is that given the propensity for male homosexual couples to keep their individual financial resources completely separate from each other, there are fewer practical barriers to dissolution than are found in heterosexual examples. In looking for predictors of relationship breakdown, Kurdek (1995) found an interaction between change in positivity and change in personal autonomy. If positivity decreased, and personal autonomy increased, relationship dissolution was more likely.

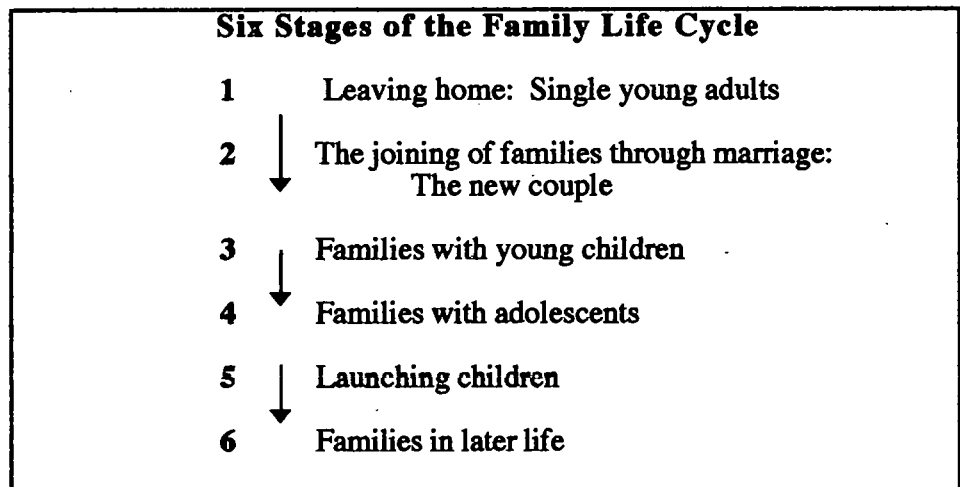
Kurdek's (1989) study confirmed that the first year of gay male partnerships were generally marked by reports of a decrease in relationship satisfaction - often leading to break-up during the period. This finding is consistent with the McWhirter and Mattison model discussed below.

4:4 Couples in Context: Models of Change

Carter and McGoldrick (1980), Combrinck-Graham (1985), McWhirter and Mattison (1984) and Clunis and Green (1988) have each developed stage models of change over the lifetime of a relationship. Carter and McGoldrick proposed a family life cycle (FLC) model from a systemic perspective - with more recent revisions allowing for the changes in cultural context for families - such as the changing roles of women, (Carter and McGoldrick, 1989), and changing family structures. (Jerrome, 1996)

The FLC model involves a six stage structure of family change (see Figure 4:1). Three factors emerge as basic to FLC development - biological, maturational, and societal. The birth of offspring, the expectation that relationships grow, and the ageing of individual members are identified as major life cycle determinants. These are set against external social expectations and internal familial pressures - not just from the nuclear family, but also from the intergenerational influences of the wider family.

Figure 4:1 Family Life Cycle Stages: Carter & McGoldrick (1989).



Life cycle stages follow a linear progression, and are subject to the exigencies of time. As Duck (1994) puts it, there is an underlying expectation of 'rightness'. There is a 'right time' to get married, have children etc. Therefore, qualitative judgements about decisions may be

made. For example, some choices may be wise at this moment, but would not be appropriate at a later date.

The nodal points at which major transitions take place form the major focus of the FLC model. These are points at which the family will suffer greatest stress, and negotiate several changes. Family members may need to adopt new roles and develop new skills and identities; and changes in family structure may involve new hierarchies and power balances. With each transition, there is increased complexity in terms of patterns of intimacy and changes in beliefs and expectations. Any change has both positive and negative effects which will impinge on the ways in which family members connect with each other.

The Carter and McGoldrick model is valuable in suggesting that there are typical events structuring family life. The inclusion of social and intergenerational influences also enables the couple to be seen in context. However, the proposed linear progression allied with the narrow focus on biological and child-centred events provides a restricted account of significant experiences of change. Furthermore, the model applies an external understanding of life cycle events. In adopting this focus their work carries implications of normative development - e.g. that the couple relationship inevitably will involve the birth of children. Partners who do not conform to this pattern may therefore be considered abnormal. However, in view of their focus on *family* processes this implied assumption may stem from their lack of close attention to couples per se.

Combrinck-Graham (1985) modelled the FLC as a spiralling developmental process. She criticised the Carter and McGoldrick model on the grounds that it focuses on different sub-groups involved at each life cycle nexus, rather than evolution of the family. For example, on the *individual* during the first (unattached young adult) stage.

Whilst still seeing the events attached to the birth and maturation of children as defining life cycle episodes, Combrinck-Graham set them against the background of the whole family and focused on the oscillations between each generation. Life cycle nodal points such as the

birth of the first child are described as moments when the generations are drawn together by the change which affects them all in different ways. In contrast, the periods *between* transitional events are marked by a drifting apart during which time the focus of each sub-system is upon exploration of personal issues relevant to the period.

Combrinck-Graham describes this dynamic as a series of non-pathological oscillations in levels of intimacy in the family. At one extreme are the *centripetal* periods of closeness and at the other, the *centrifugal* cycles of disengagement and distancing. In effect, family reactions to the experiences of nodal events are stacked up to form a life spiral in which each generation is involved in a reciprocal exchange of developmental tasks. For example, the mid-life crisis described by Levinson (1981) tends to coincide with the critical events attached to the nurturing of adolescent children. (See Fig. 4:2). Thus the periods which are seen to provide the most significant insights into family functioning are the centrifugal phases when outdated family structures are being dismantled and new identities, or personal goals are being formed.

The Family Life Spiral

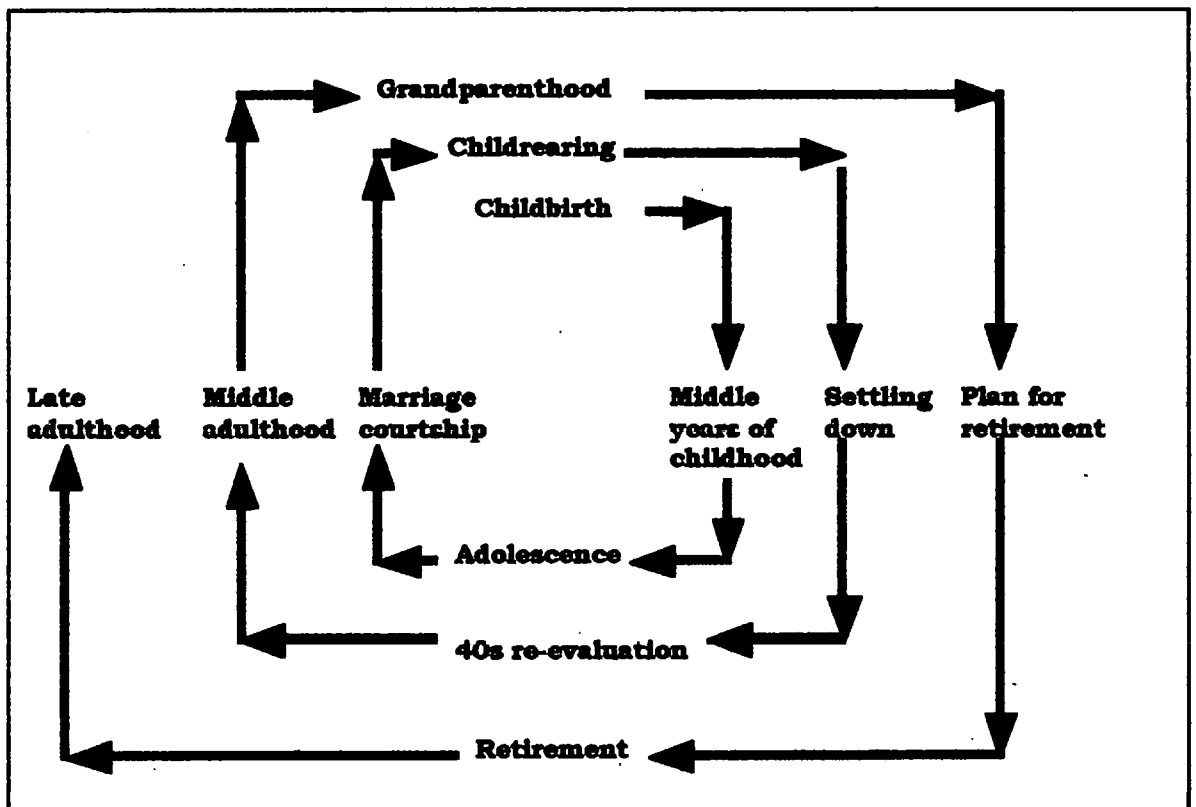


Figure 4.2 Adapted from Meill & Dallos, 1996, p. 257

The Family Life Spiral model adopts a more dynamic model of change than linear stage models. However, its approach may also be criticised as an external and prescriptive account of relationship processes. Like the FLC, children provide the major focus of events; no allowance is made for reversals in family processes, and the 'typical' nature of life stages implies a normative approach.

Both models fail to explain processes in untypical relationships - for example, step - and single parent families; childless couples, or couples whose age fails to coincide with the age related assumptions of the models. They also presume an intergenerational pattern that may not be evident in an increasingly fragmented culture.

However, McWhirter and Mattison (1984) identified a six-stage developmental model (applied to the gay male couple) which carries some useful implications for long term change in a variety of intimate relationships. Based on the number of years of survival of the partnership, stages are typified by characteristics or processes through which the couple blends, nests, maintains, builds, releases and renews their relationship. (See Table 4: 1). Progression is not linear. The argument is that partners may progress at different speeds, sometimes leading gay male couples to seek therapy in the belief that their relationship is breaking down. The researchers find it a useful reframe of the problem to highlight the stage discrepancy between the couple. For example, a lover at stage one - in the full excitement of limerence (passion, being in love), may be in despair about his partner who is going through the stage three experience of reclaiming his individuality.

Alternatively, some individuals may regress to a previous stage, or find themselves dealing with issues from more than one stage at a time. However, the overall task is to maintain an equilibrium between independence and commitment. It is interesting to note that as a couple development model, the theme of individual experience weaves in and out of the relational reality.

Stages of Gay Male Relationships

Stages:	One	Blending	Year 1
	• <i>Characteristics</i>		
	• Merging		
	• Limerence		
	• Equalising of partnership		
	• High sexual activity		
	Two	Nesting	Years 2 - 3
	• <i>Characteristics</i>		
	• Homemaking		
	• Finding compatibility		
	• Decline of limerence		
	• Ambivalence		
	Three	Maintaining	Years 4 - 5
	• <i>Characteristics</i>		
	• Reappearance of the individual		
	• Risk taking		
	• Dealing with conflict		
	• Establishing traditions		
	Four	Building	Years 6 - 10
	• <i>Characteristics</i>		
	• Collaborating		
	• Increasing productivity		
	• Establishing independence		
	• Dependability of partners		
	Five	Releasing	Years 11 - 20
	• <i>Characteristics</i>		
	• Trusting		
	• Merging of money and possessions		
	• Constricting		
	• Taking each other for granted		
	Six	Renewing	Beyond 20 years
	• <i>Characteristics</i>		
	• Achieving security		
	• Shifting perspectives		
	• Restoring the partnership		
	• Remembering		

Table 4: 1 Adapted from Mattison and McWhirter, (1987)

Several researchers have attempted to gather evidence to support or refute the model. Deenen (1988, 1991) - a critic - found that contrary to the outline of stage 5, there is a high degree of intimacy between male homosexual couples whatever the length of the relationship.

Furthermore, his findings demonstrated that relationship satisfaction, emotional intimacy, and sexual experiences were influenced by factors such as age of respondent, length of

relationship, and the couple's living arrangements. Therefore, although partially supporting the theory, his evidence did not support the stage model (Deenen, 1991).

In contrast, Kurdek (1989, 1995) found evidence for the growth of trust, and merging of money and possessions (stage 5), and for the processes of stages 1 to 3 - evident not only in gay male couples, but also in lesbian and heterosexual partnerships. Furthermore, Kurdek discovered a time effect in that relationship satisfaction and love for partner decreased by the end of the first year for couples who terminated their relationship at that stage. He suggested that because males are not socialised to be relationship-orientated, but to be assertive and 'agentic', gay men are less able to deal with the inevitable decrease in limerence, and the attendant increase in conflict - inevitable in the first year of a relationship. Such changes require the skills of negotiation and compromise to be successfully survived.

Both Deenan and Kurdek took an empirical approach, but the model has the advantage of a qualitative assessment of the life cycle. It allows for flexibility of interpretation and avoids being tied to specific concrete events. As may be expected of a model of gay relationships, it says little about the wider familial and social context of change. However, as a conceptual model of the couple relationship it enables a generative exploration of change events. For example, 'merging' (stage 1) allows for a wide interpretation of relationship beginnings.

Clunis and Green (1988) developed a model based on the McWhirter and Mattison (1984) version. Founded on a study of lesbian relationships, the researchers identified development as beginning with a pre-relationship stage - a time when the partners explore relationship possibilities. Stage 2 - the romance stage - involves merging and fusion, and possibly emotional intensity. This is followed by a conflict stage - when couples face partner realities. The acceptance stage is calmer - a period marked by understanding and negotiation of conflict. A decision to remain together, leads to the commitment stage where basic trust is developed. The collaboration stage follows. At this point the couple decide on a joint venture, such as a baby, or a shared business undertaking. This has an impact outside the relationship, and creates an increased sense of relationship quality.

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Clunis and Green, like McWhirter and Mattison, developed the model as a conceptual rather than a concrete one, from their work as therapists. The pre-relationship and collaboration stages appear to be distinctive of lesbian relationships, and reflect gender differences in approach - males initially being sexually attracted, females consulting emotional and practical issues. As yet, no independent research has investigated the Clunis and Green model.

4:5 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has examined empirical studies of change in families, and the life cycle models developed from clinical observations. Heterosexual studies identify the differing effects of family transitions, while life cycle models propose a longitudinal approach to family structure. Some contributors, such as Hines (1989) and Rolland (1989) suggest 'untypical' influences in family change - poverty, or chronic illness - seen in the context of the normative FLC. However, although there is an awareness that family structures are changing, FLC models maintain a normative stance, and as argued above, adopt an external, proscribed approach to family development. Children are expected to be a central feature of the life cycle, and the family, rather than the couple, provide the focus.

Given that much of heterosexual research presumes a normative approach, the data obtained tends towards normative assumptions about relationships. Studies reflect prevailing cultural values, and underestimate the role of jointly constructed understandings of change.

However, in making comparisons with a homosexual group for whom normative assumptions are limited, and who are required to plot their own relationship course, it may be possible to observe how the potential for uncharted change is managed; how couples handle the absence of cultural expectations, and how new norms are developed.

Homosexual life cycle models take a less prescriptive approach. They focus on the affective dynamics of the couple relationship. There are fewer identifiable concrete stages, and the

role of children is less pivotal. Furthermore, the context of the homosexual relationship is different to that for heterosexuals. Social expectations, social disapproval, and lack of social structures are features which create special challenges for the homosexual couple.

In looking at transitions in couple's lives it has been possible to identify the attributions, beliefs and meanings partners use to interpret their experience. The role of these factors in creating relationship quality and satisfaction has also been discussed. The influence of gender expectations has been proposed, since these considerations have the ability to affect possibilities for change. Similarities, as well as differences have been identified between homosexual and heterosexual couples.

Apart from FLC models - which are based on clinical observations, most of the studies discussed have taken an empirical approach. Some researchers have used multi-choice questions, (for example, Anderson, 1990; and Engel & Saracino, 1986). Others have listened to accounts reconstructing couple's past experiences, (for example, Hagestad and Smyer, 1982; Surra & Huston, 1987; and Steinman, 1991). The choice of methodology has determined the data obtained - measures of satisfaction, attributions and cognitive patterns. Accounts have focused on respondent's interpretations rather than on the *process* of meaning making.

Nevertheless, some researchers *have* attempted to look at process. For example, Higgins, Loeb, and Ruble (1995), and Karney and Bradbury (1995). However, their methodology produced useful data on components of change, but little about participant's perceptions of the process.

There are two points relevant to developing an understanding of change. Firstly, Kurdek (1995) has argued that change is at the heart of all relationship processes. He states that to look for consistencies is inappropriate. He suggests that the role of chance events causing 'relationship chaos' are central to an understanding of change in relationships. As Hermans and Hermans-Jansen (1995) put it, life events which fall within the range of cultural

expectations are 'on schedule'; surprise events are not - and therefore create different meanings. Secondly, Mattison and McWhirter (1987) suggest that every stage in a relationship is a process, not an event. A life cycle model of a relationship therefore can only be a map which charts changes of direction in the journey. Stages are typified by characteristics which help us to understand the stresses and tasks couples face.

The implications are that change is a process in which cultural expectations play a major role. This suggests inadequacies in some previous studies, and provides focus for this one. Firstly, FLC studies say very little about choice, or its basis in construing. As Duck (1994) argues, being subject to constant variation, relationships involve the need to make choices. Researchers using life cycle approaches adopt ways of segmenting experience, implying that relationships are stable and manageable. Duck advocates that a constructivist approach achieves a more accurate picture of relationship change, because it allows for perpetual change, and acknowledges that couple's responses stem from alternative possibilities for action.

Secondly, in examining how couples construct experiences of change it is essential to acknowledge the role of *talk* as central. The internal reality of a relationship derives from a dyadic transaction in which a comment by one partner is given social meaning by the response of the other (Duck, 1994, p. 131). The meaning conveyed may uncover an existing reality, or serve to create a new one between partners. However, creation of meaning is inherent in the control of change, and referents (chunking of time, using metaphors, invoking normative assumptions) make sense of experience, and create shared understandings between partners.

There is a need therefore, to consider where constructs, and the beliefs which support them, come from. The discourses and assumptions embedded in talk are derived from the culture which forms the context for the relationship. The homosexual studies illustrate this point. For this reason, a *social constructionist* approach is needed because it allows for personal choices within a socially/culturally constructed repertoire. As Boscolo and Bertrando (1996)

argue, social constructionism is *about* relationships - the relationships involved in the sharing and social genesis of knowledge.

Furthermore, people vary in the ways in which they construct meaning. Research has shown that the ability to develop meaning in conversation and recall is a learned skill. (Eisenberg, 1985; Edwards & Middleton, 1988). This would suggest that some people come to be better meaning makers than others, depending on the ability of the adults who were the original teachers.

The social constructionist approach depends on exploring language and discourse employed in people's accounts - whether retrospective or longitudinal designs are employed. It therefore has an orientation towards process research. Cain (1991) for example, investigated a social constructionist view of how notions of identity develop. He interviewed gay males about the decision whether or not to disclose to others their sexual orientation, and discovered that not only were disclosure behaviours inconsistent across various relationship experiences, but that contrary to the findings of less insightful studies, self disclosure of gay identity was not related to positive self acceptance but to the social context in which the disclosure takes place. In focusing on the *social* nature of identity formation, the role of information management in the production of change was identified.

In setting out the guiding propositions, chapter 5 provides the link between the theoretical material and the findings of the study. The important themes of the foregoing arguments are organised into specific areas of investigation.

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CHAPTER 5:

GUIDING PROPOSITIONS

5:1 Introduction

There are five main themes which emerge from the discussion so far. Each contributes to the background against which the guiding propositions are set.

- An assumption that there is no one way of looking at human behaviour underpins the argument. Psychological theories are diverse, reflecting the heterogeneity of the subject matter.
- Each approach contributes a different insight - its value depending on the particular aspect of human behaviour under discussion. Approaches however, are not necessarily mutually exclusive.
- Some understandings are more appropriate than others in explaining how people deal with change.
- A practical way of investigating people's approach to change is to look at lifecycle changes in relationships because:
 - this enables a focus on a range of transitional events.
 - it offers the possibility of seeing change as a negotiated process.
 - change can be studied in terms of context - not only of the relationship, but also the social context of family and culture.
- Sampling both heterosexual and homosexual couples exposes where different processes may be at work. Different norms operate for each group, and these are expected to influence the ways in which co-constructed meanings, and attempted solutions are formulated.

Two core propositional areas are therefore established. One covers the subject of change and encompasses ideas around the nature of first and second order change. The other deals with homosexual and heterosexual couple differences.

5:2 Propositions: Group 1: Couples and Change

- That couples will have beliefs about decisions that need to be made when they are confronted with significant changes.
- That couple's accounts will show evidence of higher order beliefs about change - for example, that it is 'difficult'; 'painful'; 'needs to be managed' etc.; and that these discourses play an important part in how transitions are successfully managed.
- That couples will vary in the extent to which their explanations take account of different levels of shared cultural discourses.
- That couple's choices regarding significant times in their lives will also be in line with their unique perceptions of the relationship rather than according to the normative assumptions of formal life cycle models.

5:3 Propositions:

Group 2: Homosexual and Heterosexual Couples

- That there will be evidence of gender discourses which will be concerned with issues of equality; power; responsibility for, and nature of, the relationship. Some differences will be observed - for example - ideas about gender roles and expectations may be more challenged by homosexual couples.

- That there will be a more ongoing negotiation of roles, discourses, and meanings in homosexual partnerships than in heterosexual.
- That homosexual couples will mention different social structures, support networks and contexts for their relationship than heterosexual couples.
- That normative life cycle events will be less clearly defined for homosexual couples than for heterosexual.

PART TWO:
METHODOLOGY

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CHAPTER 6:

PROCEDURES

6:1 Introduction

Firstly, the chapter briefly outlines the qualitative methodology used in the research, and discusses the implications of its use. Subsequently, the design of the study is detailed, and ethical questions arising from the research are debated. Finally, methods are described in terms of data collection, analysis, and validation procedures.

6:2 A Summary of Methods

The assumptions and aims of the research dictated a qualitative methodology. Data was obtained from semi-structured interviews conducted with a total of twenty six co-habiting couples. The interviews were *conjoint* - i.e. involving the interviewer and *two* respondents in a conversation about significant happenings in the couple life story. The task of the couple was to jointly construct the narrative of their relationship, using a graphing technique as the basis for their story. The interviewer's function was to respond in ways intended to enable couples to feel heard, and to move the interview forward ensuring that material relevant to the research aims was addressed.

This methodology was chosen in order to discover how couples co-construct a recollection of events, and how they jointly engage in change, and/or give it meaning. As suggested in chapter 4, studies of change deal with individual experience (e.g. Adelman, 1991), or family and couple change (e.g. Hagestad and Smyer, 1982), using observation, surveys and structured interviews, but few deal (as do Oppenheim *et al.* (1996), with transition as a shared perception, or as an opportunity to construct shared meanings.

For this reason, the study was *exploratory* - looking to define a set of concepts with which to describe the co-construction process, and to discover and understand the terms used by couples themselves in their portrayal of change. The theories discussed throughout the thesis formed the backdrop to the findings. From looking at the ideas and methods of other researchers, the study aimed to consider their theoretical models, rather than build a hypothetico-deductive model of its own.

Two approaches were taken to the data obtained. One, a thematic analysis of each interview script; the other, a case study approach. The former approach was adopted in order to gain insights into the issues seen as important across the sample. The resulting theme analysis allowed access to the general patterning of lay explanations of change, and to the interpretations applied to such explanations at a 'micro' level. In contrast, case studies provided a rich, detailed account, and as Yin (1989) suggested, a more holistic perspective on the data. This enabled identification of the idiosyncratic contexts and dynamics of particular couples, and aimed to listen to *how* co-construction occurred. Case study data contributed ecological validity and relevance to the thematic material.

6:3 The Implications of Choosing Qualitative Methodology

Practical and Epistemological Issues

Advantages of the Methodology

The advantages of choosing qualitative methodology are threefold. Firstly, the use of a hermeneutic method of analysis and interpretation ensures that the data speak for themselves. Analysis can be propositional, and interpretations flexible and open to amendment. These are qualities valuable to an exploratory study. Furthermore, as the

literature maintains, (see for example, Bryman, 1984; Berg & Smith, 1988; and Strauss & Corbin, 1990), the data obtained is rich in content, and provides a 'thick description'.

Qualitative methodology also has the advantage of giving access (as Silverman, (1993) argued), to common sense assumptions about what constitutes the field of enquiry, and 'makes problematic' common sense reasoning. This opens up not only the ongoing dialectic (discussed in chapter 2) between 'folk psychology' (Bruner, 1990), and the formal theories of 'psychologists as experts', but also the socially held theories through which cultural expectations and stereotypes are conveyed and re-conveyed in talk. Given these considerations, the research is characteristic of *ethnomethodology*, (according to Potter & Wetherell (1987), 'ordinary people's methods') but is chosen on the grounds that an 'inside perspective' may be gained without the total immersion in participant's lives and social context, usually required of an ethnographic approach.

Thirdly, the choice of qualitative methods is based upon the assumption that all knowledge is developed in the context of a relationship, meaning that research relationships become the medium through which social systems can be understood. (Berg and Smith, 1988). From this it follows that the research interview - as an interpersonal event, is an ideal vehicle for gaining knowledge about participant's life themes and nuances of meaning, whilst also allowing a reflexive stance as the interview schedule and data analysis progresses.

Disadvantages of the Methodology

The disadvantages of using qualitative methods centre around attempts to establish validity and reliability. Firstly, given the exploratory nature of the research, and the use of case study material, a tight pre-structuring of design is not possible, as Robson (1995) argues. Therefore the conceptual framework, the research questions, and the sampling strategy all need to be re-assessed as the study continues.

Secondly, the debate suggesting that a positivist research approach is preferable has led some researchers to collect quantitative data to validate their qualitative findings, sometimes leading to problems in reconciling the two. (See Bryman, 1984; and Trend, 1978). Instead, this study adopted a means of providing alternative, qualitative perspectives on the data. The aims of data collection and analysis were to gain insight and understanding rather than to build theory; to be rigorous in use of analytical procedures; to be aware of researcher-based assumptions, and to produce data gained through a triangulation of methods in order to establish convergent validation (Jick, 1979). Triangulation, in surveying, is a method of finding out where something is by getting a 'fix' on it from two or more places (Robson, 1995). This is analogous with the practice of using several sources, or methods of data collection in order to improve confidence in the findings. In line with these aims, a composite of methods was used, with the following practical considerations in mind:

- That a combination of distinct methodologies could be expected to yield *comparable data* and therefore serve to increase confidence in the results of the analysis. (Methods are discussed later in the chapter)
- That in order to understand the ways in which beliefs about change are co-constructed, data collection and analysis should attempt to tap into the *multiple layers of meaning* in the data.
- Based upon the assumption that each text in its entirety is about change, the analysis should produce data concerned with *process* - answering questions relating to *how* narratives of change are co-constructed between couples.
- That analysis should reveal the *function* of couple's talk in order to provide an understanding of the strategic aspects of narratives.

Thirdly, a 'researcher effect' may be more marked in a qualitative study. As Potter and Wetherell (1987) argue, interpretation and description of data depends very much upon the idiosyncratic standpoint of the investigator. However, an awareness of interviewer

assumptions, and a critical appraisal of the interview relationship and methods of analysis, can ensure the production of relevant and useful conclusions.

Accordingly, a presumption of this study is that the researcher is inevitably part of the construction process during the interview, and cannot avoid being part of the communication interchange. This factor may draw criticism from a positivist perspective, but as Rudestam and Newton (1992) suggest, even in studies in physics it has been noticed that the process of observation inevitably alters that which is being observed, 'one cannot separate the investigator from the object of inquiry.' (p. 31). There are various levels at which the researcher as 'person' impinges on the inter-personal context. In terms of the research relationship, emotional or even transference dynamics were sometimes evident - particularly in the case of clinical couples. It was apparent that in every interview the researcher adopted, or was 'compelled to adopt' a different persona - dependent upon the couple being interviewed, their expectations and demeanour, as well as personal feelings about *them*.

It was important to consider my personal context and underlying assumptions. Brought up in a deeply religious household, the belief that marriage was for life, and that divorce and separation were not viable options, was accepted. Choices therefore, were seen as limited to the varying ways in which problems could be resolved within the relationship. Although such beliefs have been considerably modified over my lifetime, certain residues are left. For example, assumptions and expectations concerning age and gender may be influenced by a set of beliefs and traditions no longer part of popular - if not institutional - culture. Beliefs in so-called values of respect, traditional gender roles etc. - while not part of my current expectations still produce instinctive echoes which may have inadvertently influenced responses to participants or data. This was evident in my unease about homosexuality - based upon an uncertainty around how to *be* with homosexual couples. An approach had to be developed to deal with feelings of strangeness. There were anxieties about entering what felt like a new cultural group, and worries about how to deal with a sense of difference within the interview. Such anxieties can be argued to reflect the value of cultural discourses, norms and expectations, in ensuring predictability in social exchanges.

Finally, my experience as a counsellor in facilitating change has acted as a lens through which to analyse the data. Experiences - particularly with clients who appear to be stuck, unable to extricate themselves from problematic situations - have influenced the approach taken during interviews, and the questions asked of the data. Counselling practices used in the course of therapy can be adapted for research purposes. For example, looking for patterns, exploring the past, and applying observations to psychological theories: The adoption of the 'internal supervisor' stance enabling the counsellor to reflect on her practice, is a professional 'habit' that can be transferred to the research interview. Furthermore, the case study approach applied to the overall assessment of therapy, enables a holistic appraisal of outcomes - a useful treatment of research data.

6:4 Design

The design of the investigation has been based around two factors: The specific procedures of data collection and analysis, and the overall structure of the research programme.

The central design feature was the conjoint interview. Although individuals frequently describe couple events, it was felt that an individual's story would not provide data relevant to the joint construction of meaning. Joint interviews offer the opportunity to examine experience as a social phenomenon - to observe how cultural discourses are exchanged between people, and how partners adopt and 'play out' roles in change events. Furthermore, the narrative developed in the joint interview is an amalgam of three perspectives, both couple and interviewer contributing to its construction. Recollections are tested and modified in the telling, and are richer in configuration. Finally, the conjoint interview offers the opportunity to observe and engage in the emotional dynamics between couples and explore the influence such dynamics have upon the construction of experience.

The research also made use of a comparative group design. This model arose as a form of theoretical sampling, as the need to explore wider perceptions of change developed. Having couples drawn from different groups - heterosexual, and homosexual - allowed some evidence to be explored in terms of, for example, prevalence of socially constructed signposts of change, gender discourses etc. The homosexual group was further sub-divided into lesbian and gay males. Similarly, a number of client couples formed part of the heterosexual group. This enabled an 'action research' perspective where the research process was itself involved in furthering change. Action research entails a collaboration between the researcher and the researched, and applies the results of data collection, analysis and interpretation in active promotion of change. It was expected that clinical couples would present a deeper insight into transitional events not found in the normal course of interviewing - due to the additional amount of time involved in therapy.

The design was also longitudinal in that a small proportion of couples were contacted after the analysis stage in order to provide a check on validity, and to gain an understanding of the effect of the passage of time on the couple's relationship - since the first interview. The second contact was also designed to check whether understandings presented at the first interview had changed over time, and if so, how - and for what reason. The study was therefore collaborative on two counts - with respect to the co-constructed material of the interview, and in terms of this second approach to respondents.

Analysis of data involved a continuous dialectical process between variations on two methodological approaches - 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' - leading to a gradual distillation of the meaning contained within each interview. Use of these procedures conformed to Kvale's (1983) notion of the *hermeneutical circle* of meaning construction, and were chosen in order to gain a rich and diverse understanding of the material.

- Firstly, an examination of broad themes and dominant discourses contained in each interview - a 'top-down' analysis, was followed by a 'bottom-up', line-by-line

investigation of the text. The 'bottom-up' approach was based on my own interpretation of Grounded Theory analysis.

- A return to 'top-down' methods then looked at the functions performed by the narratives, exploring the *indexicality* of accounts (their meaning in relation to the context). This was followed by the creation of a series of integrative models - each producing a 'top-down', script specific summary of the main elements of the analysis so far.
- Finally, a 'bottom-up' analysis of features of interactional style was carried out.

Whilst the initial top-down analysis identified the major events and relationship issues in each couple's narrative, the bottom-up approach revealed how these themes were defined, constructed, and used. The second-wave top-down approach examined the discourses and conversational tactics used in narrative construction, whilst the final bottom-up procedure aimed to examine the dynamics of co-construction. The recursive use of the different approaches provided disparate perspectives on the material.

The procedures outlined are examined in greater detail later in the chapter.

6:5 Ethical Issues

Prior consideration was given to ethical matters surrounding the research, and in an attempt to comply with the recommendations of the British Psychological Society, and to achieve a satisfactory personal standard of practice, the following steps were taken at each stage of the process:

The Interview

- Given that one would be unaware beforehand of painful events present in the couple's story it was judged vital to obtain fully informed consent from couples

taking part in the research. This involved being clear about the expectations of the interview, and the fact that material from the session was for the purposes of research and publication. The commitment to confidentiality was discussed in advance with the couple, along with how, given the aims of the research, this would be maintained.

- A contract was established in which participants were informed of their right to terminate the interview at *any* time should they so wish.
- It was stressed that payment of a fee was to compensate the participants for loss of time rather than for interview content - in order to remove, as far as possible, the pressure to 'perform' as an exchange function.
- The issue of change was discussed - in the context that the interview itself may prompt change in all participants. It was seen as important to address this issue with couples.
- It was a general policy of the research to monitor the effects of questions and general discussion. In circumstances where upset could not be avoided, painful issues were acknowledged, and interviewees encouraged to pace proceedings until the moment had passed.
- An attempt was made to be mindful of countertransference feelings - unease, emotional warmth etc. Care was taken not to reveal this aspect to the respondents, but to acknowledge it to myself, and be aware of it in theorising.
- At the end of each interview, after the tape recorder was switched off, space was given to enable participants to talk about the session. Where painful issues had emerged, time was given to talk these through.

Analysis

- Strenuous efforts were made at all times to treat participant's contributions with respect.

- Any parties external to the study who were involved, for example in transcribing tapes, were asked to agree in advance to maintain confidentiality with respect to both the material transcribed and the participants involved.

Reporting

- All reasonable precautions have been taken in order to ensure the anonymity of participants.

6:6 Methods

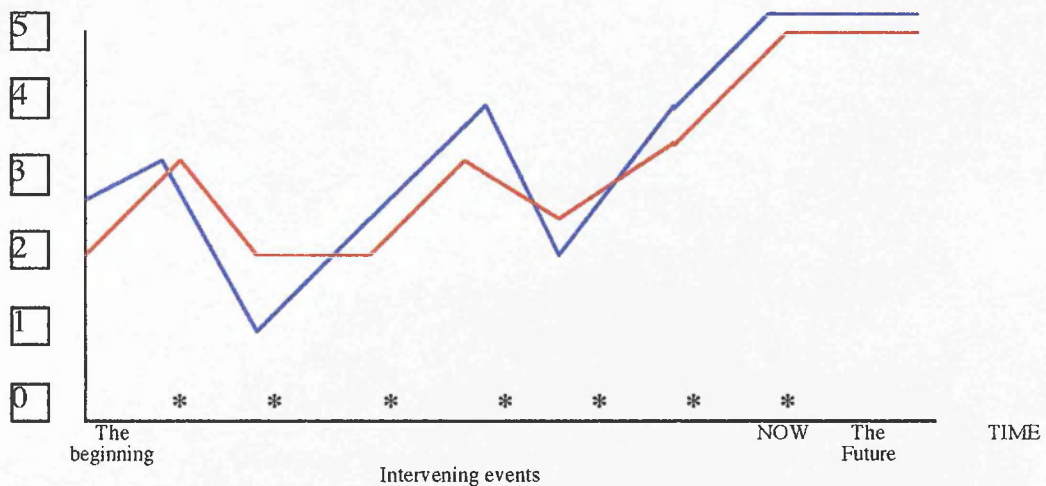
The basic unit of the research was the semi-structured interview, aimed to encourage couples to talk about significant events marking their lives together since their first meeting. The interview was innovative in that it was based around the presentation of an empty graph upon which respondents were asked to write the events of the relationship, plus a measure of their perceived closeness. Initial instructions set out the task to be completed, then a set of six questions were introduced at key points during the interview. These were sometimes modified, and not always introduced in the same order, depending upon the idiosyncratic nature of each interview. As the basic technique developed, interviews became more typical of reciprocal conversations in which additional questions, probes, reflective, and reactive responses passed between interviewer and respondents. Spoken instructions for completing the closeness measure were prepared in advance. (Questions and instructions are at Appendix 1).

This final interview form developed from a series of trials. The first model - piloted with two couples, depended solely on a series of questions and prompts, a traditional semi-structured approach, but it was felt that the interview schedule failed to respond to disparate couple stories. This led to the adoption of a strategy designed to add structure and flexibility to the process. Two couples were presented with a set of paper circles introduced as

'stepping stones' (a practice used by Relate counsellors to outline processes of relationship development with clients). Each significant event was marked on a separate 'stone'. The strategy produced a more organised structure, but after examining other research methods the schedule was further refined to enable couples to chart significant events on a graph. (as Surra & Huston, 1987). This provided a structure enabling some uniformity of method across the sample, but allowed for flexibility, and a measure of perceived effect of significant transitions in terms of closeness. (See figure 6:1)

Figure 6:1 Example of a couple life event graph. Life events are charted along the X axis, and the perceived measure of closeness is on the Y axis.

Measure of each partner's
sense of closeness



Closeness was the variable used as a measure of relationship effect during periods of change. The choice was quite arbitrary, and may be criticised as likely to be less crucial to some couples than others. It was also an element imposed upon the process, leaving couples less able to propose their own idiosyncratic measurement. However, the concept was chosen for three reasons. Firstly, on the grounds that 'closeness' is popularly cited as a desirable relationship quality, secondly, that it formed a constant means of evaluation across the , and thirdly, that closeness is implicated in attachment dynamics and change - according to the theories discussed in chapter 3.

Although key questions were initially used as the basis for the interview, much of the original style depended upon the use of 'reflecting' techniques - as used in a counselling session. However, it became clear that this approach was time-consuming and unproductive. Consequently, a more conversational approach was adopted. Thus, the key questions and graphed storyline provided a structure which would permit some standardisation between interviews, *and* allow interviewer input to be both spontaneous, and directive.

This meant that the character of the research interview differed from that of a clinical session in three ways:

- Clinical sessions are usually based upon the client's agenda, whereas the research interview was designed to fulfil the researcher's aims.
- The researcher's role in the interview was different. The clinical role is to facilitate exploration and change using formal counselling strategies. In contrast, the interviewer role was not to consciously *produce* change, but to observe it as a re-constructed phenomenon, and to some extent, to be involved in the process of re-construction. The different motivations therefore were likely to result in the discovery of different aspects of change. In the clinical interview, exploring dysfunctional or problem-centred behaviour, and in the research interview, seeing change more in terms of development.
- The balance of power in the research interview was likely to be different to that in a clinical session. Despite attempts to create an egalitarian arrangement in both types of interview, underlying factors are likely to produce inequalities according to the balance of need. In the research interview, I needed respondents to provide me with information, with the likely effect that the balance of power was accorded to the respondents. In a clinical interview, the process is liable to be reversed. However, the issue is not clear-cut, in that both kinds of interview constrain all participants to please or impress, and may involve the dynamics of power in giving or withholding of material.

6:7 Sampling

The possibility of obtaining a representative sample was very limited. However, to see sample representativeness as important misunderstands the rationale of a qualitative methodology, and adds little to the knowledge obtained. In grounded theory, *theoretical* sampling is considered to be more important than the characteristics of the sample population. That is, that as data is collected, the gaps in understanding are identified, and subsequent participants are interviewed on the basis of the need to fill conceptual deficiencies until sufficient theoretical saturation is reached. Couples were chosen for the study therefore on the grounds that they generated data which would provide a thick description of change events. Nevertheless, an outline of each participant's characteristics is important.

The sample, comprising four groups, was very small. Only eight homosexual couples - four lesbian, and four gay - were interviewed. Of the seventeen heterosexual pairs, five were client, and twelve, non-client couples. The thirteenth heterosexual couple (a pilot interview conducted with family members), was removed from the study early in the process.

Homosexual and client partners were therefore not represented equally. Couples were not matched between groups for characteristics. Attempts were made to interview couples of different ages, socio-economic status, and experience of childrearing. However, these factors were not representative of the population from which they were drawn. Apart from being appropriate to the designated groups and theoretical needs, the only essential criterion for selection was that couples had lived together for at least two years. Table 6:1 provides a detailed summary of respondent factors seen as important to the study.

Group	Names	Age of Partner	Years living tog.	Married	HAC considered	Children	Age-range of Children	Occupation of Partners	Education - past, present, future	Home - ownership status
Lesbian										
Code B	Jane & Catherine	31 35	7			None		Prof	HE	OO
L	Barbara & Mo	32 35	4		✓	2 lwc/ 1 lwfp	7 - 11	Prof Hom	HE	PRA
M	Maureen & Lyn	43 44	5			None		Prof Techn	HE	OO
R	Gina & Yvonne	52 35	6		✓	2 indep	20 - 30	Prof/Mean Prof/Stud	HE	OO
Gay										
Code J	Duncan & Chris	35 33	7		✓	2 lwfp	8 - 13	Man Techn	FE	Tied
K	Ivor & Andy	29 24	6		✓	None		Man Techn	FE	Shared OO
V	Peter & Chas	55 52	32			None		Eng Cat	FE	OO
Z	Jeremy & Matt	37 35	3			None		Prof SE dec	FE	OO
Hetero										
Non-client										
Code A	Bill & Jude	45 47	24	✓		2 indep/ 1 lwc	21 - 24	UE Hom	FE ST	OO
C	Liz & Anthony	68 67	46	✓		4 indep	Adults	Ret Prof	HE	OO
G	Kate & Steve	25 26	7			None		Prof UE	FE	OO
N	Jill & Ian	53 54	5			2 each lwfp	12 - 21	Prof Prof	HE	OO
O	Mandy & Adrian	25 26	6			None		Man Man	HE	OO
P	Julie & Philip	39 34	6	✓		2 + 1 expected	under 5	Hom Techn	FE HE	OO
S	Janet & David	42 54	26	✓		2 lwc	14 - 18	Hom/PT Man	ST HE	Tied
T	Jim & Jess	30 22	4	✓		2 + 1 expected	3 - 6	Manul Hom	ST	SH
U	Shaun & Tina	48 31	6	✓		1 lwp/ 2 lwc	16 & under 5	UE Hom	ST	SH
W	Angie & Mike	24 25	6	✓		3 lwc	2 - 6	Hom/PT gard	ST	Tied
X	Linda & Tom	34 37	15	✓		3 lwc	6 - 10	Hom Manul	ST	SH
Y	Carol & Malcolm	30 38	5	✓		3 lwc (2 ffp)	8 mths - 10	Hom SE builder	ST	OO
Client										
Code E	Brian & Jean	37 34	7	✓		2 lwc	under 5	Man Hom/PT	FE HE	OO
F	Di & Rob	23 25	4			2 lwc (1 ffp)	18 mths - 5	Hom/PT UE	ST	PRA
H	Tricia & James	28 29	5	✓		None		Stud Man	HE	OO
Q	Paul & Kerry	42 39	7			2 (ffp) 1 (ffp) all lwfops	12 - 19	Man Man	FE	OO
D	Alan & Sheila	50 48	27	✓		3 lwc	14 - 24	Techn Prof	FE HE	OO

Table 6:1 Characteristics of each respondent couple

Key To Abbreviations - Table 6:1:

Heading:	HAC	Humanistic Affirmation Ceremony (The Lesbian and Gay Commitment Ritual)
Group column:	Codes	Script/Interview codes
Children:	lwc lwfp indep ffp	Living with couple Living with former partner Living independently from former partner
Occupation:	Prof Hom Techn Man Stud Eng Cat SE dec Ret UE ptw gard Manuf PT	Professional employment Homemaker Employed in technology - e.g. computing Managerial Student Engineering Catering Self employed Decorator Retired Unemployed Part-time work Gardener Manufacturing / Manual work Part-time
Education:	HE FE ST	Higher education Further education No formal education after leaving secondary school
Home ownership status:	OO PRA Tied SH	Owner occupier Private rented accommodation Tied cottage/house Social housing

Notable imbalances were seen on several counts:

- 72% of the couples had been living together between 4 and 7 years at the time the interview. Relationships of shorter, or longer duration were seriously under-represented.
- Of the heterosexual couples, 70.6% were married, resulting in less than one third of this group being co-habitees. Although all of the homosexual group were co-habitees, 50% were actively considering a commitment ceremony. Whilst at present this has no legal power, it signals willingness to enter a public declaration of trust.

- Of the homosexual group, only one lesbian couple had children living with them. The same couple were contemplating having a child by donor - born to the partner who so far had no children of her own. Only one of the gay couples had experience of children born to a partner during a previous heterosexual marriage. Childless couples were under-represented in the heterosexual group - only 17.6% (3 couples) were included.
- Differences in educational achievement were evident across the sample. All lesbian partners had either experienced, or were in the process of higher education. 33% of the heterosexual non-client group had been involved in higher education, and 40% of the client group. None of the gay partners had experience of higher education, but all had undergone further education after leaving school. 40% of the client group, and 16.6% of the remaining heterosexual group had been involved in further education, but respectively, 20% and 50% of these groups ceased formal education on leaving secondary school.
- 68% of the total sample owned their own homes, with the remainder living in private rented accommodation, social housing, or tied dwellings. Home ownership status was not necessarily a measure of financial security or employment status. One affluent couple lived in a tied cottage, whilst another couple, having no income other than social security, owned their own home.
- The lesbian group had the highest percentage of professional and managerial workers at 70%. This occupational group were represented amongst gays at 37.5%, in the heterosexual non-client couples at 33%, and amongst clients at 50%.
- One of eight lesbian partners was a full-time homemaker. No gay, or client partners fulfilled this role, but 25% of heterosexual non client cohorts did so. 8% of the latter group, and 20% of the client group were part time homemakers, also working part time outside the home. No male respondents classed themselves as homemakers - whether part- or full-time.

None of the gay couples had a partner who was unemployed, but 12.5% of lesbian partners had chosen unemployment. Of the heterosexual groups, 8% of the non-client, and 10% of the client partners were without paid employment. In each case, heterosexual respondents classed as unemployed, were male.

- The remaining occupations for partners in lesbian, gay, heterosexual non-client, and heterosexual client relationships were represented for each group respectively as follows:
 - Technology - 12.5%; 25%; 8%; 10%
 - Self employed - none; 12.5%; 4.1%; none
 - Engineering - one gay partner
 - Catering - one gay partner
 - Gardener - one heterosexual partner. (Non-client)
 - Manual worker - two heterosexual partners. (Non-client)

6:8 Procedure

All of the couples described above were obtained as a result of opportunity sampling. The majority through the snowball technique. Heterosexual couples were recruited through friends of the researcher, and some were obtained through the recommendation of a social worker, on the grounds that they were experiencing considerable practical difficulties. Client couples were recruited from Relate and Primary Health Care clients. It proved to be much more difficult to recruit gay and lesbian couples for the research. Advertisements were placed with a local Gay organisation, and with the Pink Paper - a homosexual publication, but neither produced any responses. The first couple was introduced by a friend, after which, subsequent couples were recruited from the couple being interviewed.

Apart from client couples who were recruited in a face-to-face encounter, the remainder were contacted by telephone. The source of each introduction had already warned the couple that a researcher would be contacting them with a view to tape-recording an interview with them. I requested that no other information was given to prospective couples until my own telephone call, when I explained: 'I am interested in talking to couples about their

relationship - how they met, the things that have happened to them while they have been together, the way they feel about the relationship. That kind of thing. This isn't a way of judging relationships. I'm just interested in your shared experiences. The only necessity is that couples involved have lived together for at least two years, that they are willing to be part of the research, and feel comfortable with having the interview tape-recorded.'

My interest in change was not mentioned, in order to avoid self-conscious accounts in which respondents would either work hard to provide what they assumed I might want, or would tend to self-reflect in an evaluative way, leading to an avoidance of talking about change experiences which couples saw as being less successfully survived.

Apart from two couples who were interviewed in the researcher's home, all other couples were seen in their own homes - or in the case of clinical couples, in the doctor's surgery. Each non-clinical interview lasted between one and one and a half hours, and participants were offered £20 for taking part - on the understanding that this was an attempt to compensate them for the time they were committing to the process. Four couples refused payment, with the explanation that they were delighted to have an interest taken in their relationship.

Clinical couples were approached differently. Additional issues were relevant to these couples. It was evident that clinical couples were finding some aspects of change difficult to achieve, therefore providing a useful source of theoretical sampling. However, as with the rest of the sample, there could be no control over the nature of problems, or relationship factors. Furthermore, couple life-cycle exploration could be beneficial to the therapy, but could not be introduced unless clients were aware of the fact that the research procedure followed *my* agenda as well as their own. This was a necessary ethical consideration.

Consequently, I approached a number of clients early in their counselling, explaining that I was researching the life-cycle of couples. It was suggested that their stories were not only interesting, but that our work may benefit from the 'closer look' such an approach would

bring. I explained that it would involve writing life events on paper, and tape-recording the research session. The couple were asked whether they felt comfortable to be involved in the procedure, and whether they would therefore agree or decline the opportunity to take part.

Some couples decided against, either immediately or after some thought. Five couples agreed. Three of the couples asked for subsequent sessions to be tape-recorded on the grounds that the procedure gave added 'weight' to the therapy.

Each interview was tape-recorded using a Marantz CP430 recorder with two microphones - one placed in the proximity of the couple, the other, near the researcher. Completing the graph was a collaborative task. Couples worked jointly, sitting at a table, or together on the sofa. Coloured pens were provided, and an outline for the graph was included on an otherwise blank sheet of cartridge paper - 297 mm X 420 mm.

When the graphing technique was first introduced, each partner was given his or her own blank copy of the graph, and asked to plot significant events along the horizontal axis with a brief description of the circumstance. As the partners carried out the task they were encouraged to remember and discuss together, thoughts, feelings, and influencing factors.

However, this procedure was changed slightly as a result of dissatisfaction with the resulting dialogues, and a helpful comment from a reviewer. The larger blank graph was produced to encourage shared completion. The task of the interview was described as outlined in statement 1, (Appendix 1). I also asked the couple to talk together as the interview progressed, so that they could mutually decide who would be scribe, and which events merited a place on the graph. This resulted in a more conjoint account, better suited to the purposes of the study, and provided additional data in terms of which partner opted, or was encouraged by the other to be the scribe, and who decided what should be written on the graph.

The interview was kick-started if necessary with question 2 (Appendix 1), and the use of various prompts - 'How did you feel about that?', 'So, what happened next?' ensured that the story continued, and additional information was provided. Furthermore, in later interviews, added questions addressed themes found to be present in previous ones.

The closeness measure was completed collaboratively, although each partner marked their own perception of closeness on the graph. The subject of closeness was introduced gradually, by means of questions 3 - 6 (Appendix 1), giving the couple opportunity to think about the character of their relationship, and reflect upon the appropriateness, or otherwise, of closeness as a factor in each identified event. Once this procedure began, the interviewer said very little apart from answering questions about the practical requirements - where to place points in relation to events, which coloured pen to use, etc.

The interview ended after the marked points had been joined, and there had been some discussion about any similarities or differences in perception. Once the tape recorder was switched off, responses to the interview were discussed, with opportunity if necessary, to deal with painful matters in a sensitive way.

Immediately after each interview, biographical details and general impressions of interaction patterns were noted, plus any kind of data thought to be interesting, useful, or likely to be forgotten. These also included personal responses to the couple, reflexive commentaries of the couple's impact upon me, and my countertransference towards them.

As the research developed, I was aware that my feelings about couples differed - not only because of transference and counter-transference effects, but also because I was less familiar with the experience of homosexual partners, than that of heterosexual or client couples. I had had personal contact with a gay individual, but otherwise, my awareness was limited to cultural stereotypes, and images of Gay Pride. These could be expected to affect my assumptions and attitudes towards gay and lesbian couples.

Additionally, I was anxious about the responses of homosexual couples to me. My fears were that I might be considered voyeuristic and prying; that I might use words *inadvisedly* - be non-PC; that I might unwittingly say something to make the couple feel hurt or 'objectified'.

My fears were soon dispelled. Homosexual couples who agreed to participate were warm and welcoming. Partners were pleased to talk - given that during the major period of data-gathering (1995 - 6), homosexuals were confronting issues to do with AIDs, 'outing', and Gay Rights. The most enjoyable and fruitful interviews resulted from these meetings.

6:9 Analysis

Although interviews followed a similar pattern, the resulting scripts contained inherent differences. Clearly, couples did not each experience the same kind of change, neither did changes occur with the same frequency, or magnitude.

Types of change varied from life-cycle, through life-style, to changes in daily relationship dynamics. Some of the changes reported were specific to a particular group (e.g. marriage), or to a particular couple (e.g. illness). Some couples reported so many changes that the graph became crowded and confused, whilst others reported very few.

These differences had implications for the analysis of the data, in making it difficult to

- make direct comparisons across scripts, because of the variation in the amount and type of changes experienced.
- make generalisations about processes of change across scripts, since couples had either different experiences, or differing awareness of change.

The analysis therefore, could deal only with the themes which were common to all scripts, and broad enough to include specific couple interpretations of change.

With these considerations in mind, the text of each interview was transcribed. Early interviews were roughly transcribed by hand in order to gain a sense of the data, spot inadequacies, and any need for a change of focus. Later in the process, interviews were typed, but due to the lack of time, five of the interviews were professionally transcribed. It was decided that the Jefferson style of transcript (See Smith, Harré & Langenhove, 1995) was inappropriate to the aims of the study, and a general rule was formulated that only the forms of speech necessary to the analysis would be transcribed. Therefore, paralinguistics were not generally included, but because of their possible significance in the interaction, pauses, and laughter were.

Before beginning the analysis a set of questions was prepared:

- What is being said here?
- What is not being said?
- What is being taken for granted?
- What is the person/couple doing?
- What do I need to know in order to understand?
- How do structures and contexts serve to support, maintain, impede or change these actions and statements?

These were modifications of questions suggested by Silverman (1993) and Charmaz (1995). They served as a heuristic for maintaining a clear focus during the early stages of the analysis, to be supplemented by additional questions at a later stage.

Although the structure of the analysis was prepared in advance, there were changes as the process evolved. The analysis adapted to the changing requirements of the emerging data, although based upon seven main stages of inquiry, outlined in Table 6:2.

Table 6:2 Stages of Analysis

Stage	Number of scripts	Based on the procedures of	Stage Task	Task Perspective	Example
1	All		A general summary of each interview / script	Top-down Exploratory	Appendix 2
2	6	Grounded Theory	Active, line-by-line coding	Bottom-up Intensive	Appendix 3
3	6	Grounded Theory	Focused coding Reducing the number of codes produced, and creating categorical hierarchies	Bottom-up Intensive	Appendix 4
4	19	Grounded Theory	Less intensive analysis, based on the codes resulting from the previous stage	Top-down & Bottom-up	Appendix 5
5	All	Functional Analysis	An interpretative approach looking at discourses and conversational tactics	Second-Wave Top-down	Appendix 3 & Appendix 6
6	All	Grounded Theory	Axial Coding A theme-specific integration of codes and functions	Top-down Integrative	
7	All	Conjoint narrative construction	Looking at interactive styles, speaker roles, and conjoint retrospective creation of 'truth'	Third-Wave Top-down Exploratory	Appendix 3

In summary, stage 1 provided a simple overview and comparison of each script. The remaining stages were each subject to an iterative process. Themes emerging from analysis at stages 1 and 2 were elaborated in successive stages - not only from a linear process of reading through scripts one at a time, but also through a repeated reading and re-reading each transcript, and making comparisons between scripts and between themes within scripts. The analysis was an evolving practice. New insights emerged, enriching or adding themes, whilst making others redundant. Theoretical sampling ensured that gaps in the understanding of themes were addressed by modifying methodology, or re-focusing questions in subsequent interviews. At every stage of the analysis a system of memos was developed - hand written notes providing an ongoing commentary noting insights, interconnections, further question to be asked of the data etc. Later in the process, as memos became more specific, an index card system was developed. It was found to be more easily accessible - and along with the frequent use of mind maps was found to promote more generative, lateral thinking.

As the analysis developed, some concepts became less important - for example, early direct references to conscious or unconscious responses were superseded in later scripts by more frequent references to *states of mind* ('you were very depressed at the time') rather than talking about behaviour in terms of conscious / unconscious motivation. Discourses about 'closeness' were frequently used, whereas ascriptions of 'trust', 'strength', 'weakness' etc., tended to be idiosyncratic to particular couples. Other concepts grew in importance. For example, the influence of *others* became one of the central themes in the data, resulting in a wide number of discourses to do with the role and perception of others. Twenty two themes initially identified in the data were eventually reduced to fourteen, retained as being common to all scripts.

- **Stage 1: Organising data.** Shortly after recording each interview, the material was organised into a brief summary of major themes and impressions. The overview was arranged according to a coding frame designed to capture both explicit and implicit features of the interview. Section 1 of the frame dealt with the written material obtained, first impressions of the interaction between the partners, and the subject matter of the

interview. Section 2 summarised the major assumptions and beliefs evident on first appraisal, and any implications these may have had for the participant's approach to change. (See Appendix 2 for a couple example).

- This was a top-down approach to each couple in turn, and enabled an early comparison across couples. The major theoretical themes of the foregoing chapters underpinned the development of summaries:
 - The structuring dimensions of change as outlined in chapter 2. Did respondents talk of change as imposed or chosen; stemming from external or internal sources; subject to conscious or unconscious responses; discrete or continuous; a problem or challenge? Can the emerging analytical themes be understood according to differing levels of analysis?
 - The events in couple's lives - those included in the couple's graph, and those merely spoken about. What discourses were employed to describe such events? How were such events chosen as important?
 - Relationship and personal events - especially those relevant to relationship development, and orientation differences. What kinds of causal explanations were given? Did the theories of 'experts' (e.g. psychological, biological, astrological) feature as explanatory concepts? What was the role of gender discourses and cultural expectations in couple's narratives?

Stage 2: At this point the bottom-up, *line-by-line analysis* of the text following the principles of Grounded Theory was adopted. Strauss and Corbin (1990) defined the grounded theory approach as 'a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon.'

(p. 24)

The method allows an interpretative approach towards the experience of participants, and enables an understanding of multiple layers of meaning. This is achieved by focusing on 'the specification of concepts and their relationships to each other' (Ibid. p. 62), and 'by taking the data apart, and putting them back together in new ways' (Ibid. p.57).

Practically, this is achieved firstly by developing research questions which identify the phenomena to be studied, and then by labelling the phenomena in conceptual terms, rather than resorting to description. In the case of transcripts, this involves line-by-line, open-ended analysis in which each distinct feature is given a conceptual label which can be generalised to other instances carrying a comparable quality (stage 2 analysis). Once this stage is achieved, concepts which share similarities, or relate to a particular phenomenon, can be grouped together in categories, thus organising and clarifying the enormous amount of collected data. (Stage 3).

The formation of categories has the effect of enabling the creation of hierarchies of information, in which some categories may be more important than others. The result at this stage is that a number of phenomena which have their own satellite categories, may themselves become subcategories of other phenomena.

- The themes and impressions identified in Stage 1 acted as the phenomena which formed the basis for the coding in Stage 2.
- Six scripts were analysed closely - two from each major group - lesbian, gay male, and heterosexual. The analysis used at this stage involved a process of working systematically through each script, taking each participant's dialogue in turn, and breaking it down into chunks or phrases, each to be examined and compared with other phrases in the section. This procedure was used to develop a number of code labels which would conceptualise the role of both speaker and text in the construction of the narrative.
- Hence, the coding could be seen as *active* in two ways:

- In terms of the analytic process - a dynamic and interpretative scrutiny of the text.
- In using *active* code labels. For example, a label - 'shifting the context' - devised to represent an instance where a speaker switched the narrative to include a new background against which a change event was experienced. In a large number of codes, the verb portrays a sense of process, whilst the noun refers to a general phenomenon.
- As stage 2 progressed, two types of coding began to emerge:
 - Code labels relevant to the building of the story - e.g. 'constructing', 'checking', 'continuing', 'asking', 'confirming'.
 - Those relevant to the phenomena themselves - e.g. 'building context', 'identifying constraints / possibilities', 'explaining links between events and actions', 'using examples', etc.

Active coding enabled a disengagement from the theories and assumptions introduced in previous chapters of the thesis, and ensured a fresh approach to the data.

- In the early stages the analysis produced a huge number of labels (See Appendix 3) but these were refined in Stage 3.
- Each script was given an interview code to ensure anonymity and to enable easy reference as the analysis proceeded. N1 for example refers to script N, taken from one tape recorded interview. E1,2,3, was script E taken from three interviews. Each page of script was divided into sections roughly coinciding with topic areas, and numbered consecutively.
- **Stage 3: *Focused coding.*** According to Charmaz (1995), the grounded theory method of focused coding enables a more selective and generic approach to the data through the creation of categories which subsume common themes and patterns found amongst the accumulated active codes.

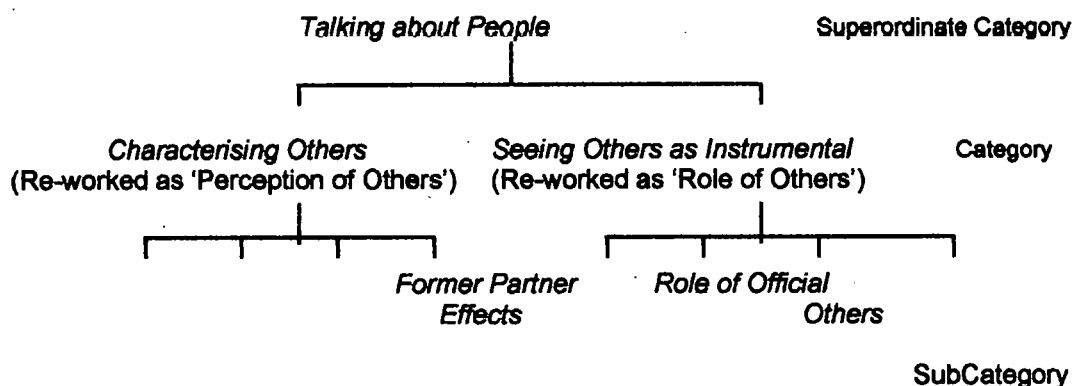
During the stage 2 coding exercise, it struck me that participants would often present an event, outline the context against which it was set, express emotional and practical responses, and cite evidence from their own or other's previous experience to justify their responses to change. Narratives would sometimes be drawn to a conclusion with a discourse which appeared to apply a final understanding to the story. This pattern may have occurred because of the construction of the interview. However, seeing that scripts already had this recurring structure, it was felt that the grounded theory approach to focused coding - a kind of linear, if iterative trawling through the script - was counter-intuitive.

- Consequently, the approach adopted was to take each storied event, or major phenomenon as a complete narrative, and using a mind-map technique, to identify the hierarchical relationships present within it - beginning with the major phenomena and codes found in stage 2, and identifying the relationship between these and subsidiary codes in the text. (See appendices 4 : 1 to 4 : 16, analysis of the script of Gina and Yvonne - appendix 3)
- 'The Bad Year', for example, is a phrase used halfway through the narrative included between pages 7 and 11, and contains within it a number of stressful events. In this instance, the *Bad Year* was coded as a major phenomenon, subsuming several other phenomena contributing to the story of how and why the *Bad Year* occurred. Categories developed in relation to each phenomenon both summarised and generalised the meanings drawn from the more specific active codes of stage 2. Coding remained conceptual rather than descriptive, but in moving away from the text, lost some of the richness of the original coding.
- The choice of category labels was purely arbitrary, based upon the nature of the emerging data, and the factors seen as particularly significant in the context of change.
- As each independent narrative was analysed, the developed hierarchies reflected shifting classifications. Some of the phenomena and categories seen originally as major

- classifications became less important, whilst others, beginning as subordinate categories later emerged as major themes across scripts.
- Category labels were developed to be more succinct. For example, as scripts were compared, an emerging superordinate category was labelled 'Talking about people', but this subsumed a number of lower order categories such as a) 'characterising others'; b) 'seeing others as instrumental' etc. Some lower level categories were found to have subcategories of their own. For instance, 'seeing others as instrumental' subsumed labels such as 'former partner effects', 'role of official others' etc. (See figure 6:2).

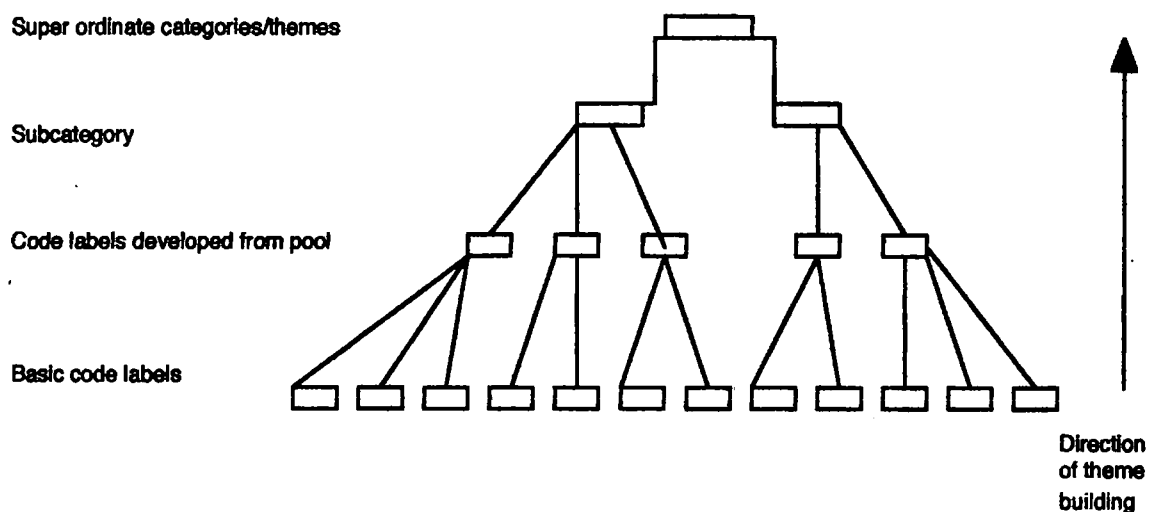
Eventually, categories a) and b) above became 'Perception of others' and 'Role of others', and were elevated to the position of super-ordinate categories - thus becoming two of the major themes found in the scripts. (Figure 6:2).

Figure 6:2 The labelling of hierarchies. An example.



- Gradually, the iterative dialectic between coding and interpretation actively transformed the stage 2 dissection of phenomena, to produce a final set of narrative themes (super-ordinate categories), and sub-ordinate categories. (See figure 6:3).

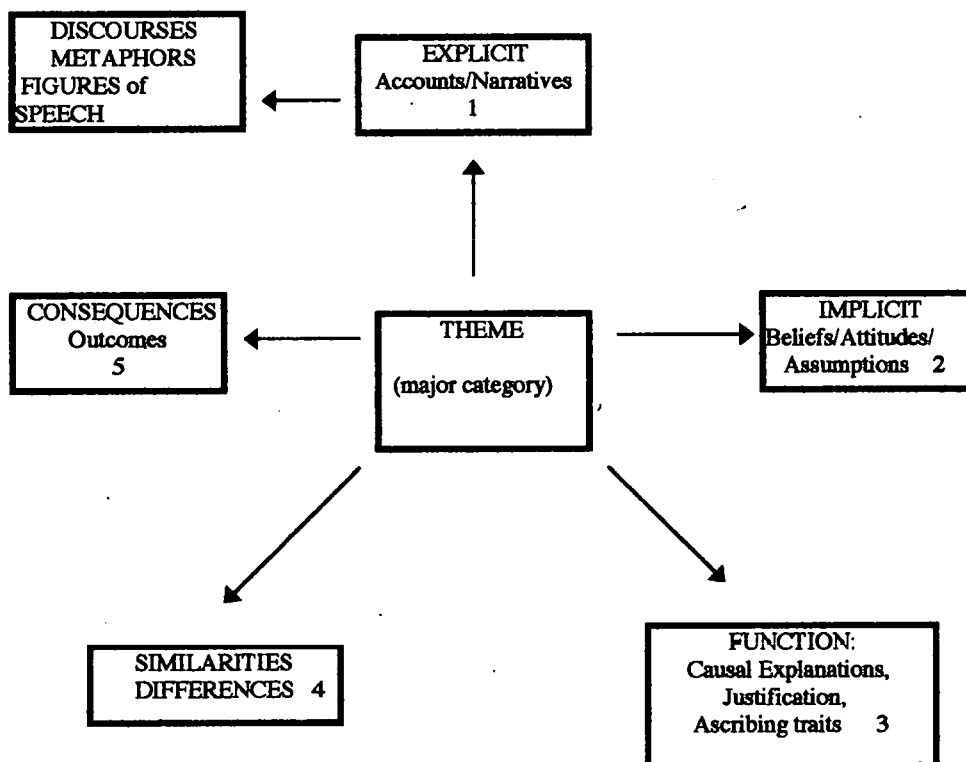
Figure 6:3 Relationship between codes and categories. The building of themes.



- Colour codes were developed in order to highlight the established themes, (see example at Appendix 5) and passages of text were gathered into appropriate thematic documents using the cut and paste facility of Microsoft Word 6.
- **Stage 4.** At this stage the remaining 19 scripts were investigated at a less intense level. Themes and categories established in previous scripts were colour coded, and evidence of new or modified categories was sought. Passages of text were added to the already compiled cut and paste documents.
- **Stage 5.** Having established the main themes via codes and categories, all the scripts were re-analysed with a focus on *discourse*. This entailed using a top-down, functional perspective - asking different questions of the data - such as:
 - In what way is this person trying to present him/herself to him/herself, to me, to the partner, and to others?

- What kind of conversational tactics are respondents employing - humour, ridicule, self-justification, minimalising etc.?
- This involved a speculative, interpretative approach - reading into the text. A coding frame used to guide the analysis is shown at Appendix 6, and an example of coding at Appendix 3. Particular attention was paid to inconsistencies in couple's talk, and to interpretative repertoires - passages of text which hung together as clusters of terms, descriptions and figures of speech - 'the narratives assembled around metaphors and vivid images'. (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell and Potter, 1988). An example of an interpretative repertoire is included at Appendix 7. Instances of such repertoires were cut and pasted in order to compare functional patterns across scripts.

Figure 6:4 Axial coding categories for integrative stage of analysis.



Stage 6. At this stage the analysis was drawn together by means of *axial coding* (as suggested by Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This involved pulling together the codes, categories and functional elements of each theme - taking a new perspective towards the connections already established. The aim was to identify the relationship between the themes discovered in the scripts, and the contexts, conditions, and consequences presented in couple's narratives. For this purpose, a coding paradigm was developed, and a mind map configuration used to represent and summarise each theme. (See figure 6:4). Each map had a theme or superordinate category as its central point. The established codes and sub-categories were reinterpreted as explicit and implicit accounts - both of change, and its consequences. The functional and comparison elements were added as signals of the purposive aspects of narratives. In total, the reinterpretation provided a conceptual overview of the theme, and from it, further properties emerged which added to understanding. Figure 6:5 illustrates one resulting configuration.

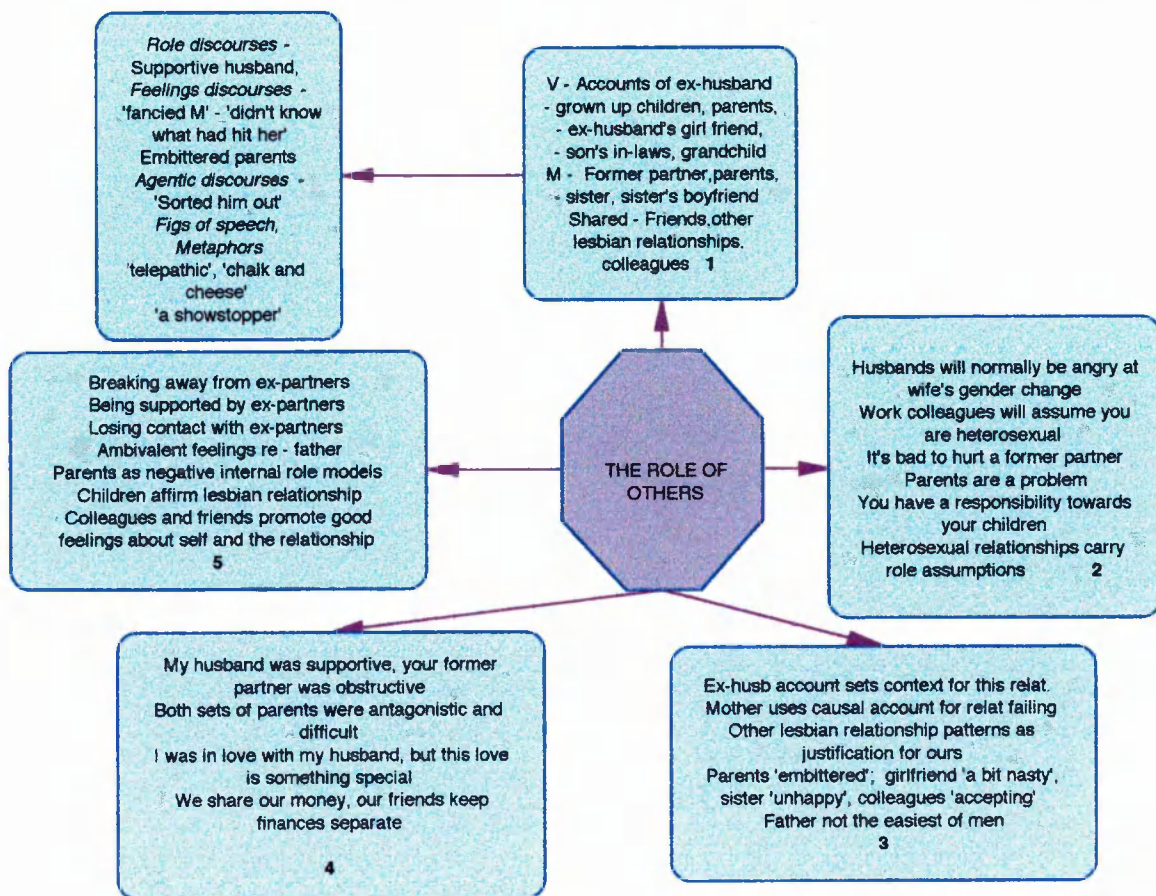


Figure 6:5 The axial coding of the theme 'The Role of Others'. (A Lesbian Couple)

- **Stage 7** A *third wave* analysis was undertaken, springing from observations of findings from previous stages in the process. A growing awareness that content analysis alone was insufficient to explain narrative construction led to further analytical measures. The understanding was that there ought to be some way of explaining how implicit and functional aspects of partner's stories were negotiated between them in order to construct and produce explicit narratives. For this reason, several additional measures, suggested by previous research in this area, were taken:
 - Each script was examined for qualitative differences in turn-taking style according to the six styles developed by Veroff, Sutherland, Chadiha & Ortega (1993). Further details are given in chapter 8.
 - Drawing on the work of Hirst & Manier (1997), interaction between partners was analysed according to the roles each performed in the process, and to other features of interaction which may have a bearing on narrative construction.
 - Prompted by the work of Meill (1987) on conjoint retrospective creation of truth, recollection of events, and the construction of new information during the interview was examined. This measure explored *how* the couples concerned collaborated in reconstructing memory, and involved an analysis of the *functions* of the turn-taking process.

6:10 Validation: Follow-up Measures

The need to ensure congruence and validity was addressed in three ways. Firstly in using the composite methods outlined above. Secondly by means of follow-up measures. The first of these was obtained by submitting a wide selection of extracts taken from the scripts to a fellow researcher well versed in qualitative methods. She was asked to match themes discovered in the scripts against the random selection; and to identify pre-defined interactional styles in a further set of extracts. Her comments on the exercise were noted and changes were made to the analysis, and coding strategies. Based on her suggestions, three simplified validation exercises were carried out with another researcher, and tested using the Cohen's Kappa concordance measure of inter-rater reliability. These procedures provided a check on the occurrence of identified content. (See Appendix 8).

In addition, a respondent validation measure was employed. Seven couples were contacted about the findings of the interviews. They were asked to comment on the themes emerging from the analysis, and upon any relevant changes - material, or attitudinal - occurring since the original interview(s). Six of the couples were contacted by telephone; the seventh couple provided feedback by means of a further interview and written responses. Some questions were asked of each couple telephoned:

- What changes have taken place since we last talked?
- Is change more, or less stressful now?
- Have any of your plans for the future been achieved?

Additional questions checked specific issues formerly raised by the couple, and respondents were asked to comment upon a brief summary of the themes. (Summaries at Appendix 9)

6:11 Presentation of Findings

Chapters 7 to 10 present the findings. Chapter 7 first summarises the main findings, followed by details of the main themes, codes and categories discovered in the transcripts. Chapter 8 relates the themes to the Guiding Propositions. Chapter 9 examines the co-constructive processes through which couples presented their stories of change, and chapter 10 takes a holistic view of the data in presenting two case studies.

THE REPRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF CHANGE IN

INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS:

A study of homosexual and heterosexual couples

BOOK TWO:

THE FINDINGS

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CHAPTER 7: THE MAIN STUDY:

Findings related to Heterosexual

and Homosexual Couples

7:1 Introduction

The findings of the study are presented in five ways:

- Firstly, a summary of the main findings - giving a brief overview of the ways in which the main themes emerged.
- A presentation of the main themes, examples of codes and categories found in the scripts, and a summary information gained from couple's graphs.
- A discussion of the findings as they relate to the Guiding Propositions.
- An examination of the co-construction of narratives.
- A synthesis of the data in the form of two case studies.

Homosexual and heterosexual groups are identified throughout.

7:2 Summary of Main Results

Couple's accounts regarded *change* as having recognisable qualities giving it impetus, shape and texture. As a process, change was seen as a flow of experience beyond conscious control. Higher order beliefs about the effects of change conveyed the sense that both change and no change were constructions found in dangerous and uncharted territory. *Strategies* had value as ways of modifying or halting change. Talking was the most popular strategy for dealing with transitions, enabling couples to cope more successfully. Other, more practical strategies had value as procedures for shifting situations, or enabling couples to cope with difficult and unchangeable circumstances.

Decision making was viewed as central to the deliberate production of change, and was successful as long as antecedents and confounding factors worked together with decision making properties to enable a choice to be made. The consequences of decisions depended upon the nature of precursors, and random elements - some of which resulted in a 'no decision' decision.

Narratives concerning *time* enabled couples to interpret and organise the nature and effects of change, as well as conveying its qualitative properties. *Then and now* themes added a behavioural dimension to narratives about time, creating discourses of difference, improvement or deterioration.

Relationship themes provided a context for change - adding an emotional and jointly constructed experiential dimension, along with an understanding of the traumatic aspects of change. The importance of stability as a contrast to change was noted, and the role of factors internal and external to the relationship were seen to have implications for the kind of change that couples experience and their ability to deal with it.

Factors such as *lifestyle issues* and the presence of *children* were seen both to form a context for change and to create qualitative effects in terms of material resources available for coping with change, and the practical and emotional pressures upon couples in trying to deal with it.

For couples who were influenced by the existence of *former partners* from a previous relationship, there were differing effects - some benevolent and some negative. Most importantly, the behaviour and attitudes of former partners were seen to have a significant effect on the nature and quality of the new relationship leading to modifications in the ways in which couples conceptualised, and dealt with change.

Relationship themes and person perception themes were resonant with shared cultural discourses which conveyed accepted norms for attitudes and behaviours. Both people and relationships were characterised according to socially acceptable values.

Perceptions of self and other themes particularly performed functions in this context. Through reported perceptions, couples were able to organise their recollections of events,

compare themselves with others, express ways in which they were developing common characteristics and use shared cultural discourses to create or support stereotypes of behaviour.

As the most frequently occurring theme, the *role of others* was seen as crucial to the experience of change - both in terms of the instrumentality of others in providing contexts for, and promoting, change. Couples also cited others as vehicles for achieving change - acting as sources of supporting evidence in the storying of the relationship, and as models against which a couple could compare their own relationship performance.

Whereas themes of change revealed very few differences between heterosexual and homosexual narratives and beliefs, relationship themes indicated differences with respect to sexual behaviour (including the prevalence of extra-marital affairs), domestic roles and factors external to the relationship such as cultural practices, and social expectations of the relationship.

The issue of children created differing effects for heterosexual and homosexual couples. The former showed evidence of cultural expectations to be followed or challenged. Homosexuals however, were seen to negotiate beliefs about the relevance of children to *their own* relationship, as well as conveying assumptions about the role of children in gay relationships in general.

Orientation and gender themes provided most evidence of differences between the two groups. For example, both groups presented notions of the gendered self. For heterosexual partners, cultural discourses of stereotypical male/female identities were evident; although some males appeared to be anxious about being blatantly stereotypical. For homosexuals there was evidence of an anxiety about identity - not having a shape or definition readily available. Differences were also seen in accounts of the gendered identities of others. Heterosexuals 'cast' others in stereotypical roles, or alternatively, showed discomfort with non-stereotypical examples. In contrast, homosexual couples were often uncomfortable with stereotypical gays, but showed differing responses to straights - often preferring them as friends, but being critical of straight's voyeuristic and insensitive attitudes to gays.

Homosexual couples saw heterosexual marriage as a template for their own, but identified major departure points in terms of balance of power, role of sexuality, domestic roles and measures of mutual support.

Friendships and the 'scene' were important as supportive networks for the gays interviewed - although views were tempered by reservations about the particular effects of such a small community - especially on the relationship. AIDS was believed to have had an impact on the acceptance of gays in the straight world - most damagingly in terms of institutionalised structures such as commercial practices.

Heterosexual partners mentioned friends most often as part of their pre - relationship experience. As the relationship progressed, the role of others as friends diminished for straight couples - being retained more often by female partners in the group.

Age-related themes appeared to be similar across both groups. There was evidence of expectations regarding the appropriateness of certain behaviours in self and others with respect to youth or age. Discourses about being the 'right' age were particularly reported with respect to having children, and four couples addressed the implications of a significant age difference between them.

7:3 Identification of Themes

As chapter 6 outlined, themes were developed from basic codes and categories identified in the scripts. After all the scripts had been compared, a summary of the major themes was drafted, and a hierarchy of codes and categories reproduced for each theme.

These data are represented here according to several conventions:

- Themes are presented in two ways according to the nature of findings. Some lend themselves to tabular representation, others are more suited to summary presentation.

- Both forms of presentation reflect the hierarchical structure of the analysis.
- Most of the tables presenting themes have three columns. One is headed *Initial Codes - higher order beliefs*. This title stems from the axial coding stage of analysis which
- identified certain basic codes as the implicit beliefs, attitudes and assumptions contained in couple's narratives.
- *Categories*. This heading signifies the classifications into which the different codes were organised. Categories arise from the initial codes, and make up the themes identified in the scripts.
- *Propositions*: are the interpretative elements of the findings - the conclusions stemming from the links between categories. These signify the major implications contained in the narratives as couples talked about themes.
- *Themes* are the major issues contained in the scripts, and are constructed from relevant codes, categories, and propositions presented in the tables.
- *Groups* are made up of related themes - assembled together in order to demonstrate links within the data.

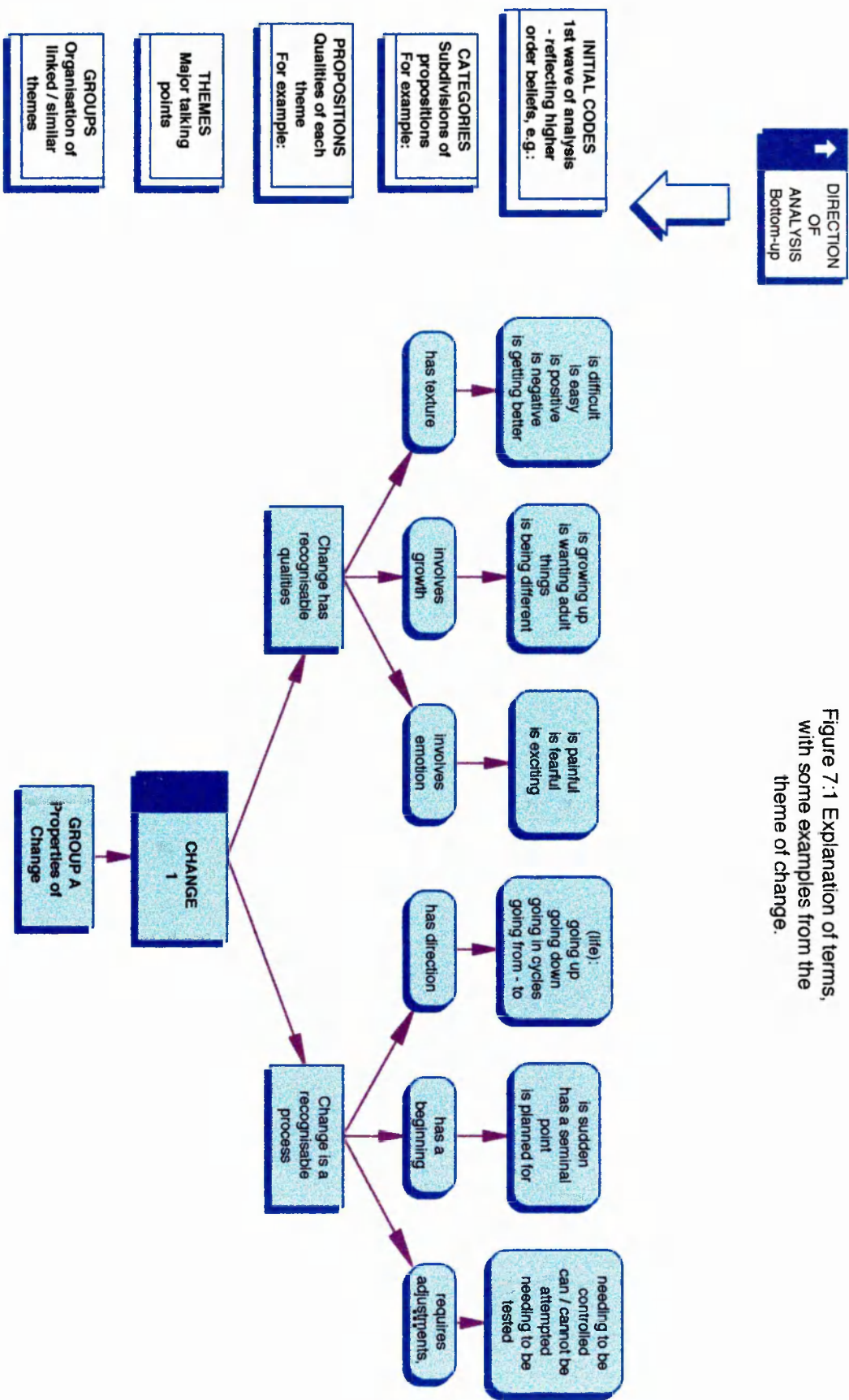


Figure 7.1 Explanation of terms, with some examples from the theme of change.

- Figure 7:1 presents an explanation of terms as they relate to the theme of change.

Key designations - gay, les, and het, have been included in parenthesis at the end of each script citation in order to identify the group - gay, lesbian or heterosexual - from which it is taken. Pseudonyms have also been added to each quotation.

7:3.1 First List of Themes

By the end of the analysis, a total of 22 themes had been established. 5 of the themes occurred frequently (F) in all of the scripts; 9 occurred less regularly in each script (R), and 8 were idiosyncratic (I) to one or two. The themes - along with brief explanations are shown in Table 7:1.

Table 7:1: First list of themes

OVERALL LIST OF THEMES			
No:	Theme	Occur s	Explanation in terms of couple's discourses about -
1	Change	F	metaperspectives on change as a concept.
2	Perception of others	F	perception of how others think, are, and act.
3	Role of others	F	perception of the instrumentality of others in change
4	Perception of self	F	perception of how the self thinks, is, and acts
5	Relationship themes	F	the growth, quality etc. of the relationship
6	Orientation/gender themes	F	the implications of gayness and gender in the story
7	Strategies	R	the use of coping mechanisms in times of change
8	Lifestyle/money themes	R	the role of these issues in the relationship
9	Decision Making	R	choices and how they made them
10	Time	R	the role and nature of time in their story
11	Age-related themes	R	the relevance of age to aspects of the narrative
12	Violence	I	the role of violence in their story
13	Children	R	the role of children in their story
14	Former partners (FPs)	R	the impact of FPs on the present relationship
15	Then and now	R	'before and after' differences due to change
16	Vision	I	the role of having desirable goals
17	Behaving differently	I	the possibilities had someone behaved differently
18	Security/stability	I	the role of these issues in processes of change
19	Trust	I	the role of mutual trust in times of change
20	Being strong	I	the role of personal effectiveness in the relationship
21	Blaming / fault	I	the need to ascribe accountability in happenings
22	Costs / benefits	I	weighing the issues in experiences of change

7:3.2 Revised List of Themes

Four major groups emerged from the themes:

- Accounts referring explicitly to change itself.
- Narratives and discourses concerned with aspects of change as it occurred in the couple life story.
- Relationship themes - not always having direct relevance to change itself but acting as a central component of couple's accounts.
- Themes around person perception - whether of self, partner, or of significant others.

For the purposes of a final organisation of the data, the idiosyncratic themes (I) in table 7:1, were subsumed under relevant higher order themes. Number 22 - costs and benefits, was included under the heading of change. Numbers 12, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21; (violence, behaving differently, security, trust and blaming/fault respectively) were considered to be relationship themes; and number 16 - vision - was included in the perception of self theme. The remaining 14 themes were organised according to the developed groups (see Table 7:2). Each theme will be discussed as the chapter proceeds. Examples will be given of the initial codes, developed categories, and propositions subsumed under each major theme.

7:3.3 Validation of themes

A colleague, given training in identification of the fourteen themes, was presented with fourteen passages of text against which to match each theme. This exercise obtained an inter-rater agreement of $K = 0.85$ (Cohen's Kappa – see Appendix 8). Since each passage of text had contained several themes, it was decided to carry out another test. A second exercise was conducted with another trained rater - this time with short passages of text, where one theme was highlighted as an unambiguous presentation. In this exercise, agreement was 100%.

Table 7:2: Refined list of themes - re-numbered according to relevant positioning in the groups.

Final list of Themes organised according to groups			
No	Theme	Occurs	Group
1	Change	F	Accounts refer explicitly to change itself.
2	Strategies	R	Narratives and discourses concerned with change as it occurred in the couple life story.
3	Decision making	R	
4	Time	R	
5	Then and now	R	
6	Relationships	F	
7	Lifestyle/money	R	Relationship themes - not always having direct relevance to change, but which are a central component of couple's accounts.
8	Children	R	
9	Former partners	R	
10	Perception of others	F	
11	Perception of self	F	Themes around person perception - whether of self, partner, or significant others
12	Role of others	F	
13	Orientation/gender themes	F	
14	Age-related themes	R	

7:4 Thematic Groups

7:4.1 Group 1. Theme 1: Change

This theme stands alone and deals with how couples talked about change itself. Table 7:3 details two propositions about change found in the analysed scripts - that change has recognisable quality and process. The former was seen in perceptions of how change impacts on the person or relationship. The latter was reported in terms of change as movement. Expressed beliefs were common to both homosexual and heterosexual groups.

Table 7:3: Data relating to the couple's perception of change in terms of its quality and progression.

Initial codes: Change - Higher order beliefs	Categories: Change - example of discourses in brackets	Propositions
is needed	has pre-determining qualities: <i>(When you feel bored you are ready to move on - Mandy)</i>	Change has recognisable qualities
has been initiated is final	has boundaries - beginnings and endings: <i>(The turning point was when I went to Devon - Jane)</i>	
is difficult or easy; positive or negative; is getting better	has texture: <i>(It's not a smooth path - Chris)</i>	
is painful; is fearful; is exciting	involves emotional responses: <i>(I think there was slight panic at some point - Jill)</i>	
is growing up; wanting different things, being different	involves growth and maturation: <i>(-It did affect our relationship and made us grow up I think in lots of ways - Adrian)</i>	
is at a point of 'stuckness'; nothing can be done	is impossible. Some things are unchangeable: <i>(You can't change things can you? - Tina)</i>	
happens over time; has sequence, pattern, steps	has motion/phases: <i>(There's a lot of stages --- and then there's another lot to deal with - Malcolm)</i>	Change is a recognisable process
is slow; is fast; is gradual	has a pace: <i>(It all happened really very fast and it wasn't something that I was expecting - Ian)</i>	
is sudden; has a seminal point; is prompted; is planned for	as a process has some kind of beginning: <i>(That was like the turning point - let's move on - Mo)</i>	
involves 'life' going up; going down; going in cycles; from - to	has direction: <i>(It was a slow process up the slippery slope - Paul)</i>	
needs to be controlled; can/cannot be attempted; must be tested	requires adjustments, responses: <i>(How do we deal with this thing next time it happens? - Jim)</i>	

→
Direction of Analysis

Change has recognisable qualities

a) *Change has pre-determining qualities.* Couples talked about the conditions leading to change in different ways. Some referred to the personal pre-dispositions motivating change, others talked of change as stemming from personal choices made between different options. Both kinds of experiences led to a positive view of the process; whilst for those who were faced with change because of circumstances over which they had no control, change was less welcome: -

I fell pregnant almost straight away didn't I? - after Katy - with Josh. He was a big mistake. A big shock, wasn't he? (Jess - Het).

b) *Change has boundaries.* Within the flow of experience, a particular action or a convergence of events provided some couples with a clear knowledge that change had begun or ceased at a specific point. For some the details were hazy, but an awareness of change was clear, and there was no going back: -

Ian: She turned round triumphantly to my two daughters and she said 'There you see, he regards me as the enemy!' and I can't remember now for the life of me what led up to that but obviously it was a *seminal point* for them.

Interviewer: That must have been horrible.

Ian: Yeah. I tried to retrieve the ground but she wouldn't. (Het)

c) *Change has texture.* Couples used metaphors and figures of speech which gave a sense of texture to change. The experience was described as - 'not a smooth path', or 'hard work' especially if characterised by 'stuckness'. On the other hand change was seen by some couples as 'comfortable' as long as it proceeded slowly and with a certain amount of control. Some couples referred to elements of size. Change can be 'small' or 'an enormous amount' which in turn leads to narratives of the effects of change also described in similar terms - for example, 'carrying an enormous amount of pressure'. Couples conveyed ideas of change as positive or negative attached to notions of texture.

d) *Change involves emotional responses.* Almost all accounts of change described or conveyed the feelings linked to the experience. Emotional responses were signalled by a sense of confusion conveyed in the details of the account. Some responses include a sense of loss, inadequacy, pain or fear depending on the context and nature of the change. Discourses carried the implication that change was uncharted territory.

e) *Change involves growth and maturation.* There were notions that change in itself caused people to grow up, to be 'older and wiser'. In contrast, some couples talked of how the passage of time, or the process of growing older resulted in a change in habits and aspirations:

S: There is a degree of wanting a permanent job because you want things like a house, and you used to think that you would never actually want those things. I wouldn't want a car. I wouldn't want a house, and I wouldn't want a bag of shopping from Safeways, but as you mature you come to expect that and you want that. (Steve - Het)

f) *Change is impossible. Some things are unchangeable.* Some things don't change, and there are situations which inhibit change. For example, the presence of an existing partner suggested to a would-be mate that there was no hope of a developing relationship. Personality was identified as particularly unchangeable, leading to a sense of helplessness when desired changes were thought to be unachievable. Similarly, certain personality types were seen to have unchangeable qualities. -

A Cancerian will never change his mind - - - He don't forget. He'll forgive, but he don't forget.
(Peter - Gay)

One couple talked of the unchangeableness of being gay - although later in the interview this was balanced against an understanding that behavioural aspects of personality *can* change when people become aware of their gayness.

Unchangeable elements were mostly presented as negative -except for one couple who saw 'no change' as comfortable. However, unchangeable circumstances were generally seen as leaving no alternative but acceptance of the status quo. -

I can't turn the clock back. I can't change anything so its just something we have learned to live with now..' (Jim - Het)

Change is a recognisable Process

a) *Change has motion and phases.* Change was talked of as a dynamic process occurring over time - evident in the changing quality of behaviour, perceptions and attitudes. Some couples offered a chronology of events in order to make sense of change as a developmental process. Change was seen as happening in phases, or stages. Phases could be discrete times in the past when certain behaviours were evident, carrying the implication that a new phase has arrived, and one is older and wiser now. On the other hand, change could occur in stages carrying the connotation of 'getting somewhere' or seeing improvements'. -

There's a lot of stages and a lot of mess in one go and that gets sort of easier and then there's another lot to deal with, now the longer it goes on the easier it's getting

(Jeremy - Gay)

b) *Change has a pace.* Relationship beginnings were particularly characterised in this way. Change may occur slowly and tentatively - a gradual growth through friendship to a physical relationship. Alternatively, fast beginnings were conveyed by striking metaphors 'It was a bit of a bang!' - and were accompanied either by a sense of the unexpected, by panic and fear, or by a clear sense of purpose. -

Yes I decided in three days that I was going to leave my marriage and be gay but wanted to live with Yvonne. So we went out first on Saturday night and I told my husband on Tuesday that I was leaving him. A quick decision. (Gina - Les)

c) *Change as a process has some kind of beginning.* Couples had stories about how change began - from the clearly defined beginning prompted by their own actions, or the actions of others - the 'turning point' experience; or beginnings 'just happened' - were 'natural' and something unspoken between the partners. Sudden and unexpected beginnings were marked by strong emotional responses, like 'falling in love with a new home'; being frightened because things happened 'out of the blue'; or being left 'feeling in a tizz'. Sometimes these powerful feelings prompted new beginnings. -

Mo: I mean I was upset about it but you were, - it was absolutely horrible...

Barbara: We couldn't talk about it.

Mo: No. Not for ages, so we decided not to go that way...(Les)

d) *Change has direction.* Some couples conceptualised change as a process going from one place to another. In contrast, change became problematic when there was no sense of direction - for example, when things were 'going round in circles'. Discourses concerned with 'going uphill' or 'going downhill' carried qualitative distinctions. 'Downhill' tended to have negative connotations, although it could imply that change was freewheeling, gathering speed. 'Uphill' for some couples implied excitement, positive affect, improvement - but generally involving a struggle which was destined to be part of life's pattern. -

Chris: Yes, a general trend upwards. but its not a smooth path.

Duncan: No its not a smooth path and I don't think it ever will be but I think the future is going to be very similar. (Gay)

e) *Change requires adjustments, responses.* Couples often described themselves as attempting or testing change, and some had pre-developed strategies for testing the 'rightness' of attempted change. One couple used prayer and a policy of waiting for the outfall of events in undertaking desired change. -

Adjusting to change was sometimes seen as being more difficult because patterns of behaviour learned in childhood produced inadequate or inappropriate responses. Issues around control were important to the process of change. Sometimes, the need to take control of a situation prompted a decision for change. Conversely, change was avoided or entered into after careful thought for fear of losing control - particularly if the context was seen as needing careful handling, or if past experience had involved similar loss of direction. -

- Ian: My (ex-)wife and I bought the house and put ourselves deeper into mortgage debt you see, and so I - it was with some reluctance that I began to think seriously about buying something with J, (new partner) and therefore selling her cottage.
- Jill: What from the financial point of view do you mean? Or was it the commitment?
- Ian: Well, it's just that it was - I think it might be the change.
- Jill: Oh right, cos it was the security thing.
- Ian: I think that suddenly bore in on me. A little bit. (Het)

Adjusting to one change was sometimes followed by a series of further transitions. Like a pebble dropped into a pond, change spread wide until the ripples ceased and circumstances contracted down to a period of stability.

It is worth noting that themes of change demonstrated few differences between heterosexual and homosexual groups in the sample apart from those due to the idiosyncratic discourses used by partners.

7:4.2 Group 2: Change in the Couple Life Story

Four themes were appropriate to this group. These were the characteristics of change that couples identified when talking about their own transitions. Strategies, decision making,

time-related explanations, and perceptions of 'then and now' were apparent in most scripts as 'taken for granted' components of change experiences. Homosexual and heterosexual partners displayed few differences in their accounts of change.

Theme 2: The Use of Strategies

Strategies emerged from the transcripts as those methods employed by couples to further relationship development, negotiate ongoing relationship dynamics, and cope with stress and the exigencies of change.

Couples used strategies both consciously and unconsciously in each of these areas, and in ways outlined in Table 7:4 (p.198). There were no discernible differences between the heterosexual and homosexual groups in their use of strategies.

Talking is a Vital Strategy in Relationships and Change

The strategy of talking was seen to have a very important role in the couple relationship. Talking enabled couples to negotiate the 'getting to know you' phase of early meetings and could have an obsessive character at this point.

As relationships developed, talking performed different functions. In terms of pragmatic considerations, talking was used as a means of agreeing jointly established perceptions and actions. Talk was utilised in explaining behaviours and experience. Disputes and practical matters were resolved through talking and talk was a vital strategy in preparing for change. Talking had a function in partners teaching each other new skills or delegating responsibilities and roles.

Table 7:4: Propositions and categories relating to the couple's use of strategies when dealing with change

Initial codes: Higher order beliefs	Categories: examples of discourses in brackets	Propositions
working it out coming to a new realisation discovering a lot in common talking endlessly	Talking enables new relationships to take root: (We couldn't stand each other really, but when we actually sat down and got to talk about it, and the reasons why we were like it, everything seemed perfect then. We worked it all out and we felt closer than ever then. We knew that we just couldn't be apart Mandy)	Talking is a vital strategy in relationships and change
Telling each other Explaining where I'm coming from Reaching an agreement Urging a partner to talk Talking for hours; 'Seeding' ideas Sharing stories	Talking enables relationships to prosper: (As far as the relationship was concerned I was aware that I needed to keep talking to him Kerry)	
Sorting it out Putting it right Releasing bottled-up feelings Relieving pain Releasing tension	Talking acts as a good coping strategy: (I knew there was something niggling him. I used to say 'Just talk to me. We can sort this out' Jill)	
Planning the future Preparing for changes Teaching a partner Thinking aloud	Talking is a strategy for dealing with change: (This time we are just going to have a long discussion after the baby is born about what we are going to do Jess)	
Playing hard to get Dressing up to attract Feigning lack of interest Being careful Being romantic	Strategies help relationships to get going: ('Well, I'm busy on Saturday. I'm doing this and I'm doing that', and I was about to say, 'Oh well, to hell with you then.' But you went, 'But I'm free at lunch on Sunday. Matt')	Practical strategies are useful in handling change in relationships
Using humour Organising money Withdrawing Keeping secrets Finding ways of showing love	Strategies enable relationships to run smoothly: (He writes me lovely letters and things like that still – sometimes I wake up to a nice big poster saying 'I love you' Jess)	
Taking no notice; countering bad days; reframing bad things; coming to terms with things; getting help; crying with someone else; staying one step ahead; trying something different; facing reality; doing your best; delegating responsibility; developing rules for coping	Practical and cognitive strategies enable couples to cope: (About a bad operation scar: well it is my sort of <i>smiling zip</i> . That is what we said - Kate)	
Investigating options; working hard; taking steps; thinking positively; seeking advice; trying other tactics; getting help; planning the future; praying about it	Active strategies are helpful in dealing with change: (Putting a deposit on the flat wasn't about the flat at all. – I was definitely going to leave my wife Ian)	

—————→
Direction of Analysis

Talking therefore had a role in all aspects of change. Couples talked during the process of decision making and relationship building. Talking was used in confronting each other, or jointly facing problems. Through talking, couples established an agreed timescale for actions and events, and individual partners often used self-talk to work out solutions. In times of stress couples used talking as a strategy to give each other comfort and to work through difficulties.

An inability to talk - seen as a result of learned or innate behaviour patterns was seen as a disadvantage. Neglecting to talk was seen as a sign that the relationship was under stress, or beginning to fail. Being unable to talk was indicative of the gravest of circumstances.

Talking had certain consequences for couples. It enabled them to provide a shared rationale for their actions, and to remove problems from the relationship and place them in a public/external space from which they could gain an outside perspective. Talk enabled couples to maintain control or to shift a stuck situation, and was an important strategy utilised in the presentation of self to other, and in the maintenance of a good, communicative relationship. Talking by implication, was seen as more successful than other strategies. -

Matt: I suppose other people go down to the pub and drown their sorrows. There must be other ways of releasing tension. If they don't open up and speak about them, they'll find other ways of dealing with them, which in the end would destroy what they have with their partner. (Gay)

Practical Strategies are Useful in Handling Change in Relationships

Couples used a variety of pragmatic strategies - as outlined in Table 4. In the beginning relationship, strategies were of practical value in impression management, -

Matt: I got there and he was waiting in his car and he didn't even take any notice of me. He was writing something down. I got there and he just opened the door and I got in the car and he just carried on writing, and I thought, 'Oh great!'

Int: Like meeting your doctor.

Jeremy: I didn't want you to think I was too keen. (Gay)

and could be used to protect an individual until he or she became more sure of the other.

Chas: It was funny because I used to think he was a policeman when he was chatting to me. I used to be frightened to death. He used to drop me off miles from where I used to live! I used to be dropped off at a big posh house. I used to live in a terrace at the back of it! (Gay)

As the relationship developed, couples acquired strategies for dealing with issues like confrontation, - such as withdrawing, or throwing cushions. More formal strategies were advanced for sharing financial responsibilities - for example the use of both joint and separate bank accounts.

Humour was a well evolved strategy for taking the heat out of angry, embarrassing, or painful situations. -

Maureen: We found something humorous most days. We do have similar senses of humour and we can actually have ourselves in stitches over visual imagery, I mean Lyn's more with words, I'm more with visual imagery and silly voices and things. (Les)

Strategies were used to assure relationship quality when difficult times affected the couple. -

Liz: That's when I went out and did my teacher training and quite honestly it was a saving grace, because all the problems of father were left behind. It was thinking about something else rather than this miserable old man. (Het)

Actions were sometimes seen as having a symbolic function in being used as unconscious strategies for effecting change. A 'cry for help' or 'attention-seeking' strategies enabled an immovable situation to yield to change.

Theme 3: Decision Making

Table 7:5 shows the decision making process as explained in couple's narratives, and includes the following elements: *Antecedents* - forming the context for choices; *confounding factors* -

influencing how a decision is made, and *decisions* - having a form and quality. *Consequences* stem from the choices made as a result of the interplay of the other three factors.

Decision making is subject to antecedents


Decision making is a central feature of change, but not all change results from a conscious decision. However, couples reported that decisions arose when antecedent circumstances dictated. The co-occurrence of a number of factors forced a decision - for example, leaving college, having nowhere to live, being in a steady relationship - compelled the couple concerned to consider buying a house together. Attached to the choice was the necessity to evaluate possible alternatives. Some couples reported that decisions could only be taken at the 'right time', or when the 'right person' came along; and a decision taken for the 'right reasons' ensured cognitive and affective consonance.

Decision making is affected by confounding factors

Confounding factors related to couple's needs. These were the less tangible aspects of decision making. Some couples reported that their choices were affected by how they made decisions as a couple. Some decisions were more appropriate to one partner than the other - for example, employment choices. In some cases, one partner longed that the other should make a decision because he or she needed to feel nurtured by someone who could be strong. One homosexual partner deliberately encouraged his lover to leave him in order to produce the opposite effect - thus creating a very successful paradox.

Table 7:5: Propositions and categories relating to the decision making process

Initial Codes: Higher order beliefs Decisions involve -	Categories: examples of discourses in brackets	Propositions:
weighing up costs and benefits; needing to act; having no alternatives; recollecting past experiences; being advised; things coming together, not working out; having a reason; being 'right'	<p>Influence of past experiences: <i>(I didn't want to jump out of one frying pan into another one, so it took me three or four weeks long to really decide. Mike)</i></p> <p>Events not working out: <i>(Philip: We didn't feel happy about it did we? Julie: and the house wasn't sold was it? Philip: No. We decided to put it on ice.)</i></p>	Decision making is subject to antecedents
needing to accept things; needing to let go; needing to stop certain behaviours; deciding who decides; fearing the wrong decision; having premonitions; wanting someone else to decide; someone else deciding differently	<p>Decisions need to be taken: <i>(I spend so long looking for all the pitfalls and things not going to work, and being quite insecure. I decided it's about time I stopped feeling that way. Mo)</i></p> <p>Feelings influence decisions: <i>(Jane. I just had this feeling. Catherine. You had a premonition didn't you? Jane. Yes. I get these premonitions sometimes and I just got this feeling that it wasn't the right thing to do.)</i></p>	Decision making is affected by confounding factors
bridging events; one depending upon another; being unspoken; gradual, or sudden; shared, or being made alone	<p>Decisions involve doing things:- <i>(I now have to make a decisions - or when he gets the job - do I stay here, or go and live with Jeremy wherever he's living? Matt)</i></p> <p>Decisions can be symbolic:- <i>(It wasn't the first time I'd talked in those terms, but actually making that decision was the physical proof that I was going to (do it), and there's a lot of difference between talking about it and actually doing it. Ian)</i></p>	Decisions have properties
Feeling relieved; changing plans; staying with the decision; being left in a void; making a mess of things	<p>Decisions may cause problems:- <i>(It was a bloody disaster. I just had all sorts of expectations and it was just a disaster. Jean)</i></p> <p>Decisions may lead to uncertainty:- <i>(It was a hard decision to give up my flat. I had nothing to go back to, and I had an elderly neighbour below me. It was hard to leave her as well., Carol)</i></p>	Decision making leads to consequences

Direction of analysis 

Decisions have properties

The properties of decisions gave character to the decision making process. A decision could act as a bridge between one set of circumstances and another, or between talking and doing. The making of one decision often depended upon the outcome of another. Decisions could be sudden, or made gradually; available to awareness, or unspoken. Decisions could be made together, or alone.

Decision making leads to consequences

Couples cited various consequences of decision making. For example, 'staying with the decision' referred to those occasions when partners made strenuous efforts to remain with an original resolution. -

'I decided and that was it. I like to have things planned -- If I plan to do something, I go ahead and do it even if I feel ill. I still do it.' (Catherine - Les)

'Doing nothing', 'staying put', or 'making no decision' were all clearly examples of decisions being made. From the scripts it was evident that there were three factors which led to 'no decision' decisions:

- Premonitions and fears were elements of personal meaning leading some couples to decide against particular courses of action.
- The decisions of others to withdraw from co-operation in the couple's decision making process led partners to re-assess their choices and either abandon their plans or formulate new ones.
- When circumstances failed to 'work out', couples in the sample decided to 'stay put'.

All three factors, in effect, returned the couples concerned to the antecedents and confounding factors stage of the process. This is represented diagrammatically in the discussion of a model of change in chapter 12.

Theme 4: Time

The theme of time appears in the scripts as a device for achieving different kinds of effects which fall into eight distinct categories - each having relevance as a discourse which gives change a 'personality'. Given the variability of categories, and unwieldy nature of discourses to illustrate them, accounts of time are more readily conveyed in rhetorical rather than tabular form. Two main propositions emerge from the categories - that time is used as a structuring device; and that time has characteristics.

Time is a structuring device

a) *References to time were used to chunk events and make them manageable.* Couples created this effect in two ways. Firstly, by constructing together the timescale for events. In this way couples grounded the shared context of their lives and gave it relevance. -

Jill: Four, five, six, no it was three months between the cinema and the meeting and the -- moving in bit?
 Ian: Mm
 Jill: as opposed to the deposit on the flat. You didn't want to put that in.
 Ian: Wimbledon's July isn't it?
 Jill: June 25th.
 Ian: Sorry.
 Jill: Birthday.
 Jill: Change it. (Het)

Secondly, in giving time a value, couples implied that time imbued events with meaning. For example, a relationship developing quickly - '*within 5 weeks we were at the solicitor's*' implied that a great deal was being accomplished; surprising things were happening. Whereas, '*it was eight years before we met,*' implied that the relationship underwent a long incubation period.

b) *References to time had a shifting value.* The same amount of time had different meanings in different contexts. Four weeks waiting to see a specialist implied a long and anxious delay. Four weeks taken to set up home implied a whirlwind experience.

Things seen as 'important at the time' enabled a comparison with present-day perceptions with the implication that previously significant issues had diminished in importance.

With hindsight, a past experience referred to as 'a blip' was discovered after discussion to be a period of over twelve months agreed to be a considerable time when experienced in the present.

c) *Time as a signal of change.* This theme occurred in two ways. Couples spoke of it being time for things to change -

Its about time for me to back down. (Philip - Het)

and as a mark of cultural change -

Times were so different then to what they are now. There has been a major change I think, over the last ten years. (Duncan - Gay)

and relationship change -

As time has progressed, (the physical quality of our relationship has) changed. When we first got together it was more lust than anything else. (Chris - Gay)

d) *Time was quoted as a measure of skill and planning.* 'Its about timing and looking to see what's going on' was one partner's description of an ability he wanted the other partner to develop.

Another couple described the need to 'do' things in the right order - also a matter of timing. -

We didn't get married *before* the children arrived. Fourteen and a half years too late! (Mo - Les)

e) *Time was used as a measure of relationship quality.* 'We didn't spend five minutes together' was a signal that a relationship had broken down long ago; and 'spending time together - having quality time' carried connotations of partner's willingness to invest in the relationship. Spending long periods together (usually in bed) was characteristic of newly developing relationships.

In contrast there were assumptions about the time it would take to get to know certain things about each other. -

Int: How did you feel about her when you first saw her?

Bill: Well, I felt very fond of her personality. I really related to the caring, warm person that she was.

Jude: You couldn't possibly have known that to start with. (Het)

Furthermore, time itself became part of a survival strategy for some couples. -

We take this thing *one day at a time*, and you know, it doesn't matter what envelope drops through the door on to the mat, it's not insoluble. (Ian - Het)

Time has characteristics

a) *Time had qualitative value.* Seen in the figures of speech used to describe periods in the couple life story. A 'good time' described a period of contentment for one couple; a 'bad time' was when father was in hospital and the couple concerned were trying to consolidate their new relationship; a 'difficult time' occurred when a partner was threatened with losing his job; a 'right time' appeared for another couple as relevant to considering family planning measures. 'Time' was used as a generic term to apply textures to the narrative.

b) *Time as a commodity.* Time was treated in the narratives as a commodity that could be used up. Time was needed to adjust to new situations, or to make decisions. Couples talked about there not being enough time. They reported the need to 'spend time' together, or that for some experiences, time had gone - it was too late - the clock could not be turned back.

c) *Time as having properties*. For some couples time was slow, and 'dragged on'; whilst for others it was fast, and took them by surprise.

For one couple, time was deceptive - 'It was only six weeks, and it felt like a whole term!' (Mandy - Het)

For another, time had 'hard' and 'soft' properties. It was quantitative - it could be objectively measured, or it was qualitative in character. -

Int: Right. From the beginning to now is five years?

Adrian: Shall we get a ruler? To divide it off accurately, or doesn't it matter?

Mandy: But it doesn't go like that does it? - Its actually the memory. (Het)

Theme 5: Then and Now

Then and now themes dealt with different stages in a process, or disparate effects over time. Comparisons were created between what *is*, and what *was*. There were five identifiable categories in which the past was contrasted with the present. Table 7:6 represents one of the categories - personal disposition comparisons - and illustrates how 'then and now' themes were presented in couple's narratives. The single proposition is that -

Narratives of then and now signal change

a) *Change in cultural discourses, attitudes and practices*. Heterosexual couples in the sample recorded a shift in social attitudes towards pregnancy outside of marriage, children's rights, divorce, working patterns and wedding etiquette - with the implication that when the partners were children and young adults, life was more constrained by social norms and values. -

Oh yes. When we were young, *you* were the child and that was it. You weren't told what was going on. (Jude - Het)

Homosexual couples identified stereotyped gender roles in the past, along with legal sanctions and sterner attitudes against gays. Assumptions in the present tended to be based upon past perspectives. -

Int: Have you ever felt the need to have some kind of commitment ceremony?

Chas: Oh blimey no. No.

Peter: You see M, Chas and I have come up in the era where that sort of thing was frowned upon. To me that is exhibitionism. (Gay)

b) *Change in personal dispositions.* Contrasting how one was *then* with the self in the present had implications for the relationship. (See Table 7:6).

Table 7:6: The consequences of personal dispositions in the past and present, in terms of the current relationship. (Narrative examples)

Then (in the past)	Now	Consequences
We were very young	We are now mature	We would have handled things differently if we had known then what we know now.
I couldn't talk to my sister then	I can talk to her now	I would have been able to cope better at the time
I was very compliant	I have more courage now	I wouldn't have allowed them to browbeat me
I was more frenetic then	I am still frenetic now	Our relationship is affected by my way of being - then and now
I was not involved in my children's lives too deeply	I see much more of my grandchildren	I enjoy my grandchildren more than I did my children
We were very insular when we first married	Our perceptions have widened	We are more aware of other influences, things and people than we were then
I needed something to look forward to	Now I don't need anything to make me happy - every day is just worked out	The stress and tension has gone and its helped because its made it easier for you
My former partner would make a joke of everything I'd done	S (present partner) would think it was brilliant that I was doing such things	I can be happy with myself and more relaxed with her
My former partner was a major influence in our lives together	He isn't a threat any more	We can relax because its just the two of us

c) *Change in behaviour.* Couples identified changes of behaviour in the present as stemming from such factors as changed personal dispositions, or change in circumstances. The behaviour of former partners was often cited as the reason for 'doing things differently' in the present relationship. Emotional and sexual behaviour was subject to change due to unhappy experiences first time round. Couples frequently referred to a change in the organisation of financial matters which reflected dissatisfaction with how these things had been handled in the past.

Couples reported having learned from experience, with the implication that with hindsight things would have been done differently. In the present therefore, the practices of the past would not be repeated, or they would be improved upon because the partners had more skills, better coping strategies, and were more able to 'make things happen'.

Greater maturity ensured that couples had changed priorities, and a changed awareness of their abilities. -

We're at the stage where quite honestly one of us is going to pop our clogs. -- I know I could cope, but I think if it had happened when we were first married, I doubt if I would have had the capacity to *feel* I would cope. (Liz - Het)

d) *Change in the relationship.* Again, former partner issues were seen as relevant. The present relationship was seen as involving more trust than the past one. Anger management and freedom to be oneself were among the qualities in the present relationship seen as superior to those in the former. One partner reported that he was able to take responsibility in the present relationship, whereas in the former he was able to hide behind a wealthy lifestyle.

Partners reported changes in themselves as a result of the relationship. -

My life before K was nothing. I was probably the most depressed person alive. (Duncan - Gay)

Others conveyed a sense of 'before' and 'after' as their relationship developed, -

Sex takes a back seat. We don't have sex as often as we did when we first met. (Ivor - Gay)

and certain decisions were taken in the present that would have been inappropriate in the past.

When we were together for three years we wouldn't even have considered buying a house together let alone a commitment ceremony. ... We've lasted so long that we decided to do something for our tenth. (Andy - Gay)

e) *Past and present themes were contained in the stories couples told.* Couples contrasted their experiences in one college versus another; one job as compared with another; their experiences as children when they 'had nothing' with their experiences now - being financially comfortable. Couples also introduced themes around the differences between parental love, affirmation and anger management, and those features in the present relationship.

In all five categories, the present was contrasted favourably with the past - the exception being sexual behaviour. Some, though not all couples referred to the greater frequency of sexual experience in the past with nostalgia.

7:4.3 Group 3 Relationship Themes


Four themes were allocated to this group. Not all were directly relevant to change, but were central to couple's accounts. Beliefs emerged about the nature of relationships, and about influences on relationships - in this instance - lifestyle/money, children, and former partners. There were notable differences between the accounts of homosexual and heterosexual partners.

Theme 6 Relationships

A diversity of themes about relationships were discovered. Table 7:7 outlines the main codes, categories and propositions.

Table 7:7: Codes, categories and propositions concerning implicit and explicit beliefs about relationships

Initial codes Higher order beliefs	Categories: example of discourses in brackets	Propositions
Cementing the relationship physically; fearing physical intimacy; changing sexual behaviour; affection vs. sexuality; needing more sex; enjoying sexuality; controlling sexuality	Sexual activity is expected in close relationships: (I think because <i>that</i> (i.e. not being able to have sex) has just been such a main thing it has just blocked everything else out - we aren't the <i>normal couple</i> - Tricia)	Internal factors affect relationship quality and change
Swapping roles; the 'working wife'; dividing/sharing the chores; being in control; having a role	Partners in a relationship may/may not choose a role: (We don't actually subscribe to the theory of gender roles. - We don't either of us not to do things because we think it is the other one's territory - Maureen)	
Getting together; splitting up; confronting each other; feelings and emotions; balancing the relationship	Relationships involve internal change: (I see the change from friendship into a relationship. It became more intimate, and then it became an aggressive relationship - fiery in terms of passion. - Mandy)	
Sharing pain; feeling stressed; splitting up; running away; strain and trauma; growing closer	Relationship traumas have differing effects: (We were basically insecure, and we were running away from each other rather than sorting it out, and sort of looking on the black side of it all the time - Mo)	
Needing safety; providing safety; being in control; financial security; practical support; emotional support	Security, safety and support are necessary features of a relationship: (Any time I'm scared or worried, its Matt I want to talk to and Matt that I want to be with. My temperament can swing up and down and around an across., - but he makes me feel anchored to the ground - Jeremy)	
Being a couple proper; ending insecurity; acting properly; demonstrating commitment; spoiling what you have	Being publicly committed has good and bad effects: (You hear about so many couples that have a great relationship up until the moment they get married and then suddenly they're absolutely different - Adrian)	External factors affect relationship quality and change


 Direction of Analysis

Internal factors affect relationship quality and change.

a) *Sexual activity is expected in close relationships.* Sex was reported as a key feature. The first sexual experience together had a special role in *cementing* the relationship, placing it on a different level. In contrast, 'going off' sex was seen - both in heterosexual and homosexual relationships as pathological. -

I was finding it more and more difficult to be close sexually, so that was when I went for counselling. (Jane - Les)

Sex was expected to be more passionate at the beginning of the relationship - although homosexual males also added 'lustful' to their discourses. For both groups, sexual activity decreased as the relationship progressed, but gay males tended to accept the tendency -

You need the affection. That's a lot more important. You can manage without sex, you can't manage without that. (Chris - Gay)

Heterosexual couples tended to see the presence of children as responsible for the decrease in sexual activity, and the male in the relationship was more likely to express dissatisfaction, - blaming his partner -

I married the wrong woman didn't I? (Mike - Het)

in this case, implying that other women would be different.

Sexual activity in lesbian relationships was seen to be problematic for heterosexuals -

I think people can often separate emotion from sex. They can accept the fact that we love each other, but I think they separate that from what they perceive as some kind of immoral sexual relationship. (Maureen - Les)

'Extra-marital' sexual relationships were admitted in several gay male partnerships, and one lesbian relationship, but only one heterosexual couple admitted to an affair. The latter being a

strategy deliberately chosen and engaged in by both partners for the purpose of enlivening their relationship.

b) *Partners in a relationship may/may not choose a role.* Stereotypical domestic roles were taken for granted in heterosexual relationships, although there was evidence that fathers were involved in childcare - getting up in the night, carrying out 'school runs' etc.- however the fathers concerned were unemployed and therefore more available for such duties.

Domestic roles for homosexual couples were subject to more negotiation, and decided on the grounds of personal preferences, physical abilities, or the needs of the task. Typically -

There's a great mutual respect and it works well because we haven't taken on any kind of role for any reason other than that's what we happen to be good at - or hopefully, like. (Maureen - Les)

Several heterosexual couples had tried, or planned to - role swap. Usually one partner saw this as an opportunity to give the other partner a break, or a chance to be more fulfilled.

Stereotypical roles were problematic for two couples. One - heterosexual - male partner had difficulties with accepting his wife's wish to take paid employment - based on his fears that she might thereby become attracted to someone else. The other - a lesbian partner was angry to find herself fulfilling the 'breadwinner' role with very little help from her mate.

Two couples found difficulties arising from the fact that they worked together. In both cases, employment forced them into a power differential which needed careful handling in order to avoid problems in the relationship, making it difficult to fulfil their roles at work. -

It was awful, if we had had a row before we went into work it was very difficult to be nice to each other -- I didn't want to talk to Adrian in a nice voice all that day. (Mandy - Het)

There was evidence that partners adopted preferred emotional roles in the relationship which in times of stress were subject to reversal. -

Barbara: (After a violent episode) I just cope, and immediately Mo gets very sorry and very upset and the roles just switch.

Mo: You then become a comforter. (Les)

c) *Relationships involve internal change.* Four sub-categories emerged.

- *'Getting together'* started the change - moving the couple from individual to couple status. A variety of factors influenced the relationship beginning - physical attraction; an inner realisation that the relationship was desired - an inner conviction; some appealing feature of the other - for example, a sense of innocence; the role of factors such as 'fate'; falling in love, or following the example of friends (heterosexual couples only in this sample); and negative factors - 'Well, it wasn't good looks!'

Perceptions involved the awareness of 'becoming an item' in the context of friendship and cultural circumstances. Context affected the quality of the getting together experience. -

You grabbed what you could, because you weren't sure whether a bloke was gay or not.
(Peter - Gay)

- *Feelings and emotions* emerged in response to a partner's actions, or to shared traumas. They had positive connotations - loving, caring, warm, exciting; but also negative implications - inadequate, fearful, disappointed etc. The ability to share the same emotions was seen as positive. Emotional responses were implicit in change. It was important therefore to acknowledge the presence of feelings. -

We talk more about the problems in our relationship rather than -- pretending that they are not there. We try and confront how we are feeling. (Catherine - Les)

Some scripts included fewer references to feelings than others. These tended to be the scripts focusing more on concrete descriptions of events.

- *Confrontation* was seen either as a dynamic to be avoided, to be proud of avoiding, or to be enjoyed as a mark of a healthy relationship. -

It was a bit of an outburst, but it did us good. (Jane - Les)

Anger was acceptable if relationship stability and personal sanctuary could be guaranteed. Confrontation could threaten stability, or lead to change. -

Brian You obviously kept it bottled up, because I didn't know.

Jean Because if eve I spoke about it, you were on your high horse. (Het)

- Relationships were described as needing to achieve some kind of *internal balance*. For example, between individuality and 'togetherness', emotional volatility and emotional control, or dependence and independence. These were aspects of stability and change needing careful management - particularly in homosexual relationships. -

You can't possess somebody. I needed to go out on my own in the evenings, and he needed to trust me. (Ivor - Gay)

For a heterosexual couple, an early dependency reported by the wife may have been contingent on the presence of children. -

Even from the very beginning we were separate people, but certainly at the beginning I was very much more dependent on Mike. (Angie - Het)

d) *Relationship traumas have differing effects*. Although couples in the sample saw themselves in satisfying relationships, not all reported successful negotiation of traumatic experiences.

Traumas were seen as happenings which put a strain on the relationship - requiring special efforts to enable survival. Traumatic events acted as a test of the relationship - likened to the effects of birth or death. -

They were incidents in life which have the effect of drawing people together or pushing people apart. If you are close together, a birth can tighten it, but if you're not, it'll split you more.

(Anthony - Het)

Traumas upset the balance of the relationship, requiring a 'return to normal' once the problem had passed.

Some couples reported that the strain produced a sharing of physical and mental pain, which in turn led to greater closeness and mutual support. -

That brought us quite close because we had never experienced anything where we wanted the other. Having him there I wouldn't let him go. (Jess - Het)

Traumas were seen in some cases as uniting the couple against outside forces, -

Whenever we have trouble I think we normally recognise when we are being *got at*, or *feel* we're being got at anyway. (Julie - Het)

drawing strength from each other in painful circumstances, though not always in equal measure. -

Lyn I was supporting you more than I normally do.

Maureen --- It wasn't reciprocal. I was not actually giving Lyn very much back at that time.

(Les)

Others recognised that some points in their relationship were more vulnerable to traumas than others. -

I would say they were quite difficult years, and if there was going to be something that would split us up, I think that would have been it. (Jude - Het)

Some partners found themselves running away from problems - particularly in gay and lesbian relationships by pursuing other affairs. Couples from both groups reported a period of separation in response to traumatic events.

Partners who were able to turn to each other during periods of stress reported evidence of greater short-term success in managing traumatic experiences and problems.

e) *Safety, security and support are necessary features of a relationship.* The need for security was frequently linked to insecurity in childhood, in past relationships and other experiences. Insecurity was also seen to come from unpredictable, volatile behaviour; an erratic lifestyle; unwillingness to make choices and decisions, and a relationship 'going nowhere'. Sometimes the unstable personality of a partner created insecurity, and for homosexual couples 'coming out' experiences, or the fear of 'coming out' caused anxiety.

In contrast, security and safety were seen to stem from a sense of normality and predictability; being in one's 'own place'; being in the 'same place'; being with a partner; giving each other mutual support, and knowing that reliability was a key feature of the relationship.

External factors affect relationship quality and change.

The role of ritual commitment emerged as an external factor influencing the quality of a relationship.

Being publicly committed has good and bad effects. All heterosexual couples and three of the homosexual group in the sample referred to public relationship rituals such as marriage.

Homosexual partners referred to the gay commitment ceremony - a Humanist Affirmation Ceremony. Commitment ceremonies were seen variously as exhibitionist and a matter of empty words, or as positive - the object of planning over a number of years in order to affirm a relationship. The ceremony served to confirm status as a 'couple proper'; to mark the passage from lust to love, and to celebrate the years achieved together. Ceremonial commitment could end the insecurity of the relationship as well as provide protection for the children brought into a partnership. The meanings of such a ceremony were therefore linked

to the relational needs of the couple. The couples tended to use the word 'marriage' and treat it as if it were a Freudian slip.

Heterosexual couples had differing views of marriage. Some saw it as necessary to confirming their status as a couple. Others married because it was convenient to some plan - for example, to emigrate. For others, marrying or not-marrying was a matter of principle. Some determined not to marry because they resented following other people's expectations. Some because they feared a negative change of behaviour towards each other if they were committed to a contract which left them without the need to 'work at the relationship'.

Theme 7 Lifestyle and Money

This theme not only includes discourses surrounding money and standard of living, but also categories concerning work and unemployment; buying houses; possessions generally, and social life. For some couples these themes hardly appeared whereas for others they were central to the scripts.

One proposition emerged - that money is influential in relationships. Four categories were relevant. A summary of the findings is discussed below - again, tabular representation being inadequate to include relevant details.

Money is influential in relationships

a) *The use of money.* Three couples mentioned money management, of which two were lesbians. Financial matters were administered jointly, well organised and planned - on the grounds that experience with previous partners had been chaotic and stressful. One lesbian and one gay male couple struggled financially, but the remaining homosexual couples - male and female - had a good standard of living. Reference was made to the Pink Pound as a

powerful economic force. One male couple argued that gays have a high joint income and therefore are targeted by advertisers etc.

A number of the heterosexual couples were on low incomes. The male partners concerned were unemployed due to ill health, and the female partners had low-paid, part-time employment because of their child-rearing commitments. Only three of the heterosexual couples in the sample were financially secure. Proportionately therefore, the homosexual couples were more affluent.

b) *Money as symbolic.* In some cases, money was seen as a symbol of control - particularly in a heterosexual relationship. Where the male had control of money, the female partner at some stage came to see this as a denial of her rights. Where the female partner was in control, the situation was justified on the grounds that she would manage the money better.

Money was also seen as a motivation. Saving money for pensions, holidays etc. was evidence that the couple were able to prepare for, and protect, the future. Controlling money was also seen as an opportunity for the couple to control their lives - a 'way forward'.

Money was linked to trust. The homosexual partner who handed over his pay packet demonstrated trust and dependency suggestive of the traditional stereotypical power imbalance found in a husband or wife role -

Chas: I've always come home with the wages and wop them over -

Peter: Your what?

Chas: Well, the bit I have. I have to give it over don't I/ But I don't go short of anything.
If I want to go out I always have plenty. I've never gone short of anything. (Gay)

c) *Money has practical implications for the couple.* Changing financial fortunes affect the relationship. Shortage of money was cited as a source of stress and confrontation. Comparison between the lifestyle of the couple and of former partners or friends was seen to cause distress if the comparison highlighted difficulties in the present relationship. A financially comfortable lifestyle produced fewer discourses about problems, and more positive narratives.

d) *Money or lack of it affected attitudes and behaviour.* Couples whose lives were beset by lack of money reported positive effects - for example, in terms of a maturity developing from having to deal with hard times. On the other hand, couples who were used to a fair degree of affluence admitted to the powerfulness and attractiveness of such a lifestyle. -

He was emotionally blackmailing you, and this was confusing for you cos you'd had such a beautiful, perfect set-up where you came from with him. (Matt - Gay)

Gay male couples tended to see houses as important, and were particularly interested in interior design or objects d'art.

Theme 8 Children

Only three couples failed to mention children. Two were gay male, and the third lesbian.

Three major propositions emerged with respect to children.

Children create change in relationships.

Children had effects in relationships as soon as a pregnancy was announced. Children were planned for and welcomed by couples, but an unplanned pregnancy could be a disaster - creating fears about managing financially; about whether the couple was 'ready', and for couples who were at the childrearing stage thirty years ago - the risk of disgrace and a forced marriage. In contrast, a pregnancy could be seen as the only reason for the existence of the relationship.

Couples talked of the problems children bring relevant to the age of the children and the lifestage of the couple. A miscarriage was not only an emotionally stressful event, but could also lead to revelations of past experiences which threatened to disrupt the relationship.

Traumatic birth experiences and constant illness in children made them the couple's central focus and led to constant anxiety and a feeling that life was unpredictable.

For parents whose children were healthy, there were other pressing problems - managing conflict between the siblings; providing a taxi service, saving for, and organising weddings, and providing a safe haven for grandchildren.

Children from former relationships were often the source of stress - largely due to the actions of a former partner who sought to distance the children from the new relationship.

Stepchildren were also cited as the source of stress - usually to the step-parent who found him or herself the focus for the child's anger about the parental break-up.

However, apart from these instances, partners who had children were very positive about their effects. It was acknowledged that they were hard work, and could bring financial and practical difficulties, but for the majority of partners were seen as giving life a particular meaning.

Only one partner expressed dissatisfaction with the parental role - an attitude stately linked to the gender and personality of one of her children.

Children are treated differently according to different criteria

Some of the scripts provided powerful evidence of gender effects in the desirability and treatment of children. Producing a son could be seen as giving one's partner a special gift -

I would give P his first son. He'd got three daughters and (although) he took on Billy (a stepson) when he was nine months old, to actually give him a blood son, that felt special to me. (Carol - Het)

A son could also be the object of grandparent's obsessive attention - to the detriment of his sisters and the displeasure of his parents. Favouritism of this nature was seen as causing behavioural problems in the child, and disruption in the family.

A daughter could be the focus of extreme ambivalence in her mother - a preference for a son sometimes being justified in terms of practical considerations such as the ready availability of boy's clothing. Resulting behaviour may reflect that ambivalence. -

When all the monitors went off ... the worst thing for me, even though I've joked that I didn't want this little girl ... and I'm thinking 'That's my kid!' We sat there thinking 'That's ours'. It snowed ... silly little things -counting the cracks in the ceiling and the cobwebs. (Wendy - Het)

For couples who were old enough to experience both, grandchildren were seen to be more enjoyed than children. Having less responsibility and more experience provided grandparents with a different perspective on their grandchildren.

Adolescents were expected to be difficult, with teenage girls being seen as more difficult to handle than adolescent boys. Adult children - especially girls, were seen by their mother as companions - and for one mother, provided a powerful affirmation of her current lesbian relationship. -

Gina: A grandson. From my youngest daughter -- and they asked Yvonne to be a godmother.
Yvonne: So I have an official role. (Les)

Adult children also provided a forum for reflecting on early personal experiences, leading to a resolution to improve matters with one's children. -

(In the early fifties - pregnant and unmarried):
I was literally on my own. My father was dead and I used to think 'Thank God my father is not alive.' I look at Anne and think - 'I would be *there*. I don't care what she's done. That's my girl and she's at home with me!' (Jude - Het)

Such personal criteria were evident in influencing parental approaches to children. Some partners abandoned contact with their own children because of constant opposition from a former partner. In contrast, some children were treasured and cast as the central players in their parents lives after having survived serious illness, or being born after mother had suffered a long series of miscarriages.

Children create different issues for gay, lesbian and heterosexual partners

Heterosexual couples showed evidence of stereotypical expectations with regard to children. By implication the forming of a relationship meant begetting of children, and several couples expressed a desire that this should be so. Unplanned pregnancies sometimes resulted in initial unhappiness - moving to a more positive view over time. Children were for some couples the major purpose of their relationship - a shared goal established before the relationship was seriously entered into. -

Liz: Looking back I can't conceive of our life without children can you? I mean, that's the whole point of getting married --

Ant.: - that was a very clear ambition for both of us. (Het)

Exceptions to the pattern were justified in terms of a preference for the freedom of childlessness; an inability physiologically to produce children, or a feeling of being too immature to cope with children. Alternatively, more deep-seated explanations were identified.

I've never had an ambition to have children or get married -- when I was a little girl I always said 'I never want children'. (Mandy - Het)

Such explanations however, were subject to powerful cultural discourses. -

They say 'Oh you *will* (want children) when you get older!' (Angie - Het)

Some couples placed children in such a central position in their lives that they were considered to be more important than the partner. This was more evident in the discourses of women.

Female partners also appeared to hold specific beliefs about children and their nurture - that they were a bar to a woman leaving the relationship, and that children needed protection from such things as illness, the disgrace of having free meals at school or a drunken father.

Male partners expressed fewer beliefs about children but tended to talk about their parental roles as breadwinner, bath-time manager, or bedtime story reader.

Homosexual couples held more idiosyncratic beliefs about children. One male couple expressed disapproval at gays (assuming lesbians), attempting parenthood on the grounds that children would have inadequate role models in a gay family. -

Chas: They can't be brought up properly can they?

Peter: Mm, I think with two women

Chas: Then again I don't think they can because one's got to be -

Peter: You mean butch

Chas: Yeah. Try to be a man but can't. What's the child going to turn to? (Gay)

Lesbian couples responded in contrasting ways. For some, children had never been considered, even before gay awareness had developed. Causal explanations for choosing not to have children included fears of possessing defective nurturing skills stemming from personal experiences of inadequate mothering; and worries that relationship enjoyment could not survive the presence of children.

Lesbian couples who investigated the possibility of having a child by donor took careful thought. Planning the practical details was seen as essential, and sometimes the decision not to go ahead was based upon practical considerations - for example, the need to follow a career, or a realisation of the full implications of being a parent - in terms of disruption of lifestyle.

Theme 9 Former Partners (FPs)

Former partners for heterosexual couples in the sample refers to the spouse/partner from a previous heterosexual relationship. For gay and lesbian couples, former partners will have held the same role, but may have been part of a heterosexual *or* a homosexual relationship.

Certain 'former partner effects' have already featured under other theme headings. However, a summary of the evidence from transcripts demonstrated that former partners had a strong influence on couple's relationships, grouped according to five propositions:

Former partners have benevolent effects

Very few instances in this category appeared, but positive effects were seen when former partners - by their approach and attitude 'gave permission' for the new relationship to begin - one even acting as a mediator between the new partners. Benevolent effects were reported where the former partner became childminder - not only for his own, but for the other children of the couple. Former partners were also noted for acting as rescuers - from suicide, or financial disaster. Some couples even saw a benevolence in that negative behaviour of former partners had led to positively changed behaviour in the new relationship.

Former partners have negative effects

For many couples, former partners provided an unhappy context against which their relationship was set. The negative behaviour of former partners was the most frequently cited explanation for the break-up of the first relationship, and some partners saw the other's former partner as an unseen presence in the present relationship. -

Most of our relationship has had three people. I feel like Princess Diana saying that. It was like myself, you and Richard. (Matt - Gay)

Negative effects from former partners were seen in his or her refusal to accept the new relationship; in undermining the confidence of one or both partners; and in turning children from the first relationship against the partner who was now absent parent. Former partners were also seen to have had the power to change things if they had behaved differently. -

Had he been nice to me I would have said, 'Oh, I'm really ever so sorry that I even thought about leaving. Can I come back?' (Jill - Het)

Even a former partner characterised as benevolent (a male in a heterosexual relationship) was seen negatively - to have had total control over his former wife's rights, and their financial management.

Former partners affected the commencement of the new relationship

Rejection by a former partner was sometimes seen as the instigation of the new relationship - a choice by default.

Although not always directly related to the former partner's actions, the slowness of the divorce process was cited by some couples as a negative former partner effect. Couples reported that they were thus inhibited from formalising their own relationship.

Former Partner's behaviour and attitudes were part of the storying of the new relationship

For a number of couples the former partner provided an affective context against which their ongoing relationship was set. The behaviour of former partners provided a stark contrast to the current relationship, and resulted in anxieties and behavioural responses in the present.

Sharing former partner stories enabled some couples to cement, and determine the desired dynamics for their own relationship. Former partners seen as possessive, violent and vindictive, undermined the confidence of partners to create a more satisfying relationship. Devious, or irritating former partner behaviour in the present rendered a couple helpless in combating his or her wishes.

Some partners reported a former partner who was untrustworthy and manipulative, an emotional blackmailer, or well defended against rejection - experiences leaving a feeling of confusion - .

I didn't know if I was on my what not or my elbow at one time. I was being pulled every way, that was a very difficult time, very, very, very difficult time. In hindsight I think I can see how manipulated that I was. (Paul - Het)

Perceptions such as these were balanced against contrary observations when the same partner could be seen as 'good fun' - adding to the confusion.

Occasionally, spouses understood the attraction of unpleasant mates in terms of childhood experiences and the inner need to continue the familiar. Some recognised other internal desires. -

In retrospect, I think about things clearly now. I had two different feeling about him. One was the feelings about the person - like I can save him from himself. -- I also had this love affair with the lifestyle I had because I was with him, and I found it very difficult to give it up. -- I tried to explain to you just where I grew up and how my childhood had been. Being with Richard was that the situation was almost a continuation of that. (Jeremy - Gay)

However, these became the stories shared by the new couple - the new partner confirming the other's experience, or wistfully longing to achieve the same level of impact. -

If only I was Richard --- (Matt - Gay)

Former partner experiences create anxiety in the current relationship

Couples talked of being cautious as a result of the experiences attached to former partners. Some had determined to avoid relationships altogether; others found that new relationships were seriously affected by former ones. Some reported that former partner experiences had created fear and dependency in current relationships. This was particularly seen in the fear and management of anger. Expectations set up with the first partner were hard to dispel with the second. -

In that situation he (FP) would have lost his temper and quite likely I would have had the bottle flung at me, so whenever things like that happened I was always waiting for something to explode. (Jeremy - Gay)

Former partners were held responsible for unpredictable behaviour in the present; a need to hold back for fear of rejection, or an inability to talk things through.

Lack of self respect, being a victim, being dragged down, being stuck, were all personal effects stemming from former partner behaviour, and sometimes led to difficulties in the new relationship which for some couples took a length of time to change.

However, the new partner was often seen as rescuer - through patient, consistent behaviour, wooing the other to a greater sense of security, or creating a reframe within the recent relationship. -

Ivor: All the ups and downs in our relationship are tied into him (FP).

Andy: Well they were, but they are not now. There's no threat with him any more. (Gay)

Sometimes a new trust was built almost instantaneously. An inner awareness that the new partner was different, -

Maureen: There is no question in my mind that I trust her totally and the other two people I'd lived with I didn't trust at all. I knew they were lying to me. I knew they were manipulative. ---

Lyn: --- Every time I got home I didn't know who was going to be in it. That's the point at which I must have instinctively trusted Maureen. (Les)

the new partner instantly compared with the former.

Whether positive or negative, former partner effects were integrated by couples into their story, and were inevitably placed on the outside of their relationship, whilst still being acknowledged as having powerful internal effects.

7:4.4 Group 4. Person Perception

In this group, the themes deal with perceptions of self, partner, or significant others.

Themes 10 and 11 Perception of Others, Perception of Self

These two themes are considered together as they are seen to perform similar functions in the co-construction of narratives. There appeared to be no differences in these themes between heterosexual and homosexual couples. Three main propositions arose:

Perceptions of self and other characterise people and relationships

In their accounts couples used dual perceptions to story thoughts, actions and abilities - not only in terms of the individual - 'You were brilliant', or - 'I'm a Virgo and I've put everything I've got into this.' - but also collectively - 'I think looking back now, men didn't feel like that.' Perceptions are defined here as understandings of how the self or the other *acts*, or what he or she *is*.

Perceptions of self and other perform functions in the narrative

Five categories were identified under this proposition:

a) *Perceptions are creative*. Evidence was seen in several ways. Speakers used self and other perception in order to piece together a recollection and organise memory. -

It was so refreshing to find a church full of human people. *Real* people, *normal* people. Trouble is, we've been to some with such sanctimonious, pious - but these let you be yourself.

It was a relief to find somebody who understood. (James - Het)

Through perceptions, each created the other and expectations of the other -

He's always got to have the last word. He'll keep on until he's ground you six foot under with the last word. He's just waiting and hovering for someone to slip up so that he can come in laughing. (Di - Het)

as well as expectations of the relationship. -

Her desire to do things without me, I'm not quite sure how far that's going to go. -- Several times at work and several other - situations people have - gone off on their own lines and couples have - gone apart. (Alan - Het)

b) *Perceptions are comparative.* It was noticeable that in a number of scripts, self perception and other perception occurred together.

Yes, Chas tends to bend with the wind, but I - will take criticism as long as it is constructive, but if I think someone is talking lie a prat, I'll tell them. (Peter - Gay)

In such instances, couples retained a balance between presenting an agreed tale and an independent view. Alternatively, self and other perceptions allowed a comparative analysis to be made. -

When we met I was the 'experienced' married man, but she was quite the opposite. Now, Janet is a sexual sort of person. (David - Het)

c) *Perceptions are conformative.* Some scripts, or part scripts included self and other perceptions presented as unitary observations - 'we' as an item sharing the same traits. -

We were basically insecure and we both did a lot of running away from each other rather than sorting it out and sort of looking on the black side. (Barnbara - Les)

Alternatively, unitary perceptions conveyed the perceptions others might have of the couple,

Oh, we were well known for our parties. (Duncan - Gay)

or a self perception presented to produce a metaperception in the other. -

I just felt that I needed my own space and I needed Andy to realise that I needed to go out on my own in the evenings, and he needed to trust me. (Ivor - Gay)

Unitary perceptions were seen by some as unhealthy in a relationship. -

This is the thing about Prague because I had got so used to my thoughts that we were very close and that we liked what each other liked, I couldn't understand it. (The partner liking Prague). It was a big shock. A big realisation. Its good because it is terrible to go along in tandem in a way. (Jane - Les)

d) *Perceptions confer labels.* Perceptions of self and other were conveyed in striking higher order beliefs. 'He was manic.' 'She was bossy.' 'She was a striking woman.' 'He was in an emotional state.' Labels of this nature acted as verbal snapshots of the person perceived, creating instant pictures of the dynamics of the self or the relationship. -

There was no order, and I'm a Virgoan and I love order, whereas Lyn's a Sagittarian and far more pragmatic. She could see that eventually it would come right and it has. (Maureen - Les)

Scripts of this nature produced a rich and vibrant narrative.

e) *Perceptions provide causal explanations.* Perceptions of self and other were often used to interpret behaviour. For example, discussing the suicide of a friend, one partner remarked -

I'm still alive. Put it that way. That's the way I look at it. I know it sounds callous but of course, Maurice didn't want to get old. (Peter - Gay)

Perceptions of self and other bring an awareness of change

Gaining a new perception of oneself was seen to lead to change. -

When we went to Relate she did a lot of work with me about my past and I'd come from a background where my mum was very derogatory. — She said that the thing is, its not that I think J's going to go off with anybody else, its that if she's talking to someone else, I think I'm no competition, cos its to do with my own feeling about myself. It was the first time anybody had put it like that. Light bulbs went ping! and it was 'Yeah, that's what's happened!' (Mo - Les)

Likewise, a comparison of perception of self with perception of another led to an awareness of change. -

I've only just realised how burnt out I was now, and that's by talking to Barbara. I've got quite close to her and I see everything in her that I used to have and it makes me realise 'God, I must have been more burnt out than I thought I was.' (Mo - Les)

A note about scripts:

Perceptions of self and other produced qualitative differences between scripts. Several general points emerged from the study of the transcripts.

- Perception of self, or perception of another presented alone conveyed the impression of a one-sided argument.
- Perception of self *and* other conveyed the impression of a jointly constructed narrative which allowed the speaker to be aware of his or her impact upon the other.

- 'You' perceptions implied a close knowledge or understanding of the other as separate from 'me'.
- 'We' perceptions assumed sameness - I am this way, and so is s/he. A generalised perception.

Scripts more elaborated with self and other perceptions produced a fuller story containing more insight into how the relationship functioned.

Theme 12 The Role of Others


This was the most frequently occurring theme in the transcripts. The 'other people' concerned largely fell into three groups - the *relational* others such as partner, children, parents, lovers etc.; *social* others such as neighbours and friends, and the '*official*' others such as doctors, lawyers, ministers, social workers, police etc.

As detailed in Table 7:8 the influence of significant others was found to fall into two classifications - *instrumental* and *strategic*. Instrumental outcomes were judged as those having a material effect on what couples saw as their options. Strategic effects were categorised as those evident when couples quoted others as validation for their own actions.

Shared features between codes and categories were detected throughout the sample, but major differences between homosexual and heterosexual groups were also identified.

Table 7:8: Propositions and categories relating to couple's perceptions of the role of others in change

Initial Codes: Others - Higher order beliefs	Categories: Others - (Sample discourses in brackets)	Propositions
define; impose expectations; make assumptions; provide meanings	provide a context for change: <i>(The way things were at the time, everybody expected us to get married - Jude)</i>	Others are instrumental in change
are supportive/not supportive; cause difficulties; or are enabling	affect the quality of change: (With Sandy it stayed really good because she was really supportive, because she actually helped me to go out with Philip. - Julie)	
especially parents and family, are powerful; give approval; act as role models; 'need to be told'	particularly parents and family are influential in change: <i>(My Mum's going to abandon us if we are going to do that - Kate)</i>	
are invited to dinner parties; talk things over; give advice; carry out rituals and ceremonies	have official and unofficial social functions: <i>(It was a conversation you had with the doctor -- and she said something to you which triggered off - Jill)</i>	
are involved in the story; comment on our choices; give us new perspectives	can be catalysts in change: <i>(Graham fell asleep on us and we talked and talked and talked, didn't we? - Brian)</i>	Others have strategic effects in relationships
do things differently; partners are different;	can provide comparisons or act as models for desirable behaviour: <i>(We have friends in Truro. They have a different kind of relationship - Alan)</i>	
will support my story; see me more clearly than I see myself	can provide supporting evidence: <i>(Everyone else was telling me that she was having it away with Jed. - Rob)</i>	
blame us; will disapprove; will approve	can approve or disapprove: <i>(I think they will look down their noses at that - Ian)</i>	


 Direction of Analysis

Others are Instrumental in Change

Four categories were identified under this proposition.

a) *Others provide a context for change.* Significant others were found to create normative and meaningful contexts for the couple relationship through an interpretative process made up of definitions, expectations and assumptions.

Others had a role in *defining* the couple's relationship in negative ways. Homosexual couples reported that their relationship was sometimes termed 'a friendship' - by parents who found it difficult to accept the gender orientation of a son or daughter. Others therefore created an unspoken secret with attendant anomalies - such as an awareness that the couple slept together, but an overt insistence that 'nothing was going on'.

Heterosexual couples found that *their* relationships were sometimes defined by expectations and stereotypes which labelled their alliance as unacceptable - forcing them to make unnecessary choices: -

Jude was expecting Bruce, and the way things were at the time everybody expected us to get married. We decided not to because we weren't going to be forced into it, and we split! (Bill - Het)

In providing a context of disapproval significant others sometimes enabled partners to establish behavioural and cognitive independence, especially where couples were able to weigh up relevant issues, and give primacy to the relationship. In some cases though, couples adopted a defensive position in order to avoid the pain of censure. -

(In response to disapproving neighbours) We just let them get on with it. (Ivor - Gay)

Others were curious about homosexual relationships and often made assumptions about the roles of the partners. Lesbian cohorts for example, often found themselves assigned to male

and female roles by others - conclusions based upon physical characteristics like body size or dominance.

The assumptions of others contained the cultural discourses which defined acceptable behaviour in family life, even for heterosexual couples. Depending on the context, such assumptions were seen either to limit the possibilities open to the couple -

We had a baby-sitter problem

We asked my Aunt. She wouldn't. 'Its a price you have to pay if you have them.' It wasn't the thing to have baby-sitters. Now in the village everybody has baby-sitters.

(Linda - Het)

or in a more positive guise, to suggest alternatives so far not considered. -

When Ian first - left, his wife, and came to live with me - mm - I don't know whether it was because other people had asked me the question. I think Gerald (brother-in-law) had. I think he said, 'Well is he going to marry you? Are you going to get married?' I thought well, somebody asking me that question was a sort of - 'Well if you were free to marry me, would you?' (Jill - Het)

Significant others created meaning in the couple relationship. Children created 'salient points' in the couple life cycle. In contrast, adult others conferred meaning by labelling the relationship in metaphor - 'This is a house full of love;' or by characterising a partner according to past experience of his or her behaviour. -

His mum said he used to sulk a lot, and John and Jenny think he used to sulk. But you don't sulk much now do you? I don't let him sulk 'cos we talk about it. (Kate - Het)

b) *Others affect the quality of change.* Effects were found to be either positive or negative. Friends could be supportive and encourage the growth of the relationship - especially in the early stages. Alternatively, friends were known to show negative responses if the new relationship threatened to break up an established group - making it harder for the partnership to survive.

Friends were particularly important in homosexual relationships, and their responses to the couple were taken very seriously. Disappointed expectations of support from friends sometimes led to a deeper sense of disillusionment and difficulty in periods of change, and cynicism about the value of friendships.-

I just think that some people just want you when you are well and when you can give *them* something. I just still find it really difficult to come to terms with especially some of our friends that we thought were real friends. (Catherine - Les)

Neighbours were seen on occasion to cause difficulties in the life of the couple giving them a sense of being observed - termed by one homosexual couple as 'the Neighbourhood Watch Committee.'

Family members sometimes caused greater anxiety during periods of stress by using ill-judged remarks, and friends who broke promises or *changed their minds* often left a couple despairing, until a new sense of direction had been developed. -

Barbara: (Completing the graph) I've put disappointment here cos that was a hideous time when Dave pulled out. It was awful wasn't it?

Int: Ah. When he said he wasn't going to be donor?

Barbara: Yeah cos he said he would and it was really great. We had it all set up and everything and at the last moment he changed his mind.

Mo: We couldn't talk about it.

Barbara: No. Not for ages, so we decided not to go that way... (Les)

The presence of elderly relatives was also reported to severely inhibit relationship quality and development - leading to anger and frustration in the present, or regrets and guilt in retrospect.

Anthony: I didn't behave very well as a matter of fact, he (Liz's father) upset Liz a great deal and that upset me...and I wasn't terribly nice to him and looking back, I regret that. Like Liz I didn't really understand a lot and I'm not proud of the way I behaved towards him.

Liz: Anthony was sorely tried, he really was. Oh boy... (Het)

But in several narratives, 'others' had destructive roles which prompted change - for example, fears and protective responses developed in a relationship with a former partner carried over into the new relationship and alerted the couple to the need to create new expectations and behaviours. Some 'destructive others' threatened the well being of partners. The story of discrimination and intimidation told by one homosexual couple demonstrated how unpleasant events could be turned to good effect.

Int: It must have been difficult between you -- Did you find you took it out on each other?

Peter: No. It bonded us.

Chas: We had to keep together didn't we? Because nobody outside was sort of -- (Gay)

In contrast there is evidence that others have powerful roles in facilitating beginning and ongoing relationships. Homosexual couples for example, often looked to straight friends to give them passage into the gay community. -

I went out with her. I walked into The Bull, the first night I have ever been in a gay pub. She turned round and I looked round and she said, 'What are you doing in a place like this?' I said 'I don't know what you mean'. She said 'It's a gay bar'. I didn't know what to say. We had a couple of drinks. I said 'I am gay'. (Matt - Gay)

Interestingly, instances of unhelpful others occurred more often than examples of facilitators.

c) *Parents and family are particularly influential in change.* Parents were quoted as the significant others whose approval was most sought. The instigators of present behaviour patterns, both parents - even grandparents were held up as role models. -

Liz: Your mother was extremely ambitious for you.

Ant: Was she?

Liz: Oh gosh yes.

Ant: I suppose she was...It was Dad who was - well he was delighted when -

Liz: I think your grandfather was very keen on people being upright and decent people rather than in positions of power, I think that came very strongly from your grandfather from what I can gather, but not your mother who was extremely anxious that you should do well and go to Oxford and do all this...

Ant: I think it was my grand father, you're probably right. You see dad wasn't around, my male model was grandpa. (Ant = Anthony - Het)

Mothers were particularly seen as potent inhibitors of present behaviour and choices. Lack of nurturing skills in mother were seen as causal explanations for reluctance to have offspring in the present relationship, given the fears of persistently repeating her mistakes. Alternatively, couples were anxious to improve upon past parental role models. -

All I know is that I've got a load of baggage of how my family was and how I was brought up and now what I would do to make it better if I did have children, to what I was as a child. (James - Het)

Mothers were also cast as having either positive or negative effects in the present. The first introduction to a new partner's mother could be a very moving and significant event. -

Int: What do you think it did for you that meeting (with his mother)?
Jill: It gave me a family again. (tearfully) (Het)

Women in heterosexual relationships were more likely to report a strong and close association with mother - sometimes to the detriment of the marital partner. -

I had my mother for 30 something years because my family were with me for all my life. He's only been part of a section of my life. (Linda - Het)

Some mothers were seen as the source of disappointed expectations -

Her reaction wasn't the kind of reaction I was expecting from a mother. (Tina - Het)

or were regarded with a compulsion to please, as if to win approval. -

Before we had the break-up I felt compelled to do everything for my Mum, I don't know why, I just had this thing that I had to do it. (Carol - Het)

Both homosexual and heterosexual partners had 'a need to tell' parents about their relationship, but homosexual partners were more likely to have fears about being disowned. Negative responses after 'coming out' to parents were interpreted as being due to internal factors. -

Barbara: My mum was under a lot of stress at the time.

Mo: and she has apologised since. (Les)

Partners from both groups were aware of being scrutinised. A lesbian talked of how she was extensively vetted by her partner's family - a process finally giving her a sense of being accepted for who she was, as well as providing her with a more acceptable family than her own.

Heterosexual partners too were 'vetted'. Class and lifestyle issues were important to prospective in-laws in these instances rather than gender orientation, but for both groups, where parents began by being antagonistic a change of approach was gradually achieved - leading most often to an uneasy truce. Relationships were more easily repaired between women and their mothers than those with father. Only four men in the sample mentioned the relationship with father as rewarding, and in only twelve scripts was father mentioned specifically.

d) *Others have official and unofficial social functions.* The role of friendships is - as the literature suggests - very important for gay couples, and this aspect is discussed further in the Orientation Themes section of the chapter. Friends fulfilled social roles more often for gay couples than for straights who in this sample made few references to social events with friends apart from the pre-partnership experiences.

However, other social roles were identified in the data. Several references were made to the role of therapists, counsellors and purveyors of alternative medicines in couple's narratives. At least two of the couples in the non-client group had visited Relate, and two others had undergone therapy with SOCA. Therapeutic counsellors fulfilled the role of professional

helper, and were seen as people who could provide a different perspective to that supplied by friends and relatives. Therapist's words were seen as powerful in creating positive change and enabling the couple to see things differently.

On the other hand there were stories of therapists who handled things badly, allowed or encouraged too much pain to be experienced, and one couple acknowledged that a surfeit of therapy leads to a state where nothing more can be learned.

Couples also made references to the social control functions of the legal profession, for example being involved in divorce proceedings. A lesbian couple took their cause to the House of Commons to try to obtain equal pension rights. Furthermore, references were made to social institutions such as CAB, the police, and health professionals.

On the whole, these were interpreted as benevolent influences on the couple relationship in terms of protection of their rights, and catalysts to change, but homosexual couples reiterated their liability to be treated unequally against their heterosexual counterparts.

Others have Strategic Effects in Relationships

Couples include stories of others in order to provide a context for their own actions and feelings. Others are 'used' in causal explanations and justifications. Four categories were identified.

a) *Others may be catalysts in change.* Others were cited as unintentional promoters of change. The friend who fell asleep allowed space for acquaintances to get to know each other. The companion in hospital unknowingly provided a mutual context for two people to meet for the first time when they visited him.

Janet: Tom was ill. We both visited him.

David: Oh yes, we met outside the hospital. (Het)

b) *Others can provide comparisons or act as models for desirable behaviour.* In scrutinising the relationships of others, couples made assessments of their own. Comparisons carried the implication that there are diverse ways of managing a relationship. -

Ours is very different. We're very much together. We do things together.

They do things on their own. (Andy - Gay)

Comparisons of this nature were found more often in homosexual relationships, or in heterosexual client couples who needed to judge their own relationship quality. -

Just to have somebody to say 'Look, you're not on your own. Loads of people have this.'

(It) was a relief to find somebody who understood and could say 'Not all marriages work on their own.' (Tricia - Het)

Partners were often compared favourably with friends in the heterosexual non-client group,

Mandy: I can tell you things like I could a best friend sort of thing, which a lot of women I know probably don't get that with their husbands because they're not in touch with that. But I've always known that Adrian is in touch with the feminine side. (Het)

and in this sample, comparisons with former partners identified the current relationship as superior in closeness, management of anger, administration of money, ability to talk and be open, and feelings of security and well being.

Others were included as 'templates of experience' - models that may or may not be imitated, but enabled couples to assess their own priorities and beliefs. -

You hear about so many couples that have a great relationship up until the moment they get married and then suddenly they're absolutely different. I don't think there is a fear that, 'oh Christ I don't want to get married because I'm concerned about what they say is true', but I don't necessarily feel that we actually need to do anything to what we've got different, because what we've got is fine. (Kerry - Het)

c) *Others can provide supporting evidence.* Partners needing some kind of confirmation to defend a disputed point or to support a decision, narrated recollected conversations to assist their arguments; -

I said, 'I can't do it Dad. I can't be having babies.' - - - And he said, 'Well, you'll probably miss them in your old age.' (Yvonne - Les)

while in other contexts friends or official others were quoted in order to present *a case* to a partner. -

But it simmered for the whole year. Last year I was at college for the first time I knew deep down that I wanted university, but I was really scared to say that because you know, you feel guilty that we've got good jobs, and the money and things and you feel like you're being very selfish to take that away from the other partner; and people used to say to me at college, 'Are you going to go on to university?' and I'd say 'No.' and they'd say 'Well you really should,' and I'd say, 'No really I can't. I've got to go back to work.' (Mandy - Het)

d) *The approval of others makes us acceptable.* The impact of others was most marked in their ability to instil confidence in partners. When others approved, this had a knock-on effect on the relationship as well as making a partner feel good about him/herself. -

(When I got married) it made me feel better, because when you're a mother of two - an unmarried mother - older people don't look at you the same as what you are if you say you're a married mother with two. It made me feel a lot more whole, and although we were a family anyway, we were a *proper* family and it finalised everything. (Angie - Het)

For homosexual couples particularly, acceptance of their relationship was seen as affirming. Social recognition, and normative discourses carried implications of acceptability, and inclusion into the cultural community. -

Chas: They come here and we're just accepted. Its lovely and everybody speaks. Even the vicar wants us to go to church and I mean, round here, touch wood its, you can't fault -

- Peter: Oh no I mean, what is it the vicar did, Mike Evans did? The other week when we came out of church with Melanie. He kissed Melanie and he said "Oh I can't kiss you, they'll see at the back of church!" Bit of camp like that and you know its -
- Chas: Its accepted. Its a nicer thing, you know you're accepted. (Gay)

Theme 13 Orientation and Gender

Orientation and gender themes are discussed together on the grounds that sexual and gender orientation topics co-occur.

Gender themes appeared in heterosexual scripts whereas sex was discussed *as if* male/female sexuality were the only norm. Homosexual couples on the other hand (not surprisingly) talked more self-consciously both about sexual orientation and gender themes.

Four propositions were identified, and are summarised in Table 7:9.

The self is a gendered being.

a) *The homosexual view.* 'Coming out' was a common theme amongst the gay partners. Coming out could be defined as being clear about, and admitting one's gayness. The expectation that one *should* come out appeared to have gained the status of a cultural discourse within the group. Only one couple failed to use the concept, although the issue of recognising one's gayness was evident - used at one point as a causal explanation for a relationship break-up -

- Peter: I -- think you couldn't accept the fact that you were gay.
- Chas: Do you reckon?

Peter: -- You used to deny to yourself I think because when I used to deliberately say 'Oh Pufter!' you used to huff. (Gay)

The couple concerned were in their fifties which suggests that coming out *has* become part of gay culture since it became an issue in the 1980s.

For most couples, coming out was a personal rather than a political issue. It was important to admit to a gay identity, to explore its meaning for oneself, and its impact upon others. Coping with the responses of others to one's coming out was frequently stressful.

Coming out had different meanings for different partners. Some negotiated the experience gradually - growing into a personal awareness, and 'outing' with apparent ease. Others agonised over the need to find a 'right time', to have safety-net provisions. -

I'd had an unofficial offer of a job anyway so I knew I had somewhere to go, so I thought 'Right. The time is right. Go for it!' (Chris - Gay)

Coming out to parents was a particular hurdle, but there was also a need to come out to oneself, to other gays, to colleagues at work and to neighbours. It was especially important to be careful about coming out at work because there were fears about losing one's job, and some partners went to great lengths to keep sexual orientation secret - for example, a gay male taking a female friend along to company 'do's' in order to convey a conventional image.

Age-related issues were linked to coming out. For example, some partners reported that it was easier to come out as a young person. Emerging orientation awareness occurred whilst heterosexuals were also becoming aware of their own gender potential. For an older person, recognising gayness involved a learning process - how to see oneself, how to behave, how to come out, and who to come out to.

Table 7:9: Orientation and Gender themes found in couple's narratives

Initial Codes: Higher order beliefs	Categories: sample discourses in brackets	Propositions
Trying to be straight; accepting self as gay; coming out; becoming gay; understanding oneself	The homosexual view of self: (I was very isolated and I was just coming out to myself -still in that process. - I didn't know about me -- as a person, and I was quite frightened as well - Jane)	The self is a gendered being
Being typical; seeing possibilities; behaving properly;	The heterosexual view of self: (If only I could be good enough, kind enough, sweet enough then daddy would be happy - and this started at this age [<i>gesturing to imply a young child</i>] - Liz)	
Characterising gays; characterising straights; feelings about gays; feelings about straights; Stereotyping homosexual behaviour	Homosexual couples characterised both gays and straights: ((Jeremy) says that it is because we're gay men that we have this standard of hygiene. Straight men -just don't. They're used to being run around and looked after - Matt)	Others have gendered identities
Characterising men and women; stereotyping men and women; labelling children	Heterosexual couples made generalisations about males and females: (George (a son) will do as he's told, but she (daughter) will push me. I've always said I would rather have ten boys than one girl. They are a lot more problem than boys - Linda)	
Building a married life; seeing the relationship in gay terms; characteristics of gay relationships	Homosexual couples defined the nature of their relationships: (I'll say 'My partner' and 'we', 'ours', 'us' - and then I just introduce Lyn into the conversation 'Oh, Lyn and I did so-and-so', and people don't bat an eyelid - Maureen)	Relationships are gendered in narrative
Defining roles; looking after children; being provider; being manly in relationships; being a female in relationships	Heterosexual couples had ideas about typicality of gender roles in relationships: (Philip: I think really that I'm brought up with the idea that the man's the master of the house, and all this kind of rubbish, rather than it being an equal relationship. That's what we try to do don't we? Julie: Yes Boss!)	
Experiencing the gay scene; organising gay events; involving straights; choosing social venues	The gay 'scene' and friendships have a role in orientation awareness. (I had always been very straight and I did bring a lot of straight values into the relationship. ... That's another thing about lesbian culture. You do tend to stay friends with your ex-girlfriends which is very difficult for any new girlfriend coming on the scene - Catherine)	Social and cultural factors impact on awareness of gender orientation
Recognising self-orientation; learning stereotypes; being explained away; being careful; fearing AIDS; exercising power	The wider culture has an impact on orientation awareness: (Chas: There'd be a long queue for a taxi and a friend of ours used to say 'Make way darlings I'm homosexual' and we could go straight to the front of the queue. Peter: People would move. Chas: That's how it was you know, and the clubs were so seedy and it was all behind closed doors)	

→
Direction of Analysis

Individuals delayed coming out for different reasons. For some, the need to become self sufficient, or recognised in one's field was an important pre-requisite to admitting to gayness. To be valued as a person irrespective of orientation was a primary need. A disgust with the stereotypical gay male deterred some gay males from admitting to their homosexuality, or even taking a partner. -

I didn't come out until I was thirty. The only gay men that I'd seen were these effeminate, camp, stereotypical gay men who I was not attracted to at all. I was like - 'what's the point of coming out? I don't want to sleep with these things. (Matt - Gay)

A common theme was that partners had first attempted to live as straights - adopting conventional mating patterns, only to become gradually aware that their behaviour and feelings were not congruent. Some reported that gay awareness had occurred as a sudden realisation, making sense of previous experiences. -

Suddenly I was aware that something that had been there probably all my life had a name and a meaning. Whereas my generation had crushes on teachers; pashes on other girls was part of growing up. You put it behind you. But you do the right thing and meet a nice boy. You get engaged, married and have children distinctly in that order. And I did it correctly, absolutely right. And it was very much you didn't give it a name. (Gina - Les)

b) *The heterosexual view.* Narratives of the self as gendered were less explicit in heterosexual scripts. Expectations of self as female were laid down at a very young age for one contributor (See Table 7:9), and other female participants referred to the constraints which limited their lives - for example, childcare limiting possibilities of a career. Childcare was also seen to limit daily freedom for women. -

He can say 'I'm going to have a bath' - but I can't. Its different for a woman. He can just get up and go and its a bit different for me. -- When I have a bath they are in there with me. (Carol - Het)

Men and women were also seen to have different pursuits, -

We used to go out with a crowd of mates. We were together, but the men used to play with bikes and we would do whatever--' (Linda - Het)

or to be subject to different rules. -

Jude: I wouldn't talk to anyone unless I was introduced to them.

Bill: It was different for me. If you saw a girl and liked her, you asked her out. (Het)

Males in the sample tended to see themselves negatively, as if to underestimate their masculinity, -

Well, the rest of the boys at the college were dim! -- We were just regular guys.
(Adrian - Het)

sometimes even seeing themselves as inferior. -

Men aren't thoughtful are they really? We have to fight against lower, baser natures I think. (Philip - Het)

It might be argued that current feminist discourses have encouraged men to be more self-conscious about gender talk.

Others have gendered identities

a) *Homosexual couples characterised both gays and straights.* Other gays were seen more often in negative terms. The excessive behaviour of gay males was particularly criticised. Dragging, being camp, being effeminate, were behaviours seen as exhibitionist, and gay males in the sample wanted to be dis-associated from this conduct. Gays in public were seen to have one topic of conversation, and a single purpose - sex. Gays were characterised as 'prissy' and lonely, gossipy and bitchy. Gays were reported as habitually using nicknames for each other - the majority having cruel intent. -

Cat Sick we call him. Cat Sick. Gays have got names for everybody. (Peter - Gay)

The new openness towards gays was disliked by one - older - gay couple. -

People were only extreme in their own company weren't they? i.e. dragging up and whatever. You wouldn't walk down the street - whereas lads today, or gays today, wouldn't think twice. (Peter - Gay)

Lesbians were characterised as gossipy, and some gay males saw lesbians as either snooty, or given to fighting.

Lesbians were slightly less negative about other gays. However, couples detected a desire amongst other lesbians to split their relationship. This was seen as being due to the fact that the homosexual community was small and fairly enclosed, and therefore one was frequently meeting ex-girlfriends.

AIDs was seen to have complicated the issue for gay males particularly, creating anxiety in the community should anyone show signs of illness; and fear outside the 'scene' - causing practical problems such as difficulties obtaining insurance and mortgages.

Not surprisingly given these views, most couples reported their reluctance to mix in the gay community. Lesbian couples however, were more likely to show a desire to encourage fellow homosexuals - both for the well-being of the scene, and for the relationship. -

There's a lot of people who don't go out at all and keep themselves to themselves, but I always feel its important to go out and support lesbian and gay venues and pubs, and also mix with other people. I think you can get very enclosed in a relationship. Very isolated. (Catherine - Les)

Lesbian couples reported being involved with 'befriending' work and organising women's groups. One gay male was very involved with a gay organisation in the USA - The League. This was a political organisation working to change legal and cultural practices with respect to gays.

Responses to the question of children within gay and lesbian relationships were mixed. Lesbians who were in favour were those who had children already from a former marriage. Lesbians and gays who were not in favour tended either to dislike children anyway, to see lesbians who wanted children as 'not genuine lesbians', or to see such parenting as problematic.

Homosexual attitudes to straights were mixed. The tendency for straights to be phased by public homosexual behaviour met with disapproval, and in contrast to gay males, straight males were seen by one couple as untidy, and less given to cleanliness. However, most couples had straight friends, and some couples preferred them to gay companions.

One couple disapproved of gays who knowingly married into the straight world. This was seen as an unfair practice because straights would have no way of recognising gayness, and were therefore being deceived.

There were numerous stories of prejudice experienced at the hands of straights, leading the homosexual couple to experience anxiety, to deploy a carefulness in the choice of friends; and in extreme cases, to suffer acute fear and distress. Straights were regarded as generally being inquisitive about aspects of gay behaviour - the relative gendering of lesbian partners - 'Is she butch?'; sexual behaviour, and sleeping arrangements. The strapping, six foot rugby player was the archetypal model of the ultimate heterosexual male stereotype - seen to be inquisitive about, or afraid of, gay lifestyles.

Causal explanations for the behaviour of straights towards gays was couched in terms of the heterosexual's fear of the unknowns of gay behaviour, or unease with personal sexuality.

b) *Heterosexual couples made generalisations about males and females.* Several stereotypical features of gender were evident in the scripts.

Males for example were seen in contrasting ways. Men could be breadwinners - the traditional, suited, pillars of the community. On the other hand, they were depicted as

aggressive, long-haired, radical. Men were at times represented as engaged in struggle with each other, and where men were seen to attempt some kind of closeness, this was perceived as necessarily limited. -

He (my father) does think the world of you now, doesn't he? Well, as much as men do of each other. I don't think they're open about their feelings - but he does like you. (Kate - Het)

Men who were depicted, or described themselves as traditional breadwinners, were often coupled in discourse with women who were 'chained to the kitchen sink'. The latter stereotype was usually hastily modified to imply that the males concerned did not *really* expect that kind of behaviour from their women.

Similar ambivalences were evident in women's discourses about their partners. One partner described the caring qualities in her boyfriend. These were seen as more important than the ability to be conventional breadwinner-mate like father. However, she stated -

(Father) knows he's doing his best, and in a couple of months he can roll in all the money, and *I can sit back and relax.* (Kate - Het) (my italics)

as if the boyfriend as breadwinner would be a welcome change.

Stereotypes were often included by women in defining their partners - either in terms of causal explanations for their behaviour - 'You were stressed'; 'you were worried about being a kept man' - or by means of labelling behaviour. -

Typical male - the mess in his cottage! (Di - Het)

Sexual promiscuity was labelled - 'Jack the Lad' or, 'a bit of a lad'.

Females. More seriously, mothers particularly compared their children according to gender.

Stereotypes of women were sometimes conveyed in metaphor and figures of speech. The matter of having babies was described by one male partner as 'women's business', giving him permission to avoid being involved in his children's birth.

Folk wisdom was used in causal explanations which sometimes laid blame with female partners. -

My boss warned me that we shouldn't live with my parents. 'You have two women in the same kitchen - you will be in trouble!' (Bill - Het)

The use of gender stereotypes seemed to have the effect of separating partners - creating differences rather than similarities.

Relationships are gendered in narrative

a) *Homosexual couples defined the nature of their relationships.* Homosexual couples represented their relationships as being both similar to, and different from heterosexual models. Heterosexual discourses were frequently used to describe features of the couple's shared life. Although marriage was discussed as a possible way of signalling commitment, it was often seen as undesirable, not because of its heterosexual connotations, but because of its connection with divorce, or for some couples, its uninteresting nature. -

Jeremy: You want to build a married life basically. So do I.

Matt: But saying you want the whole married life, I don't like the way you say that.

Jeremy: I know. It sounds mundane and boring. (Gay)

Differences were seen in terms of roles within the relationship. Heterosexual marriages were remembered as being dogged by problems of ascendancy. Lesbian partners often contrasted their homosexual relationship with a previous marriage. -

There was a definite positioning in marriage of - he was the man of the marriage, and therefore in a lot of scenarios, he was in control. Because I was the woman I had no

right to that aspect of control. In my relationship with Yvonne, -- there is no jockeying for position. -- I don't know if that is the case in other lesbian relationships. I don't know what is the norm in heterosexual relationships. I know that is the way it was. (Gina - Les)

Fewer comparisons in terms of control were found in gay male discourses. Only one male partner in the group had been previously married and his wife was perceived as powerful in separating him from his children after their divorce.

Gay male relationships were expected to follow certain patterns. Prospective partners were seen as unlikely to begin a relationship at a young age, and once formed, relationships were unlikely to last for long. Sex was inclined to be the initial attraction although as a relationship component it was expected to decline fairly rapidly. Emotional closeness was not seen as necessarily following the first infatuation, and most relationships were expected to be sexually open with partners taking other lovers. Partners were expected to live 'separate lives', and couples in the sample tended to see themselves as challenging these expectations and thereby providing models that others sought to emulate, and could easily recognise. -

We are known on the *scene* as a couple. (Ivor - Gay)

Lesbian couples suggested that *their* relationships were more supportive than heterosexual ones. -

As a woman in a relationship with another woman there is a supportiveness that only another woman can give you. (Maureen - Les)

However, lesbian relationships were seen to have disadvantages too. -

There's a lot more awareness of emotion and there's a down side to that 'cos relationships with women can be very emotional, and very, very intense. (Mo - Les)

Stability was seen as important for both gay and lesbian couples, and views of how this may be maintained differed. Some saw a need to 'go along in tandem' and tried to develop similar

characteristics. Others focused on the need to retain individuality. The struggle to maintain a balance between the two was advanced as a folklore about homosexual relationships -

Jane: I think a lot of friends -- try and be the same as each other without realising they are in fact different people. They are individuals.

Cath: But lesbian couples do tend to look alike.

Jane: Yes, after a while. I suppose heterosexuals do as well, but people say *we* look alike. (Les)

or as a causal explanation for seeing homosexual couples as different. -

Matt: But that's why I think we work cos sometimes Jeremy is the stronger one. I was going to say bolder, and then it swings around all the time.

Int: So you kind of swap places in a way.

Matt: I don't know if that's cos its two males together. (Gay)

b) Heterosexual couples had ideas about typicality of gender roles in relationships.

Exceptions to the stereotypical patterns of relationships were seen to create adverse reactions in others. -

Jess: My mum is now with Jim's brother, which has made things complicated. --

Jim: I think it is really good. It has actually brought him out of himself -- Made mum a lot happier hasn't it?

Jess: -- He is like my mum's toy boy. -- My brothers and sisters had a big row about that didn't they? -- Its been two years now, so they've started to come to terms with it. (Het)

Heterosexual relationships were seen to involve partners in different practical roles. Man as provider, and woman as nurturer discourses were evident, and the resulting differences in relative closeness to children were noted. In some instances, notions of the male as tough, gallant and 'owning' his partner were evident. -

M went through a hard time with a girl at work and then I found it very hard to be amicable with that person and I started using my power to return the force you know, because she picked on *my* girl. (Adrian - Het)

Few scripts dealt overtly with issues of equality between the genders, although power struggles were evident in the dynamics of co-construction for one or two couples. Past

learning and Biblical pronouncement was cited as justification for open expressions of inequality. However, 'sexist' notions were either recognised as being worthy of modification

The 'working wife'

Janet: You were not very keen about the job.

David: From a selfish point of view I would prefer she was here. But I am sensible enough to know that you can't shut people up. (Het)

or having an underlying rationale. -

Julie: I agree with the Biblical thing that you have to stand - that its *your* responsibility.

Philip: Yes, but that's in order to give you security, not to subject. -- I feel that (my responsibility) is there so that the female partner feels the security that I think a woman needs to feel. (Het)

Inequality could be seen as a causal factor in the stability of a relationship. -

Christian marriages don't break down - they stay together because they're male dominated. (James - Het)

Social and cultural factors impact on awareness of gender orientation

Heterosexual experiences of cultural and social themes were in line with well documented gender effects - lack of economic power for women in heterosexual partnerships, and the importance of social status for men - homosexual experiences provided evidence of striking differences.

The major thrust of this theme however, deals with homosexual experiences. Two categories emerged.

a) *The gay 'scene' and friendships have a role in orientation awareness.* Amongst the gay and lesbian couples interviewed, there was an awareness that the local gay scene was small -

almost 'incestuous'. This caused problems for couples wishing to socialise in terms of the likelihood of frequently meeting ex-partners; the restricted social mix of the group; -

The people we met in the women's group were very much my values - middle class values. I have got to say it - whereas the people I had met before (at other gay venues) were a mixture - which I don't mind, but I didn't feel much at home. Partly because of their attitude, and perhaps because of my attitude as well. (Catherine - Les)

the tendency for homosexuals as a group to be suspicious of newcomers, -

Cath: I was threatened by them. They also seemed threatened by me or something.

Jane: The sort of thing, 'Is she good enough for you?' (Les)

and to be suspicious of straight values.

The scene was characterised as having a 'grapevine effect', -

Gay men can be very gossipy, but equally the lesbians can be very gossipy as well, and the grapevine is incredible. I mean, there is not a lesbian in Dunster that doesn't know about our commitment ceremony. (Barbara - Les)

which was sometimes seen as invasive in the life of the couple.

Gay males took charge of their social lives by organising 'outrageous' themed parties - for example, a Christmas Party in August, or by arranging well prepared dinner parties.

Lesbians arranged dinner parties - where their financial resources allowed, but otherwise were involved in more informal social events in their homes. One couple adopted a 'responsible' attitude to the gay scene and organised their own discussion and friendship group meeting publicly. In this way, they were able to control the nature of the meeting and to an extent, unconsciously restrict membership.

Although most initial meetings for partners occurred at a gay venue, straight friends were often involved. They acted as chaperones - as if to guard against an outward assent to gayness, and sometimes as reinforcement for personal homophobia. -

I was actually playing games with friends of mine, cos it was a gay pub and I was with two straight friends cos I don't have any gay friends. I don't socialise in the gay sort of thing, and we were fooling around in the bar and he wanted to know how you know if someone likes you or not, and I said, 'Well its the eye contact. If you see somebody - its like yeah, oh yeah, he likes me.' (Matt - Gay)

Alternatively, homosexual couples preferred to meet in straight pubs, although these were sometimes distinguished as alien or different territory. Couples were sometimes aware that their gayness was an embarrassment in straight meeting places. -

The landlord used to keep a special place at the bar for us - two stools behind the bar, and when we arrived we would be shunted out of the way. The stools would appear and we would sit there in our full glory. (Duncan - Gay)

Gay pubs were seen as having characteristics which in themselves transformed the gay social scene and gave gays control over their own social practices -

That's part of the gay thing - a good social life - especially with the new pub because Josh and Sandy have done a good job. They make everybody welcome. The gay scene is a much more friendly place now. I am speaking to people who I have seen for nine years but never spoken to before. (Andy - Gay)

Two of the male couples earned their living managing such establishments and finding particular fulfilment for each partner in doing so. -

Chas: Oh yeah, we ran the gay pub.

Peter: Yeah. I used to run the straight bar. No puffers allowed in my bar. Well I had to hadn't I? -- It wasn't embarrassing for me. I think it was embarrassing for the clientele, for the straights that were in there. (Gay)

b) *The wider culture has an impact on orientation awareness.* The business of recognising homosexual orientation had been a difficult personal transition for the majority of partners. - exacerbated by cultural discourses and expectations.

Marrying, or considering marriage to a heterosexual partner had been attempted by several interviewees. Most reported strong social pressures to do so, which clashed with inner convictions of gayness. Sex education, and cultural folklore about 'normal' development tended to create uncertainties. -

The sex education I had at school was very much that you would go through a phase being either gay or lesbian. Its a passing phase. Don't worry, you'll come out the other end. You'll be off, married, two kids, dog, cat, mortgage. (Chris - Gay)

Having recognised personal homosexuality, partners were often treated 'as if' their orientation were an illness.

My parents found out about me by opening my mail -- (They) drove 150 miles to come and visit me (in hospital) and just literally threw this mail on my bed and said, 'You're queer!' and I said, 'No, I'm not queer.' and the classic 'We'll get you cured!' (Maureen - Les)

Being accepted in the social world was a central issue for homosexual couples as highlighted in previous themes. Partners admitted to being careful for fear of abuse, -

Peter: He rang me up Christmas Day, didn't you?
 Chas: Mm.
 Peter: 'Cos he'd given me a false name as well.
 Int: Why did you do that Chas?
 Chas: Cos you can meet some unpleasant people. (Gay)

discrimination, -

At the time I was working at G. It wasn't smiled upon to be gay and work there, although there are, even now. There is one bloke that works there who is gay. He's in the closet and won't come out. -- I just feel quite sorry for him. (Chris - Gay)

or prejudice. -

Chas: We used to get this woman - she was well up in the village, and ... she used to open our letter box and shout rude things. ... and do you know, the vicar - they wanted the roof doing at the church and they sent donations. They ripped our cheque up.

Peter: They don't want money off your sort!

Chas: They didn't want money off us. (Gay)

AIDS was seen as adding to the straight community's suspicion of gays, and has impeded acceptance (although this may now be a changing effect). Even in the gay community, AIDS has had its effects. -

Duncan: I still think people worry about it. I went on a bit of a diet and lost a bit of weight, and everyone thought I had AIDS.

Chris: Its understandable I suppose. The Gay Disease. (Gay)

Practical difficulties have resulted, leading to the need for strategies as counter measures. -

They seem to think that every gay man has AIDS. They (the insurance company) asked us whether we were gay and we had been told to say no. So we did. (Ivor - Gay)

Homosexual couples however, were aware that they are capable of exerting power, for example, through the Pink Pound (discussed earlier), or through using their gayness to advantage. -

I've - been told that I won't be made redundant. They've invested too much money in me, and also because of this League thing now. It will be very embarrassing if they go and sack me - one of the leading lights, cos I'll scream blue murder and they'll think they sacked me because I'm gay. (Chris - Gay)

Implications of power was also vicariously achieved through connection to famous others, -

Peter: And then within three months we were living together, weren't we?

Chas: Yeah. In a flat next door to Noel Gordon. ... Another lesbian. (Gay)

or through gaining personal influence in the straight world - through managerial and professional positions in employment or through involvement with family concerns. -

Cath: There are all sorts of opportunities I would like to take up. The family business might be interesting. My family won't address any issues. They just stick their head in the

sand as far as our relationship is concerned but the family business is just going on.

Int: You might like to be involved in that?

Cath: I would, and I wouldn't. For personal reasons. The idea of a little bit of power or of a little bit of input - being part of - that's very attractive me. (Les)

Theme 14 Age-Related Themes

Age-related themes were applied to topics concerned with change, relationships, and personal factors. Four categories were identified and were represented in terms of causal explanations, expectations and normative assumptions.

a) *Being young*. Couples talked about their expectations of appropriate behaviour and the appropriate treatment of young people.

Being young was seen to be the time for parties, being relaxed, being free and having fun. Couples from both groups expected sex to be more important to young people, but gays particularly felt it was unlikely that young gays would get involved in relationships. -

Normally on the gay scene when you are 16 - 17 you just want to play around and meet different people. (Andy - Gay)

For young straight couples with sexual problems, the youthfulness - particularly of a male partner was seen as worrying. Jean had gynaecological difficulties -

I just felt completely inadequate and I thought he would leave me because ... he had only just turned 18. Why shouldn't he really? .. why should he stay, you know? (Carol - Het)

Being young could lead a couple into behaviour that later they would regret and find embarrassing in retrospect. -

I'm surprised actually that we, looking back. -- Its funny how you change because when you are younger you just think 'Yeah, yeah. Let's just do it.' I would never try to deceive people like that now. I mean to think that people looked at us and thought 'Do they really think we are *that* stupid?' (Jean - Het)

On the other hand, the youthful had a right to expect certain treatment from those who were responsible for them,

They had such strict rules, such as 'no boys in the dormitories, no drinking, no smoking.' (The college) was run by two nuns, so it was very strict. You weren't allowed to have parties. You weren't allowed to be a student, but you wanted to be a student, because you were away from home for the first time. (Adrian - Het)

and some restrictions were considered more appropriate to some ages - and implicitly, to some genders - than others, although allowances for apparent unreasonableness could be made. -

Philip: Before we got married you had to be home for twelve o' clock.
 Julie: No eleven.
 Philip: Eleven o' clock.
 Julie: Eleven o' clock on Fridays and Saturdays.
 Interviewer: And you were in your late twenties?
 Julie: Mm.
 Philip: -- It was incredible really. You'd think you were about sixteen.
 Julie: Well I mean, they didn't want to be up all hours really.

Being young was sometimes presented as a causal explanation - for example, for relationship breakdown - due to immaturity and inexperience, or due to an inability to cope with something too frightening. -

I: What do you feel that you couldn't cope with Chas, about the cancer?
 Chas: I don't know because I was, bearing in mind I would be late twenties wouldn't I, and I don't know, I was probably frightened more than anything.
 Peter: Yes, I think you were.
 I: Frightened of losing Peter?
 Chas: Probably, or what would happen in the relationship. (Gay)

Being too serious for one's age was considered as being inappropriate when young. Having too much responsibility led to an identification with older people and a sense of having lost youthfulness. -

Adrian: I spent all my time with 35 year olds at work because all my sort of equals were 35, and I was just permanently around mature people, terribly -

Mandy: We went through a period where we just -

Adrian: Oh, we wouldn't have been able to tell you who was in Top of the Pops. (Het)

b) *Being old* produced different discourses. Partners of both sexes and orientations reported anxiety about being older, or getting old. There was reluctance to admit to being older than one's partner, reaching 40, and anxiety at possibly being mistaken for a retired person. -

Int: Do you still work Peter?

Peter: How old do you think I bloody well am?

Int: Well, you're only a chicken.

Peter: I know that. You don't know that. How old do you think I am?

Chas: You told her.

Peter: I haven't.

Chas: You did earlier.

Int: Well, how old were you when you met? You were in your 20s when you met, and you've been together 31 years so, yes I suppose I asked you because you're home in the day and -

Peter: Oh I see. You don't half think fast on your feet! (Gay)

On the other hand, some couples planned for early retirement on the grounds that they wanted to have some enjoyment out of life other than work.

Age-related discourses in older partners tended to look back to a period characterised by discourses of a different era. -

In those days we were so house proud we paid 6 guineas for a running yard of carpet - (Peter - Gay)

contrasted with priorities of the present day. -

Now I think, 'What have I done all this for? Its all dust collectors. (Chas - Gay)

An added awareness of changed expectations in the present was seen in views about possibilities open to the older person. -

I remember reading once, -- that until you're forty you know you're going to die, and after forty you KNOW you're going to die - give or take a few years. The effect of that on me was practical - 'Oh dear, I must do something!' (Anthony - Het)

c) *Being the right or wrong age* was a discourse used particularly with respect to having children. For some, 30 - 35 was the right age - enough time had passed to develop maturity and enjoy some independence, whereas over the age of 40 prompted doubts about coping, and a sense that 'our age is against us.' Some partners recognised that if their ages were different, giving them time to fulfil their plans first, children would have been a possibility. Such discourses were present in both heterosexual and lesbian scripts.

Sometimes couples reported the juxtaposition between age and happenings as surprising. For example, it was surprising for one partner that she was 30 years of age before she developed a sense of security. Another partner was surprised to be told that he hadn't become truly aware of himself until he was in his 40s. -

Peter: I honestly don't think - until you were in your 40s, I don't think you were accepted - or you couldn't accept the fact that you were gay. I've always thought that.

Chas: Do you reckon? (Gay)

d) *Having an age difference*. Four couples - two lesbian and two heterosexual, reported a significant age gap between the partners - in each case creating anxiety in the older partner.

In the straight relationships, having an older male partner provided the wife with a father figure, and ensured that he felt pleased to have attracted a younger woman - despite the taunts of friends. The attraction however, was noted as mutual. -

There is seventeen and a half years between us. I kept thinking it won't work. Third time round and there is this big age gap. And all my mates were saying 'Cradle snatcher!' and all this. In a way I was thinking probably its a feather in my cap. I don't want to make out I'm cocksure or anything like that. It isn't anything to do with that. There is something about myself that Tina liked, and something about Tina that I liked. It clicked. The chemistry.

(Shaun - Het)

However, whatever the initial attraction, both couples reported that later in the relationship, a growing anxiety developed as the age disparity became an added factor when problems occurred., -

For me it is the third time around and my previous marriages had none of these problems. We had other problems but the children were healthy. In this marriage we had a lot against us, our age for one. (Paul - Het)

leading to worries about losing the younger partner. -

David At the back of my mind, having had one wife go off, I try to keep an eye on the second one. As you can imagine here the opportunities of meeting other men are about
Janet Zilch.
David nil really. Its always been at the back of my mind - Janet being younger than me. I wouldn't want that to happen again. (Het)

Having an older partner in a lesbian relationship could produce a role reversal - the younger partner learning the ways of a gay lifestyle before the older partner was even aware of her gayness. -

Yvonne It just happened to me a bit younger than you. I moved to London in my early twenties and started figuring it out then and went through all the angst then. By the time I met you I was a fairly old hand.
Gina There is seventeen years difference in our age. I was pushing middle aged before I figured it out. (Les)

Like the heterosexual relationship, an older partner in a lesbian relationship could be subject to age-related anxieties. -

Jane Catherine had had a boyfriend previously and I was the first woman she had been out with, and because there is quite an age difference between us as well - there's ten years between us - so that was difficult as well. (Les)

7:5 Researcher Generated Themes

In addition to the fourteen themes discovered in the scripts, others arose in response to specific prompts during the interview. These were themes attached to the graph exercise.

The Graph-Related Findings

Couples were asked to define what *closeness* meant to them, and to suggest terms which they felt conceptualised their relationship. The responses obtained for each couple as coded are included in Table 7:10.

Closeness and relationship definitions carried connotations of levels of intensity, reflecting the sense of relationship depth. For example, a gay male couple (code K) who denied that closeness was a feature of gay partnerships, talked about regulating distance between them.

In contrast another male partner suggested -

For me closeness is more about the insecure times not the secure times. The secure times I think you're confident. You think you can take the world on and you feel terribly much that you can do it on your own terms by yourself. For me closeness is when the bad times come along and I'm not so strong, that there's somebody that I want to turn to, somebody that I can tell all my problems, all my fears, all my insecurities that I feel that I need help with. (Jeremy - Gay)

Closeness was sometimes seen as something new to a partner - unlike anything experienced before. Closeness allowed partners to be vulnerable towards each other; to be themselves. It enabled them to talk together, and was marked by touching and other signs of physical affection. Closeness was also about reciprocal strength. An experience in which each partner could take turns in being strong for the other.

Table 7:10: Couple's definitions of closeness and relationship

code	Closeness Definition	Relationship Definition
A	The thing that kept us together	No relationship definition
B	Feelings go deeper	Being supportive
C	Patterns of closeness relate to boundaries - e.g. parental boundaries	Mature
D	No sense of closeness	Uncertain, unpredictable
E	No sense of closeness	Difficult, separate
F	United against the outside world	Nomadic
G	Facing things together	No relationship definition
H	A meeting of minds. Sex rather than a deep intimacy	A friendship
I	Physical affection - a changing quality over time	Secure
K	Not a characteristic of gay relationships	Doing things together, but having the right amount of space
L	Support	Humour in the relationship
M	Not the same as warmth but linked to it	Safe and warm. Unconditional love
N	Being a soul-mate. An emotional twin	Loving, caring
O	Intensity, knowing about each other, sharing everything, relaxed	Being supportive
P	Like family, brother and sister; being the same person	Fulfilling, comfortable
Q	Supporting each other	Volatile
R	Telepathic, and being physically close	Happy, secure
S	Doing things together, spending time together	Conventional but innovative
T	Being more understanding of each other	Looking after each other
U	Being together through pain, tears, and trouble	Being together, talking through problems, making plans, involving the children
V	Bonding - mentally and financially. No sex	Humorous
W	Being able to talk about things	A friendship. (A desire rather than a reality)
X	Being together as a family. (W modifies - wants independence)	Tolerant. (Tongue-in-cheek)
Y	Wanting/having someone there	Cosy, comfortable, being together, stable
Z	Being able to open oneself completely	Trusting, secure

Key:

Heterosexual non-client
Heterosexual client
Lesbian
Gay

The graph measures of closeness revealed several interesting patterns. (For a full summary see Appendix 10) Apart from a disparate beginning for one couple, the measures of the four lesbian partners followed each other closely. Gay couples also plotted similarly close measures apart from one couple whose measures parted for a time at their relationship midpoint - possibly due to trauma, or to a stage 5 effect of the McWhirter and Mattison (1984) model.

Three of the client couples who completed graphs plotted sharply divergent closeness measures - subject to violent swings. The fourth in contrast, plotted a steep, shared drop in closeness.

Heterosexual partners tended to plot their graphs closely together - whether the measure remained fairly constant, or was subject to violent swings.

The measures may have implications for the couple's perception of their relationship, providing suggestions for therapeutic focus. Falls in closeness level tended to be linked to stressful events - although on occasion, what was stressful for one partner led to greater feelings of closeness for the other. The findings may suggest that some partners plotted their feelings of well being rather than of relationship closeness.

7:6 Follow-up with Couples

In order to establish respondent validation, seven couples were approached after the original interview. Summaries of their responses are contained in Appendix 9.

- Respondents tended to confirm the themes and impressions gained at interview. In a number of cases, couples had accomplished changes anticipated on our first meeting – or feared events had come to pass. Instances of the former were usually characterised as positive – for example, buying a first joint property together. Unexpected or feared events tended to draw negative responses. For example, a partner contemplating his own death with relative equanimity during the interview, recounted his distressed response to subsequent serious, and life-threatening illness. This supports Baumeister and Wilson's contention that narrators seek to convey personal agency in narrative – presenting an ideal case (1996).
- Some of *my* perceptions of the interview were firmly rebutted - for example, Ian's implied denial that he had ever been unwilling to undertake domestic tasks.
- Some rebuttals however, may have signalled a maturation in the relationship. For example, Jude declared that *other people* had no influence over the way she and Bill dealt with change. The original narrative however, had been rich in stories of how others had prompted or constrained choices and change.
- Some features of the original conversation persisted. For example, if the interview contained largely one partner's story, so did the follow-up. If children were a major concern, they remained so. Similarly, use of figures of speech was persistent. Partners tended to use the same metaphors (for example, Anthony referred to 'a blip') to describe situations at follow-up as those use in the original contact.
- Perceptions of the stress of *change* varied according to life experiences in the present. Some regarded change as less stressful, or no different now, whilst others suggested that their lives were more stressful than when we first talked. However, each couple referred to unhappy or stressful elements of change. Only three (of seven) couples cited positive changes.
- Although the summary of themes took a generalised view of interviews as a whole, each respondent answered with reference to his or her own relationship.
- *Strategies*. Some respondents suggested that they had few of them. Others elaborated the strategies listed - for example, having particular *ways* of talking as a coping strategy.
- *Decision-making*. Some respondents talked of decisions being out of their hands, while others mentioned antecedent and consequent factors in decision-making.
- *Time* was seen to give a different perspective, an opportunity to adjust to change.

- *Relationships* had various effects. For one respondent, a relationship difficulty had wiped out fifty years of a marriage previously perceived as sound and mutually beneficial. Most other respondents cited the positive effects of their relationship - stability, opportunity to talk, etc.
- *Other people effects*. These were marked for most couples. For some, former partners had constrained their choices; for others, family were influential. Two couples admitted that they deliberately ignored what other people might say about their private behaviour.
- *Gender and age effects*. Four respondents mentioned gender, but with the exception of one, saw such effects as being in the past. Each considered themselves as belonging to a different 'cultural' age in which gender inequalities were non-existent. Responses about age effects were varied. Some denied any effect, whilst others regarded youthfulness as involving more changes in direction, and more opportunities, whilst old age was seen as leading to lack of independence and feelings of weakness.
- Rob and Di, a client couple (early in the study) wrote responses to some of the 'beliefs' identified in their interview. These are presented at Appendix 9 and validate some of the cultural discourses included in their narrative.

7:7 Summary

This chapter presented the main findings of the study, and examined the fourteen themes seen finally as important to the study of change. As the research progressed, some themes emerged as more important than others. Themes around change remained central as providing insights into how people construct the experience. However, some relationship themes were less useful. Lifestyle and money for example, affected the course of change, but like issues of trust and strength, had less widespread influence than other factors. More important were themes stressing the role of others in couple's experience. Self and other perception, and orientation

and gender themes, provided the most powerful cultural discourses, signifying social constraints on choices.

Measures of closeness, and relationship definitions provided clues about how couples give meaning to the relationship, and suggest a focus for therapy in client couples. Follow-up with couples provided a measure of respondent validation of the main themes and changes identified.

Chapter 8 looks at how the themes of this chapter relate to the Guiding Propositions.

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CHAPTER 8:

RELATING THE FINDINGS TO THE GUIDING PROPOSITIONS

The Guiding Propositions suggest that beliefs and cultural discourses influence how couples cope with change. This chapter relates the themes of chapter 7 to the propositions, and examines the role of cultural discourses in providing a source of cultural beliefs.

8:1 Propositions Group 1: Couples and Change

- *That couples will have beliefs about decisions that need to be made when they are confronted with significant changes.*

As the theme 3 (Decision Making) discussion outlines, couples do have such beliefs. These notions are not only rooted in the context of antecedent factors, but also subject to the needs and aspirations of the couple. Beliefs about the properties of decisions dictate how couples invest in the decision-making process, and together with the antecedents and confounding factors determine the choices made. The beliefs attached to the outcomes of decision making lead couples to rationalise and make sense of their choices. However, at every stage of the process beliefs reflect normative assumptions and cultural expectations. Some assume an instrumentality in events themselves - in coming together or not working out; whilst others suggest that 'needing' to do certain things is unquestionable. These issues are discussed further in chapter 11.

- *That couple's accounts will show evidence of higher order beliefs about change - for example, that it is 'difficult'; 'painful'; 'needs to be managed' etc.; and that these discourses play an important part in how transitions are successfully managed.*

Couple's accounts show evidence of higher order beliefs about change. They enable couples to understand change, to feel in control of the process, and to recognise when change is not possible. They also enable partners to make sense of the process of change in retrospect, and to learn from the experience. How far such beliefs may be relevant to the management of change will be further addressed in the case studies presented in chapter 10.

- *That couples will vary in the extent to which their explanations take account of different levels of shared cultural discourses.*

Couple's accounts dealt with transitional issues in a manner comparable to a levels of analysis approach. Explanations were presented at the personal, relational and extra-relational levels, yielding cultural discourses appropriate to each level. Personal characteristics and perceptions were subject to expectations, assumptions and labelling typical of cultural expectations surrounding personal identity. Accounts of sexual activity, negotiation of roles, confrontation and relationship rituals were interpreted according to cultural discourses about relationships. The role of others was particularly explained in terms of narratives of approval, disapproval, and consciousness of social constraints.

Although there were shared features across the sample, variations between groups and between couples were evident. The major group differences were found in themes around the role of other (12), and orientation/gender themes (13). Variation between couples with respect to all themes depended upon the particular focus of the interview in terms of the life cycle events reported by the partners.

- *That couple's choices regarding significant times in their lives will also be in line with their unique perceptions of the relationship rather than according to the normative assumptions of formal life cycle models.*

The proposition that couples were more likely to perceive their relationships according to unique, personally chosen events was supported to some extent, but the findings are complex. Table A, (Appendix 11) outlines a summary of couple's actual responses. Listed events included holidays; visits to social support agencies; illnesses; going to college; periods of separation, etc. However, normative events were well represented. Table 8:1 below summarises the 'normative' events cited by couples in their construction of life cycle graphs.

Table 8:1: Normative life cycle events cited by respondents.

Events of the normative life cycle model	
First date	
Other meetings	
First sexual/romantic experience	
Role of friends + changes in	
Meeting the family - being accepted	
Getting engaged	
Moving in together	
Back to the parental home	
Marriage	
Divorce	
Access to child of previous marr	
Pregnancy, childbirth, & miscarriage	
Children to university	
Loss of role	
Children marry	
Death of parents	
Grandchildren	
Normative goals for the future	

Number of gay male couples in the sample	4
Number of Lesbian couples in the sample	4
Number of non-client heterosexual couples	12
Number of heterosexual client couples	4
(No graph completed for one client couple)	

Table 8:2 summarises the incidence of other events cited by couples in their construction of life cycle graphs. Events in this table are categorised according as unique perceptions of the couple.

Table 8:2: Unique life cycle events cited by couples.

Unique perceptions of the life cycle
Buying, renting house, flat, home
Employment, career, promotion etc.
Owning/running a pub
Redundancy
Car ownership and car accidents
Moving to rural setting, town setting
Travel and holidays
Education, university, college
Outside help - counselling, CAB etc.
Financial issues/problems
Hospital / illness (inc. mental illness)
Friends /neighbours /parties
Role swap
Splitting up
Getting back together
Taking a lover
Becoming friends
Sexual failure / relationship problems
Emotional and spiritual issues
Joint venture

Number of gay male couples in the sample	4
Number of Lesbian couples in the sample	4
Number of heterosexual non-client couples	12
Number of heterosexual client couples	4
(No graph completed for one client couple)	

The above classifications are problematic. The 'normative' table (8:1) is based upon formal heterosexual life cycle models, (for example, Carter & McGoldrick, 1980; Combrinck-Graham, 1988) who see development as child-, and family- centred. These models contain culturally shared normative assumptions which can be seen even in unique events, such as role swapping. The 'unique' table (8:2) is more appropriate to the McWhirter & Mattison (1984) and Clunis & Green (1988) models - presenting a more flexible, and less culturally constrained approach - and tend to reflect the emotional, and sometimes individual nature of the couple life cycle. However, the distinctions are not clear cut, and arbitrary divisions raise questions around the definition of normative vs. unique.

The approach taken here is that events signalling cultural norms to do with relationship development may be seen as normative, whilst events which signal personal and couple well

being may be seen appropriately as unique. For this reason, house and employment related issues are included in the latter category.

If such a classification is acceptable, then this suggests that unique events outweigh normative ones - particularly for gay, lesbian and client couples. However, the differences are not so clearly drawn if house related events are considered as belonging in the normative category.

In terms of a qualitative assessment of the data therefore, the proposition lacks clear support.

8:2 Propositions Group 2:

Homosexual and Heterosexual Couples

The data showed that there were conceptual similarities and differences in couple's narratives. Table 8:3 summarises how these were evident within the thematic structure, and findings are discussed with reference to the Group 2 Guiding Propositions.

- *That there will be evidence of gender discourses which will be concerned with issues of equality; power; responsibility for, and nature of, the relationship. Some differences will be observed - for example - ideas about gender roles and expectations may be more challenged by homosexual couples.*

Gender and orientation accounts were especially subject to cultural discourses, in line with gender stereotyping outlined in feminist writings, (e.g. Rogers, 1998; Segal, 1988).

Discourses of the dominant heterosexual culture were pre-eminent - for example, in the determining of stereotypes, but an emergence of their own set of cultural discourses was evident in homosexual narratives. Heterosexual couples spoke of their relationships *as if* a script were available - the exceptions being two couples who acted 'off script' and thereby caused comment. Gender discourses were found to be concerned with equality, power and

roles. Evidence was particularly apparent in heterosexual interviews and even where partners challenged the stereotypes, normative cultural discourses were seen to run through their accounts.

Gender discourses produced two effects - on self and relationship. The gendered self was more 'self consciously' presented in homosexual discourses, and more likely to be taken for granted by heterosexuals. Gay couples particularly saw straights as a comparison group, and frequently straight partnerships as relationship templates - the opposite pattern was not found in heterosexual relationships.

Table 8:3 Themes demonstrating similarities and differences in obtained responses

	Groups and Themes	Specific Issues
Similarities	Change	Views about the quality and process of change; strategies; time; decision making;
	Person perception	Self and other perception; Age-related themes
	Co-construction	Interactional styles
Differences	Change	Then and now - cultural issues
	Relationship themes	Sexual behaviour. Roles - <i>domestic, stereotypical, professional, emotional</i> . Internal change - <i>getting together, balance</i> . Response to trauma. Commitment ceremonies. Closeness. Money and lifestyle. Children.
	Role of others	Affirmation; expectations
	Orientation and gender	Gendered self; gendered relationship; gendered others
	Speaker roles	'Chief Narrator'; use of names

- *That there will be a more ongoing negotiation of roles, discourses, and meanings in homosexual partnerships than in heterosexual.*

Homosexual couples challenged gender discourses by negotiating otherwise stereotypical domestic, emotional, professional, and sexual roles. Domestic and professional roles, as the literature suggests were inclined to be undertaken as a result of mutually convenient arrangements, or partner preference or ability. Emotional roles tended to be more interchangeable - particularly in lesbian relationships. Sexual roles followed different developmental patterns for gay as distinct from heterosexual males - both beginning with high intensity, but diminishing in the gay partnership. Lesbian partners seldom mentioned sexuality, but those who did noted that their sexual behaviour caused great interest amongst heterosexual males. Heterosexual partners did not disclose extramarital relationships. Gay partners disclosed affairs in the past, but only one couple admitted to an ongoing 'open' relationship. Two of the lesbian couples hinted at other lovers, but these were introduced as teases and may not have reflected reality. The other two lesbian partners claimed complete monogamy. These findings are as Blumstein and Schwartz (1983), and Berger (1990) suggest.

There was evidence that gay males and lesbians lacked a clear definition of gay identity - needing affirmation from their homosexual peers. Reference was occasionally made to historical gender stereotypes - the 'butch' lesbian, or the 'camp' gay male. Stereotypical gay identities in the present were rejected, and couples tended to work at trying to establish a normative gay *self*.

Children had a differing role in developing meaning for couples. For some heterosexual couples, and one lesbian couple, presence of children gave a feeling of normality - 'doing the expected thing'. For some homosexual partners, children who accepted (or were allowed to accept) their parent's orientation were seen as strongly affirming the orientation of the relationship. Several partners - heterosexual and homosexual - admitted antipathy to children.

Couples from both groups talked about negotiating dependence/independence, closeness/distance. For some heterosexual couples, financial independence could be problematic; for both lesbian and gay, regulation of emotional independence was of particular importance, although some lesbians specifically referred to 'two women together' as being a difficult emotional issue.

- *That homosexual couples will mention different social structures, support networks and contexts for their relationship than heterosexual couples.*

The importance of social events and friendships was more marked amongst homosexuals. Parties were especially significant for gay males, and socialising at gay pubs was an meaningful feature of homosexual culture. Considerable ambivalence was identified in that 'the scene' enabled homosexuals to feel a sense of belonging and solidarity, but also resulted in feelings of negativity and distance.

Official organisations such as 'The League', 'Friend' and self organised friendship groups were important in establishing legal rights, befriending networks, and the development of personal interests.

In the heterosexual group, friends diminished in importance after the initial meeting of the couple. Exceptions were noted in that one couple remained close to the friend who initially introduced them to each other, and the female partner in two couples suggested that friends were important.

- *That normative life cycle events will be less clearly defined for homosexual couples than for heterosexual.*

This proposition is debatable. Both groups provided examples of normative and unique life cycle events. Tables 8:1 and 8:2 above list the events included on couple's graphs. However, as suggested, the distinction between normative and unique events is problematic.

If the categories in the tables are accepted, then it can be argued that lesbian and gay couples are more likely to have unique perceptions of the couple life cycle, - a feature also detected in client couples. In contrast, heterosexual couples appear to see both normative and unique events as equally important in their lives.

Homosexual couples sometimes focused on *different* - rather than poorly defined events. Marriage, children, family issues featured less, whilst joint projects, holidays, social events, and emotional issues were included. Relationship development therefore was conveyed through a disparate mix of issues, and presented a reduced number of culturally expected relationship events.

8:3 The Role of Cultural Discourses

In line with the literature, the functions of cultural discourses - to provide a context for change, constraints on behaviour, and possibilities for action - were clearly identified in the scripts. The discourses implicated in the Guiding Propositions were presented through figures of speech and metaphors; and through normative assumptions about relationships, families, and personal realities.

8:3.1 Figures of Speech and Metaphors

These acted as colourful forms of shorthand, performing functions within the narratives. They conveyed perceptions of the self, of others, and of situations:

I made a real hash of it. (Ian)

She puts me down. (Mike)

We have been given a new lease of life. (Brian)

There is a light at the end of the tunnel. (Di)

or power relationships, stereotypes:

She was ground under the heel of a less than tolerant husband. (Ian)

He was a cradle snatcher. (Angie)

Its woman's intuition. (Carol)

and causal explanations.

It happened because he was 'over the hill' (Tina)

She came from a 'peasant background'. (Shaun)

Such phrases carry implicit meanings, understood by both speaker and hearer.

8:3.2 Relationship Discourses

These were interconnected accounts conveying relationship rules, expectations and definitions. Relationship discourses were predominantly concerned with heterosexual experience, and dealt with development, sexuality, children, and the role of others in relationships.

Relationship Growth and Character

Most relationships began with romance, 'being in love'. 'Bonding' was expected, as was an expectation that the relationship would 'become physical'. Numerous discourses inferred that relationships would 'grow naturally', and have certain qualities - dependency, closeness, shared emotion, 'chemistry'. Normative expectations were conveyed implicitly -

Coping with tragedy keeps us together. (Carol)

Families always go out together. (Sheila)

We don't have a normal relationship. (Jean)

or in the strategies used:

We like to have quality time. (Paul)

We work at it. (Jill)

I make sure I look nice. (Angie)

I pay her compliments. (Mike)

Sexuality

Discourses around sexuality suggested a disjunction between expectations and reality - especially amongst gay partners for whom sexuality was initially of paramount importance. Sex was 'something on a pedestal', and 'expected in close relationships'. It was allowable to look elsewhere if sexual needs were not fulfilled. However, sex was expected to be disappointing on occasions, and performance likely to wane over time. It was considered acceptable to discuss relationship sex with trusted friends but not with family, colleagues or neighbours.

Sexual discourses reflected gender expectations - particularly in heterosexual relationships. 'Men always want it'; 'women prefer an experienced man'; 'a woman can keep a man through sex'; and (a gay discourse) - 'straight men are turned on by gays'.

Children

Discourses viewed children variously as 'innocent', 'to be seen and not heard', 'vulnerable', 'territorial', and given to 'sibling rivalry'. Folklore discourses suggested that some people - usually females, can predict the gender of an unborn child. Other narratives suggested that pets substitute for children in some cases; that there is a limited - or right - time for having children, and that 'two are a good number to have'. Lack of children was expected to lead to loneliness in old age, and childless couples felt the pressure of cultural expectations to start a family.

Children were said to 'make a family', but also to 'create difficulties in the relationship'. Girls were expected to be 'closer to father', and boys to mothers. Girls were talked of as 'more trouble', or 'very sensible', but teenage boys were seen as 'difficult to handle'.

Rules concerned with children stated that you are expected to look after your own child. Children were expected to 'do the right thing by their parents' in old age. Children are 'doted upon by grandparents', 'damaged in gay relationships', 'encourage bonding between partners', are 'ideally brought up by a full-time mother', are 'owned by their parents', but 'become a boring topic if talked about too much'.

The Role of Others

The role of others in the relationship was circumscribed. Friends were cast as matchmakers, but were expected to take a back seat as the relationship developed. The wider family, and 'other people' were expected to be excluded in order for the relationship to succeed, whilst at the same time, being on hand when support was needed.

8:3.3 Marriage and the Family

Cultural discourses around marriage were numerous. Conventions regarding the marriage ceremony - who pays, who is legitimately allowed to be photographed with the bridal couple, wedding ceremony etiquette and expectations of the vicar's role. Several couples mentioned time effects on ritual expectations. 'Thirty years ago, you got married first, and *then* had children'.

Family approval of the relationship was needed. However, poor parental models were blamed for present relationship difficulties. Fathers were seen as providing male role models, being strict, setting standards, being protective towards daughters, and teaching them to fear men. Mothers were seen as ambitious for their children - particularly sons, intuitive, dependent

upon family occasions such as Christmas, responsible for dysfunction in children, and influential as an in-law.

8:3.4 Personal Discourses

Gender

Gender expectations were particularly powerful. Many of the discourses highlighted by feminist writers were evident. Boys and men were prized, required to be tough, aggressive, evil, competent, experienced, head of the family. Blokes 'fancy' women, always want sex, talk about girls, ask them out, handle the money in relationships, and pay the bill in the restaurant. However, other discourses were apparent - that women manage financial affairs - and in gay relationships, that men can be both strong and vulnerable.

Girls and women talked about being/not being attractive, and putting on weight. They were responsible for housework, looking after the children, and ensuring family communication. They had roles as taxi driver, intuitive partner, seducer, - but *little* girls must be good. Discourses suggested that women wanted men to be protective. Women were physically and sexually vulnerable:

I did everything but go into his work. When there are a load of mechanics all standing in the garage, that is not a place for a young girl. (Kate)

Terms used with respect to women highlighted underlying cultural expectations and attitudes - a 'female' doctor; 'just' a housewife, 'spinster' teacher, a 'professional' woman. Female respondents sometimes used phrases such as 'I was a bitch', or 'a silly old woman', to describe themselves.

Orientation

Discourses defined homosexual culture in terms of the scene and its customs. However, ambivalence accompanied talk about gay venues, the gay network, and communication through the grapevine. Homophobic attitudes were expressed through negative discourses. Social gays were almost always described as drag or tarts, fairies, or queers. 'Raving butch', 'closeted gays', 'promiscuous', 'vicious', 'bitchy' and 'anti-couple' - definitions conveying vivid, unflattering images of homosexuality - as if creating distance between self and the stereotype.

Gay discourses also challenged heterosexual assumptions - especially amongst lesbians where gender expectations created anxiety. New discourses were developed around the negotiation of domestic and economic roles, with couples, (with one exception - 'I got burnt out. I was doing it all') - talking of each partner only doing the things she was good at, or attracted to. However, heterosexual discourses 'ran through' homosexual relationships, both being challenged, and providing a template. For example, references to the relationship as 'a marriage', and discussions of commitment ceremonies.

8:3.5 Causal Explanations

Discourses not only defined, explained and stated rules of behaviour, they also provided causal explanations. *Psychological discourses* were used to describe 'states of mind'. - 'confronting feelings', 'having a lot of baggage', 'being intuitive', 'affirmed', 'listening to the child within'. Causal links were suggested - 'parents as poor/good role models', 'life mapped out by the age of five', 'people who have problems with their own sexuality can't cope with homosexuality'. Psychological causes for behaviour were identified in depression, breakdown, mourning, being very stressed.

Mental health discourses were usually posed in negative terms implying loss of control, needing help, being out of one's mind. Such discourses were often tied in with medical discourses about getting cured, being made better - especially with respect to homosexuality.

Biological discourses were used to explain moodiness, broodiness, emotionality, and generally applied to females. Causal explanations suggested pregnancy, hormones, a 'natural' desire to be pregnant, PMS, etc. Biological discourses were also used to explain gayness and life changing events such as the mid-life crisis - seen as a male phenomenon.

Astrological discourses explained personality and relationship patterns - the 'typical' behaviour of a Libran or Sagittarian; telepathy, or fate, affecting relationship interaction; 'sending energy' to heal a family member.

Religious discourses tended to focus on issues of rules and expectations, external power, or the idiosyncrasies of religious people. 'The Church' is against divorce, sexual expression, and contains people who are 'not normal'. On the other hand, God is a guide, and needs to be followed closely.

Age and maturity discourses conveyed a sense of rightness in terms of behaviour, and implied improvement, for example, in coping strategies - being stronger, adult, growing up.

Summary

Chapter 7 outlined the content of themes presented in couple's narratives. Chapter 8 looked at how the themes related to the Guiding Propositions, and some of the cultural discourses implicated in the findings. Chapter 9 looks at *how* themes were established between partners, and the implications construction processes may have for clinical couples.

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CHAPTER 9: THE CO-CONSTRUCTION OF NARRATIVES

9:1 Introduction

The co-constructive process is an area which has so far received little research attention. The present study was based upon retrospective accounts produced jointly by couples. The assumption was that in remembering significant points in their relationship, partners would express and organise their experiences through stories and discourses, and apply jointly crafted meanings to events. Co-construction however, was gradually seen as involving more than the content of communication - the subject matter of chapter 7. An additional analysis - this time - of *process* was required.

Distinguishing clearly between process and content is sometimes problematic. For example, the recollection of a particular interview as pleasant, light-hearted and generally good-natured was backed up by a recording supporting this impression. However, a reading of the transcript revealed angry exchanges which had been cloaked in laughter and lightness of voice - an instance where content was confounded with process.

An analysis of process reveals patterns generalisable across the sample, but also examples which are fairly idiosyncratic to a particular couple. However, both process and content build a complex communicative experience, reflecting the 'communication episode' highlighted for example by Harré and Secord, (1972) - cited in chapter 3. Winograd and Flores, (1986) argued that such episodes constitute a 'conversational dance' - assuming that partners consciously or unconsciously *choose* a response from a range of possibilities and therefore 'direct' the building of meaning.

This chapter discusses the findings in terms of co-constructive processes identified throughout whole interviews: Interactive styles, the role of each partner as speaker, the links between process and content, and change as it happens in the interview are examined in turn. These are

preliminary observations arising as an offshoot of the main analysis, and therefore a full analysis is beyond the scope of this project. However, the observations generate ideas which could be followed up in a later study.

A number of differences emerged which applied to some couples and not others. For this reason, heterosexual non-client, lesbian, and gay couples are distinguished from heterosexual client partners.

9:2 Co-Construction and Interactional Styles

Turn-taking is necessary to any communicative interchange. However, its form was found to be inconsistent across scripts, and within specific interviews. It was also subject to an added feature of negotiation due to the presence of a third party. Couples were not only speaking to each other, but also responding to - and tailoring their accounts for - the consumption of the interviewer.

Qualitative differences in turn-taking styles were found and these were discovered to conform to the six codes of analysis of interactive styles developed by Veroff, Sutherland, Chadiha and Ortega (1993). The classifications are as follows:

- 1) Collaboration Characterised by the speaker extending, questioning, answering the partner. Continuing the storyline.
- 2) Conflict disagreeing; interrupting; negative responses.
- 3) Confirmation agreement: Mm; yes, etc.
- 4) Laughter-Continuation
 The speaker makes no reflection on previous comments of the partner, but continues the general storyline.

- 5) Non-response The speaker avoids a response to the previous comment.
- 6) Confirmation-collaboration characterised by interruption, affirming and then adding new information.

All but three non-client couples were found to use a predominantly collaborative style of interaction (1). However, the narrative was often pursued without the speaker overtly acknowledging the partner's previous response. Several couples collaborated in storytelling by completing each other's sentences - a feature of interaction termed 'ducting' by Veroff *et al.*

Confirmation - collaboration (6), and laughter- continuation (4) were the next most frequently used communication styles, with confirmatory responses (3) being regularly attached to collaborative styles. The interaction of two heterosexual, non-client couples was particularly characterised by conflictual communication (2).

All other non-client couples, except for two, showed evidence of brief episodes of conflict. The exceptions were a lesbian couple whose relationship was characterised by emotional and physical interdependence reflected in a highly skewed interactional pattern (to be discussed later); and a stereotypically traditional heterosexual couple. It could be argued that in both cases, elements of conflict were muted because of a strong imbalance of power in which the 'weaker' partner was required to adopt less confrontational ways of challenging the more dominant other. There was no evidence from the sample that homosexual couples differed from heterosexual couples in terms of interactional style.

Client couples were chosen as a further attempt at theoretical sampling, because of their difficulties in achieving change. Their narratives showed evidence of specific differences in terms of interactional styles. Non response (5) was the most commonly used style - although this may have been due to the particular dynamics of counselling in that during the early stages much of the communication is directed towards the counsellor rather than the partner.

One couple (the female partner) employed a confirmatory style (3); one, continuation (4) - without laughter; and two couples, a conflictual (2) style. All the couples changed their styles over time - eventually utilising largely collaborative styles (1) or (6).

The analysis suggests that some styles may be subdivided to produce further codes. For example, laughter-continuation styles fall into two groups: a) the accounts which continue a joint narrative without overt reference to the partner's account, and b) where partners continue with their individual stories in parallel with each other.

9:3 Co-construction and Speaker Roles

In addition to indications of interactional style, the scripts revealed that partners adopted specific roles in the co-construction process. Hirst and Manier (1997) studied families recounting their past and suggested that family members adopted different roles in the storytelling. One might be narrator - having the chief role in recounting the story: Others may take the role of mentor - prompting the narrator at points in the story; or the function of monitor - agreeing, disagreeing, evaluating etc. Roles were seen as interchangeable to some extent - depending on the nature of the stories being told. There was also some evidence that family members tended to adopt default roles.

However, this study comprised two main communicators with an interviewer who often fulfilled the mentor/monitor role. There were marked differences between couples in the balance between partners - evident in the roles each played. Over half of non-client couples constructed their story equally - each partner contributing comparable elements to the narrative. However, the highest proportion of these were gay male and lesbian partners. The constructive process used by the remaining couples was characterised by one partner acting as chief narrator (CN). This role was identified either by volume of narrative spoken by CN, or the nature and content of input. For example, CN's tended to control the story by using confrontational tactics - 'That's the way it is, and that's tough!', or by persisting in efforts to regain/maintain control when points in the narrative required that the story be set straight. CN

partners also 'directed' the interview by using discourses of 'self' and 'other' perception as justification or as causal explanations.

Heterosexuals had the highest proportion of CNs - seven out of twelve couples. Only one of these was male.

As Hirst and Manier found, the role of CN can be transferred to another on occasion. Alternatively a skewed narration can become more egalitarian. Evidence for narrator changes were seen, for example when accounts changed from a relationship to an employment focus in a heterosexual narrative, when details of the account were disputed; or when the context was of special significance in some way to the more muted partner.

These processes may provide a key to memory and meaning construction in relationships. Interactional style and role dictates who will have charge of the narrative. For example, the primary narrator may choose to tell one person's story - either her own, or her partner's. This tendency was remarked upon by at least one of the more muted partners; and one CN remarked as the interview concluded that she had presented a negative picture of the relationship. Furthermore paralinguistic practices affect the way in which the story is heard - the aforementioned laughter which covered angry words; or the flat, sad voice which conveyed the speaker's unhappiness with her recollections of the relationship in the past. Such features can be expected to act as mediating elements which direct the focus of the narrative in terms of justifications, causal explanations; who defines the context of the account, and how partners interpret the consequences.

A study of client couples would appear to support this view. Of the client group, three couples had a male CN. In two cases, the male partner was defined as having, or being 'the problem'. Their partners joined therapy as a last resort before contemplating relationship dissolution - suggesting that the CN role was concerned with presenting a 'good' case in order to avoid break-up.

The third male instance mirrored the findings of Dallos and Dallos (1997), that interaction patterns between couples in therapy reflect the inequalities of power in their relationship.

Women who feel powerless may cease to be CN because they are robbed of their role as relationship expert - thus become depressed, less able to effect change, and consequently less able to direct the relationship story.

One couple whose interactional style was mainly conflictual began therapy with a female CN, but both were engaged in a struggle to define the narrative in its final form. These data and interpretations support the view of Dallos (1997) that in therapy, the storyteller role involves a strong control function. Towards the end of therapy, changes in the role of CN occurred, couples adopting a more egalitarian style.

9:4 Co-construction Processes and Narrative Content

The findings suggest that process and content work together as experience is co-constructed. For example, patterns in the use of names were detected. In heterosexual couples women tended to use their partner's names more often than men - with only one couple showing a reverse trend. There was no discernible trend in homosexual couples, and use of names appeared to be idiosyncratic to each couple. This would appear to rule out the likelihood of name use being a gender-related issue - i.e. that females use names more frequently than males. However, appellation seemed to reflect an emotional balance between partners - the anxious partner using the name of the other more often. This finding was supported by evidence that partners tended to use names more frequently during narrative periods when the emotional temperature was raised by painful contexts, or when the control of the story was shifted from one to the other.

9:5 Change in the Interview

Two types of co-construction were identified in the scripts - the recollection of events, and the structuring of new information. Processes involved in the co-construction of memory perform several functions. They enable - as Miell (1987) argues - the retrospective creation of truth.

Reconstruction occurs through an active interpretative process of reconstruction bringing together the individual relational schemas of the partners into a negotiated relationship schema. This provides a basis for 'evaluating experience, anticipating the future, and structuring information.' (Miell p.63) As a result, the processes of reconstruction perform several strategic functions. Firstly, they enable space for reflection. In the process of reconstruction partners not only recalled what they had done together, but what they told each other about their joint actions:

Matt: I have the grand vision and S starts with 'Well, what about this?' and I'm 'Oh, never mind.'

Jeremy: We'll go driving when we go looking for places and he'll take me to see this most fantastic big house in the country. 'That is the house I want', he says. 'Yeah, but can we just like start at the bottom first?' (Gay)

The couple interpreted the experience and provided a rationale for action.

Secondly, through the process of reconstruction couples created shifting contexts against which the relationship could be set.

Adrian: I think probably we were going through a load of stages in six weeks from a very nervous bonding to sort of irritating each other and clashing

Mandy: because there were all the other things going on as well. It was my first time from home you know. You have to live in the sort of campus there and there's lots of other sorts of emotion going on at the same time, and you're given assignments and you've got to get on with people on your course. It was a funny time wasn't it? When you look back on it - how you cope actually - I don't think I would want to go through that again. (Het)

As the couple created each new context in retrospect, they maintained and reinforced their integrity as a partnership and convey a sense of growth or change. Each new story of shared context separated the partners from the world, and from their individual contexts.

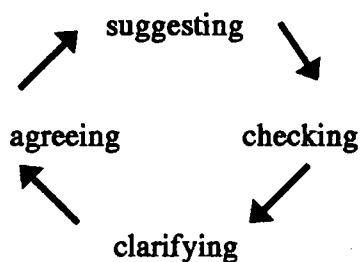
Thirdly, examples of co-construction were seen to be qualitatively different. For example, some were concerned with establishing timescale or order/accuracy of recalled events. Such periods were found to typically occur at the commencement of interviews and in almost all

cases consisted of tightly argued collaboration in which both partners had fairly equal input - even seen in couples who went on to conform to the CN pattern:

Steve: You were at College
 Kate: Oh, was I?
 Steve: Laughs
 Kate: I was at College, wasn't I?
 Steve: You'd just started College, yeah.
 Kate: Yes, but I was with Jane though, at school.
 Steve: You weren't at school. I wasn't at school.
 Kate: Weren't you? No you weren't at school. You were working. Oh well, perhaps I was at College then. (Het)

This was a circular process - sometimes run through two or three times before a definitive version of events was agreed, as fig. 9:1 illustrates.

Figure 9:1 The collaboration process in establishing a timescale for events



These periods contrasted with other narratives which appeared to be less overtly negotiated and where partners appeared to agree on the story version and concentrate on elaboration of more complex accounts.

Process functions were most clearly seen when change happened during the interview. In such situations the couple were not just reporting a construction of events, borne out of pre-existing schemata, but reconstructing events from a personal/individual perception which was destined to undergo change. These occasions could be argued to mirror closely the dynamics of the counselling process, and suggest that a change of perception also introduces a change in meaning which itself becomes the focus of reconstruction.

Three examples emerged from the data. In each case, one partner learned some startling information about the other in terms of the meaning of past events, which had serious implications for the relationship in the present. In two cases, interactional style and narrative roles changed as partner's accounts flipped between the past and the present. In effect, past issues had now become the present.

Jeremy: I told you that I went into see Alec and he was so happy at first and then...

Matt: No I didn't know that you told him that you saw me first, I knew that you came from the airport straight to me and then you left me and went to Alec, I didn't know that you'd told him that you went to see me first and that's why he didn't want you there, you told me that he just decided that it wasn't going to work between the two of you and he didn't want you there and you had to leave.

Jeremy: No I told you, I definitely told you he had flipped out when I got there because of you...

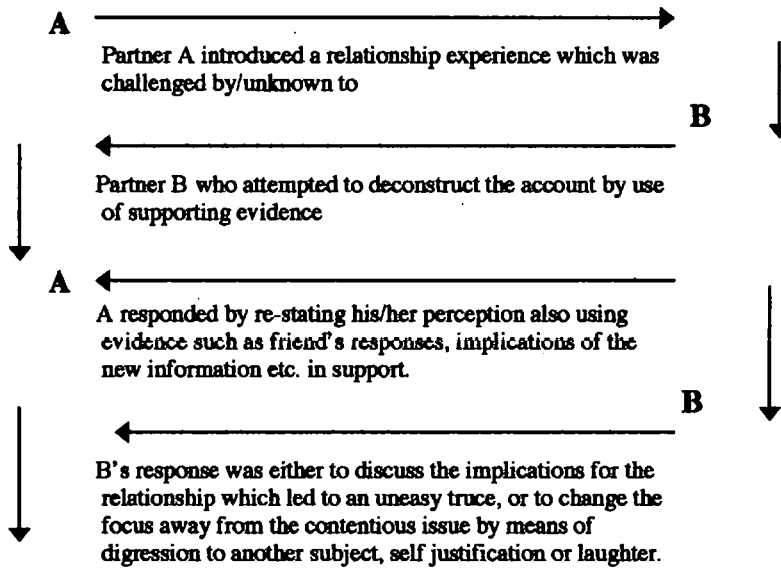
Matt: No you didn't. It's the first I've heard of it.

Jeremy: I don't think so.

Matt: Yes it is, well hey it's in the past.

There were shared features evident in each of the three examples which comply with Miell's view that a novel event or crisis for one of the partners causes the individual to check the picture of the relationship and update. The process may be conceptualised as shown in Figure 9:2.

Figure 9:2. Dealing with a novel event in memory reconstruction:



In none of the cases did the couple reach an overtly agreed consensus, although in one, a remark at the end of the interview demonstrated that B had accepted the re-construction. With so few examples to draw upon it is hard to reach any useful conclusions. However, follow-up with each of the couples revealed that where partner B had avoided becoming engaged in the re-construction, the couple continued to hold diverse views. The relative importance of the issues involved appear to affect meaning construction which may indicate that meaning becomes part of a joint construction if the disputed memory is of a nature crucial to the ongoing stability of the relationship.

9:6 The Validation of Interactional Styles

The first attempt produced a disappointing level of agreement. A colleague with relevant research skills was asked to match six passages of text with the six Veroff *et al.* interactional styles. Four were appropriately matched but two were transposed. One of these -

- Jill: I still say this thing about you going back to meet your wife was a very significant things as far as our relationship was concerned.
- Ian: OK. So after that -

was coded as confirmation - which, from the written text appears appropriate. However, closer examination reveals that Ian's quoted response was a non-response - classified as avoiding a response to a previous comment. There are three reasons why the classification may have been unclear: Firstly, the passage of text (longer than quoted above) may still not have been comprehensive enough to demonstrate the full impact of Ian's response. Secondly, the validator had no access to the original taped interview, thus the subtleties of the response were lost - i.e. the dismissive tone of Ian's 'OK'. Thirdly, several passages of validated text included more than one interactional style, rendering it hard to find a 'pure' example. The question is also raised as to what length of text comprises an example of interactional style. Some styles appear to run on for pages of text, others change with every few lines.

However, a subsequent validation exercise was carried out with examples of text chosen as unambiguous in terms of interactional style. The resulting inter-rater agreement was satisfactory at $K = 0.83$ (Cohen's Kappa). (See Appendix 8).

9:7 Clinical and Non-Clinical Couple Differences

The discussion above indicated some differences in interactional styles between heterosexual client couples and other respondents. Further features were also identified in terms of relationship quality and coping strategies relevant to the co-construction of transitional

experiences. The longitudinal focus on client couples enabled additional observations not possible with non-client couples.

Relationship Quality

Non client couples indicated the character and 'fit' of the relationship according to degree of closeness, negotiation of personal and couple space, and the shared balance of personal qualities - strength vs. vulnerability, anger vs. passivity etc.

Client couples focused on the problematic aspects of their relationship - fraught negotiation of togetherness; difficulties with sexuality; covert, or overt power struggles:

Tricia: One thing we've never had is equality. I've never felt equal.

James: I still have this feeling of an ultimate power that Tricia has.

Four of the couples defined one partner as the 'problem'. The partner so-defined tended to have little understanding of self, or partner,

Alan: When you, when you make a statement like that it's almost as though I don't know, - I've got to read between the lines in some way .

had unclear goals for the future,

Brian: I don't know where I want to be in five year's time. I have never given it any thought.

was given to negative thinking styles, and tended to look to the experience of others to reinforce his or her negative cognitions:

Alan: That concerns me -, because I feel it's important that we do things together because, - (in several other situations people have gone off on their own lines and couples have gone apart.

Pre-emptive construing (Dallos, 1996), was a characteristic of three of the relationships;

Rob: I can never trust her.

and interaction was characterised by unclear interchanges in the form of contradictions - (i.e. a partner making a statement which is followed later by an opposite view); and an absence of shared meanings.

Narratives contained a search for causes, and evidence that couples were constrained in their options by, for example, gender discourses

Alan: (Talking about the suggestion that he exchanges a well paid, hated job, for one he might enjoy). I'd feel guilty about not bringing in an equal share, because I know how hard you have to work for what you get.

or intense anxiety and fear.

Discourses around fear, cultural expectations, and negativity were also seen in heterosexual, non-client couples whose relationships were troubled - characterised for example, by one partner frequently leaving the relationship.

Strategies

Non-client narratives were characterised by the use of strategies such as deliberate positive thinking, 'learning from experience', 'managing change' and 'taking control', 'pulling together in times of trouble', and the most important - 'talking things over'. Discourses highlighted couple's implicit rules for coping with change:

Take one day at a time. (Ian)

Don't think about it. (Once change has occurred) (Tom)

Accept it. (Shaun)

Three clinical couples avoided talking or thinking about their problems outside the counselling room. Few strategies were mentioned, and those attempted were often inadequate - for example, the partner who readily agreed to change his behaviour, but then did nothing.

Absence of strategies appeared to be linked to low self esteem for three female, and three male partners. Practical constraints also limited the strategies available - for example, the presence of children prevented dissatisfied female partners from leaving the relationship.

Similar strategic factors were identified in troubled heterosexual non-client relationships.

Longitudinal Focus

Non-client couples provided a retrospective account of change. In contrast, clinical couples were intending, and participating in the process of, change. Clinical cases therefore involved a different perspective, enabling long-term observation of change as it happened. This resulted in several conclusions:

- Many of the features identified above were not consistent over time. Changes in interactional style, and speaker roles were noticeable between the first and final tape recordings. (See above discussion).
- Early scripts were characterised by a larger number of expressed negative cognitions, perceptual disjunctions, and interactional imbalances between partners. Interviewer input was substantial, and partners addressed each other through the third person.
- Later scripts retained certain core characteristics. For example, the tendency for one partner (Kate) to use confusing and contradictory narratives, persisted. However, evidence of change in negative discourses, interactional style and balance between partners was found. Alan, for example, began as the dominant speaker. His negative perceptions defined

his relationship with Sheila. At the end of counselling, communication was more evenly balanced, giving space for Sheila's more positive input.

- Long-term study enabled a better picture of the 'fit' between partners, and clearer links to past influences were established. For example, Jean's dominant discourse was 'people don't listen to me'. This had been a consistent experience with mother, now repeated in her relationship with Brian.
 - Changing emotional responses were identified as transitions occurred. For example, Rob experienced anger, uncertainty, and depression early in therapy. However, an insight into why he behaved and felt as he did towards his partner Di, offered a longed-for hope of positive change, and was greeted with elation.
 - It was possible to observe the effects of change as it happened. Rob's self-discovered reframe of his motives and intentions led him to see that the couple *could* achieve their expectations of closeness by working on internal change within themselves and the relationship, rather than focusing on blaming external others for their plight.
 - The role of transference and countertransference was more marked with clinical couples, and opportunities to make use of intrapsychic dynamics was evident. For example, in becoming aware that James was very angry with me because I was unable to 'fix' his problem, just as mother seemed inadequate to meet his childhood needs, it became possible to identify the roots of his feelings of powerlessness, and explore and change his feelings of powerlessness with his partner Tricia.
-

9:8 Conclusion

This chapter has briefly introduced observations concerning features which may be seen as relevant to the co-construction of recollection and representation of meanings in narratives. A look at clinical and non-clinical couples has suggested some of the areas of difference between them.

Chapter 10 takes a case study approach to the themes and co-construction of meaning between two couples.

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CHAPTER 10:

TWO CASE STUDIES

10:1 Introduction

This chapter attempts to present an overall map of the themes and reconstructions which make up the discourses of change by furnishing the stories of two of the couples interviewed.

Grounded theory analysis produces concepts and categories along with the properties which give the categories breadth. However, such analysis creates divisions in each script in order to establish composite data bases across the sample. Case studies enable a top-down synthesis of themes by yielding a descriptive and analytic storyline illustrating how categories are integrated in the production of themes.

One couple from the heterosexual, and one from the homosexual group were chosen. The heterosexual couple - both in their late forties - were poised on the edge of change. The homosexual - male couple were in a state of change at the time of the interview. Both couples were distinguished by the richness of their accounts, in terms of their ability to reflect on their actions, and in conveying a wide variety of meanings to their subjective experiences.

10:2 Case Study 1: Jeremy and Matt

Completing the Graph

Jeremy and Matt were interviewed for just one session lasting one and a half hours. Their interactive style was largely *collaborative*, with elements of *confirmation*, *continuation* and *conflictual* styles.

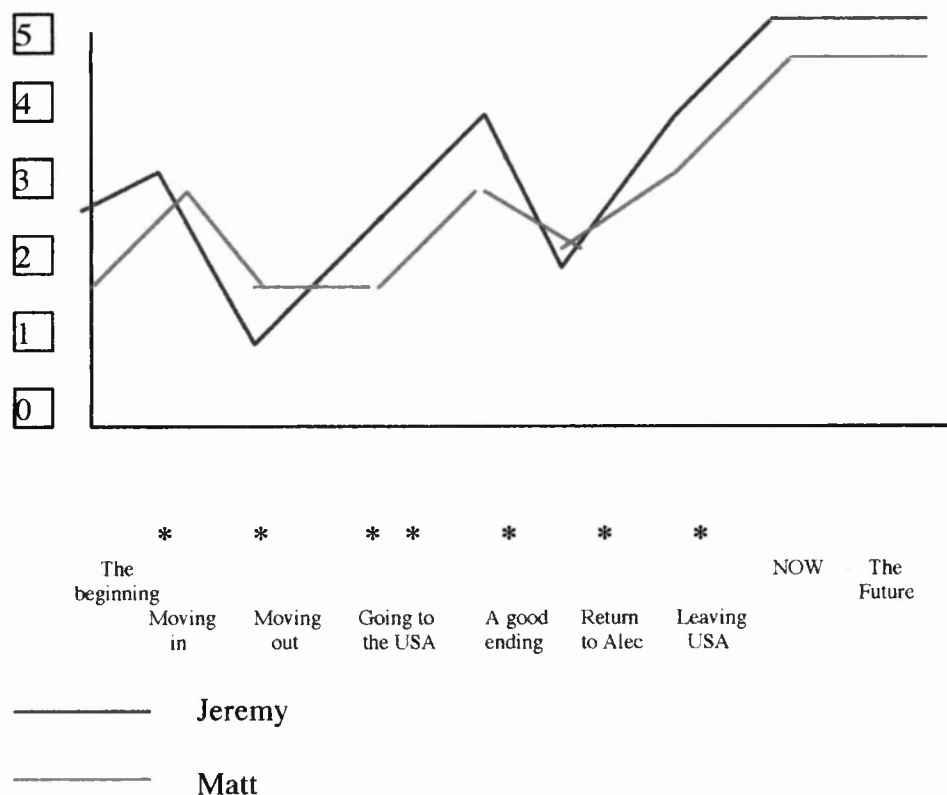
The partners were clearly interdependent, and ratios - for example, of confrontational interaction were evenly balanced. This was also evident in the self perceptions which emerged

as the graph was completed. Each felt a comparable awareness of need of the other; anxiety about what each had to offer the other; and confidence about self worth in respect of the other.

Imbalances were evident in terms of perceived material worth - Jeremy being used to a more affluent way of life; and in differing attitudes towards their homosexuality. Jeremy had ‘come out’ to his parents many years ago, whereas Matt’s family were still unaware that he was gay.

The case study illustrates the analytical themes found in the overall sample, and figure 10:1 represents the graph completed by the couple.

Figure 10:1 Life events and closeness measure: Jeremy and Matt.



The Couple's Story

Jeremy and Matt first glimpsed each other across the bar of a gay pub. Their earliest encounters involved a kind of game playing - testing each other out. Jeremy because he was already in a relationship - one that was far from fulfilling; Matt because he was not yet admitting to himself that he was gay. Each therefore needed to be reasonably certain of the other before he was willing to become more closely involved.

Despite the initial hesitancy, the couple moved into Matt's flat together within two weeks of the first sighting - an action described as sudden, but effortless and natural.

However, within six months Jeremy moved out at Matt's suggestion. Jeremy was still emotionally attached to his former lover - Alec, and had vacillated between the two partners, indecisive about commitment to either.

The couple described their feelings at this time. Matt could see that Alec offered far more material benefits to Jeremy than *he* ever could - 'I was weighing myself up against Alec, and I didn't have anything to offer.' Jeremy on the other hand, was debilitated by Alec. 'He was one of those people who always seemed to be pulling you down, and its very easy to begin to believe all that.' However, the occasional flashes of real warmth from Alec, the affluent lifestyle, and the need to heal Alec of the effects of a 'hideous childhood' kept Jeremy tied to the relationship.

Matt had his own 'other' in the form of a lodger. A straight friend who with his girlfriend 'took over' Matt's flat and created a cramped and untidy environment which produced an unwelcoming context for Jeremy, and an awareness of split loyalties for Matt.

These emotional and practical issues resulted in a relationship subject to violent swings at different levels. Jeremy commuted between his two partners, unhappy that neither provided complete fulfilment. Matt vacillated between a desire to be permanently with Jeremy and a decision to end it as a relationship 'going nowhere'.

In emotional terms, Jeremy was 'bruised' from the relationship with Alec. He recognised the 'destructive power' that Alec had over him, and was uneasy about allowing anyone else to get close enough to repeat the experience. At the same time he recognised that Matt was different. Matt affirmed him rather than destroying his self esteem; Matt did not resort to the kind of angry outbursts which had created fear in Jeremy's relationship with Alec. Matt longed for Jeremy to trust him, but at this stage Jeremy was suspicious. 'I was always waiting for the sting to come afterwards'.

A change occurred when Jeremy decided to take a high powered, and well paid job in the USA. This had the effect of putting him in charge of his own lifestyle and rapidly built his self esteem. The relationship with Matt entered a 'good period' when the couple sensed themselves as close but Matt was aware that Alec was still 'on the scene'.

Jeremy began to tire of the job after a while, and was contemplating returning permanently to England. In Matt's words - 'You were coming back to England and you didn't know which one to go to. Me or Alec.' At this point, Matt again took control and suggested that the two men have a final holiday in America; have some fun, and make a good ending of their relationship. Up to this point the couple presented shared perceptions of the progression of the relationship. However, new knowledge was to be revealed to Matt as the interview continued.

Their planned ending was carried out and Jeremy came home a few weeks later ready to return to Alec. However, when Alec learned - within the first few minutes of their reunion - that Jeremy had visited Matt before travelling to see him, Alec violently ejected Jeremy and declared a final ending between them: Jeremy had no choice but to return to Matt.

However, during the interview, this - the precipitating factor leading to their final decision to be together became an object of dispute. Matt was devastated to learn that Jeremy had chosen him 'by default'. Jeremy argued that Matt *had* known the truth, and as chapter 8 suggests, the couple were involved in a confrontational re-construction of their perception of events, leading to an overt acknowledgement that each had different perceptions which remained; but that Matt especially was willing to let go of the difficult issues the 'new' knowledge had brought up - 'Well hey, its in the past.'

Their story continued to the time of the interview when Jeremy had resigned from his job, and together they were contemplating buying a property of their own in order to 'build a married life'.

At follow-up, Jeremy was enjoying his new job - seeing it as an improvement on the last. The couple had moved into a shared home - an event illustrating their different approaches to change - Jeremy welcoming, and Matt fearing it. Themes around difference were marked, but these were seen to be beneficial to the relationship enabling the partners to create a good 'fit'. The couple's stance with respect to gayness hadn't changed, and resolution of the 'choice by default' issue was interpreted according to Jeremy's perception. He was now feeling more distant from Alec, which gave Matt more confidence. (See Appendix 12 for responses to follow-up questions)

Several factors contribute to the understanding of the role of change in the couple's story and illustrate some of the analytical themes found in the scripts overall.

The Theme of Change

The couple were aware that change is a process. They talked of change occurring in stages - for example, decisions about where to live were dependent upon the location of Jeremy's new job. Change had to progress through sequences. The big house in the country was a dream but it was necessary to 'start at the bottom first'. Change therefore had to be managed - to abandon the dream and 'get back to reality' - which involved the necessity of adjusting to a new set of circumstances.

Some changes were seen to involve reluctance. For example, Matt contemplated leaving his flat with a mixture of regret -

I've been happy in my flat for such a long time;

and anxiety -

I'm not moving till you've sorted yourself out.

Other changes were seen as positive. For example, Jeremy's final disconnection from Alec made an important change to Matt and therefore to the relationship.

Alec had gone now and that was it. It was just the two of us and then I could relax.

Change was evident throughout the script as other themes illustrate.

Relationship changes

The couple set their relationship in the context of the influences existing before they met. Jeremy's sumptuous lifestyle and the nature of his family of origin were detailed as causal factors in the attraction he felt for Alec, and in producing differences in expectations and personality which distinguished him from Matt.

Alec as former partner had a powerful effect on the early dynamics of the relationship. Jeremy came to the relationship in fear that Matt would be like Alec. As Matt stated:

Jeremy still doesn't trust me. You used to think I was too good to be true, and something will bring it down, or I'll go off with somebody else, or I'll just do something nasty.

Matt revealed little about early influences on his own life, but saw Alec as the source of his insecurities which explained his tendency to urge Jeremy to leave him and return to Alec. -

I knew that he loved me and wanted to be with me but I also new he wanted Alec too for whatever reason. I always had the feeling he was going to go off with Alec ... It was easier for me to say "Oh fine. You go back to Alec".

However, Jeremy too found that Matt's behaviour made *him* feel insecure. -

When we're alone you're really nice and then as soon as we go out with your friends you're a million miles away from me, and you act as if you're so straight and that leaves me in a

very insecure position.

The couple reconstructed an account of one such event in which Jeremy angrily challenged Matt about his behaviour. The confrontation had the effect of establishing behavioural expectations and relationship rules in order to achieve a greater sense of security.

Matt We had a massive fight, and you just attacked me on the way home.

Jeremy Well I was trying to get a reaction. ... I came storming towards him and he went, 'What am I supposed to do?' I was shaking in the street. 'You're supposed to fight for me, not just let me walk away!'

Matt It made me understand a little bit more of what I was supposed to be. I think I also understood what he was like as well.

The couple were aware that as the relationship developed they were more able to handle their insecurities by being able to share their vulnerabilities, and (at Matt's instigation) acquired the ability to talk about things.

Personal changes

The need to be strong was a theme particularly important to this couple. The notion of personal (emotional) strength was related to feelings of security/insecurity in the relationship.

Jeremy fought hard to be strong although he also longed to hand control over to another. The couple recollected how this worked at the beginning of their relationship. -

Jeremy: I spend a lot of my time fighting to be strong and successful and there are days when I just long to be with somebody and just let go of that and say, 'You're in control and that's final.'

Matt: 'You take care of me now. I'm always the strong, dominating person. Now its your turn.'

Jeremy: But I'm not quite ready for that, but that situation when you can just heave a sigh of relief, just for one period of time drop your guard. Let someone else make all the major decisions, work things out. If I'd actually allow somebody to do that ...

Matt: If you'd actually allow somebody to do that, you'll just jump back and say, 'No, I'm not doing that.'

Jeremy admitted to unchangeable elements in his personality - for example, a tendency to resist being told what to do, and to attack the other if he felt cornered or unhappy; but he was aware that he was gradually changing in his ability to cope with these behaviour patterns and able to adopt a more mature approach. -

Jeremy: If I look back on all my relationships, I have been in a delayed growing up phase, and I guess with you I take more responsibility for my situation. I kind of half hid behind Alec and the fabulous house ... so I've had a history of being looked after. Now I'm ready to face the world.

In psychodynamic terms it was interesting to interpret the relative strengths of the partners - in terms of perceived versus actual strength. Jeremy needed to remain strong possibly because his relationship with Alec had shown his dependency and weakness. In contrast, Matt saw himself as powerless - having little to offer, whilst demonstrating that he had the power to employ risky strategies in telling Jeremy to go, in order to achieve satisfactory ends: In effect, each needed the other to act confidently the relationship. -

Jeremy: I often used to feel that you gave up on me too easily because I wanted you to want to drag me away from it all, and sometimes when I felt I wanted to lean on you, I wanted you to say 'Don't go back.' I wanted you to have that sort of strength and you didn't. ...

Matt: But that was because my confidence, and to put everything into you knowing that there is these little things that could drag you away ... If I'd done that and it hadn't have worked I would have felt, I don't know, devastated, guilty, whatever ...

Orientation themes

were less explicit for this couple than for other homosexual partners in the sample.

Jeremy took his gender orientation for granted but recognised that it created problems early on when he needed to prove himself as a person before he could 'come out' to his family.

Matt was more aware of his changing approach to his homosexuality. His first strategy was to behave 'as if' he were straight, and he delayed finding a partner until he discovered Jeremy

who was (for him) a *real* man. He was not at all attracted to stereotypical gays. Much of Matt's insecurity early in the relationship was due to his anxieties about 'coming out'.

Future changes

At the time of the interview, the couple were planning to visit Jeremy's family overseas. They both had fears and expectations of the visit, and knew that it may change their relationship.

Jeremy hoped that Matt might understand him after meeting his family. Both used psychological metaphors for explaining the effects of family of origin on personality and behaviour. Interestingly, Jeremy (the intuitive, 'artistic' partner) chose a psychodynamic justification for current conduct. -

So much depends on the way you were brought up.

whereas Matt (the 'practical', 'action man' partner) used a 'tabula rasa' explanation. -

Well, its your conditioning isn't it? We're all conditioned to whatever is around you or whatever your parents are like. We're all babies born into this world not knowing a thing, but knowing everything until the adults start telling you 'Don't do this', and 'Don't do that!'

In their final co-construction of the future, the partners attempted to predict the possible effects of the family meeting - as if 'playing with' reality in order to rehearse potential outcomes, -

Matt: You'll hate me after I've met your family.

Jeremy: I'll hate you? No its how you'll see me.

Matt: I'll drop you in it a number of times.

Jeremy: You may do, yes.

Matt: I have a very good knack of ... I always take sides with the mothers. Friends of mine would always hate me going round.

Jeremy: I have to say that I hope you *do* side with my mother, cos she thinks I'm wonderful.

- a scenario which could be judged to have a positive outcome for the relationship.

In summary, the interview conveyed ideas about change on many levels, and in many contexts - personal, relational and social. Change seemed to be a necessary component of the relationship - particularly given Jeremy's personality. If it didn't happen, it would be provoked in order to avoid stagnation. -

If it does become a bit too easy and plain sailing ... I'm likely to go, 'Let's shake this up a bit, its getting a bit dull'. I think that might be the artistic personality.

10:3 Respondent Validation - Response to Themes

At follow-up, Jeremy suggested that his approach to change was unlike that of other people. He welcomed change, and became bored if life became too stable. He suggested that this was due to his flamboyant lifestyle, and to personal issues which have created ongoing anxiety. Therefore, *change* has been a strategy for dealing with fear.

He agreed that *decisions* are a way of controlling change, and suggested that his approach is to withdraw, think carefully, and rationalise his approach to choices. He found that some decisions had far-reaching effects which could change the quality of life.

Jeremy agreed that *relationships* affect how you deal with change. Alec had had a negative, and Matt, a positive influence on his choices, and feelings about transition. Consequently, he saw *former partners* as being very powerful - and in his experience, having a negative effect on his life. These outcomes stemmed from the responses of former partners who had the power to sap his confidence.

Jeremy agreed that *age* had a role in creating or limiting options, but his approach was to see this as a challenge, and an opportunity to change course and develop hitherto unconsidered alternatives. He was at the time considering the necessity to leave his career (an age-related issue) and attempt a change of direction.

10:4 Case Study 2: Jill and Ian

Completing the Graph

Jill and Ian took part in a single interview lasting one and a half hours. Their interactional style coded mainly as *collaboration* (1) and *confirmation-collaboration* (6) with some *continuation* (4) and occasional *non-response* (5). Jill appeared to be chief narrator whilst Ian was monitor, although the roles were reversed at times.

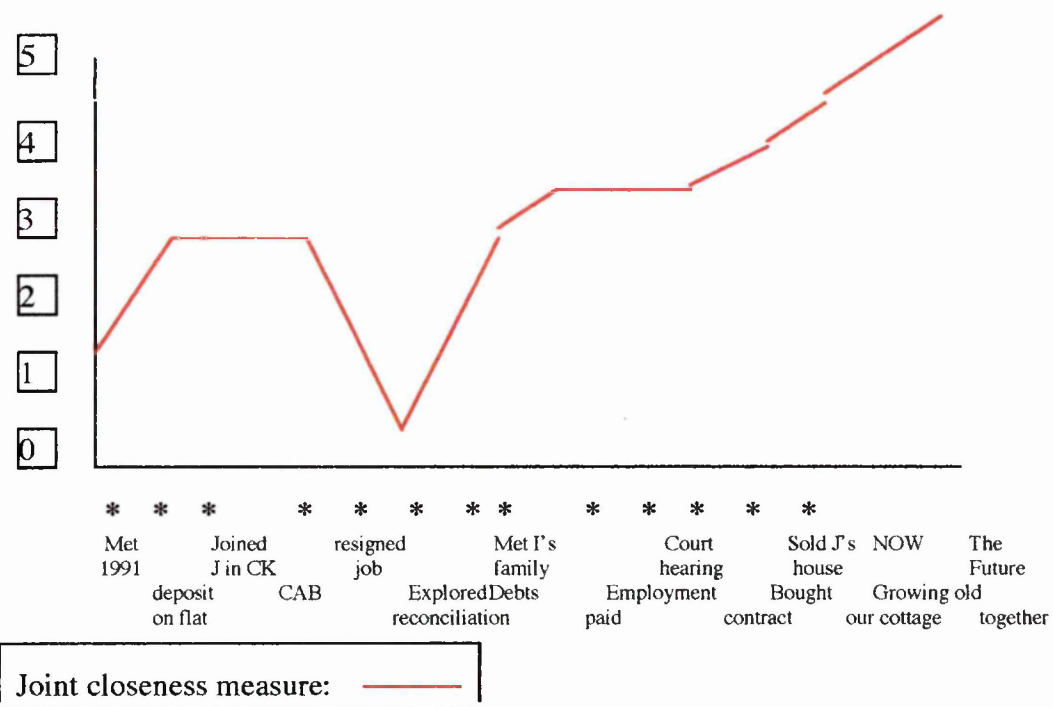
Ian added the first six events to the graph, and Jill identified the remainder. The couple opted to complete the closeness measure as one negotiated line.

In the joint narrative Ian was characterised as the 'dreamer' creative and hardworking but financially unskilled. Jill was businesslike - characterised as efficient and financially well organised. Superficially it might be assumed that Jill was the more powerful partner, but as the interview progressed Ian's emotional and physical resources became more apparent.

Figure 10:2 represents the graph and closeness measurement produced by the couple. Interestingly, although Jill directed the story, eight of the thirteen events included on the graph are Ian-related events.

The Couple's Story

Jill and Ian first met through a mutual friend. Just emerging from an unpleasant divorce, Jill found herself instantly attracted to Ian - 'This wonderful smile and lovely voice when he spoke to me, and I thought 'Oh I like you!'

Figure 10:2 Graph completed by Jill and Ian

Time spent talking revealed that they had a lot in common, each having two young adolescent children and an unhappy marital history. However, it was clear to Jill that Ian was intent on remaining with his marriage - 'there was no way he was going to change that relationship'.

After several 'phone calls and meetings the relationship changed from a romantic to a physical one. Ian was struggling with his unfulfilling marriage, and a failing business, and his first response to the new relationship was to put a deposit on a flat in London, having decided that he was going to live on his own.

However, the flat remained unoccupied, and after a series of bizarre events in which Ian displayed some very uncharacteristic behaviours, he told his wife that he loved someone else, and then moved in with Jill - three months after their first meeting. At first he was commuting

to London from the Midlands in order to keep his business going, but as the couple talked it became obvious to them that his financial situation was worsening.

The story now had two parallel themes. At Jill's suggestion Ian went to the Citizen's Advice Bureau and joint plans were drawn up for dealing with Ian's financial problems. He resigned from his business and moved full time to Jill's home. Meanwhile, Ian had two significant meetings with his wife - one to arrange financial matters for his first family; the other - a final attempt to see if a reconciliation was possible. The first resulted in Ian's complete estrangement from his children, and the second left him very sure that he really wanted to be with Jill.

The CAB visit was a turning point for the relationship, and the loss of his daughters was a crucial event for Ian. However, the attempted reconciliation was significant for Jill. Together these three events provided a set of tasks which the couple needed to negotiate in order to move their relationship on to a firmer footing. Over a period of two years the couple worked together to clear Ian's debts, whilst he had to deal with grief and anger over losing his daughters. Jill needed to rebuild a sense of security with Ian and convince herself that he really wanted to be with her.

Another turning point emerged when Jill was introduced to Ian's mother - a widow. Jill's parents had died years earlier, and her former husband's family had rejected her. The meeting was significant - as she said tearfully, 'It gave me a family again.' The two women quickly formed a mutually supportive friendship.

The story of their individual pasts wove in and out of the narrative - Ian's more so as he was still in the process of ending his marriage. The past was therefore influential in the present - both in terms of protracted divorce court hearings, and in colouring the narratives of their own relationship.

Whilst Jill had a highly paid, professional post, Ian was forced to take a series of short term posts in teaching. A permanent employment contract for Ian completely changed his mood. "I can't tell you what it does for my self esteem. I'm absolutely revelling in it!" Their new financial equality opened fresh opportunities for the couple. They sold Jill's tiny cottage and

bought a home of their own. At the time of the interview, the couple were living with friends, waiting to move in to their new cottage.

During the interview, the true meaning of the attempted reconciliation became a matter of debate. Ian's internal understanding had been that he was *considering* a reconciliation with his wife. However, Jill had heard his declared intention as being that he was *going back* to her. Once the difference in perceptions had been highlighted, Jill returned to the matter insistently - anxious to explain the reason for her extreme distress at the time. Her explanation for his confused use of words was that he had been stressed. Ian stood by his interpretation - writing 'explored reconciliation' on the graph, and seemed unaware of - or unwilling to admit - the different meanings involved. At the end of the interview, when completing the closeness measure, Jill referred to the event as 'Ian explored reconciliation' - thereby countering - in words at least, her own perception of the original event.

Jill and Ian's story was based on pragmatic issues. Their discourses reflected this focus rather than the more psychodynamic concerns of Jeremy and Matt. This had implications for the way in which the analytic themes were presented.

Themes: Change

Change and emotion were seen as interrelated factors. Strong feelings prompted change - for example, Jill's distress at Ian's decision to 'go back to his wife' led her to withdraw emotionally for a while, in order to guard against further hurt. In contrast, change which happened very fast - early relationship development for example, left Jill feeling panicky and unable to cope.

Some aspects of their narrative were seen as unchangeable, leading for instance to Jill's expectations that the relationship could go nowhere owing to Ian's marriage, and the irreversibility experienced by Ian when he lost connection with his daughters.

However, the partners sometimes perceived change differently, with Jill seeing the possibilities and Ian seeing disaster -

The main thing about Ian was that his self esteem was very low - his mounting debts and his feeling of being inadequate. -- He couldn't see a way forward - certainly as far as the debts were concerned. That was something that to *me* was purely an academic thing.

Both talked of change as a process - qualitative transformations happening over time -

Ian: I was getting more distancing from my --- wife, but that had been going on for a long period of time.

in some cases implying a sense of direction. -

Jill: I think you started to see some sort of progress ----, whereas before you had just been going deeper and deeper down, didn't you?

Strategies

Talking, as a strategy for dealing with change, was a constant theme. Talking led to an awareness of shared histories at the beginning of the relationship, and to the development of coping strategies when facing problems. Ian talked things over with his wife, his friends, and 'official' others, but reported lack of success at times. -

Ian: I remember saying something half-baked, but which didn't come anything near what I was expecting I might say. It didn't come close to what either of *them* was expecting I was going to say.

The couple saw their ability to talk as a strength of the relationship -

Jill: One thing about my relationship with Ian that I'd never had in my marriage was that he was a friend, and somebody that I could talk to.

a quality that changed during a period of extreme stress. -

Jill: Ian actually became quite introverted -- he was bottling up his feelings about guilt I think. -- The thing -- to make our relationship carry on working was for me to be able to get Ian to talk and to be open with me about it.

Decisions

Jill and Ian frequently referred to decision making. The context in which they were taken affected the nature of decisions. Ian expressed the belief that he made decisions quickly. However, several of his choices - for example, to leave his wife, were made over time -

It was a very clear decision that had been made over --- fifteen years.

although when his wife asked him if he was going to leave her, he responded -

I think I am. I think I am.

The decision to rent the flat was symbolic. It represented Ian's final resolve about his marriage. The decision to buy their own home was seen to be the 'right thing' given that Jill and Ian were now more financially stable.

'Expectations' sometimes featured in the need to come to a decision - 'What are we going to do for Christmas?' carried implications about family gatherings, and needing to make a decision at this time led to the meeting between Jill and Ian's mother.

Past experiences determined current decisions - for example, economic decisions were very carefully taken for fear of slipping back into financial difficulties. Furthermore, past decisions were sometimes seen as having been dependent upon the behaviour of others, or circumstances at the time - implying that the decision *could* have been otherwise.

Whatever the character of decisions, they represented the core events of change for the partners.

Time

Time signified change in terms of the speed of events, or timescale and chronology.

Effects of time were referred to in terms of the emotional and practical implications - things happening very fast caused anxiety or a need to organise things quickly.

Establishing a sequence of events in time was important to Jill - particularly evident at the start of the script, and when Ian's various visits to his wife or the intermediary consulted at the time were being recalled. This suggests that organising events into sequence acts as a grounding mechanism, helping to reduce anxiety about the unknown.

Relationship Changes

Sexuality was mentioned once - as a mark of the early development of the relationship from the romantic to the physical stage.

Other changes were focused on partner's roles in the relationship. Domestic tasks at first were assumed (by Ian) to be the responsibility of Jill, until a series of confrontational episodes led to a more egalitarian regime. Even though unemployed, Ian had not seen it necessary to undertake housework whilst Jill was at work -

I'd been sitting on my backside all day with sod-all to do, and here she'd
come home and --

The use of humour played a large part in the successful negotiation of this issue, and the couple regarded the differences between them as valuable in making the relationship work.

Jill saw herself as 'extremely practical'; whilst Ian was 'the romantic'. These were the 'constants' through which changes were managed.

At the beginning, Jill seemed to take the dominant financial and emotional roles. Ian was stressed - 'in a state' - and Jill took control - 'I got you organised, didn't I?' After Ian's debts were cleared, and he had a permanent post, the couple felt 'on an equal footing'. However, the narrative of 'doing things together' was a persistent theme. Ian suggested the term 'emotional twins' to describe the character of their partnership.

Several 'others' had instrumental roles in prompting change. The mutual friend who first introduced the couple; Ian's friend who acted as go-between for Ian and his wife - enabling Ian to negotiate an ending with her; the doctor who suggested Ian might try a reconciliation; Ian's mother who, in accepting Jill as part of the family enabled the couple to feel their relationship - and Jill's part in it - legitimised; Jill's brother-in-law who questioned her about marriage to Ian - which led the couple to discuss an issue previously not considered.

Personal Changes

Personal changes were closely linked to relationship changes. Ian's emotional and financial problems formed the basis for the togetherness of the relationship - the shared focus upon which both partners could work.

Both partners underwent emotional changes. From being severely stressed when they first met, Ian slowly reached a position of self confidence as his practical problems were sorted. Only one issue remained problematic - Ian's fears that he might meet his former colleagues.

I know what they'll all say 'He's teaching; he's back in the classroom.
He's teaching primary kids!'

The implied criticism was painful.

Jill felt comparatively stable on meeting Ian. She had had four years to recover from her marriage breakdown. Jill appeared to enjoy the role of 'strong partner' whilst enabling Ian to counter his problems. However, her own vulnerability was clear in the emotional trauma of Ian's resolve to go back to his wife. Once Ian returned Jill reverted to emotional equilibrium over a period of time - by continuing to be immersed in solving Ian's monetary difficulties, and through the meeting with Ian's mother.

Children

Both partners were estranged from their children. Persistent attempts were made to make connections, but neither had been successful. Both had left their former partners, and the children appeared to have been used by former partners as means of retaliation. This was an issue seen by the couple as unchangeable.

Former Partners

Former partner (FP) stories were employed as comparative models for the present partner. The relationship between Ian and his wife had been highly confrontational, and very separate. Jill and Ian were determined to talk together and resolve differences, and to share more of their lives together. Jill's husband had constantly 'put her down' which contrasted sharply with Ian's more positive, affirming approach. Furthermore, many of Ian's financial problems were seen as being due to his wife's social aspirations. FP comparisons therefore motivated the couple to set themselves new relationship rules.

Gender

Few gender discourses were evident, but their appearance was generally attached to discussion of roles, and introduced by Jill. She referred to Ian's fears of 'being a kept man'

during his indebted and unemployed stage, and alluded to her own organising attempts as 'in my bossy way!'

Future Changes

Whilst completing the closeness measure, Jill hesitated about placing the line too near the topmost limit, -

We've got to leave ourselves a bit for the future 'cos that's our expectations - to grow old together and be happier in the future.

suggesting - as did most couples - that the future would be even more positive than the present.

The couple's ambitions included consolidation - Ian in his permanent post and the couple in their new cottage. Some issues still awaited clarification Ian's divorce for example, linked to pension considerations. -

This is all something in the future which has yet to be decided, and I haven't decided what to do. So I've decided to do nothing.

Ian was against marking their mutual commitment by getting married. He argued that marriage makes people change - they stop trying. Jill seemed to be willing to accept Ian's relationship rule.

10:5 Respondent Validation

At follow up the reconciliation issue was described by Ian as unimportant and down to his tendency to say one thing, and mean another. Perceptions of self and other, and aspirations for

the future remained unchanged. Changes since interview - building up the shared home, and problems for Ian in his job - brought the couple closer. The effect of social constraints and cultural discourses were seen in the brief re-thinking of the marriage issue and a changed recollection about the sharing of domestic roles. (See Appendix 13)

In commenting on the themes, Ian remarked that they reflected his thinking. However, he suggested that *decisions* were often taken out of one's hands - either because of circumstances or personal factors, and that *former partners* could have a long-term, devastating effect on a new relationship, but that such experiences ensured a determination not to make the same mistakes again.

10:6 Discussion: Case Studies as Narratives

Baumeister and Wilson (1996) suggest that life story accounts take a different form to individual event narratives. Having greater consequence, the former are likely to contain more positive effects - moderately presented, whilst the latter will be polarised into extremes of success or failure in order to 'tell a good tale'.

The case studies however, reflected both phenomena. Individual events were constructed with humour, emotional impact and striking meanings, whilst the overall life story conveyed positive self, other, and relationship effects more modestly constructed. However, this may be a 'couple effect'. In contrast to the case study partners, a number of couples presented moderate narratives throughout - often citing failure, and negative self and other perceptions. This suggests that couple's narrative construction reflects a shared perception of the character of the relationship. Some couples saw themselves as fighting a hostile world, or struggling against failure produced by illness or unemployment - resulting in core meanings lending a negative property to the narrative.

Case study lifestories illustrated the role of the narrative in making change meaningful. The Baumeister and Wilson (1996) classification of narratives is useful in demonstrating how this occurred. The researchers argue that narratives serve four needs - to enable the narrator to construct meaning in terms of purpose, value and justification, efficacy, and self worth. This suggests a four-fold perspective on change.

Both studies showed evidence of change having purpose. These were general and long term - such as the need to see the relationship grow, or specific and short term - the need to overcome the mountain of debt, or to make a good impression on parents. Short and long term purposes were often linked. For example, Jeremy's need to decide between partners was a step in the direction of a fulfilling long term relationship. Furthermore, some purposes were framed in terms of objectively experienced goals, whilst others were about subjective states. Both couples decided to buy a property as a signal of their shared commitment, and both evidenced change in internal meanings - Jeremy and Matt in terms of emotional strength; Jill and Ian with respect to a sense of increased closeness. Purposes were generally given added meaning by being linked to positive outcomes.

The need to give value and justification to actions and events was seen in the drive to make good out of bad, to place 'badness' in the past, and to demonstrate 'goodness' in the present. This meant that change, or responses to it, were given moral value. For example, Jill's support of Ian in dealing with his debts, and Matt's support of Jeremy through the emotional traumas instigated by Alec were presented as the past 'bad times' which had contributed to present 'togetherness' in the relationship. Both examples support previous findings of Brunstein, Dangelmayer and Schultheiss (1996) arguing that partner support of personal goals is predictive of relationship satisfaction. Likewise, emotional responses to change were carefully justified (as Staske (1996) predicts) by situational explanations - dubious former partners or parental influences being responsible for present negative emotions; or the recall of past emotions being validated by friends.

The implication of agency is carried in both stories. Partners presented stories emphasising the role of control - almost as an unconscious measure of change and development. Anxieties over emotional responses appeared to be due to feelings of powerlessness - hence the need to

justify their appearance. Both partners suggested lack of agency during the early stages of their relationship. Jill had no expectations of Ian; Matt saw himself as having little advantage over Alec. As the stories progressed however, awareness of their own instrumentality grew: Ian paying off his debts, and taking full time employment; Jill being accepted as a family member; Jeremy taking a post in the USA, and Matt deciding to let Jeremy go. With each example of personal strength and decisive action, closeness measures were seen to rise, along with perceptions of mutual support.

Grenyer and Luborsky (1996) suggest that positive therapeutic changes are signalled by *mastery* in client's narratives. This is evident in the discourses indicating emotional self control and intellectual self-understanding in the context of interpersonal relationships. Given Matt's experience of 'letting Jeremy go', it may be possible that narratives implying efficacy not only reflect positive changes, but also enable narrators to feel, and therefore enact, control where change is needed.

Finally, the case study narratives contained references to the self, conveying implicit - or explicit - messages affirming individuals and their relationships. At times, affirmations were self-presented. Jeremy revealed his affluent childhood, high powered, and high paid job as if to engage in overt impression management. Jill described herself as a 'good organiser'. On other occasions, one partner affirmed the other. Declarations of self and other worth tended to be the stable attributions against which the diversity produced by change occurred.

10:7 Case Studies: A Synthesis of Change

Analytical themes in the case studies were interrelated factors contributing to constructions of change. Themes and their meanings were more than attributions or cognitive devices. They provided a rich account - adding to meaning in the narrative. Each cluster of themes appeared to play a different role. Themes of change - *strategies*, and *decision making* provided information about the purpose and efficacy of couple's actions; *time*, and *then and now*

contributed a chronological context for change. *Relationship themes* added an interpersonal perspective. *Person perception themes* supplied measures of self worth, and acted as a source of narrative material used to explain the value of, and justification for, couple's actions.

Thus the case study material illustrated how changes in behaviour and meaning were talked about. In contrast, changes occurring within the interview, offered a limited opportunity to observe the process as it happened highlighting differences between recall of change events, and reconstruction of new meanings. Usher (1989) argued that there can be no change unless change of meaning occurs. The case studies suggest that the issue is problematic, and discovering exactly *how* the change happens is difficult in such a small study. In practice, few researchers have addressed how new meanings are created.

It seems unlikely that change in meaning occurred for Jill and Ian. The belief about reconciliation was challenged, but Jill's emotional response was not directly acknowledged by Ian. Jill's attempts to explore the origin of the belief were only partially engaged in by Ian, and no shared evaluation took place - these factors are necessary to meaning change according to Clarke (1996). Ian's response at follow up suggests that the issue has not been discussed since. Meaning change for Ian may have taken place over time however - given the remark that he doesn't always say what he means. Alternatively, his answer may have been a justification, making his response 'acceptable'.

Jeremy implied that meaning change had occurred because of behavioural and emotional changes subsequent to the interview - without direct discussion of the issue. The matter of 'choice by default' was acknowledged as a reality, but the choice was reinforced by the growing emotional security each partner found in the relationship. This suggests that meanings may be addressed by means other than direct verbal negotiation.

In contrast, attempts at behavioural change between partners may need more direct measures. For example, Benjamin and Sullivan (1996) suggested that changes in the division of labour between couples occurs over time as a result of people 'opening up' and exploring their concerns. Jill and Ian's struggle over who does the housework seems to support Sullivan's claim.

Looking at the case studies has therefore provided an overview of how two couples talked about change. The material can be understood in terms of the functional roles of the narrative, or because of what it says about how change occurs. Whereas explicit accounts of behaviour change appear to be fairly accessible, the links between changes in behaviour and changes in meaning are unclear. Whether one pre-dates, or is essential to the other needs to be the subject of further research. Chapters 11 and 12 look more closely at what may be learned about change from the findings as a whole.

PART FOUR:
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

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CHAPTER 11:

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

11:1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the results of the study in terms of the questions which prompted and directed the research:

- That couples' management of change is affected by the beliefs they hold about it;
- that cultural discourses will play an important role in shared stories of change;
- that change events seen as part of the shared life cycle will be described according to unique perceptions of the relationship.
- Furthermore, that in talking about change there will be observable differences between homosexual and heterosexual couples in terms of gender discourses, relationship roles, the relevance of social structures and life cycle understandings.

However, any discussion of findings must be set against a critique of data collection, analysis, and presentation.

Each of these processes involves the activity of one researcher through whose efforts the findings are gathered and interpreted. Therefore, the advantages and disadvantages of personal subjectivity need to be considered.

Firstly, my approach to the data has been crucial to the nature of findings. The questions asked during interview tend to dictate the answers given. In deciding to withhold the true focus of the study from couples, it may be that many of the features of change which were important to couples were omitted, and that a clearer understanding was denied.

In addition, by asking couples to construct their stories together, interesting features of their individual tales may have been lost.

However, these factors could have resulted in the development of less self-conscious accounts, with fewer attempts by couples to produce a 'good' story of change, and - most importantly - enabling the co-construction of narratives to be a central focus of the research.

Secondly, answers given by respondents were likely to be dependent upon the ways in which questions were asked. It was important to direct the story to ensure sufficient theoretical sampling. Consequently, the need to be listening, guiding, and responding appropriately in the interview meant that I occasionally neglected valuable information in the dialogue. Worrying about the next question to be asked sometimes resulted in the loss of a really important discourse, an inaccurate hearing of an account, or a failure to apply a relevant spontaneous response.

However, in any everyday interaction, these processes occur, and as researchers, we cannot hope to observe human behaviour without ourselves affecting what we see. For that reason, the findings must be interpreted as not just couple responses, but as the result of the processes seen in any communication - self-consciousness, lapses of attention, immediacy effects etc. Furthermore, it is wise to *expect* that this will be a three-way dynamic; that all participants will be experiencing similar processes. For example, partners may also have an underlying agenda in which it is dangerous to be too truthful for fear of its impact upon the other partner. Hence for each participant the requirements of impression management exist.

Whilst these problems cannot be eliminated, the adoption of a functional analysis enables some account to be made of these issues, and as this research has done, seeks to include them in the overall understanding of how co-construction of narratives develops.

A third problem of this study is that one can never be sure of complete theoretical saturation of concepts - i.e. that every possible aspect of the phenomena under study has been captured. The further one advances into the process of 'writing up', the more one becomes aware of questions unanswered. However, it can be argued that posing questions, and finding questions unanswered is the purpose of research. This piece of work ends with more questions to be asked concerning the interactional processes involved in narrative construction, for example.

The role of the researcher in data analysis is equally problematic. A coding system which depends upon the idiosyncratic approach of one person may give weight to issues which to another may be of little value. Similarly, interpretations of interaction and discourse need to 'go beyond' the explicit meanings held within the text. This leads to interpretations influenced by personal experience and assumptions, and may misunderstand the intentions of participants. Additionally, the recognition of interactional styles requires a decision-making process which may equally be open to alternative interpretations.

However, such analysis and organisation of data has the advantage of providing a rich source of material, and one which privileges the narratives of the couple. In using several methodologies for obtaining and examining the data, engaging the services of an uninvolved validator, and including samples of the raw data in presenting the findings, the study attempts to guard against serious misunderstandings of participant's conscious and unconscious intent. Furthermore, as with everyday communication, these interpretations do not remain static or singular, but vary with context, and approach. For this reason, the multiple approaches to analysis enable several checks on meaning and legitimacy of interpretation, creating a dynamic understanding of narrative construction.

Lastly, the role of the researcher in presenting the findings, may be another source of difficulty. The tendency to include quotable material from couples whose narratives are constructed from a richer, or more concise and inclusive discourse, means that couples who are less articulate, or who demonstrate unfocused co-construction skills are less well represented in the presentation of findings.

Nevertheless, such couples act as *negative case* examples, and enable the specification of conditions under which co-construction and recollection of past experiences take a different form, and thus prompt further questions about how those with uncollaborative interactional styles construct a shared narrative.

With these arguments in mind, the chapter continues with a rationale for the approach adopted towards the material:

The methods used to analyse the content of interviews with couples led to a division of findings into *content* and *process*. In listening closely to the tape recordings and observing the couples as they talked, it became evident that the content and process elements of narrative construction do not operate as independent factors. Talk not only 'does' things because words are carefully chosen to create an effect, but also because the procedures of presentation are equally managed as tools of co-construction. The two strands developed as different ways of looking at the material, and resulted in qualitatively different interpretations - *content* being the meanings and verbal events conveyed in language; *process* being the intersubjective patterns through which couples told their stories.

Thus in line with this demarcation, content and process will be discussed in turn, with some attempt to show how the two factors are related. Furthermore, since the data were obtained and analysed by means of purposive theoretical sampling, some attention will be given to variations discovered in the material.

11:2 Discussion of Content

11:2.1 Narrative Content and its Relation to Couples.

The fourteen themes finally identified as critical elements in couple's narratives of change were grouped in analysis into four classifications. These were - themes relating to change itself; those concerned with change as it occurred in couple's experience; the relationship themes which emerged as central to couple's accounts, and the themes which dealt with perception of self and others.

The majority of narratives about change were similar in content for all couples. Views about the quality and process of change, ideas about strategies employed, notions about the

relevance of time factors and the process of decision making, were consistent across scripts, as were concepts involving self and other perception.

However, differences were identified with respect to cultural discourses evident in the storying of several phenomena: - The 'then and now' themes sometimes referring to changes in cultural attitudes; relationship themes involving a number of major differences in terms of partner roles, and practical relationship concerns; and assessments of the role of others. These themes showed noticeable differences - particularly evident in the narratives of some homosexual couples. Orientation and gender themes were, as might be expected, also a source of variance.

The narrative content can be discussed in terms of four conceptual areas:

- couples talking about change as a concept
- couples interpreting their own changes
- the contextual elements of change
- interpretative and functional discourses of change

These classifications arise from an overall view of the codes, categories and themes discovered in the scripts, and highlight the four areas which appear to be central to couple's re-construction of change events. From this perspective, the consistent properties and dimensions of themes can be identified, along with the 'negative case' variations which add to their understanding.

Couples talking about change as a concept

Beliefs about change varied between couples, but within the variations important core themes emerged - raising the question as to what criteria are used when couples assess change. It could be argued at a superficial level that change is 'given meaning' according to positive or negative beliefs which in turn depend upon the context against which transitions occur. However, higher order beliefs appear to form a chain of meanings which together highlight the important motivations underlying attitudes to change.

Several of these core meanings emerged - for example, in talking about the qualities of change, meanings were grouped around notions of control and effect - not necessarily directly stated, but implied in the discourse.

I fell pregnant almost straight away didn't I? - after Katy - with Josh. He was a big mistake. A big shock, wasn't he? (Jess - Het).

Negative beliefs were attached to any change involving feelings of inadequacy, inability to return to a previous position, difficulties of adjustment etc. - all examples of lack of control. Positive beliefs were more likely to be attached to change which had been chosen, for which the couple were ready, or which resulted in positive effects like maturity, or a better lifestyle.

The notion of effort was also central to an assessment of change. In talking of the process, couples spoke of change as something separate from themselves, a dynamic in which they found themselves caught. Carried along by movement in time, and at a pace, having qualities of naturalness and ease, or being overtaken by the speed of the transition leading to feelings of panic. In contrast, change for some involved a slow and painful struggle to reach stability. The amount of effort needed to manage, control, or adjust to change affected the stance taken towards it; and unchangeable elements led to frustration or feelings of resignation.

Couples interpreting their own changes

Four themes emerged in this group - the use of strategies, decision making, the role of time, and 'then and now' - concepts related to the before and after effects of change.

Couples use of strategies was seldom consciously acknowledged as such. However, partners were aware that certain behaviours had positive implications for the relationship and for the negotiation of change. New relationships for example, invariably involved mutual self disclosure, and 'game playing' was a feature of several early meetings, enabling each partner to 'test out' the other before a serious move towards commitment was made. Changes were

negotiated and difficult matters resolved in ongoing relationships through discussion or deliberate behaviours seen as likely to enhance relationship quality.

Talking, and other cognitive and behavioural strategies were seen as important in enabling partners to clarify their thinking, experiment with ideas, reflect on performance, obtain an outside perspective, and create a channel for change. Partners who had no strategies - in this sample typically, (though not always) client couples, found change difficult. This suggests that strategies have an important role in the management and execution of change.

Decision making emerged as an essential feature of controlled change - not that decisions ensured total control. For some couples, decisions ended a period marked by lack of control whilst for others, a decision was followed by a sense of things getting out of hand.

Three groups of factors were found to influence decision making. The antecedents were the events and cognitions which suggested to the couple that a decision was necessary. Practical considerations were mitigated by the needs of the partners - the confounding factors which modified and directed the process. A third factor - the couple's beliefs about the characteristics of decisions coloured expectations or provided functional explanations of the likely outcomes of choices. Furthermore, speculating about the nature of the decision making process enabled the couple to reflect on different scenarios for change.

'No decision' decisions were centred around issues of control - events not working out, premonitions, fear of making the wrong decision, someone else deciding first. These features prompted couples to avoid change.

Decisions were not always followed by positive outcomes but in itself, making a decision tended to leave the couple feeling relieved, having 'done the right thing' etc. - conveying a sense of instrumentality. The findings therefore suggest that decision making is important as a strategy for controlling and advancing change.

Notions of time acted as descriptive devices for conceptualising change. Applying a timescale enabled change to be divided into manageable portions, or described according to context.

References to time became synonymous with change when described as good or bad, and enabled an understanding of change as a process. For some couples, time acted as a measurement or assessment of change. The implications are that discourses of time enable couples to define and constrain the effects of change - a further control strategy.

'Then and now' themes carried implications concerning the effects of change and the passing of time. Such themes dealt with comparison and difference - both in terms of cultural, personal and relationship change. Contrasting 'then' with 'now' tended to give couples the chance to stand back and reflect on the results of change - in most cases (with the exception of recollections of sexual experience), having the effect of rationalising the present as being more favourable than the past. This suggests that there may be a motivation to interpret change positively in order to convey a sense of learning and growth.

Although other change themes reflected general similarities, differences between homosexual and heterosexual couples were evident with respect to cultural discourses, attitudes and practices attached to 'then and now' themes. A number of heterosexual and homosexual couples cited relevant social stereotypes as having changed over time, referring to sterner cultural constraints in former times. Heterosexual couples referred to rules which laid down normative expectations in the past. An added recollection by homosexual couples was the presence of disapproval, exclusion, and discourses around abnormality.

Contextual Elements of Change

Chapter 7 includes this group of themes under the heading of relationship themes. For the purposes of the discussion, the relationship is seen as the context for the couple's narratives of change. Relationship themes focus on factors internal and external to the relationship which affect its quality and the negotiation of change. These include categories such as an expectation of sexual activity; the negotiation of roles, change and trauma within the relationship, and the need for security and support. External factors refer to the ways in which the couple publicly declares their commitment to each other. Other themes in this group refer to 'lifestyle and money', 'children', and 'former partners'.

At this point, the discourses of homosexual and heterosexual couples showed discernible differences, suggesting that a model of relationship change built solely on the experience of heterosexual couples, excludes certain theoretical possibilities, and creates an incomplete representation of narrative functions.

For example, a number of partners saw sexuality as a central feature of relationships and both heterosexual and gay males noted a decline from the first level of enthusiasm as the relationship progressed. However, gay partners accepted the deterioration philosophically, and substituted other pleasures, whereas heterosexual males who reported a deterioration, blamed the partner, recounting feelings of dissatisfaction.

Similarly, there was evidence that the negotiation of roles was managed differently by different couples. Some homosexual partners for example, were able to negotiate domestic and emotional roles according to the particular needs of the couple. Heterosexual partners tended to adopt stereotypical roles, but those who chose unconventional roles attempted to proffer justifications for behaving differently.

Where couples talked of internal change within the relationship further differences were seen. For example, narratives concerned with first meetings and relationship beginnings included different cultural factors - especially for homosexual couples who each reported anxieties -not just about personal acceptability, but also about being laid open to the danger of exposure.

Furthermore , the ongoing dynamics of change in the relationship were subject to different pressures and characteristics. Among these were attachment issues - as discussed in chapter 3. Two of the lesbian couples were aware of the dangers of emotional intensity between female intimates, and although the need to balance individuality with togetherness was mentioned by a number of heterosexual partners, all but two of the homosexual couples reported this as particularly problematic. This may be due to the absence of intervening factors - for example - the presence of children, who enable distance regulation.

All couples cited attachment dynamics in dealing with stress - withdrawing from each other, or drawing closer together, but the strategy of turning to extra-marital affairs was reported by

five of the homosexual couples. This may be because the partners saw such behaviour as acceptable in homosexual culture; because they felt less vulnerable in admitting affairs to each other; or because constraints - such as the existence of children, did not apply. These are factors which may have prevented heterosexual couples from disclosing such strategies to each other or to a third party.

Other contextual themes showed few differences in the responses of homosexual and heterosexual couples. For example, public rituals of commitment such as marriage were seen as positive by a number of couples. Some saw their value as declarations of intent, others, as good for any children involved (where relevant). However, negative views sometimes demonstrated orientation-specific differences. For example, the homosexual couple who saw commitment ceremonies as exhibitionist (perhaps implying a 'copying' of heterosexual practices). Heterosexual couples who expressed negative views did so on the grounds that getting married gave partners permission to stop working at the relationship.

Practical influences - such as lifestyle and money, children and former partners - provided a context for change. Money carried a symbolic value in relationships - conveying notions of control, trust, and motivation, whilst at the same time having very real effects in terms of the couple's level of affluence. 'Enough' money ensured access to a wider range of resources for handling change, and couples with little money reported restricted, and problem-based lifestyles.

Children were seen as a source of change, and stress; restricting freedom of choice and in some cases, making a couple more vulnerable to the machinations of former partners. On the other hand, children ensured a wider and richer scope for change and created a more varied lifestyle for their parents.

Former partners were seen as having varying effects - instigating change, but also placing constraints upon change. Former partners created a context for the new couple, and frequently acted as a template against which the new relationship could be compared, and from whom much could be learned.

In summary, contextual themes suggest several points. Firstly, that there is evidence that some areas of close relationships are subject to explanations and discourses which vary according to orientation. These include sexuality, gender-specific roles, anxieties about attachment, and public and private acceptability. These issues may have implications for understanding the ways in which change is handled. For example, it may be argued that change is more fluid and subject to fewer restraints in homosexual relationships and that expectations about change and the strategies available to cope with change are more constrained in heterosexual relationships. However, from the evidence, it is equally possible to argue the opposite case.

Secondly, contextual themes suggest that the effects of change are rationalised in relationship discourses. Change gives the couple opportunity to learn from experience, to respond by altering behaviour, and to develop approaches and strategies that convey a sense of growth and maturity. These aspects of couple's narratives are common to both heterosexual and homosexual partnerships.

Interpretative and Functional Discourses of Change

This section examines the themes grouped in chapter 7 as those dealing with person perception. Themes in this group include perception of self and other; the role of others; orientation and gender themes, and age-related issues.

The role of others was an important theme in the group. Others were seen to provide a context for change, to affect its quality, and to influence its direction. Couples acknowledged the role of others as catalysts in change or as role models for dealing successfully with change. In situations of conflict, others, their views and behaviour, were used as supporting evidence, and an awareness of the approval of others enabled the couple to feel confident in their relationship. Parents and close family were seen as particularly important to the relationship.

Although these elements were common to all couples studied, there were specific differences in the reported impact of others for homosexual couples. For example, a number of heterosexual and homosexual couples reported social disapproval of their relationship. One heterosexual couple had breached the cultural expectations of their day by conceiving out of wedlock - leading to family rejection of the female partner. Other heterosexual couples earned disapproval because of 'inappropriate' age differences, or displeasure at the 'social class' or personality of one of the partners. Otherwise, few heterosexual couples experienced condemnation of their relationship.

However, all homosexual couples interviewed reported the risk of censure once they declared their gender orientation - therefore there was a sense in which the whole relationship was subject to disapproval. Furthermore, a number of homosexual couples were faced with ambiguous responses from close family. Parents were likely to behave 'as if' the couple were just friends, often ignoring the possibility that sexual behaviour may be part of the relationship. This appeared to leave such couples feeling in possession of a guilty secret.

Homosexual couples frequently found themselves the object of curiosity - lesbians particularly reported this tendency - possibly because the female couples interviewed were involved in more social activities with heterosexual friends and neighbours. Gay couples tended to report more aggressive and openly negative behaviour towards them. The differences may be explained as linked to gender effects - males being more likely to experience aggressive responses from others.

Friends provided special support for several homosexual couples perhaps in the absence of close family, but also possibly because friends affirmed the relationship. Friends were often deliberately chosen from amongst the straight community and fellow homosexuals were rejected by some couples as being too overtly gay (for gay males), or too restricted in attitudes and approach for lesbian couples.

Parents played a more ongoing role in the lives of straight couples - acting as role models, companions, and child-care help. Interestingly, nineteen couples were anxious that parents approved of their relationship, and were subject to family vetting processes. Of the remaining six couples, two heterosexual client, and four homosexual couples were resigned to negative parental responses.

The official social functions of others tended to be seen by both heterosexual, and homosexual couples as beneficial, but the homosexual couples interviewed acknowledged themselves to be disadvantaged by legal and cultural constraints not applied to their straight counterparts.

Overall, the findings suggest that others had a role in change firstly in their ability to affirm the couple and give them confidence to attempt change. Others could encourage or discourage; suggest possibilities or dictate limits, and couples reported that they sometimes achieved change because of, or in spite of, others. People who had 'official' institutional roles, like solicitors, doctors, counsellors, the police etc. were seen as providing a more objective, detached input into change. Their contributions were sometimes criticised, but also seen as having the advantage of providing a wider, outside perspective to problems enabling new approaches to be undertaken.

Orientation and gender themes often had an interpretative role in narratives of change. Gayness and gender were seen to restrict choices - although in terms of gender such restrictions were implicit rather than recognised.

Gay and gender themes were seen when partners talked about self and other. For all but one homosexual partner, 'coming out' was an essential aspect of self acceptance - precoded for all but two partners interviewed, by a struggle to establish a straight identity. A dilemma encouraged by shared cultural discourses stemming from peers, and significant others, that 'crushes' on same-sex teachers, and incipient homosexuality were normal experiences of adolescence.

A number of heterosexual partners stressed differences between them in terms of stereotypical economic and domestic roles and there was evidence of cultural discourses suggesting more lenient attitudes towards males than towards females. 'A bit of a lad' described a partner benevolently, whereas 'two women in the same kitchen -- will be trouble.' implied criticism. However, such discourses held implicit expectations about the behaviour of both males *and* females. Nevertheless, some couples attempted to avoid or challenge gender discourses 'We don't hold with all his gender stuff!' - reacting dismissively.

Although the negotiation of roles appeared to be more flexible within homosexual relationships, discourses around commitment, sharing, companionship, etc. were comparable between all couples. Specific differences however, were identified with respect to sexuality (discussed above) and supportiveness - seen by a number of couples as a particular strength of lesbian relationships.

Orientation and gender themes were not only basic to a couple's understanding of their relationship, but also characterised the social and cultural influences affecting the partnership. For example, some gay and lesbian couples were aware that the small, close community which comprised the gay 'scene' was not only a despised group to which most were reluctant to belong, but also a necessary support system - possibly, (although this was not explicitly stated) providing a kinship network to replace family. Furthermore, gay couples reported that fear of AIDs had produced a change of sexual behaviour within the community and led to restricted choices outside it.

Specific discourses coloured the approach of gay couples to their peers. For example, for some, the 'grapevine' was an important source of information about fellow gays, and dinner parties, fun parties, and pub meetings were important as social events. Straight friends often acted as an important means of keeping a balance - perhaps maintaining links with the acceptable world of heterosexuals, but feelings were ambivalent. Gay couples reported an awareness of prejudice. Some produced accounts of fear and anger - for example, at straights who suggested that homosexuality was an illness, or who tried to reject gays in social settings.

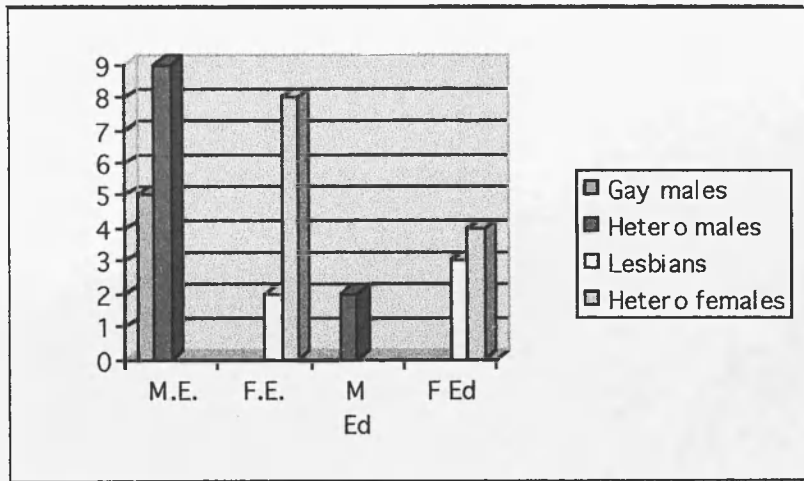
Heterosexual couples cited social and cultural effects in terms of employment or lack of it, especially for males in the sample - economic power being influential for both males and females. For some couples, the role of friends diminished as the relationship progressed; and some - not all, heterosexual couples mentioned close contact with family of origin members.

Orientation and gender themes frequently acted as functional discourses - explaining why courses of action had been taken, suggesting that orientation and gender carry implications for how couples cope with change. Firstly, a sense of personal power and acceptability may affect

attitudes to attempting and dealing with change - creating an awareness of being able to control and direct events. Secondly, the presence and character of any support network is likely to influence the impact of change. Thirdly, different couples may find that fewer options are open to them. Given that some couples have various debilitating life experiences - illness, unemployment etc., gender and orientation may create additional limits to life choices.

It is worth noting that couples frequently reported the development of strategies for personal and couple fulfilment - often in terms of job promotion or educational achievement. Figure 11:1 shows that of the couples interviewed, fourteen men (five gay, and nine straight), and ten women (two lesbian and eight heterosexual), reported advancement through employment. In contrast, seven women were pursuing or had pursued further education (three lesbian, and four straights), whilst only two men - heterosexual - were pursuing educational aims. This suggests that partners use such strategies to improve self esteem and viability, but that changing jobs is a preferred advancement activity. However, where such an option is chosen, betterment through education appears more attractive to women than to men. The choice of such strategies not only produced change for the couple, but also arguably equipped them to deal more successfully with it.

Figure 11:1 showing the number of partners who choose a change of employment, or entry into further education as a means of personal and relationship development.



Key: M.E. Males choosing employment
 F. E. Females choosing employment
 M Ed Males choosing further/higher education
 F Ed Females choosing further/higher education

Along with orientation and gender issues, age-related themes also carried an interpretative role in terms of causal explanations, normative assumptions and expectations. As such, age discourses were seen to limit choices - since behaviours appropriate at one age were considered not to be so at another. Age provided a rationale for behaviour. Sometimes, for example, 'bad' behaviour was excused on the grounds of its appropriateness to youth. Age discourses also suggested different choices - for example, being older presented new possibilities not available when young. Age created new contexts - when for example, an age difference between partners created a particular dynamic between them. Narratives to do with age therefore suggest that not only is age itself a subject of change, but of itself creates changes.

11:2.2 Summary of Case Studies - an Overview of Content

Case studies provide an integration of themes, and demonstrate how they emerge in the couple's storyline. The examples emphasise not only some of the conceptual differences *between* homosexual and heterosexual partnerships, but also those discovered *within* them.

Jeremy and Matt

This couple tended to focus on the internal dynamics of their relationship. The only external influence of note came from Jeremy's former partner (Alec). The traumatic nature of the earlier relationship provided the underlying context for the change events chosen for their life story. Jeremy's struggle to leave Alec - physically and emotionally - was central, leading to a major concern with emotional issues between them.

The partners tended to see change in a variety of ways - depending on its context. Some transitions were good, welcomed, and occurred naturally - like their original meeting. Others, such as the possible ending of the relationship, caused anxiety and reluctance - especially if seen as being beyond control.

Decision making was not always part of change, but strategies were used freely. Talking was seen as a vital part of relating and dealing with problems - a skill which became refined as the relationship grew. In suggesting that Jeremy should leave him, Matt created a paradox which forced Jeremy to see where his greatest priority lay. The strategy led to Jeremy's final decision to commit to Matt.

Two relationship themes were central to their story. Lifestyle and money, and the role of the former partner were closely linked - given that Alec guaranteed an affluent lifestyle for Jeremy. No mention was made of children, and the role of sexuality was taken for granted. Discussion of domestic roles featured very little, but it was implied that both partners took responsibility for cleaning duties.

The emotional balance between the couple was subject to change over time. The relationship affirmed both partners and led to an increased sense of wellbeing and control - particularly once Jeremy had chosen to be committed to Matt. The need for - and fear of - attachment was an important theme for the couple.

The couple failed to mention social support networks. This may have been because Jeremy had access to a wide social circle through his connection with Alec, and his employment in a theatrical setting. Matt was dismissive of fellow gays, and anxious to distance himself from gay stereotypes. In some respects the couple were unlike the other gays in the sample, in that orientation issues were less central, unless the role of Alec is seen as such.

Although much of the jointly constructed narrative was conflictual, the couple negotiated the story in equal measure, with both partners prepared to swap emotional roles when necessary. Evidence resulting from the new information presented during the interview suggests that Matt may seek to 'damp down' emotionally anxious states. In contrast, from the evidence of his own words, Jeremy may be motivated to 'stir up' any situation threatening to become mundane. These may be examples of the mechanisms used to maintain stability.

Jill and Ian

A number of couples in the sample constructed a relationship story based upon the experience of one partner. This was so for Jeremy and Matt (Jeremy being the focus) - *and* for Jill and Ian. Events crucial to Ian's life were central to the shared life story. These were the experiences linked to his extrication from his former marriage, and the process of regaining his financial security. Although emotional issues were present, the couple's approach was essentially pragmatic.

For Jill and Ian, change produced panic and fear if it occurred too quickly, or if it seemed to be beyond their control. Changes early in the relationship appeared to be more dangerous than those occurring after the couple had developed a sense of security and commitment. However,

current stability stemmed from early changes - such as the swift relationship development, and Ian's attempt at reconciliation with his former wife.

Strategies played an important role in the management of change. Talking was a competence discovered at the beginning of the relationship, and when Ian reached the point of being too emotionally upset to talk, Jill felt that the partnership was under threat and took strong remedial measures to re-establish communication. The couple frequently used practical strategies - consulting outside agencies for help, using others as go-betweens, and resorting to practical jokes to de-fuse confrontational situations in the relationship.

Decision making was important in effecting change - sometimes having a symbolic role in signalling a change that had really been made in the past. Roy's decision to rent a flat represented his earlier resolve to leave his wife. Time and timing were strong themes - particularly for Jill, possibly reflecting her orderly approach to life, and her need to control events.

Relationship themes provided the context for change. Both partners were sensitised to relationship issues after unhappy experiences with former spouses, and both had been cut off from their children. These issues were powerful influences on how they regulated their lives together. They were anxious not to repeat past mistakes, and were glad to establish new relationship dynamics. Shared sexual experience was an important aspect of the relationship - an evidence of its growth and security. Domestic roles were negotiated over time, after Jill balked at being expected to be responsible for domestic duties as well as being involved in full time employment whilst Ian was unemployed.

Jill perceived herself as strong and dominant, and Ian was understood as stressed in the past and a visionary in the present. Others were perceived as having powerful roles in the couple's story - as facilitators, approvers, models of desirable/undesirable behaviour, inhibitors of, or catalysts to development. The couple included a larger number of external influences in their story in comparison to Jeremy and Matt.

In terms of relationship dynamics, the couple seemed concerned to maintain a balance between emotion and control factors. Jill reported her own, and Ian's powerful emotional responses to some of the changes in their story. Both partners balanced this perception with descriptions of their ability to take charge of change outcomes, and to work hard in establishing equilibrium. Instrumentality seemed to be an underlying theme for the couple. This was particularly evident when the meaning of an event was debated during the interview. Emotion played a major role in the original interpretation of intentions and responses, whereas the focus in the interview was towards establishing control over the story. The finally agreed meaning determined who had control of the narrative.

The case studies suggest that narrative content is not only mediated through talk, but subject to 'impression management' in terms of the dynamics of interpresentation - the process of co-construction which are argued here to have a subtle, but powerful role in communicating ideas about change. These issues are addressed in section 3.

11.3 Discussion of Process.

Co-constructing the Narrative.

The results highlighted the impact of four factors on the way in which couples controlled narratives of change.

- It appeared that shared stories were developed through the medium of interactive styles which dictated how narratives were manufactured.
- The speaker role adopted by each partner in the telling appeared to indicate who carried the responsibility for the story.
- Evidence of change as the interview progressed provided templates of how particular couples dealt with change.

- An interaction between the spoken content of the story and subtle features of process showed evidence both of the management of boundaries within the interview and provided a metaphor for the character of the couple life story and their management of change.

Each of these points will be discussed in turn.

Interactive Style

Patterns of interaction were found to be largely in line with the six Veroff *et al.* (1993) categories of style - i.e. *collaboration, conflict, confirmation, continuation, non-response, confirmation-collaboration*. Three identifiable features of interactive style emerged:

- Differences were observed in the interplay between interactive style and content. This was particularly seen in confrontational episodes where couples displayed a consonance between a conflictual style and angry talk, while others conveyed dissonant impressions by concealing conflict in laughter.
- Variations of style were not necessarily consistent throughout the interview. They varied with subject matter, emotional content, areas of knowledge/experience specific to each partner, and sometimes with the nature of the life-cycle event being reconstructed. Some events appeared to need more negotiation than others - especially if emotional effects were marked. Nevertheless, there was evidence that each couple conformed to a preferred interactive style which persisted throughout the interview and which continued to colour the ways in which alternative styles were used. For example, couples whose accounts were largely coded as collaborative retained a collaborative style even during periods of conflict.
- There were discernible differences between client and non-client couples with more continuation and conflictual styles found in the former. This may be a feature of the particular couples chosen (all seen as 'stuck' - unable to manage change), or because their primary focus was problem centred. There were no discernible differences in interactional style between homosexual and heterosexual couples.
- Veroff *et al.* (1993) argued that a particular aspect of interactional styles - the ratios of use between couples - has a predictive value. They discovered that relationship stability over a

- three year period was correlated with an even matching of interactional styles between partners - whether collaborative or conflictual. The shared nature of the interplay between speakers is therefore seen as having a subtle effect on how joint meaning is shaped.

Speaker Roles

Speaker roles were evident in the balance between partner's input in the construction of accounts. Gay and lesbian partners were more likely to construct their story in equal measure, whilst heterosexual couples were more likely to possess a chief narrator (CN) - in all but one case, the female partner - who appeared responsible for the main story telling role. The predominance of female CNs may be explained in two ways - that women may be fulfilling stereotypical roles as 'relationship experts' (as argued in chapter 3), or that they have greater linguistic competence in describing emotional and relational issues. No such expectations exist for gay couples and therefore the role of CN may be adopted by the partner who has personality characteristics which lend themselves to the role.

Partners of CNs affirmed, challenged, modified the narrative, but seen from the standpoint of a counsellor appeared to fall into two affective groups: a) the predominantly 'challengers' and 'modifiers' who exercised control but from a different (less overt) standpoint to the CN, or b) the 'affirmers' who commented on the CN narrative but made little attempt to challenge the story. The former group were found to be more likely to conform to evenly matched ratio patterns in interactional style - for example, each partner producing an equal number of conflicting interactions which suggests equality in assertiveness in the co- construction of meanings and accounts.

Both interactional style and speaker roles can be argued to be important aspects of narrative co-construction, and valuable as diagnostic tools in the clinical setting. For example, differences between client and non-client interactive styles suggest that there may be a link between interactive style and the ability to manage change in a relationship. Interactive style

therefore may provide clues as to the source of 'stuckness', or suggest ways of achieving change.

Similarly, the identification of speaker roles highlights evidence of power balance and nature of co-operation between partners, with the ultimate effect of providing clues to the more unconscious elements of the relationship - attachment styles, ambivalence, transference etc.

The Creative Process of Change

The results illustrate the role of talk in reconstructing memories of change. As argued in Chapter 9, processes of reconstruction have been identified to include three strategic functions - to provide space for reflection; to produce a shifting context which enables the couple to make sense of their relationship in the presence of change; and to present narratives of qualitative diversity which provide information about the couple's position with respect to the story of change. Change therefore may have a material reality - the birth of a child, illness, divorce - but it will be constructed at different levels, and given subjective meanings which may conform to the principles and aspirations of the relationship.

This is illustrated by the examples of change which occurred during three of the interviews.

The following patterns were seen:

- In each case, the new information presented by one partner immediately created a context shift - as if breaking the boundary around the couple - the 'knowing' partner pushing the 'unknowing' partner to potential exclusion.
- Where the new information was seen to be inherently damaging to the relationship the 'unknowing' partner created space for reflection by challenging the new material and enlisting supporting evidence - the views and comments of others.
- At this point the stylistic nature of the interaction changed - becoming more confrontational, or subject to persistent questioning as each partner sought to establish his/her personal reality. It may be argued that the qualitative differences in interaction signalled a heightened emotional response. As Oatley (1994), and Stein (1995) have

- suggested, such responses are typical reactions to change seen when available resources seem inadequate, when re-planning seems impossible, or re-structuring is necessary.

For each of the three couples involved, a change occurred in one partner's perception of possible versions of the story. Whether the 'new' version becomes the accepted one appears to depend upon its salience to the relationship, or upon the ability of the 'unknowing' partner to internalise his or her new knowledge.

Triangular Processes in the Interview

The examples of change occurring in the interview demonstrated the ways in which content and process worked together in the assimilation of new material. Similar processes were identified in the narrative reconstruction of past events. Content developed from a continual process of co-construction in which couples revised and edited their joint accounts checking and clarifying as if to reach a mutually agreed version of events. However, content was also given texture by the constructional strategies occurring between each partner and the interviewer - a three-way process. The use of names illustrates this point.

Naming of partners was found to have a subtle effect on the presentation of the narrative. Boundaries within the interview system were shifted and clues were given as to the function of the account. For example, naming included the interviewer with the couple in the account, and the story became a presentation of self and other. For example,

'I'm not explaining it very well, but all that Lyn has got to do is just to come over and say, "Oh come on Maureen" and I dissolve into this little heap and say "I'm sorry, I've been in a terrible mood"'. (Maureen - Les)

The account became personal and inclusive.

Use of 'I', 'You' could be used to *exclude* the interviewer when the couple focused on the presentation of self *to* other, or reflected on the other. For example,

'I often used to feel that you gave up on me too easily because I wanted you to drag me away from it all.' (Jeremy - Gay)

The account had become a private communication between the partners.

'You' could also be used as a form of generalisation - a cognition of the world which could be applied to the self - 'You know when somebody likes you.' was a way of saying 'I knew he liked me.' Use of 'he' or 'she' on the other hand could subtly exclude the other partner and draw the interviewer into a liaison with the speaker. This often appeared to be an attempt to lure the interviewer into a collusive construction of meaning to disadvantage the other.

Mike You're making out this is all about me going out

Angie The way I remember it is completely different to the way you remember it.

Mike But you remember all the bad things. You was miserable all the time and I was always happy, but you couldn't accept it.

Angie But why were you always happy though? All I ever remember is you going out all the time and me just looking after this baby all the time. We went out for my 21st and we argued because I was with my friends and you wanted to be with me.

Mike That's why I hated going out with Ann because she knew everybody round here and I knew no-one. She was always off talking to her mates and I was in the middle of the pub just looking at the floor.

Int You felt abandoned.

This strategy often led to a feeling of unease and subsequent attempts by the interviewer to include the excluded partner. Similar countertransferences occur during counselling sessions, and may be responsible for the development of collusive coalitions.

Furthermore, content and process were seen to present subtle metaphors for the nature of the relationship of some of the couples interviewed. For example, one couple constructed their life story in a very haphazard way - beginning in the present. Their account of life events 'tumbled together' - reflecting the character of their relationship - process and content

mirroring or determining a chaotic reality. Several couples whose life stories were peppered with intrusions from children, friends, the wider family, reflected similar patterns in the interview with encroachments from television, dogs or children. One interview was characterised by a partner who wandered in and out - frequently returning with illustrations of the subject matter of their narrative - photographs, property details, bric-a-brac. A striking metaphor of his role in the relationship - frequently leaving, and collecting other partners.

Conclusion

Chapter 11 has considered the implications of the findings relevant to the content and process elements of the data. Chapter 12 discusses the implications of the findings in terms of theoretical approaches. A model of change is suggested, and a critique of the study is presented.

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CHAPTER 12:

IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter makes links between the findings of the study and the theoretical approaches against which it has been set. A model of change is developed from this perspective, along with a discussion of possible clinical implications. The methods employed in the study are assessed, and suggestions for further research are made.

12:1 Integration of Theories

As argued in earlier chapters (2 and 3), some theoretical approaches are more effective than others, as interpretative frameworks to the aims of this study. For this reason, this chapter first explores those approaches which provide useful theoretical insights into the observed data. The Systemic approach is included on the grounds that it allows an understanding of the dynamics of interaction within the couple relationship, and its place within a wider group - the family. In contrast, the Psychodynamic, Constructivist, and Social Constructionist approaches focus on fundamental issues which influence behaviour - often in unconscious ways. The four approaches therefore enable four different perspectives to be taken on the material, and each has a particular interpretation which allows its own insight.

The Cognitive and Behavioural approaches are not included in this discussion because they are seen as more individualistic in their focus, and although valuable as explanations of what can be observed, they have limited theoretical relevance to issues of process. Since the dynamic recollection and co-construction of narratives forms the focus of this study, these explanations were considered as less useful.

In taking an integrative approach, the discussion is not suggesting that the theoretical perspectives can be fused together to construct an holistic theoretical edifice. This would be a theoretical impossibility as each approach is based upon diverse assumptions. Rather, that in understanding the data from these different perspectives, one is seeking a theoretical saturation. Not in the Grounded Theory sense - in which the concepts implicit in the data are themselves fully understood, but in the sense that one has taken several 'snapshots' of the data from an outside, theoretical perspective, in order to achieve an understanding of the different facets of the material.

The Systemic Approach

The Systemic approach offers clarification in three ways. It provides an insight into the processes of the interview; a language translatable into a set of concepts through which to understand couple's accounts, and a framework within which accounts and processes may be interpreted.

Being concerned with 'here and now' processes, systems theory makes sense of the co-constructive elements of the interviews. Interactive styles enable couples to maintain the balance between them - whether through conflict, or the more collaborative style seen in 'skewed' partnerships who appeared not to risk confrontation. Other features of co-construction - interchangeable speaker roles, consistent chief narrator roles, use of names - are examples of the interactional patterns which created circularities, and maintained stability between the partners.

Clearly, partners do not have an equal role in meaning construction, as reference to interactional style, and narrative qualities such as salience, coerciveness, confrontation and persuasion tend to suggest. Most scripts showed evidence of qualitatively different inputs from partners - even if neither filled the chief narrator role. Elements in the narrative were often seen to create a linear story progression - for example, where partners continued the story in turn.

However, in terms of the content of couple's narratives, two major systemic concepts emerged - the role of *circularities*, and relationship *rules*. These offered an interpretation of several aspects of couple's stories. For example, circularities were identified in two ways:

Firstly, despite the contention by earlier approaches, that problem maintenance stemmed from behavioural circularities *within* a closed system, more recent approaches have acknowledged that relationships are open - affected by contextual factors - employment, other people, values and beliefs. These either serve to sustain the status quo, or provide resources for change. This view was borne out by couple's narratives of change. Jeremy for example, delayed commitment to Matt due to the seductiveness of Alec's lifestyle. Almost all couples reported the influence of others on their decisions and the changes made, and sometimes change was avoided on the grounds of belief - that the time was not right, for example.

Circularities were also seen in the development of meanings between couples. As partners talked about events, their narratives repeated the checking, affirming, polarising, dissolving patterns seen in examples such as those represented by figure 9:1 (p 293). It may be argued that circularities especially occur when meanings are unclear - for example when interviewees were establishing the initial relationship timescale; or when new information was introduced into the story. In contrast, when meaning has already been established, a linear pattern appears to develop.

The circularity argument is useful in constituting a model for how couples establish a version of 'truth' in reconstructing events. However, it fails to explain how external perspectives - such as cultural discourses - come to be integrated into the process.

Another relevant communication pattern was seen in the form of the structural and intergenerational rules employed by respondents.

Structural rules were identified in the scripts in terms of the regulation of boundaries in the couple relationship. For example, many changes stemmed from an unconscious attempt to strengthen or change the boundary around the couple subsystem - the couple withdrawing from friends as they became more committed; allotting time for talking and being away from

children; moving house or taking on a new job in order to withdraw from others, or from the partner. Alternatively, couple's stories identified instances where shifting boundaries became problematic for example, the 'working wife' story in which the balance of power between the partners was subject to threat. Similar regulation of boundaries occurred during the interview producing changing coalitions between speakers - as chapter 9 illustrated.

Intergenerational rules were concerned with attachment issues - the balance of individuality and togetherness argued to stem from the character of childhood attachments. Homosexual partners were particularly exercised over distance regulation - interpreted in the literature as due to gender-specific approaches to attachment - behavioural similarity failing to carry restraints present in heterosexual relationships. Several change events suggested avoidance of closeness - from the ever-present former partner, either in spirit or actuality, to the pursuit of extra-marital affairs - containment through a form of *triangulation*. In this use of the term, the involvement of a third party enables the couple to feel safe, less vulnerable to direct interaction between them. Other ways of handling change suggested a fear of losing closeness - for example, the partners in both case studies who 'backed down' in the face of new information - arguably to minimise conflict and maintain connectedness.

The Psychodynamic Approach

Psychodynamic understandings focus on changes in the internal world of the self, and in Object Relations terms such changes are a result of internally conducted relationships which mirror and experiment with, external ones. Changes in the relationship are seen to stem from the ability of one partner to modify painful emotions projected by the other - dealing with transferences appropriate to childhood relationships in a way that renders them less powerful in the present. Several couples - such as Jeremy and Matt, referred to personal changes brought on by the accepting and affirming behaviour of the partner. These explanations tended to be used by the more insightful couples who held higher order beliefs about the nature of the emotional dynamics of the relationship, and the relevance of childhood experiences.

Some couples used psychodynamic discourses when interpreting change, even referring to the relevance of upbringing - particularly nurturance and mothering. However, interviews suggested psychodynamic factors occurring at a more subtle level. For example, reference to feelings and emotions occurred frequently. Even within the interview, changes in emotional temperature were signalled by changes in interactional style, and it was clear that emotional responses were important elements of communication. Barbara and Jill experienced powerful emotions at the beginning of their relationship. These signified a mutual awareness of past unhappiness, and brought into consciousness the realisation that their relationship may provide opportunities for resolution. Until this understanding occurred, overwhelming emotion impeded positive change for the couple.

Attachment theory draws together the systemic and object relations approaches in suggesting that we each have a *working* model of relationships (Duck, (1994) - stemming from representations of childhood relationship experiences. These we apply to our relational lives, using them to interpret and deal with input from relational partners. Thus attachment theory is closer to object relations than to other psychodynamic approaches. Attachments refer to social, and interactional processes, homeostasis of the attachment system, bonding rather than sexual drive, and working models, rather than unconscious drives.

However, this study showed that the attachment system is constantly re-negotiated - hence the integrated model of change proposed later in the chapter. Couples re-remember past relationships, and respond by continually re-formulating the model. Maureen harked back many times to her relationship with mother, and stressed the constant effort to re-write the past with the help of her partner, Lyn. One client couple, Tricia and James, both had difficulty in modifying the effects of early relationship models, therefore finding it hard to create helpful changes in their relationship.

The Constructivist Approach

Constructivism provides interpretation for many of the elements found in couple's narratives. For example, the mental and behavioural effects of transformations. Couples often described

how changes resulted in old structures being ripped away - new ones being reconstructed. Developing awareness of personal homosexuality for example, meant that a construct system relating to social expectations around gender and sexuality were dismantled, and core constructs to do with perception of self were reconstructed with reference to a different set of roles, practices and meanings. For some partners this involved loosening previous culturally sourced constructs of self as 'normal'; along with cultural scripts about it being common in adolescence to experience crushes on same-sex teachers, or experiment with sexuality, before re-thinking and organising new constructs to do with self as gay or lesbian.

Understanding that relationship change affects a couple's shared construct system, suggests that narratives of change modify the link between constructs and belief systems. For example, change may have the effect of validating or invalidating beliefs, influencing the perceived outcome of change. Julie and Philip's belief that 'God will allow things to work out', left them content to stop attempting change when circumstances failed to materialise. Beliefs about proposed change - that the outcome would be positive whatever happened - were validated. Although to an outside observer the consequence may not appear to be positive, the couple retained consistency in the belief system, and used the unchanged context to experiment with new plans. In contrast, the homosexual couple who believed that their kindness to neighbours would guarantee their acceptance in the community were sadly disappointed and forced to leave their home, resulting in a sense of loss and anger - their established 'neighbour-construct' invalidated.

Constructivism suggests that beliefs are mediated through different contexts, and analysis of scripts suggests that various contexts have a powerful role in enabling or restricting change. For example, couple's life story events were in themselves contexts which differed in terms of likely threat to the joint construct system. The first introduction to a partner's family is arguably more crucial than a traumatic holiday abroad - depending on the nature of the relationship, and family of origin. Each event results in a challenge of differing proportions to the couple's construct system.

There was evidence too that the social group against which the relationship was set had a powerful influence. Angie chose to formalise her relationship for the sake of her children in order to gain acceptability for the family in the village community. Jane and Cathy felt abandoned by friends who failed to support them during a period of illness. In the former example, change was prompted by an awareness of contextual norms and values, in the latter, the experience of change was harder to endure.

Social and personal belief systems were seen to form a particularly powerful influence in couple's narratives and operated at different levels within a particular story. For example, couples had personal scripts about change being 'difficult', 'too fast' etc., enriched by family beliefs contained in narratives of how parents, brothers or sisters dealt with similar changes. Partners drew upon stories of their own previous attempts, and these funded beliefs about how any new changes would be negotiated. Each layer of meaning was connected by social and cultural beliefs to do with appropriateness. Thus the construction of the experience of change was subject to multiple perspectives.

Some couples showed signs of being hampered by beliefs linked to past experience influencing construct systems in the present. Former partner actions were often cited as responsible for self belief and anxieties about 'getting things right' in the current relationship. Likewise childhood templates provided a context for beliefs about the self - experience of inadequate mothering casting doubt on one's own ability to mother. Many couple's attempts at building a shared construct system were focused on the re-writing of old family and personal scripts.

The constructivist model enables a three-way understanding of the construction of experience by linking the development of constructs with the role of context, and belief systems. However, despite interpretations linked to commonality and sociality as relevant to relationships, constructivism borrows from systems theory many understanding of how shared constructs are developed. Little is said about how conjoint meanings are developed, and the constraining role of cultural discourses is neglected.

The Social Constructionist Approach

The social constructionist approach goes further in 'giving voice' to couples involved in change. Meaning is developed through a process of co-construction which is responsive to, and given value by, the context in which it occurs. This allows for the interpretative and functional role of discourse. Constructionism gives weight to each theory of the person. Consequently, notions of personal agency are seen as one of the possible discourses about people - that they have stable selves, having the power to make choices.

However, in constructionist terms, the couple may be seen as less agentic than from the constructivist perspective. For example, the couple who contemplated change when a previously dependent wife took paid employment, may be seen according to the latter as being faced with the task of developing a new construct system - taking in altered perceptions of roles and meanings. In contrast, the constructionist approach sees the couple's options for re-construction as being constrained by cultural discourses concerned with economic norms, gender expectations, etc.

Social constructionism is relevant to the themes observed in the study in lending itself to the understanding of narratives, and the *process* of co-construction. However, the notion that discourses limit the number of meanings available to be created in communication is challenged by examples from the scripts. Couples may base meanings upon acceptable stereotypes and cultural discourses, but their accounts often contest normative talk and apply their own generative co-constructions to produce new meanings. This process is particularly seen in the discourses of homosexual couples who start from a heterosexual model, but develop their own idiosyncratic versions of the relationship. For them, the relationship form is uncharted territory. They are required to make up their own rules from fragments of previous experiences, along with popular images of both normative, and unorthodox models, thereby producing creative transformations.

Secondly, social constructionism suggests that talk is tailored to suit the context in which it is taking place in order to fit in with the perceived expectations of any listener. However, the essence of change is that it creates a new story and as Zimmerman and Dickerson (1996) argue, discourse cannot become a dominant influence until it becomes public. It may be argued therefore that although elements of story presentation conform to an 'impression-management' model, change offers the opportunity to test out new meanings. This may account for those situations where couples disputed each other's attempts at reconstruction in order to emphasise their own account. Such examples suggest that narrators may attempt to produce stable meanings of their own, which they will strive to maintain despite changing contextual factors.

Social constructionism suggests that talk is constitutive in any context, but the approach is theoretically vague about how the process succeeds. For example, what is the mechanism by which cultural discourses create subjective meanings? The scripts suggest that links between discourse and meaning are forged from a complex process in which a number of factors are implicated - personal, couple, familial and cultural beliefs carried in discourse and mediated through joint construction of past and present experience. Social constructionism has no model of how these links are forged.

In its flight from individualism, social constructionism has denied the role of the individual mind. Gergen (1994) suggests that the constituents of the self - emotions, motivations, personality etc. are in themselves cultural constructions. As a result, the approach makes no allowance for autonomy, choice, or spontaneous action. However, it sees these elements as themselves socially constructed - concepts not relevant, or given different emphasis in other cultures. Evidence from the scripts suggests that certain behaviours can occur in response to social expectations - for example, anger at an extra-marital affair may occur because such a response is deemed legitimate. However, panic because events are happening too fast, or distress at illness and pain, are hard to interpret as socially constituted emotions.

Lastly, the approach may be criticised on the grounds that it has no predictive value. Because the theory accommodates all behaviour in a system of volatile meanings, causal factors cannot be measured across different contexts. However, such a criticism misunderstands the focus of social constructionism which is to explain the function of discourse as a social device used to elaborate, de-construct, and re-construct the shared nature of experience.

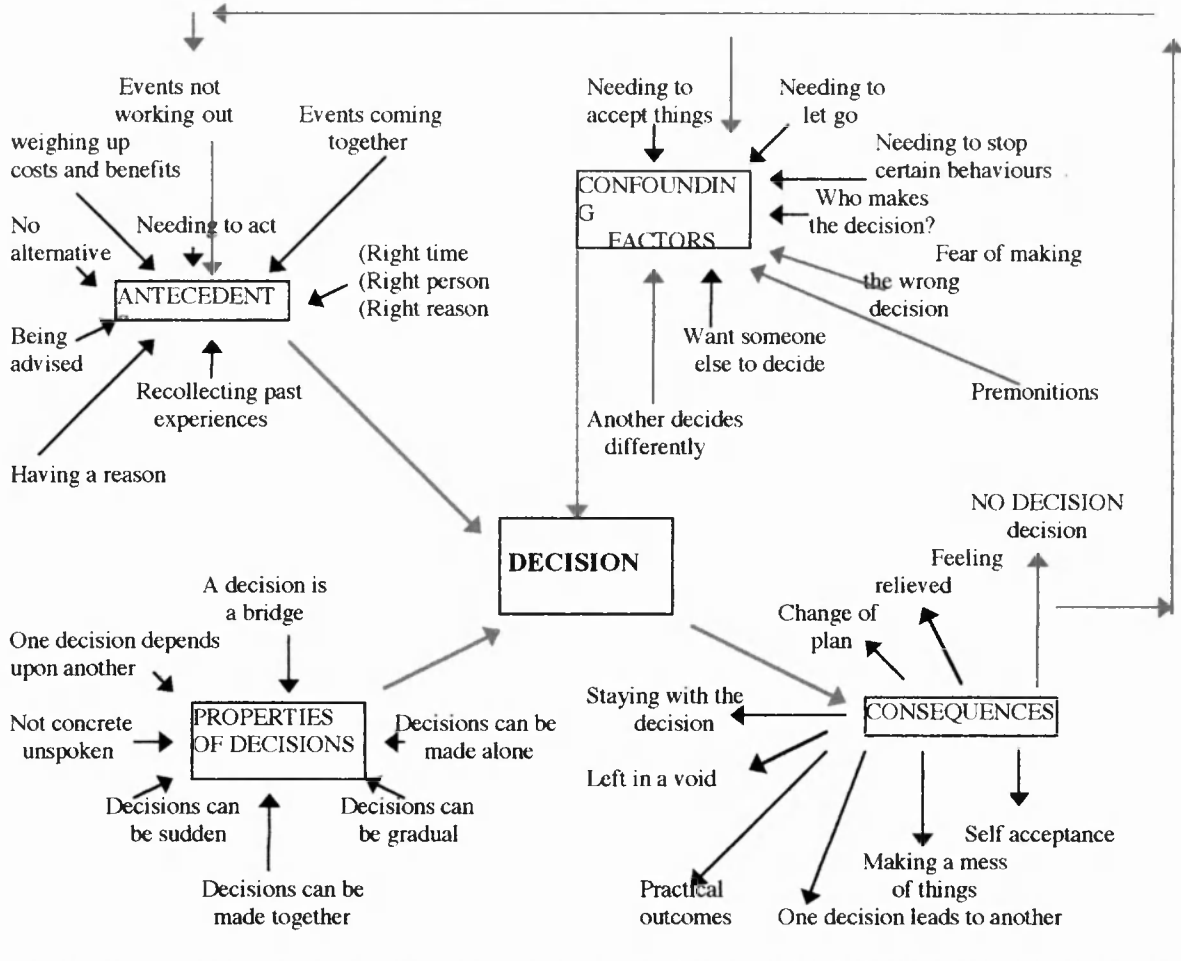
12:2 Developing a Model of Change

As argued in chapter 6, the intention of this study was not to develop a theory of change, but to be an exploratory investigation, moving towards a theory of change. Insights into couple relationships have suggested a model for understanding aspects of therapeutic change - or more importantly, stuckness.

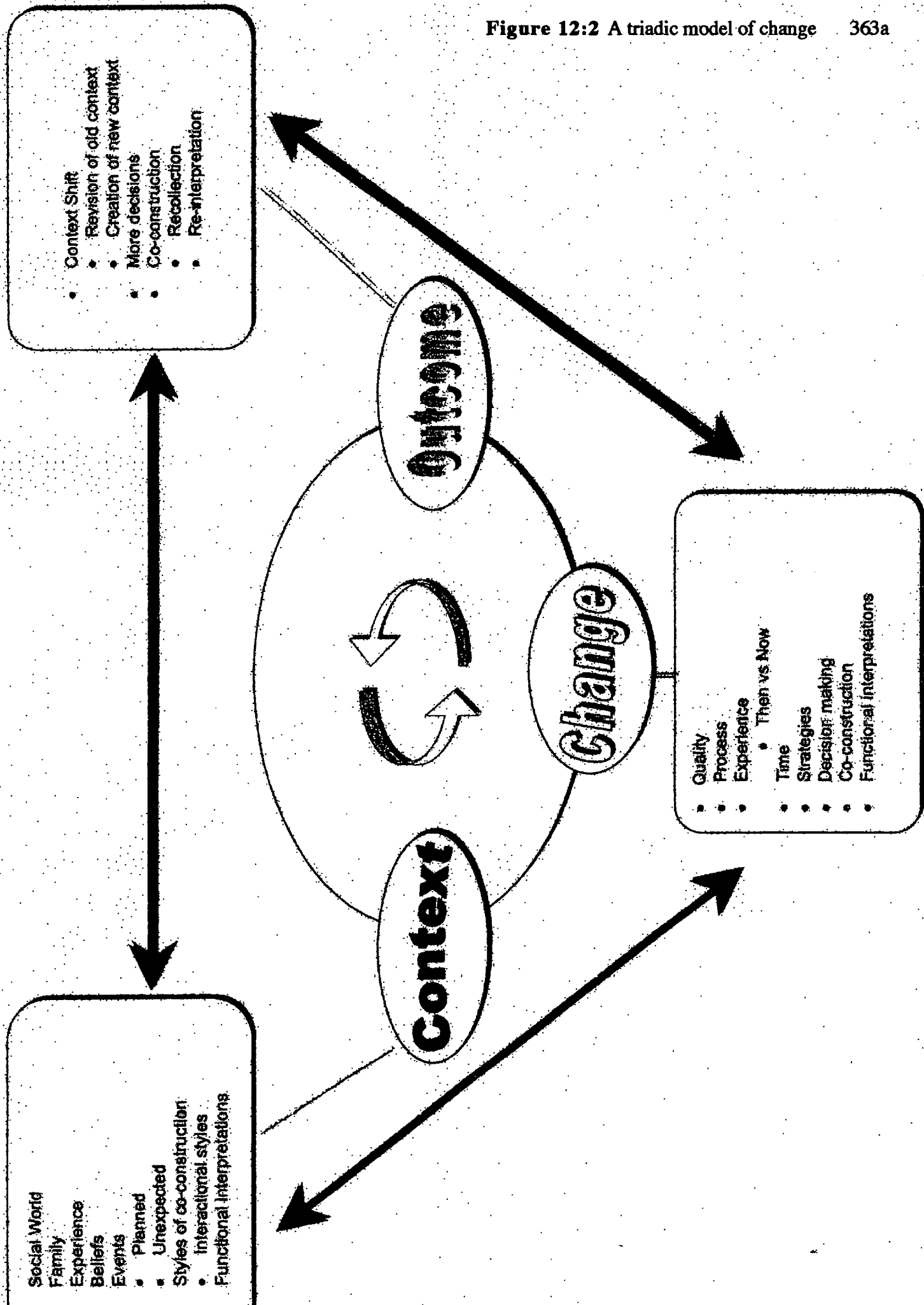
Change may take two forms. It can happen as development over time, or be prompted suddenly. In either case, the role of decision making is crucial. Decisions may be forced as a response to natural development, or may be taken in order to achieve change. Figure 12:1 represents the decision-making process.

As discussed in chapter 7, decisions are made based on antecedents - contextual elements - the precursors to change. Among these are the confounding factors (CFs) stemming from the couple's own needs and aspirations. The consequences of decisions are varied, and may either lead to a variety of changes, or in the case of a 'no decision' decision, return the couple to the antecedent and CF parts of the process, (signified by the green arrows in figure 12:1). The change process is crucially affected by the *properties* of decisions.

Figure 12:1 The Decision Making Process



A model of change needs to identify those aspects which couples themselves see as important constituents in the management of change. Accordingly, three factors are argued to contribute to the cycle of change - context, change itself, and outcome. Therefore, a triadic model is suggested, with the role of meanings being crucial at each stage - see Figure 12:2.



Stage 1: Contextual Factors

The contextual basis of change involves all those elements that provide a backdrop to the changes experienced in the relationship. The social world from which cultural discourses stem; the family of origin of both partners in which behavioural expectations are developed and through which the internal representation of relationship dynamics and emotional expectations are forged. At this level, beliefs about self and relationships are important as are the interactional styles that have evolved with relationship development.

The functional and interpretative discourses of change form their own context. Transitions are interpreted in terms of self and other perception; given meaning in terms of significant others, and made subject to the limitations imposed by cultural discourses around gender, orientation and age-related beliefs etc. Add to these factors the experience and events (expected and unexpected) which have characterised the partnership since their first meeting. Each of these elements contribute to the meanings which underpin any experience and interpretation of change.

Stage 2: Change

As the findings suggest, change itself is interpreted in terms of beliefs about the character and impact of change as a process. Meanings are constructed around the different attempts to control the process of change - the use of strategies to achieve or mediate change; decision-making to control and direct change; explanations around time and timescale, and the placing of change into an understandable context in terms of concepts of 'then' and 'now'.

Stage 3: Outcome

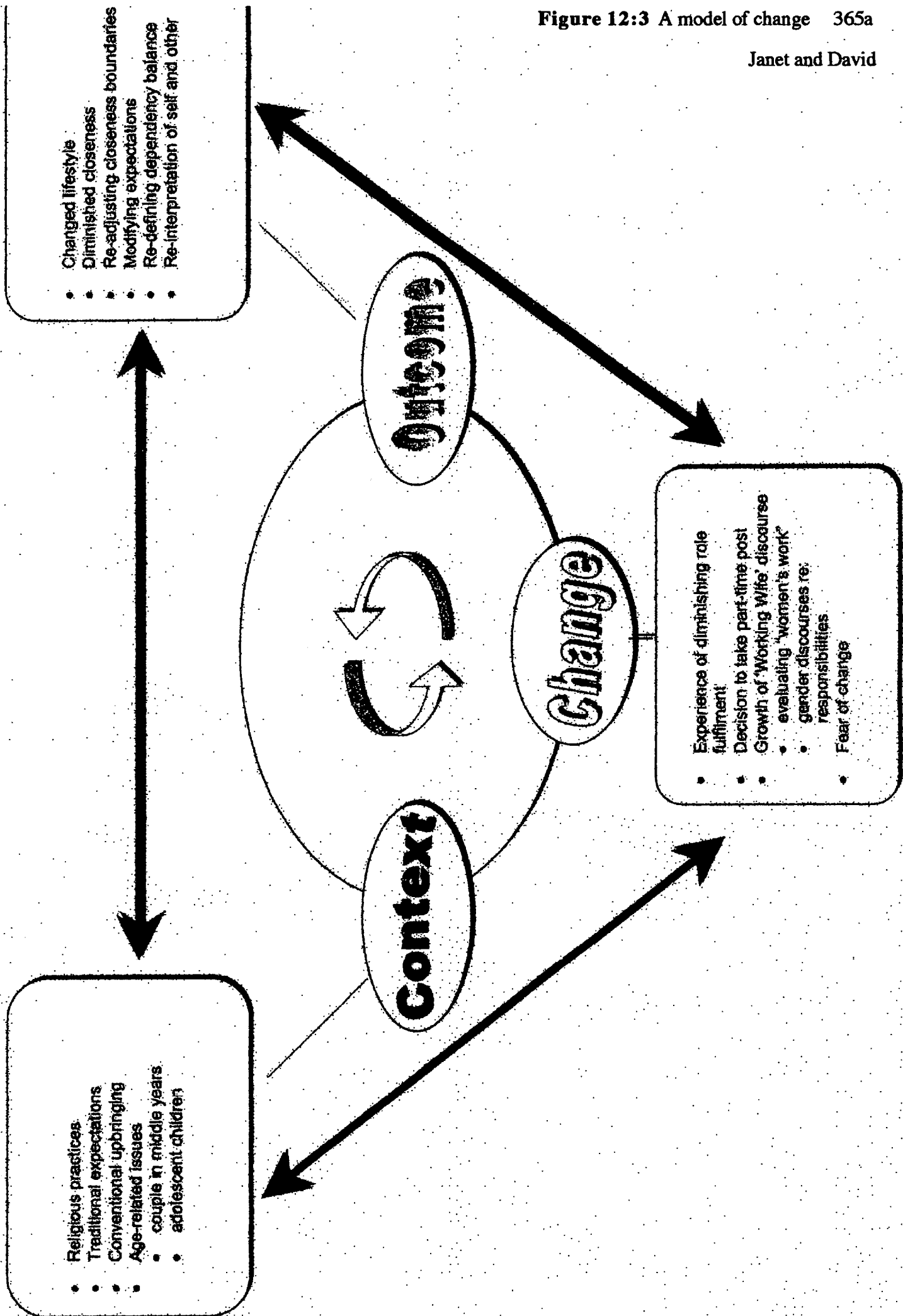
Outcomes form the last stage of the interpretative process when meanings are co-constructed around the changes made to some aspects of the original context, or in creating new contexts. At this stage, further decision making and strategies may be attempted, and the

whole process of change may be re-interpreted with reference to recollections of the period prior to the change. With the revisions of the previous context, or the creation of a new one, the cycle is completed, but because changes in meaning are involved, there has been a shift in context level.

Figure 12:3 illustrates the process with reference to a change made by Janet and David - mentioned above - a couple who had lived a very traditional married life for sixteen years based on conventional upbringing patterns, involving strong religious principles. With two children now into adolescence, Janet decided to fill her less full life by taking a part time job. Between them, the couple constructed the discourse of the 'working wife'. Both displayed beliefs about women's work - as unimportant, low paid, just undertaken as a 'little interest'. David was not happy with the idea of a working wife, but presented interpretations of his unease in terms of fears that Janet might find someone else. David was considerably older than Janet.

Janet's decision led to a change in lifestyle which induced the couple to compare the new regime with the former closely shared existence they had enjoyed, and both adopted strategies to minimise the loss. For example - David made a point of taking interest in Janet's work , and both made strong attempts to maintain quality time for the relationship. As time went on the couple were aware that they adjusted to the change, and modified their fears and expectations accordingly.

The outcome was that the context formed by their relationship was re-defined in terms of a new balance of independence for each partner and a re-interpretation of Janet as a more stimulating and interesting partner, and David as more aware of her former contribution to the household.



12:3 Clinical Implications

Prochaska, DiClemente and Norcross (1992), looked at how people change addictive behaviours - both through self-help, and therapeutic measures. They suggested that change is a spiralling process involving five stages, and their work has relevance to the identification of the three stages in this study.

A stage analysis of change presents two clinical benefits. Firstly it enables the identification of areas where stuckness occurs, and secondly, suggests appropriate therapeutic strategies.

Identifying Stuckness in the Sample

One client couple were experiencing sexual difficulties. They appeared to be stuck in stage 1 - at the level of the context underlying possibilities of change. The cultural (religious) discourses of prohibition which had inhibited their sexual development also rendered them subject to ongoing power struggles which, added to strong family of origin influences - prevented them from moving on.

In contrast, some couples demonstrated that they were stuck in the middle of the *change* stage (2) - for example, gay couples exhibiting signs of homophobia. Such instances suggest that the period of change is not complete. The stability and acceptability of homosexual lifestyles has not become normative which for such couples ensures that they cannot yet feel comfortable as gays among gays.

Couples in the sample who discovered new information during the interview were couples who showed evidence of being stuck at the *outcome* stage - not having had time to re-interpret and assimilate changed perceptions into a co-constructed meaning.

In the clinical setting, identification of the precise area of stuckness may provide a focus for clinical strategies - for example, in enabling clients to re-construct positive meanings in areas

of context, change, or outcome. The implications of the stage-related approach are that an integration of therapies may be required. Shapiro (1996), and Prochaska *et al.* argue that different therapeutic approaches are relevant to different stages in the change process.

Stage 1 Measures

Contextual (stage 1) inhibitors of change may be seen in anxiety and resistance to disruption of relationship balance or 'fit'; unawareness of the origins of problems, negative and/or pre-emptive construing; and overwhelming emotions such as fear of the outcomes of change. These might suggest an unreadiness for change, argued by Prochaska *et al.* to account for poor therapeutic outcomes. Often, clients referred by a medical practitioner fall into this category, and therapy may have little chance of succeeding.

Stage 1 *contextual factors* include the characteristics of the pre-contemplation and contemplation (first two) stages described by Prochaska *et al.* During pre-contemplation, couples are unlikely to be aware of problems in the relationship - although these may be obvious to observers of the couple. At the contemplation stage, awareness is growing, but the couple may not be seriously inclined to act, and are therefore not ready for change. In some cases, contextual factors identified above, may mask the need for change - interpretative discourses for example, ensuring that the *status quo* is seen as 'normal' and unchangeable.

However, where there is a preparedness for change, this stage may lend itself to exploratory therapies. These may be psychodynamic attempts to increase awareness of problem origins, or Rogerian, non-directive explorations of contextual factors, providing opportunities to confront feelings, or re-evaluate relationship possibilities.

Stage 2 Measures

Problems attached to the change stage (2) may arise because partners attempt change at different times, or progress at different rates. Strategies for decision making, and coping with

change may be inadequate, and narrow interpretations of change may inhibit exploration and evaluation of dysfunctional beliefs - without which, as Clarke (1996) argued, change in meanings cannot be achieved.

Prochaska *et al.*'s Preparation, and Action (third and fourth) stages are relevant here.

Preparation involves an intention to take action, a decision-making period, followed by *Action* - some attempt to overcome problems through overt behavioural measures. According to the researchers however, this is a period when action in itself does not necessarily signal change. Couples therefore may need assistance to achieve change.

Here, exploration of the meaning of change itself is valuable - examining available choices, coping strategies, and possible outcomes. The use of more directive, problem-solving therapies may be required, and as clients attempt change, the therapeutic relationship becomes more important - as Prochaska *et al.* suggest. Clients often sense the fragility of their new form of relating, and the therapist may assume a transferential role as 'good-enough' parent - as if offering clients as 'adolescents', a safe place to experiment and mature.

Stage 3 Measures

Stage 3 - outcome problems may be concerned with inability to maintain the good, - similar to Prochaska's Maintenance stage which involves the need to ensure the continuation of positive change. This may mean learning to cope with a new context, and construct new ways of being. Prochaska *et al.* note that relapse is endemic in change, and often occurs once positive outcomes have been achieved. Hence it is more appropriate to see change as a spiral process which may involve regression.

Stage 3 strategies therefore need to focus on supportive measures, reinforcing the good already achieved. This may involve adopting reflexive approaches - reinterpreting reversions as vital to the change process, and exploring hypotheses - for example, looking at possibilities for the future. There may also be a need for structural measures - creating sources of support, strategies for maintaining the good, or for problem solving, etc.

12:4 Methodological Implications

The Value of Qualitative Method in this study.

Qualitative method has enabled the development of a synthetic model of clinical change in terms of relevant antecedents, decisions, and consequences linking them to the theoretical themes discussed in chapters two and three. A positivist approach, whilst providing verifiable and replicable data, would have given limited access to - discourses; layers of meaning in narratives of change; and little evidence of the interactive nature of meaning making. The qualitative methods used in this study therefore gave access to aspects of content and process not available to a positivist/quantitative approach.

The use of Grounded Theory and a social constructionist approach enabled a close bottom-up analysis of the data in recursive interplay with a top-down, functional perspective. The resulting richness of material allowed respondents to speak for themselves, gave access to contextual factors in the data, enabled an analysis of discursive and functional features such as cultural discourses, and permitted an understanding of how couples jointly co-construct their reality of change.

However, there have been limitations in the use of these approaches. Few methodologies are found either in Grounded Theory or theme analysis for analysing conjoint interviews. Ideas exist in systemic theory and conversational analysis but until recently, the former depended on cybernetic analogues, and the latter on linguistic features. Discourse analysis uses methods for discovering the rhetorical functions of talk, but these look for consistencies - for example, the *scenario* methods used by Gergen (1994) which analyse responses to researcher-generated material rather than interactional events.

To some extent therefore, a methodology had to be constructed which would access both content and process of couple's discussions. It was necessary to investigate *how* the memories and accounts of change were constructed, and this led to broader methodological and theoretical implications than were covered by the original scope of the research. The resulting methodology has been a synthesis of grounded theory, discourse analysis, systemic and conversational analysis.

The use of the Veroff *et al* (1993) analysis of interactional styles provided a systematic means of assessing processes of mutual narrative construction. However, the aim was not to estimate relationship quality or create predictive measures, but to access the more unconscious, spontaneous aspects of memory reconstruction. Therefore, although useful information is gleaned through the analysis of styles - *collaboration* for example, being qualitatively different to *continuation* - more valuable information was conveyed in identifying how changes in interactive style signalled significant or emotive issues between partners; and what comparisons between couples might tell us about their ways of reconstructing the past, or conceptualising change. Thus issues important to the *couple's* conception of change were isolated. Nevertheless, conclusions stemming from a study of interactive styles need to be drawn with caution since in the context of the interview - as in any communication with an external other, the flow of interaction may be interrupted by the interviewer who might act as an artificial constraint upon habitual styles.

The application of different methodologies enabled investigation of layers of meaning in couple's accounts, examining narrative construction in order to discover how images of change were managed in conversation. For example, higher order beliefs about change suggesting that it is difficult, manageable, provokes fear etc. implied that the couple not only had experience of change, but also adopted a particular stance towards it. At another layer, discourses implying instrumentality, fault, blame, or supplying causal explanations provided accounts which had a function in managing the presentation of each partner's role in transitional events. Style of presentation added an interactive dimension - looking at who tells the story, and how couples work together in the telling.

Qualitative methods also provided opportunity for a levels of analysis approach in terms of personal, couple, and social discourses of change. Personal accounts (usually presented in the first person singular) focused on the self in terms of personal responsibility in transformations, individual characteristics, and references to private implicit beliefs. Couple accounts were more evident as a negotiated narrative - a collaborative story - or alternatively, offered by one partner as if an agreed version of events; as one partner declared: 'That is what we said'. Social discourses were presented as the implicit beliefs colouring attitudes and providing explanations from a readily available source - the cultural discourses to which we all are subject and to which we all contribute.

Evidence of behavioural expectations and causal explanations was found, and included functional discourses conveying unspoken rules - 'We shouldn't have gone as far as we did.'; biological discourses, - 'You've got the vibes, or the genes or something and you start going out.'; psychological discourses - 'They've repressed it the whole of their lives,' and so on. Seen from a social constructionist perspective such discourses are chosen from a wide range of options, but have a role in the building of a particular form of reality for the couple concerned. However, in taking account of each level of discourse, the diverse and particular representations of change were made available to scrutiny.

Given the underlying rationale of the study - to understand change for the purposes of improving clinical practice - the social constructionist approach enabled access to intuitive as well as pragmatic aspects of the couple's co-construction of change.

Counselling processes permit the exploration of nuances of meaning often not recognised from the internal perspective of the client. The counsellor may 'give voice' to the client. Change may occur in two ways, through the process of speaking aloud. Firstly, as the counsellor mirrors the narrative, the client becomes more aware of what s/he is really saying. (Clearly, we are often not aware of what we *are* really saying). Secondly, the limiting nature of chosen discourses may be identified by either client, or counsellor. These processes allow the client to act as other towards self - to reflect on self and develop new cognitions. Consequently, an understanding of the constructive nature of talk, and of the function and role

of chosen discourses provides a key to how this kind of change occurs. Thus the version of social constructionist analysis employed here is valuable in using both bottom-up - looking for the internal constructions of change, and top-down approaches - exploring evidence of the culturally shared discourses responsible for constraints on behaviour.

Some Reflections on the Study

Sample size and composition, and the absence of a comprehensive longitudinal follow-up has implications in assessing the findings. The data is not relevant to provision of verifiable

causal links, and can have no predictive value. However, it lends itself to tentative propositions and inferences - for example, about what elements might enable successful change. The findings therefore are regarded as generative of ideas rather than of use in making generalisations to a larger population.

Additional Measures

It could be argued that the use of a survey would have provided useful information in several ways.

- In providing quantifiable data lending itself to statistical analysis.
- In obtaining data from a broader sample.
- In using the qualitative data for the study as a baseline it would have been possible to investigate how far the themes discovered in this study were evident in a wider context.
- It may have been possible to identify relationships between the different themes more clearly.
- The presence of new/different themes may have been discovered through investigations with a wider sample.
- Questions with regard to successful, versus unsuccessful attempts at change within relationships may have been approached directly.

- Combined with the qualitative approach the survey could be argued to give a more solid and complete picture, but also a more objectively validated body of data.

However, given the aim of the study - to investigate how people talk about change - a survey would have provided inappropriate data. Statistical evidence could add little if anything, to that produced in interviews.

Criticisms of the Study

Validation

As argued in chapter 6, establishment of validity is problematic for qualitative approaches seen here in two areas:

- Although all fourteen themes were successfully identified by an independent rater, in asking for only one instance per theme, the full extent of each was neglected. For example, the 'strategies' theme included all behaviours likely to be consciously, or unconsciously engaged in by couples when faced with dilemmas and difficult change. This could include decisions to talk together, strategies used to end a confrontation, proposed ways of earning money when times were hard etc. A full examination of the extent of possibilities was not therefore covered by the validation method.
- Furthermore, since the second rater has no access to the original recordings of interviews, and is not part of the original contact, she has a very different relationship with the participants. Therefore, any attempt to validate themes is problematic in that the validator enters the process at a different level to the original researcher. The previous stages of coding and categorising the data have the effect of fine-tuning analytic practices.

An overall content validation could therefore be more effective - involving access to interview recording, and thematic and stylistic analysis of the complete script by both researcher and validator. The advantage would be that a reliable analysis of codes, categories and themes could be claimed - leaving less room for a persistent neglect of certain themes due to the particular perspective/blind spot of the researcher. However, in a study of this kind, such a procedure is impractical and costly.

Follow-up with Couples

The telephone conversations used to clarify and validate the themes for each couple and to establish whether further changes had occurred since the interview could be criticised as being inadequate. The material was not tape recorded, therefore there were no transcriptions. Information was recorded in writing as the respondent spoke. Therefore some material was likely to be lost. On some occasions the conversation involved speaking to one partner only meaning that the views of the other were not recorded and elements of co-construction were not directly taken into account.

Disconfirmations

The inclusion of client couples in the heterosexual group provided an unforeseen source of 'negative cases'. In this group, additional themes unrepresentative of the sample as a whole were presented. This finding created difficulties in trying to reconcile the additional client couple themes with those of other couples, suggesting that there are issues particularly salient to this group. Four factors seem relevant here:

- Each couple - client or non-client showed evidence of idiosyncratic themes based upon particular issues in the couple's life story.
- Client couples were more problem focused in their interviews which may account for the differences.

- Client examples were rooted in a study of in-depth material gained over a period of time and could therefore be argued to unearth themes that other couples would be unlikely to disclose during a single interview.
- Some codes, categories and themes from all groups were found to be less important as the study progressed. Given the size and composition of the sample, it may be argued that a larger, more balanced group may demonstrate this effect even more strongly - fewer (or more) themes etc. becoming evident.

Interview.

- Due to practical constraints, nineteen of the couples had only one interview. This procedure could be criticised as leading to loss of further theoretical sampling with particular couples.

Presentation.

- Despite a consistency in the process of developing themes from the scripts, their presentation in the results chapter varied. This was because some themes - e.g. 'then and now' - lend themselves to a different style of presentation. A systematic display was not always appropriate but could be seen as a disadvantage - inconsistency leading to a lack of confidence in the findings.

12:5 Further Research

The results suggest that there are several areas in particular, which merit further investigation. For example, although there is much in the literature about the co-construction of discourses and narratives, little has been focused on the mechanics of the process. It is suggested that interactional styles, role of speaker, and use of marker words - such as names - have a function in how accounts are co-constructed. However, further work is necessary to identify other features of narrative control that may be implicated.

The role of talking together, and the use of strategies have been highlighted by couples in the sample as useful mediators of change. Contrastingly, scripts presented by 'stuck' client couples seem to suggest an absence of such features. It would be useful to conduct further work to investigate whether this is a characteristic common amongst couples who find it difficult to make changes.

Although the general point has been made that meanings evolve as a result of the interplay between beliefs, discourses, expectations and interactional styles, this aspect needs closer analysis in order to discover the relative importance of each feature in the process. Furthermore, questions about how the process might occur need to be answered.

There was no evidence from the sample that homosexual couples had more, or less difficulty with change than heterosexuals. The regulation of distance was mentioned more often by gay couples, and the need to regulate emotional behaviour was an issue for lesbian partners. However, the role of gender in coping with change was not a constituent of the study. This may be a subject of further research which may throw light on the different strategies used by the genders, and highlight gender effectiveness in dealing with change.

From the scripts it was clear that stereotypes have an impact on how couples manage their relationship. It could be argued that the lack of models for homosexual relationships leaves the couple freer to develop their own. However, some gay and lesbian couples indicated that absence of stereotypes could be problematic. Given the growing openness and acceptability of gay partnerships, it may be that over time, homosexual couples will begin to develop archetypes of their own. A longitudinal study would be valuable in monitoring how this process may occur.

The research may also benefit from other practical and methodological changes. A longitudinal study with couples from all groups could monitor the process of change over a period of time, and identify more specifically the changes achieved and probable predictors of positive change management. The use of a survey, whilst failing to provide rich data, would be valuable as a follow-up measure. Questions constructed around each theme yielding a structured set of data which could be used to identify the relevance and incidence of themes

for each couple. Questions may also investigate themes in depth and discover for example, links between social discourses and the development of themes and their attendant meanings.

Sample size in this study was very small. In order to draw any firm conclusions generalisable to a larger population, use of a larger sample is suggested.

12:6 Taking the Research Forward

Despite the shortcomings of this study, any attempt to continue the investigation would, for practical reasons, involve a similar small scale inquiry.

In order to focus on process issues - i.e. the co-construction of narratives, I would be interested to explore the relationship between interactional styles, narrator role, and the use of conversational tactics such as naming of partner. This study has suggested that there are differences in how these processes occur in the narratives of client couples, and given my particular interest in working with relationship problems, it would be useful to see if these differences are replicated.

I would propose to conduct two semi-structured interviews with a number of client couples - one being the first interview during which the partners (usually) talk about the presenting problem. The second research interview would take place on the final meeting, and would also include some form of self-rating in which the couple would assess the failings and benefits of the therapy. I would also need to have a written record of my own responses and assumptions - both on the initial meeting, throughout the therapeutic process, and on the final session.

My own assessments would cover issues such as contextual factors - family of origin, length of relationship, children involved etc., and an appraisal of the nature and severity of the

presenting problem. A rating scale for use by the couple would be valuable in providing a client assessment for the latter.

It may then be possible to code narrative processes in order to explore possible links between interactional and conversational styles, and perceived success in couple therapy, providing further implications for therapeutic interventions.

A further study could usefully involve non-client couples in a similar exercise, addressing their assessment and experience of a relationship problem.

12:7 Conclusion

A childhood assumption that difficulties and problems always have an available solution has, over the years, been modified and reinterpreted to acknowledge that no matter how many solutions are attempted, some problems will not yield to change.

In exploring the adult reality, the view of *this* thesis has been that in understanding the nature and stages of change, along with an awareness of how couples themselves understand the possibilities of change, one may be more equipped as a therapist to identify the sources of stuckness, and hopefully create reasonably successful interventions.

Some problems are open to change.

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APPENDICES

- 1** Instructions and interview questions
- 2** Initial coding of an interview. An example
- 3** A full script analysis
- 4:1 - 4:16** Focused coding of full script
- 5** Colour coding. An example
- 6** Coding frame for functional analysis
- 7** An example of an interpretative repertoire
- 8** Cohen's Kappa validation of themes and interactional styles
- 9** A summary of follow-up responses
- 10** A summary of graph closeness measures
- 11** Couple's life-cycle events (Table A)
- 12** Jeremy and Matt - Follow up
- 13** Jill and Ian - Follow up

APPENDIX 1

Instructions and Interview Questions

- 1 **What I would like you to do is to think about your relationship, and the important things that have happened to you since you met. As you talk together, decide which are the significant events in your life and mark them along the base line of the graph. Then add a brief note labelling or summarising each event.**

- 2 **How did your relationship begin?**

- 3 **If you were asked to think of a word to describe your relationship, what would it be?**

- 4 **Do you ever think of yourselves as *close*?**

- 5 **What do you take 'closeness' to mean?**

- 6 **Some people measure their relationship according to how close they feel to each other. I wonder if you could think about the closeness between you as a couple during the events you have marked on the graph. How close were you during these times?**

Could you each mark on the graph the level that seems right for you. 5 means very close, and 0 - not close at all.

- 7 **What do you hope will happen in your relationship in the future?**

APPENDIX 2: Initial coding of interview K1 Ivor and Andy

A Origin of Material:

Couple. Homosexual

B Type of Material:

1 Interview lasting one hour
Transcript 12 pages

- 2 Graph
- a) Life cycle events
 - Meeting at the gay pub
 - Moving in together after 3 months
 - After 3 years, split for 3 months
 - Bought house together (with Neil)
 - Now
 - Having own house in the future
 - b) Measurement of closeness. Each partner drew own line

C Features of Style:

- 1 *Nature of interaction between partners*
Fairly equal input. Sometimes Andy held the floor, sometimes Ivor
- No apparent stereotypical features. This aspect did not appear in the discourse.
- Events introduced without debate - each assenting to the other's choice.
(Relationship not 'event-full'?).
- 2 *Nature of graph measurements*
- a) Pattern span between lowest and highest 'til now
 - Began at 0. Level 5 now.
 - b) Assessment of future expectations
 - Level 5
 - c) Nature of overall pattern
 - Both lines follow each other closely. Some crossover
 - A rise when moving in together, fall on parting
 - Otherwise, a steady climb

D Subject Matter of Interviews:

- 1 *Life cycle events: not necessarily tied to graph events*
- a) Social markers - commitment ceremony
 - b) Buying house & Neil's role as third party
 - c) Nature of job. Ivor in management
 - d) Previous relationship related events - Neil as former lover to Andy
 - e) Family of origin events - the two families cope with first knowledge of gayness differently. Andy's parents more shocked, but the couple ended up living with them.
 - f) Health related events. Andy took overdose when the couple split up
 - g) Meeting. At the gay pub. Andy still unsure of his sexuality. Went with a girl.
 - h) Other. Attributions - the nature of gay relationships. Difficulties posed. Youthfulness, dysfunctional behaviour. Neighbours.
- 2 *Closeness:*
- a) Possessiveness or letting go
 - b) Management of social time

Ivor and Andy 2

BELIEFS

- 1 *Where do the beliefs and assumptions about themes originate?* *source*
- a) Family of origin. Acceptance. Treating the partner as another son.
 - b) Traditional / cultural factors. Fear of others (because of their fear of AIDS)
Institutional difficulties - e.g. mortgage. Seek aid from within the group.
See the neighbours as either for or against.
Selves as a dysfunctional, possibly persecuted group.
 - c) Relationship factors
Andy as possessive
Ivor as needing own space
Struggle to achieve a good balance between possessiveness and independence
Andy, who is the most possessive at the beginning, is the one who risks Ivor's wrath by staying out all night.
 - d) Individual factors
A sense of Andy being the most vulnerable, the one who is emotionally at risk. An implicit sense
Ivor appears stronger. The managerial one.
This may reflect in economic terms but not openly stated as so.
- 2 *How are they presented?* *the discourse*
- accounts and attributions carried in the story*
- i) Biological metaphors - attributions re change.
Also re youth vs maturity
 - ii) Compatibility / fitness - esp in the contrast with Neil who is not neat. Both individuals set a high standard of neatness. The house was beautifully furnished etc.
 - iv) Negotiation / rationality
Discourses of rules, and modelling
- 3 *What are the beliefs and assumptions about change?*
- a) Imposed change - in two major areas - money and orientation.
Change more painful. Could not be avoided.
Change by choice - Buying a house / re-negotiating possessiveness. Less painful, unless things go 'wrong'.
(e.g. shady solicitor).
 - b) More about external sources of change - e.g. parents, neighbours, Neil, money.
Internal change almost solely restricted to Andy's attempted suicide and outcome..
 - c) Conscious change most dominant. Unconscious aspects (may be more evident as analysis progresses) in Andy's responses to Neil, and to the relationship split.
 - d) Levels of analysis in terms of personal, couple, and cultural / social issues: e.g. work at relationship by negotiating own with couple needs - has effect on friends who see couple as 'model' of how long term gay relationships should be.

	Transcript of tape of Gina and Yvonne	
Stage 2: Line-by-line coding	Stage one: Identification of major themes	Stage 5: Functional Analysis
<p>Building the task Co-ordinating task expectations Outlining symbolic elements</p>	<p>Task setting Inter. What I would like you to do is to imagine if you can, that this bottom line represents the story of your life together - right -</p>	<p>'Playing' the researcher?</p>
<p>Responding/assenting/ joining the task building (implicit) Detailing cognitive and practical task elements - thinking, talking, choosing events, making judgements about relative significance</p>	<p>Gina. Right Inter. from the beginning until now - and - what I'd like you to think about, and talk about between you if you can, are the significant events in your life together, that you feel have been very important in your relationship.</p>	<p>Co-ordinating the task</p>
<p>Responding/assenting</p>	<p>Gina. Mmhuh.</p>	
<p>Detailing practical task elements - marking, summarising</p>	<p>Inter. and then, as we go along this line and talk about it, if you could just mark off and summarise - just with a couple of words or so - which means one of you might decide to be scribe.</p>	
<p>Asking for clarification</p>	<p>Gina. what, the highs and the lows?</p>	<p>Presenting the relationship as a varied experience. Using metaphor</p>
<p>Confirming</p>	<p>Inter. Oh absolutely, yes. emotional vs. social issues</p>	
<p>Asking for further clarification - providing alternatives - emotional vs. social issues. Providing examples. Suggesting qualitative differences - good and bad</p>	<p>Gina. In what sort of terms? Are we talking in <i>emotional</i> terms or <i>social</i> terms? There were times when life was good, because financially it was good, but life might not have been so good at the same time because there was something emotionally going on that was down. I mean, in what terms?</p>	<p>Providing contrasting causal explanations to characterise variations in the relationship Presenting a dynamic quality</p>
<p>Seeking clarification, confirmation</p>		
<p>Assenting to alternatives</p>	<p>Inter. It can be both actually.</p>	<p>Keeping options wide open</p>
<p>Comparing examples, illustrating alternatives</p>	<p>Gina. Because the time we were buying the first house, it was high because of that, but your mum died at the same time, so it</p>	<p>Providing causal explanations which suggest that the internal state of the relationship is dependent on</p>

Confirming and modifying illustration. Assessing relative importance. Seeking clarification. Suggesting **strategy**

Confirming strategy

Assenting

Continuing

Seeking clarification of **task**

Clarifying task

Beginning the task

Creating a storied element. Affirming task beginning. Questioning significance of choice.

Affirming personal significance. Describing strong emotional response. Question for info gathering.

Providing **context - work** - implying similarity of experience?

Storying shared experience - interchangeability/similarity of skills.

Confirming. Providing second context - **relationship** as time / orientation. Relationship of **other**. Finding difference. Seeing event as beyond control.

Resulting sudden **decision**. Implying mind altering. Suggesting significance through **timescale**. Suggesting emotional importance of event. Confirming suddenness,

was low because of that.

Yvonne. Yeah, but buying the house was a **key thing** wasn't it - you know, in our relationship? That's what you mean isn't it? I think we should work through it and think about it.

Inter. Yes, because I'm sure that when the times come up you will also bring in both aspects

Gina. Right OK.

Inter. as you talk about them.

Clarifying task

Yvonne. You want me to write on the horizontal axis? You don't want me to worry about the numbers?

Inter. No not at the moment. I'll tell you about that later.

GE1 courtship_____R3

Gina. There was the very beginning. There was the courtship.

Yvonne. "**And in the beginning**". That was the high point do you think?

Gina. I thought it was the high point. **Very exciting**.

Inter. How did you meet?

Context for courtship

Gina. We worked in the same office. and er -

Yvonne. We swapped jobs at one point I think as well.

Gina. We did, yes. I was very well married. 23 years married. You were in another relationship. It just sort of happened. I found out that Yvonne was gay. Something just went bang in my head and that was it. I decided to give up 23 years of marriage for her. So the beginning was quite a high spot.

Yvonne. It was **a bit of a bang**

external factors.

Using **metaphor**

Taking control of the task.

Taking on role of chief negotiator?

Attempting to encourage, to give permission for any story.

Taking control of the written task, and seeking direction.

Gina begins narration

Using **figure of speech** - applying level of importance, or sense of story? Getting the story started. Is Gina going to be chief narrator? Checking each other's perception.

Gina begins again - presenting added context

Yvonne adds information

Gina presents herself as conventional, heterosexual. Providing CE for rapid decision - implying an internal factor, beyond conscious control. Gina to this point appears to be presenting the relationship in highly charged (emotional) terms - as if she sees life in terms of extremes.

implying positive effect. Using timescale for effect.	because you decided in days didn't you?	Figure of speech - sudden, unexpected, making an impression.
Confirming significance through timescale and sudden life change.	Gina. Yes I decided in three days that I was going to leave my marriage and be gay	
Commenting	Inter. Really.	
Continuing story.	Gina. but wanted to live with Yvonne. So we went out first on Saturday night and I told my husband on Tuesday that I was leaving him. Yeah it was a quick decision.	Gina continues - seems at present to be in charge of story.
Confirming speed of decision.		
Children Seeking further information. Widening subject matter.	Children Inter. Did you have any children?	Responding as if this were Gina's story.
Providing information. Seeing number of children and age information as relevant.	Gina. Yes I've got two adult children. My eldest has just made 30.	Gina presenting a personal, life-stage context.
Seeking further information. Seeing domicile info as relevant. Providing info. Building picture.	Inter. They had left home by then had they? Gina. No, one of them was still at home. Actually they were both still at home because Jane just had come back.	
Parents Seeking clarification, building context.	Yvonne. So were your parents as well.	Jane again adopting role of providing extra information.
Affirming context.	Gina. My parents were still at home	
Remembering difficulties.	Yvonne. It was very complicated at the time. Gosh.	Yvonne adds pragmatic comment which contrasts with Gina's colourful, affective responses - above.
Confirming difficulties	Gina. It was _____ R3 R4	
Commenting on severity of difficulties.	Inter. It must have caused an explosion, I should think	Suggesting notable emotional effects.
Affirming difficulties. Avoiding disclosure. Presenting reasoning behind choices. (CE) Characterising mother.	Gina. A bit of one. I didn't tell my parents I was gay because they wouldn't have been able to deal with that. My mother is a little French lady who tends to express emotion by wailing. Yes obviously the break up of the marriage was traumatic enough. They handled it quite well. My husband actually was very supportive. So there was the	Applying CE of cultural differences for mother's inability to deal with Gina's change in lifestyle.
Assuming negative effects on parents.		
Assessing responses of others.		Presenting parents and FP as behaving well - implying that they might have made

Acknowledging effects on partner too.

Moving the story on.
Judging significance
Moving in together

Seeking clarification, affirmation?
Confirming

Confirming and applying added importance.
Seeking clarification re task.

Confirming.

Accepting confirmation.

Basis for attraction.

Seeking information.
Introducing notion of *chemistry*.

Implying overwhelming feelings \ emotions.

Suggesting intuitive sense.

Dismissing chemistry.

Reiterating inner certainty, rightness. Seeking partner's experience.

Confirming like experience, modifying - contextual and personality factors.

Suggesting difference in other-awareness - implying CE for different response?

Continuing

Continuing

Context for meeting - work

Providing context - recounting similarities / differences.

Storying the changed awareness - gayness

beginning. - Yvonne was obviously in a relationship. ___R4
GE2 moving in together R5
Yvonne. So if you count the courtship as a milestone then, the next one would probably be moving in together wouldn't it?

Gina. Our first time in the flat?

Yvonne. Yes.

Gina. That was a milestone, yes.

Yvonne. That's the sort of thing you mean?

Inter. Yes. Yes.

Yvonne. Right, OK. _____R5
Being attracted R6

Inter. What do you think it was that attracted you to each other? Where was the chemistry?

Gina. Well, em, - I was just totally besotted. I just knew it was right. I don't know about chemistry. Nothing ever felt so right. I don't know about you.

Yvonne. Yes similar - but I was in another relationship and take longer to make up my mind and I dithered a bit longer - but, yeah I don't think I really knew you that well before we got it together.

Gina. We

Yvonne. We just sort of -

Gina. We were work acquaintances - we worked in different parts of the office - we had fairly similar jobs, they did overlap at one time. It wasn't 'til I was at a do and one of my old staff - male staff - fancied Yvonne and I said to one of the other girls, "Do you know Mike fancies Yvonne" (Yvonne was at this do) and this girl laughed. and I said, 'What are you laughing about? and she said

the change more difficult - as stressed above.

Using metaphor for significance. Yvonne as task leader - consultative.

Following the consultative approach.

Using a metaphor for significance
Task monitoring

Using a metaphor to signify a type of attraction

Justifying the relationship on the grounds of inner certainty / rightness.

Presenting self as more cautious, uncertain, - seeing the 'knowing' of a partner as an important part of being able to commit.

Presenting perceptions of self and other. Self as unknowing, perhaps naive, other as becoming a fascination. Telling the story of the other - using her name.

Providing CE for change of behaviour.

"Well, he wouldn't stand a **hope in hell.**" "Why?" "You know she's gay." I said, "No I didn't." you know - I really didn't. After that **I couldn't leave her alone.** That was it.

Use of **metaphor** - Yvonne as definitely off-limits for Mike.

Figure of speech - suggesting driven-ness?

Assenting

Inter. Yeah

Continuing story.
Characterising Gina, acknowledging personal response - being drawn in / seduced.

Yvonne. Yes she was very attentive. And I was very flattered by it actually. It was very seductive I suppose - that's probably the right or wrong word. But having someone that's very interested in you is very - flattering -

Presenting an interplay of self and other - mutual responding.

Continuing story, recalling personal goals.

Gina. And very determined to get you

Presenting self as 'the hunter'

Assenting

Yvonne. Yeah _____ R6
Timescale R7

Introducing timescale.
Seeking information, widening context.

Inter. So how long did it take before you actually moved in together?

Looking for an anchoring of the story. Wanting a 'feel' for the intensity of the relationship at this stage.

Providing timescale

Gina. Two months.

Confirming timescale

Yvonne. Two months.

Implying different decision making styles.
Using timescale as a measure of resolve.
Seeking **previous partner Y** information. Widening story

Gina. It would have been quicker if Yvonne had made her mind up quicker. _____ R7
Previous partners R8
Inter. (laughing) What do you do with your partner?

Presenting the other as more cautious.

Applying meaning. Implying comparison in quality of life.

Yvonne. (I had a life!) Emm - Well, I didn't tell her for a long time. Stupid - she guessed because we were having a full-blown affair. It was complicated because I was working a long way away and I was having to leave very early in the morning, and what I was actually doing was leaving my flat in SE Edinburgh, and walking down the road and she was picking me up and she was driving me to where I went to work and we were spending time together and then she'd bring me home in the evening. We were meeting up at weekends

Presenting causal explanation for her slower responses, with justification for behaviour.

Storying the ending - impact on former partner.

Interweaving personal story with shared narrative.

Implying deception. Not being honest

Trying to negotiate a relationship ending with a relationship beginning.

Using strategy to deceive

Characterising ending

Being critical of own

negatively.

Disputing negative characterisation.
Seeing former partner's perspective -
storying effects of ending on FP. Describing her responses.
Judging / assessing own and FP's behaviour.
Discomfort leading to final decision. Needing to act.

Continuing story

Continuing story

Continuing story

Role of both previous partners (FPs)

Continuing story.

Detailing FP role in ending.

Implying traumatic / eventful happenings - in the night
- needing advice
- having support
- needing to act.

FP Managing events
Re-structuring practical arrangements

Affirming story. Making ending?

Previous partner - G
Managing his role
Behaving generously
Reflecting relat restructuring
Characterising FP

Commenting / characterising FP

Continuing - implying finality.

and sneaking off together. It was all very sordid really, and mm - my ex -

Gina. It wasn't sordid!

Yvonne. It was for her. It was a horrid thing to do to somebody. She knew and she guessed fairly quickly. Then when I actually told her we went through this angst and grief kind of period, which didn't last very long actually. Then I said 'That's it, I'm going'.

R8

R9

Gina. And rang me up at 2 o'clock in the morning.

Yvonne. I said 'Come and get me'.

Gina. And my husband answered the phone. And I spoke to her and then - Oh no, Anne was on the phone - Anne rang me

Yvonne. She told you, she rang you

Gina. Because she rang me up, that's right, and she said to me, 'You'd better come and get her'. This is two o'clock in the morning and this is the other side of Edinburgh. and - mm - I said to Matthew 'what do I do?' and he said 'Well, you'd better go and get her and bring her back here'. So I did. I turned up in the middle of the night and brought her back, and Matthew

Yvonne. That was it really. __R9
R10

Gina. Matthew moved to one of the spare bedrooms and said "She'd better go in your room."

Yvonne. He was awfully good.

Inter. What a nice man!

Yvonne. And then we went to stay in a hotel and that was that.

behaviour. Presenting self as remorseful.

Using CE as justification for relationship ending?

Presenting self as dependent?
Possibly practical dependency - e.g. no means of transport.

Negotiating jointly to clarify the 'facts'

Presenting self as needing guidance - FP as organiser / provider of solutions.

Presenting FP as ready to change status?

Presenting FP as understanding, facilitating. Applying attribution.

Finalising the story of previous-relationship ending.

Confirming finality.	I didn't go back.	
Back to Y's FP Reflecting sadly on FP Suggesting likelihood of events. (inevitability?)	Gina. Yeah, that's right. _____ R10 R11	Presenting FP as victim. Justifying perceived self in terms of expectations of life. Fatalist discourse?
Responding to the implied 'but' Assessing former relationship Suggesting inevitable ending Admitting unknown conflicting feelings/cognitions. Implying changed meanings - with hindsight.	Yvonne. Yes. Poor girl didn't know what hit her really - my other partner. It was a horrid thing to do but it was - these things happen don't they? Inter. It just felt right.	Attempting to make it feel 'OK' - providing justification for Yvonne's actions.
Seeking clarification, introducing timescale	Yvonne. Yeah. I wouldn't have been honest if I had stayed. It wouldn't have lasted if I had stayed, I'm convinced. Not that it had been unhappy actually, because I was perfectly happy - or so I thought - but I couldn't have been could I? But I thought I was. _____ R11	Justifying actions. Reflecting on past behaviour to produce CE.
Constructing answer	Timescale R12 Inter. So how long did you live like that in the hotel?	Negotiating / sharing the narrative
Suggesting timescale.	Yvonne. Oh, this was literally for like	⇓
Modifying timescale.	Gina. Three days	⇓
Presenting evidence	Yvonne. a couple of days.	⇓
Negotiating evidence	Gina. Cos the Wednesday night	⇓
Confirming and summarising construction of timescale and its context.	Yvonne. cos I went back to your flat in Nottingham.	⇓
Adding qualitative measure.	Gina. That's right, it was a the Wednesday night - my place Wednesday and Thursday. We went to the W Hotel Friday,	Applying a positive evaluation of events.
Continuing story and timescale	Yvonne. In style! _____ R12 Completion of GE2 R13	⇓
Completing story.	Gina. then I had a flat in Nottingham. We went Saturday, Sunday and Monday -	⇓
Confirming and bringing to conclusion. Moving in together	Yvonne. We found a flat	⇓
Focusing on task.	Gina. we found a flat and moved in on the Monday. (Pause) _____ R13	Taking control of the story.

Creating a link between events. (Moving forward?)
Implying qualitative difference
- rent /buy, flat/house.

Confirming

Continuing. Providing context for action - selling property, moving parents.
Doing things

Traumatic times

Suggesting the pain of de-constructing former context - esp the relationships.
Applying a timescale
Making changes

Confirming

Confirming, identifying further elements to be de-constructed in change.

Implying intergenerational link
- parents -> couple -> children

Confirming

Detailing emotional pain of change - identifying role of parents in couple's pain, and role of forced change in parent's anger.

Confirming, clarifying story.

Building picture of pain/trauma. Others becoming angry at change

Confirming, continuing story.

Providing evidence re **role of social networks** - work

FP

FP' girlfriend

Girlfriend's husband

Implications of being outed.

Gay issues - being unable to disclose

Using gayness as a weapon

Inter. So what was the next kind of significant event?

GE3 Looking for a house
R14

Yvonne. Well as soon as we'd found, we'd moved into the rented flat, we started looking for a house to buy didn't we?

Gina. Yeah.

Context for house buying

Yvonne. and we both had property to sell. I had a flat to sell, and you had a house to sell and your parents to re-locate and things. But ._____R14

Traumatic times R15

Gina. Yeah there were some very traumatic times over probably the following six months for both of us, was detaching ourselves from the relationships - me the marriage and you the affair.

Yvonne. Yeah.

Gina. And yeah - houses to sell, parents to re-locate, children to sort out .

Yvonne. Yes that was like when it started to get acrimonious wasn't it, because your parents got really embittered that they had to move out.

Gina. Yeah. They had a granny flat in our house.

Yvonne. They were very upset, and your husband's girlfriend was being a bit nasty._____R15
R16

Gina. Yes by this time my husband had a girlfriend, at least he had it before we broke up, I found out later - but then, she started to get - it was very complicated because her husband worked for the same company I worked for, and when the marriage broke up obviously I couldn't tell my company that I was now gay and what came out was my husband

Presenting a context which de-constructed past individual lives, and started construction of new shared experience.

↓

Adding details of affective responses to the changes - traumatic times - implying a struggle involved in change.

Providing causal explanations for negative affective responses. Parental responses to forced change.

Interpretative repertoire

Presenting a story of growing self-awareness, interwoven with the influence of others on that awareness.

'Private' others presented in the role of 'whistle blowers', and public others in terms of social constraint / disapproval, and observable prejudice.

Implying a different culture effect

Taking action to fight prejudice / becoming a scapegoat

learning new ways of being. Experimenting

Needing to know about self-disclosure

Reiterating pain of events.

Suggesting timescale.

Confirming timescale and providing evidence.

Adding 'colour', introducing different story.

Continuing own story.

Continuing own story. Drawing stories together. Using a strategy against stress.

Acknowledging connection, Applying causal explanation.

Elucidating explanation Adding qualitative dimension Idealising Reiterating idealisation

Confirming. Detailing timescale and actions. Implying not so perfect? What does 'perfect' mean?

Assessing past economic status

Reflecting comment

Clarifying with CE

Commenting

was having an affair with this chap's wife. It all got a bit nasty and this chap started saying that I was a lesbian and that - I worked then for an American company - which is pretty much a **showstopper**. So it got fairly nasty. I threatened legal action if he continued to say that type of thing. This being gay was all very new to me. I was still learning what being gay was all about. It was very much. I was asking Yvonne what do I do in this situation, and how do I deal with that? I had no idea what being gay was apart from being in love with another woman. I didn't understand the peripherals. So it did get pretty nasty. This was all going on for probably about six months after, wasn't it?

Yvonne. Yes the time it took to buy the house and have it___R16
R17

Gina. We went away on holiday

Yvonne. and have builders in and everything.

Gina. We went away to Israel for Christmas, didn't we, to get away from things.

Yvonne. Mm. The house wasn't it?

Gina. Then we found the perfect house in January.

Yvonne. The perfect house. (Wistful?)

Gina. Lovely house. The perfect house. Moved builders in for four months. Actually had it gutted.

Yvonne. We were cash rich at the time -

Gina. We were cash rich,

Yvonne. - because we had

Using **metaphor** to convey shocked responses, specific disapproval. Contrasting own novice role with that of the other as expert

Implying lack of 'road map' for being gay. Implying a need to be aware of the behavioural peripherals of living as a gay

Interweaving Gina's personal story with the shared narrative. Negotiating and sharing the story.

⇓

⇓

Presenting an idealised picture - providing a contrast with previous negative events.

Presenting a new, shared, comfortable lifestyle, resulting from new economic power.

Continuing story (Implying disappointment, etc.?) Seeing a loss	settlements. Quite nice.	Suggesting a negative outcome - loss of resources.
Continuing, providing cue for next event.	Inter. Lovely.	
Continuing this section of the story. <i>Mother's death.</i>	Yvonne. All the money went on the house, and we didn't get it back.	
Continuing. Describing painful outcomes. Remembering the extreme pain of death of mother	Gina. and the week we moved in - _____R17 Death of Yvonne's mother (NGE) R18 Yvonne. My mother died.	Presenting a traumatic ending to the narrative of good things. Adding emphasis to the negative aspect of the event.
Confirming	Gina. Yvonne's mother died. So that was quite traumatic. That was fiercely traumatic wasn't it?	Directing the story.
Questioning, seeking information (disclosing to mother?)	Yvonne. Yeah	
Comparing explicit reality - not telling, not talking with implicit belief - she knew	Inter. Did your mother know that you were gay?	Presenting mother, and the relationship with her as troubled.
Characterising mother's context / experience, nature of the relationship. Suggesting an uncertain reality.	Yvonne. Mm. I never told her. I never talked to her about it. I don't believe anybody's mother doesn't know. I can't think that a mother wouldn't know. But we didn't talk really. My mother had a lot of problems and we didn't talk about much. She'd met Gina. She met Anne as well, my ex-but I really don't know.	Using a discourse to imply that mothers have 'intuitions' about their children - even with regard to gender relationships. Providing a CE for lack of openness - mother as troubled. Assuming death of mother will produce painful feelings.
Commenting, suggesting pain	Inter. No. It must have been a terrible time for you when she died.	Implying that speed of events adds to their painfulness.
Assenting - confirming feelings. Adding timescale.	Yvonne. Yes it was pretty horrid actually. Yeah, yeah. It was all very quick as well.	Implying that multiple changes add stress.
Providing extra context, implying added stress.	Gina. You were changing job too.	Creating a context of troubledness - generalised to father too. An implied expectation that partners affect each other in their distress.
Confirming Presenting parents intermeshed in distress. Enduring elements intermeshed with present change. Remembering the extreme pain of terminal illness)	Yvonne. Yeah I had just started a new job and everything. My dad - my mother was very ill for a long time and it was pretty horrid and nasty and very sad and upsetting, and my father started drinking. It was all fraught. The whole thing.	
Continuing the story of distress. <i>Applying character to the year</i>	Gina. Cos he was taken into hospital at the end of the year -	Summarising a whole year in negative terms. A year characterised by negative events. Chunking time. Assuming no positive
Affirming (the bad year)		

Confirming, giving added emphasis - implying an effect on early relat.
Adding to the 'bad' -
Storying the 'troubled sister'

Continuing - adding relat relevant information
Continuing, applying CE, implying no choice for couple

Suggesting a blighted beginning to relationship
Expressing surprise. Implying stress might have ended the relationship.
Characterising the relationship beginning.
Summarising relationship beginning, ambivalence, contrasting experiences.

Confirming summary

Confirming. Adding emotional colour.
Characterising depth and breadth of emotional pain.

Confirming assessment

Suggesting measure of control - coping

Seeking added information - widening the story - to relationship effects.

Role of emotional factors in stress

Characterising relationship - implying a quality of relationship is necessary to survive.

Suggesting **influencing factors** - personal awareness of gayness

Developing -
uncertainties re- trust
fearing the good
pessimism
negative expectations,

needed treatment. That was a **bad year,**

Yvonne. It was a bad year.

Gina. Bad year - our first year together. Not very nice. _____R18
R19

Yvonne. My sister came home. My sister was living in Germany. She was in a bad relationship and she was really unhappy, and she came home

Gina. and parked herself on us

Yvonne. for the funeral, and parked herself with us because she had no money. So we had all that really. So we didn't have a very good start.

Gina. It's amazing we survived.

Yvonne. **This grand courtship.**

Inter. So it was a very mixed time - with good things and with a lot of bad things really.

Yvonne. Yeah
Emotional/relationship responses

Gina. Mm. It was digging the depths emotionally. We must have seen the bottom end of every emotion we ever experienced.

Yvonne. Yeah. I think so.

Gina. But handled it - _____R19
R20

Inter. How do you think it influenced your relationship then?

Gina. Em. The relationship had to be strong to survive it emotionally. I never at any time - I was still learning to be gay. So I was still going through the emotions of 'is she going to stay or is she going to leave me?' I go through these things 'it's too good to be true' and so every

events

Sharing the story of added family problems,

with the implication that the sister acted without permission -

CE - a victim of circumstances. Having no control.

Others affecting relationship quality / experience.

Implying a cynicism - expectations dashed!

Gina as steward of feelings - detailing the extremes of emotion.

Sharing the story -
negotiating.

Directing / questioning the story.

Presenting relationship as emotionally strong - a surviving relationship. (A 'hindsight' assessment)

In recollection, presenting self as uncertain about the strength of the relationship - perhaps as self as not good enough, or other as not committed enough.

Seeing self as personally vulnerable in the past.

apprehensive responses.
fearing separation
personal insecurity
resulting expectations.
Comparing with present view -
suggesting a different reality.

Giving story to Yvonne.

Being in shock - grief - 'out of
it'

Balancing - presenting a
positive feature - a *proper*
home.

Leading to good feelings, sense
of stability.
Seeing positive outcomes.
Changing status, control,
balance of power, 'efficacy'?

Summarising Yvonne's story.

Reiterating summary -
describing contrasts - traumas /
stability.

Commenting. Changing focus
reverting to earlier discourse.
Seeking information -
learning to be gay

Establishing first requirement

Disclosing to others
Recalling Y's response against

Reiterating response (with
humour)
Detailing life strategy.
Obtaining social acceptance

time there was a trauma going
on I used to imagine that
Yvonne's reaction was 'No, I
can't deal with this. I'm going to
leave you". It never was but I
was going through this churn
up inside me, so felt very
susceptible, very threatened,
very vulnerable - whatever. In
hindsight that just wasn't even
there, but that's how I felt. I
don't know. You explain how you
felt during that time.

Yvonne. I was in another world
for about a year after my mother
died anyway but I think that the
time we were first in the house
after we had the builders in. It
was my first proper home. I'd
owned a flat, but I'd never
owned a house that I'd bought
my own carpets, my own
curtains, and you could choose
the furniture because you'd got
some money, but this was a new
thing for me, so - I remember
that time as - apart from all the
trauma - as quite a stable nice
time cos we had a nice home, and
it was lovely. I got into
gardening and made dinners for
people and had dinner parties -

Gina. We got ourselves a *social
life*.

Yvonne. Got a social life, and
apart from all the traumas it was
actually quite a nice and stable
time - actually. _____R20
Being gay R21

Inter. Mm. It's interesting. You
were saying earlier, Gina, that
you had to kind of learn how to
be gay almost. What - kinds of
things did you have to learn?

Gina. Well, I remember the first
most important thing. I said to
Yvonne "What do I tell people?".
And Yvonne said 'Well you
don't.'

Yvonne. (laughing) Don't!

Self perception set against
the context of learning to be
gay - a developmental
experience.

(Contrasts with self in the
interview - presenting as
strong, confident etc.)

Presenting self as grief
stricken, perhaps self
absorbed, contrasting with
the new meaningful context
Stressing the value of
choice.

- CE in terms of 'home' -
more than a dwelling - a
sense of 'ownership' - an
affective rather than
possessive ownership.

Detailing activities which
signify having a 'base' -
caring for it, inviting others
into it.
Perhaps presenting the
relationship as a closed
system - but welcoming to
others. Social life seen as a
completion of the
relationship?

Interpretative repertoire
Probing. Taking role of
task leader / director.

Adopting / casting roles as
pupil and teacher.

Presenting an unpalatable
'fact' - that something about
self is likely to be rejected -
acknowledging need to be
accepted implied?

Comparing with early perceptions.	Gina. You just live your life and people will accept you for who you are. And if one day they find out you are gay that will almost be incidental. They will accept you for who you are. You don't have to ram it down people's throats . And I learnt that. I thought you had to do this big coming out scene -	figure of speech - implying the need to be sensitive, to balance one's own needs with those of others? Presenting early expectation of dramatic, stage-managed disclosure. Implying change of approach over time.
Gentle comment?	Yvonne. (chuckling)	Self as pupil - addressing the behavioural and communication patterns to be learnt
Continuing Explaining the learning process - a new etiquette, care with words.	Gina. and learnt that I didn't. But you have to learn - I believe - the nuances of being gay - how to behave when and where. You almost learn a language when you are in a work situation or a non-gay situation how you refer to your partner or when you are talking about things in your private life.	developing new cultural discourses, and modifying old ones.
Responding Detailing attempts to maintain privacy, secrecy - keep safety	Inter. Mm	↓ IB that disclosure of sexual behaviour is to be avoided. Unpalatable to others.
Responding Characterising process (strangeness). Developing skill over time. Becoming proficient. Responding	Gina. How you talk about things. How to avoid saying that you sleep in the same bed. Inter. Mm	Presenting self as accomplished at conforming to expectations within a non-normative lifestyle.
Describing learning strategies - seeking advice, checking progress.	Gina. It's quite weird, and eight years later I am quite expert at it Inter. (laughter)	
Confirming Continuing discourse. Seeing - practical social personal outcomes	Gina. but at the time I was always coming home and asking Yvonne "What do I do here?" Inter. Yeah	Presenting self as motivated by anger to challenge inequality
Becoming angry	Gina. and 'How do I do that?' you know, and I get concerned with things like insurances and pension funds and things like that, and I started to get indignant about the whole situation of gay people in the social sense because they aren't entitled to pensions and fiscal rights and - we both work for banks - the money side of it - and I started getting indignant. I remember going through a	Recollecting self as motivated to be engaged in taking social action / power.
Becoming activist - gay rights at a personal level		Presenting self in contrast as
Being afraid		

Being exposed	phase of wanting to go out, and sort of, take up politics or something, to sort out the rights of gay people. But on the other hand, I used to panic if I went anywhere where there might be	fearful - behaving as if a possibility of being exposed as deviant / criminal etc.
Changing behaviour	- I wouldn't go to Gay Pride for a while, because I would think there were TV cameras there, and people can see me. But we go to Gay Pride regularly now.	⇓
Qualifying / modifying fears	When you realise that there's millions of people, and very few cameras, and the chances of you getting caught - you know.	
Describing as if a crime involved. (getting caught)		
Responding to assumption?		
Describing personal effects		Presenting the life of a gay as a continual process of self / impression management.
Ongoing learning		
Taking care	Inter. (laughter)	
Changing focus on learning to Yvonne	Gina. That was the learning curve. I think you never stop learning about how to handle yourself. _____R21 R22	
Confirming.		
Suggesting differences in - timescale	Inter. It's interesting that. Did you have a similar kind of learning to do?	
work experience		Seeing the learning process as one of self awareness, rather than a process of cultural negotiation.
Differences influencing approach	Yvonne. Yes I suppose so. I have been doing a bit longer than you have so - and its funny you saying about it being a showstopper at work - being gay. I have always been out at work so its never been a problem for me really. Before I moved in with my ex I went through an unhappy time not knowing - what I was getting myself into. Because I was about to move in with another woman - and it was a bit serious - it was a bit like this is really accepting that this is the way I am. That was quite tricky but - . I suppose you do. It just happened to me a bit younger than it did you. Cos I moved to Edinburgh when I was in my early twenties and then started figuring it all out then	
Recalling feeling bad - unhappy.		
Coming to terms with own sexuality		
Seeing the experience as about personal change - feelings, self awareness etc. For Gina, the focus is much more on public implications.		CE / justification - Seeing differences in approach as being due to different stages in the process for each partner.
Responding		⇓
Implying a completion of adjustment before the couple met.	Inter. Mm	
Clarifying Yvonne's view in terms of age difference.	Yvonne. and then sort of went through all the angst then, and by the time I met you I was a fairly old hand really. _____R22	Adding justification - age, and age difference as relevant factor.
Implying different age =		

different impact.

Comparing self and other
Adding to awareness of
difference -

different assumptions
different view of self
different view of others

Making comparisons

Confirming

Confirming personal
assumptions re self disclosure.

Detailing 'life-script rule' as
personal assumption.

Describing inadequacy of rule,

developing new rules.

Confirming use of rule, citing
others, highlighting dangers?

Clarifying outcomes -
disclosing vs. holding.

Confirming. Citing evidence
for behaviour contrary to
expected.

Elucidating **timescale** - recency
vs. long-term consistency

Suggesting spontaneity effect
comparing with LT effect.

Detailing social others, social
mix, orientation balance, and
responses of others. Being
accepted. Keeping 'knowing'
implicit.

Confirming, continuing.

Exploring affective /
qualitative response. Seeking
clarification re **personal**

emotional responses to
gayness - emotional

R23

Gina. There's seventeen years
difference in our age. I was
pushing middle age before I
figured it out.

Yvonne. But I would react to
things differently to you. I
wouldn't assume that I'd got to
tell people anything. I'd just
assume that I didn't tell people
anything and then if they found
out, they found out. Where you
just wanted to go around saying
it to everybody because you
thought that was what you had
to do.

Gina. Yes. Yes

Yvonne. I wouldn't necessarily
say anything to anybody at all
and would assume that you didn't
have to.

Gina. Well, I have a sort of policy
in life of '**say it as it is**'. If you
feel something, if you have to
say something, then say it. This
is suddenly I'm faced with a
situation where you don't say it
as it is. There's another way of
dealing with it.

Yvonne. Well you can. People do.
We know people that do. Other
people get very sick of it.

Gina. Mm. But I think I have
only to a non-gay person I have
only once - and that was only
last week - told someone I am
gay. Flat out! Like that! and yet,
over eight years we have built
up a lovely social circle of gay
and not-gay, and they just
accept us and they *know* we are
gay but its never said. It doesn't
have to be, an' its quite good.
We've got friends from cleaning
ladies to circuit judges and they
all accept us.

R23

R24

Inter. Yeah. Its incredible isn't
it? Its good. Did either of you

Modifying justification -
casting each partner as
having different assumptions
and expectations of self other
behaviour.

Using **figure of speech** to
explain behaviour - an
expectation of self -
openness / justifying.

Putting a counter-argument,
challenging the assumption.

Habitually gaining
acceptance without open
disclosure - using a strategy
to negotiate with cultural
expectations.

Outcome - a wide social
circle implies that acceptance
is widespread - at many
levels.

Looking for affective
responses to gayness -
probing another dimension.

implications.

Seeking clarification.

Confirming, elucidating - internal / personal effects.

Recalling emotional response
Suggesting rapid cognitive change. Suggesting recognition of enduring quality
Suggesting age related / generation effect
Recognising social expectations

Storying -

Doing the 'right' thing being heterosexual ordering life according to social expectations

Storying attempts at conformity.

Observing own behaviour

Suggesting avoidance of reality
Avoiding the application of appropriate discourse.

Recalling emotional responses and growing inner awareness

Implying a struggle -

repression / denial seeking to explain unacceptable feelings presenting 'perfect' hetero relationship

Presenting shorthand picture - romance, chivalry, tradition etc.

Responding, confirming

Questioning, monitoring task

Confirming, questioning, recapping task.

Detailing task-related response

Characterising self - negatively. Defending?

Confirming characterisation

have a particular *feeling* about suddenly discovering - or being able to say 'yes I'm gay'? Did it produce any kind of feeling in you?

Gina. In the saying of 'yes I'm gay?'

Inter. Yes - just coming to a knowledge within yourself.

Gina. Suddenly I was aware that something that had been there probably all my life had a name and a meaning. Whereas my generation had crushes on teachers, pashes on other girls was part of growing up. You put it behind you, and you do the correct thing. You meet a nice boy, you get engaged, you get married, and you have children - distinctly in that order. And I did everything correctly, absolutely right. And it was very much you don't give it a name. You don't give it a name. Even all through my married life I became aware later that every now and again I would *feel* strong emotions about another woman. Never shared it, never *expressed* it, just *felt* it. And you deal with it, you walk away from it, you put it down to - oh guy - its your hormones, or whatever. I was in a very good marriage - an excellent marriage - with a really, really lovely husband, lovely home, two children - it was copybook. Cartland would have loved us.

R24

Inter. Mm

Yvonne. Are you answering the question that Margaret asked?

Gina. Yeah. Aren't I? The question was how do I feel about being gay. What I am saying is - it was expressing - saying it was making *real* what I'd always felt but I was never able to name it

Fixing a particular point in the process - a self awareness.

Probing internal responses.

Reflecting on change of meaning - a second order change.

Storying social expectations / social myths about gender development.

↓

Presenting self as conforming.

Contrasting with self in denial - avoiding appropriate discourse, providing socially acceptable explanations.

Presenting contrasts - outer conformity / happiness / ideality - inner dissonance.

↓

↓

Acting as task monitor.

Responding with own understanding, and response. Giving substance to an unnamed awareness.

Minimalising - dealing with tension?

Responding to tension.

R25

Appeasing, smoothing,
encouraging.
Turning task to Yvonne.

Answering -implying attempt
to recall emotional response to
being gay.
Suggesting gradual change.
recalling timescale.
Suggesting growing
consonance - resulting
conflicting emotions, - fear and
relief.
Suggesting self discovery and
its predominant effect.
Relating to partner - social
conformity effects.
Recalling underlying unease.
Contrasting conformity with
reality of self.
Conflicting emotions and
feelings.

Needing resolution of unclear
dilemma

Empathising, confirming

Acknowledging / rationalising
apparently conflicting
emotions.
Comparing heterosexual
loving with lesbian loving

Recalling unexpected response
- qualitatively different -
'better' implied?

Comparing 'then' with 'now'

Suggesting impossibility of
reverting. Suggesting
unsurpassable effect of
relationship?

Commenting, appreciating,
returning to task

responding to task reversion
Characterising house

Apologising (re digression)

Accepting apology

before. That was what I meant.
I like the sound of my own voice
.

Yvonne. Yes she does. _____R25

Inter. Please don't worry. Go on.
This is lovely stuff I can assure
you. What about you Yvonne?
R26

Yvonne. Well, I can't think of a
time when it actually happened
but I can remember over a
period of time coming to terms
with myself and my sexuality,
and it being an enormous relief
- and also extremely scary - but
overall its a huge relief to know
who you are. It is for me
anyway. To know - probably like
you, when I was a bit younger
and was going out with men, and
boyfriends, it was all very nice.
It never felt quite right so - it
was never hideously horrible
but to find out who you are and
what is right for me was very
enlightening and very
reassuring - but quite scary
because I realised that I had to
face something.

Inter. Gosh yes.

Gina. I found it quite strange
that I know I was in love with
my husband and I know I am in
love with Yvonne but they are
totally different types of love
and you suddenly discover that
with *this* love there is real, real
happiness - that was the most
sort of - wow thing about
discovering you are gay. You
have this link between love and
happiness. I was never unhappy
with Matthew but being gay was
- oh, never go back. Never,
never go back. You can't
replicate this any place. ____R26
Back to the task R27
Inter. Fascinating. Thank you
both for that. (pause) - so
moving on -

Yvonne. Oh yes, from **the**

Attempting to smooth the
process.

Unable to anchor timescale.

Presenting personal change
as an experience of mixed
feelings

Growing into a full
awareness of self - seeing as
both liberating and daunting

Attempting the normative
route implied.

Presenting the new
awareness as responsible for
integration - love with
happiness.

Implying that love of a man
carries negative undertones?

↓

Negotiating a link between
events - crating a change of
direction

↓

↓

<p>Questioning event - relevance and importance implied. Declaring awareness of continuing story Gina's job Continuing, providing event</p> <p>Reflecting. Adding qualitative info. Remembering neg emotion Providing context. Questioning timescale</p> <p>Confirming. Providing additional context. timescale and qualitative summary. (No negative events)</p>	<p>perfect house.</p> <p>Inter. I'm sorry I diverted -</p> <p>Yvonne. That's OK.</p> <p>Gina. What's the next big step?</p> <p>Yvonne. I know what the next big step is. _____R27</p> <p>Gina's job GE4 R28</p> <p>Gina. My job. Context of job</p> <p>Yvonne. Your job. Such trauma.</p>	<p>Summarising a whole event as negative - use of hyperbole?</p> <p>Creating time context for event. Presenting relationship context - a contrast of early relationship as characterised by trauma, at this point as calm. Creating a sense of swinging fortunes.</p>
<p>Continuing story - role of others as constraint implied Continuing, adding to story.</p> <p>Modifying, correcting story.</p>	<p>Gina. This was - what - three and a half years in?</p> <p>Yvonne. Yeah. We'd just settled down. We'd just had I think, one whole normal year where nobody'd died, nothing awful had happened, and nobody had thrown a wobbler.</p>	<p>Negotiating chronology of events to provide bridge for coming story.</p> <p>↓</p>
<p>Assenting</p> <p>Detailing timescale, clarifying chronology.</p> <p>Accepting story, continuing task.</p>	<p>Gina. We'd got rid of your sister.</p> <p>Yvonne. We'd got rid of Sue. Your kids got married.</p> <p>Gina. No. They got married here. We were here.</p> <p>Yvonne. Mm.</p>	<p>↓</p> <p>↓</p> <p>↓</p>
<p>Employment context. Presenting self as - sought after resisting weakening rationalising</p> <p>talking making a decision</p> <p>working out possibilities rationalising possibilities</p>	<p>Gina. That was only two years ago. The job came next.</p> <p>Yvonne. (Writing/whispering) Mm. Gina's job. Yeah. _____R28 _____R29</p> <p>Gina. I got head-hunted for this job and it was like 'come to Manchester'. Yvonne was in Edinburgh. I said no to them for three months. The offer got better and better, and better. It got to the offer you couldn't refuse. It would have been silly to say no. We talked about it - and decided we were both very busy in our careers so if I was down here - drove down Monday morning and went back Friday night - we had a head office up</p>	<p>Presenting self and other as competent professionals able to rationalise, think through, challenges to their lifestyle.</p> <p>↓</p> <p>↓</p>
<p>Responding</p> <p>Continuing story - possibilities</p>	<p></p>	<p>Presenting selves as rational, capable, and expecting</p>

Suggesting responses - Coping strategies Cognitive responses practical responses	in Edinburgh so I'd probably be up once a week anyway.	circumstances to enable plans to materialise.
Continuing story	Inter. Yes.	Rationale for action. Figure of speech - seeing cautious approach as desirable.
Recalling negative effects.	Gina. Em - I'd take a flat down here and it would be all right. We'd sort things out later on. Maybe Yvonne'd get a job down here or maybe I'd get transferred up to Edinburgh. It was very much one step at a time . So I took a flat down here and started commuting - going home Friday nights, coming back here Monday mornings.	Outcome - actual experience as extremely negative.
Confirming negative effects	Ah -	Presenting different perspectives -
Implying destructive effects.	Yvonne. It was dreadful.	At this point, Gina was (on reflection), more confident of relationship survival, Yvonne, more fearful break-up -
Suggesting negative relational effects - possibility of dissolution	Gina. Now that was - it was dreadful.	
Suggesting conflicting personal perceptions / recollections	Yvonne. It was a complete, and utterly -	maybe due to differing costs and benefits for each partner.
Confirming personal perceptions	Gina. That was a real strain on our relationship. It was probably the closest we - well, I never felt it was breaking up, but Yvonne reckons	⇓
CE Seeing partner as 'coming from a different place'	Yvonne. Yes it was.	⇓
Confirming. Explaining personal similarities and differences in experience.	Gina. Well you had a different perspective didn't you?	⇓
Citing social connectedness in CE	Yvonne. Yeah. It was - it was hideous. I hated living on my own during the week, and you hated being on your own during the week, and I had friends where I was. You didn't even have anybody you knew. It was just hideous really.	Conveying sense of emotional turmoil - using strategy for coping.
Recalling mutual distress.	Gina. We used to get on the phone and cry to each other R29	
Citing evidence	Staying put _____ R30	
Taking the blame.	Yvonne. It was my fault in a way cos Gina said to me, 'let's up sticks and move'. Then I was 'oh, no' because I take a long time to make up my mind. No, no, no, I can't. Cos I'd come from the Midlands, and I was	⇓
CE Refusing escape route		
Citing personal characteristics and cognitions. -		Justifying personal choices - presenting self as intransigent, but justifying choices in terms of personal qualities, and experience.
Slow to make cognitive change		
Dislike of area		
Dislike of moving away from present domicile		
reluctance to leave job		
Contrasting negative reasoning		⇓

with positive, and reality.
may lose job anyway
love of Edinburgh

Context for previous
development, growth and
stability implied.

Responding / empathising.
Introducing other peoples
views.
Providing confirmation from
assumed views of others.
Confirming the assumption

Continuing assumptions

Responding

Beginning response to move

Providing evidence for
assumptions - back-up of
friends.

Dealing with living apart
Recalling response to work
Contrasting work satisfaction
with private withdrawal.
Illustrating argument.

Suggesting added emotional
CE for withdrawal
Suggesting slow change

Recording partner's input -
with reservations

Recalling negative emotional
response
Labelling the period.
Confirming partner's response

Widening context.
Implying lack of 'ownership' -
seeing negatively.

determined I wasn't coming to
Manchester. 'I wasn't coming
down here - at all, ever!' and I
didn't want to come south. I
didn't want to leave my job -
although my job was
disappearing very fast. I didn't
want to leave it and everything,
because I loved living in
Edinburgh. I really loved it, and
I was very proud of the fact that
I had got there. I'd come from a
little seaside town and I'd got to
Edinburgh and managed and
sorted out my life there, and it
was all right and I was quite
happy. I wouldn't move. I was
entrenched.

Inter. Yeah. Mm.

Yvonne. Like a lot of people are
in Edinburgh, I have to say.

Gina. Everything outside
Edinburgh's the sticks isn't it?

Yvonne. There is no *life* outside
Edinburgh, I didn't think.

Inter. (laughing)

Gina. I was very satisfied -

Yvonne. Some of my friends
still think there's no life outside
Edinburgh. _____ R30
R31

Gina. I was very satisfied in the
work. But for the first three
months I shut myself away. I
never went out of an evening at
all. I used to go to Tescos once a
week. Er - and I used to lock
myself in the house. I never
went out. I was frightened of
Manchester's reputation. And
then gradually I got myself out.
I used to go to the pictures once
a week. Yvonne used to come
down when she could. But it -

Yvonne. I hated coming down.

Gina. It was a *hard year*. You
hated coming down, yeah.

↓

↓

Citing the experience of
others as added justification.

Creating qualitative
distinction - the desirability
of a place - 'city chic'

Distinguishing between
work (satisfaction) and
paucity of private life.
Causal explanation - fear
responsible for social
withdrawal. Implying
cultural discourses and
cultural myths as causal -
'notoriety factor'

The narrative conveys a
sense of being in limbo -
having no groundedness -
and this creating a sense of
difficulty - leading to a
chunking and labelling of a
timescale.

↓

Suggesting positive assessment.

Accepting positive assessment - qualifying on affective grounds.

Agreeing affective assessment
Linking negative assessment to decision.

Detailing change - buying house
rationalising / justifying decision

Continuing story.
Implying change / no change.
Implying reluctance, inability to commit to consequences of decision.

Confirming story
Confirming / continuing - describing a fallow period leading to a decision - implying a need to take control.

Seeking clarification - CE

Context of 'sorting things out'
Answering, providing emotional context.
Elaborating emotional context.

Providing added context - changes in employment conditions.

Changing cognitive responses

Resulting behaviour.

Yvonne. You had this flat. It was so immaculate. There just wasn't a thing of yours in it. It was like, rented furniture, almost rented everything. It was just horrid.

Gina. It was a lovely flat, in a lovely house.

Yvonne. Yes it was, but it wasn't home.

Gina. But it was very impersonal. So then we decided that what I'd do - one, for comfort's sake, and two - for investment's sake - is buy a house down here. So I bought a brand new on this development, two-bedroom house. I thought 'Well, this I can make my own. I can have my own things, and can play with it, and its a Midlands base. And if I move back to Edinburgh, I'll let it. So its an investment - whatever.' So I moved in here. Still commuting, still a bit unhappy - so unhappy I didn't want to do anything to the house. So it was like bare walls, and bare floors, and a bed, and a settee, and that was it, wasn't it? We didn't do anything to it.

Yvonne. No. _____ R31
Looking for a solution R32

Gina. Mm. Life plodded on and then we had a big sit down and "we need to sort this out".

Inter. What do you think prompted that?

Yvonne. Sheer misery I think.

Gina. Well, we were both utterly unhappy

Yvonne. At the same time. My job - I was still working in the same place - was disappearing and it was a very miserable place to work. I was working in

Creating a context of distinctions - between house and home.

Former has all the right *things*. Latter has an indefinable *quality*, not rooted in possessions.

Provides justification for decision - on qualitative and financial grounds.

⇓

⇓

Conveying a context in which 'home' was still not achieved - implication, a special quality missing.

CE Absence of emotional investment - implied.

Describing a context of change - being 'driven' to a decision.

⇓

⇓

Describing change in personal context - practical and cognitive changes.

⇓

⇓

Finding a solution

Deciding to talk - implied
Deciding a focus, goal
Working out a **strategy**
Exploring possibilities
Finding an unexpected solution
- implied.

Changing cognitions

Continuing the story - bringing
discourse to completion.
Addressing personal aims.
Changing the focus. Shifting
meaning within the situation.

Rejecting the idea. Exploring
(implied)
Providing unlimited options
Modifying options
Providing unlimited options
but focusing choice,
providing a specific option

Seeing story devel (implied)

Making the decision

Recalling confirmation of
possibilities. Suggesting
resulting change in the other.
Confirming changes

Implying that DM process
'freed up' Yvonne's choices

Catching on! Suggesting
story continuation.

Continuing story, adding
timescale,

providing explanations (for
timescale)

and detailing affective
responses.

Confirming, continuing -
highlighted further decision

Continuing own story in
parallel

the mortgage business and it was
nose-diving. So there was
nothing to keep me there. I had
started looking for other jobs in
Edinburgh and I thought 'Well, I
don't need to do this, I could look
for jobs in Manchester. So I did a
bit of that didn't I? _____R32
R33

Gina. Well, the initial thought
was 'Let's sit down and decide
what you want to do. What do you
want to do?' and it started off by
looking for other jobs. Then we
had a conversation - look I earn
enough money.

Yvonne. Do I want to work?

Gina. You can do anything you
want. You can do *nothing* if you
want.

Yvonne. I couldn't do nothing.

Gina. And so I said, 'If you had
this fairy godmother (like me)
and wanted to do anything, what
would you really want to do?
and she said 'I would like to go to
university'.

Inter. Oh, right.

Gina. I said, 'Fine. Do it'. That's
what spurred you -

Yvonne. That was that really.

Gina. It was an easy decision for
you wasn't it?

Inter. Good gracious, so you
then sold up and - _____R33

Selling the house, part of GE3 & GE 5 R34

Yvonne. So we sold the house
and it took ages, em -
unfortunately it took ages. The
building work we'd done hadn't
been registered properly, and it
wasn't done properly, and all
sorts of things like that. So it
took a while to sell it, and it was
a bit traumatic and at the time
we were buying this one.

Detailing a shift in direction
- from looking for the
'expected' to contemplating
the 'unexpected'.

⇓

Presenting self as 'giving
permission'.

Presenting self as needing to
be active / involved.

Presenting self as 'giver of
opportunities', taking the
lead.

The implication - more
power? As older partner -
unconscious parenting?

Giving permission. Making
the decision easy. Given as
a causal explanation.

⇓

Pushing the story on.

Creating the context for the
next event - providing a CE
for timescale involved.

⇓

Constructing the story
together.

⇓

Continuing in parallel

Responding

Detailing **multitasking**

Drawing stories together.

Dealing with lots of things at once

Suggesting couple characteristic - multiple tasking

Commenting on affective quality - unsettled.

Gaining control

Confirming, then modifying.

CE implying a restored measure of control

Consequences of decision

Describing new, positive, predictive, approach.

The role of other people

Qualifying positive approach - needing to protect plans from responses of others

Controlling the response of others. Planning a 'right time' - implied.

Presenting a fait-a-compli. - implying a need to avoid the negative responses of others.

Seeking timescale

Answering request

Calculating timescale

Gina. Yes, then we decided obviously

Yvonne. and selling the little house.

New house GE5(a)

Gina. so we sold the one in Edinburgh, sold the little house here and bought this one

Inter. Oh right. _____ R34
R35

Yvonne. So all that was going on at the same time really. I was applying to colleges and applying for jobs, and just doing everything at once. We do this don't we?

Inter. It sounds a very unsettled time. _____ R35
R36

Yvonne. Yeah, it was. It was very unsettled. But it was nice then because I knew what I was doing and you knew that I was coming here.

Gina. I was happy in the thought that we were going to be together.

Yvonne. It was nice, but we had to keep it quiet at work for a long time, cos I couldn't tell them what was going on - we didn't tell anybody. We planned all this didn't we? but we didn't tell anybody, because we thought everybody's going to freak. My sister's going to freak, - she's still in Edinburgh. My dad's going to freak and everybody - and they did!

Gina. But it was too late. By the time we told them it was too late.

Yvonne. We told them it was done. We'd bought a house and it was done. But they're all right about it now. _____ R36

Timescale

R37

Inter. How long was it when you

↓

Interweaving personal and couple story.

Characterising couple behaviour.

Giving meaning to timescale.

Seeing predictable elements as providing security.

Contrasting with former insecurity.

Valuing togetherness.

Needing to control information disclosure.

Fear of negative responses used as causal explanation for control of information.

↓

Disclosing at the 'right' time. Retaining control.

Implied - couple protecting themselves from possible attempts by others to control.

Rejecting a particular measure of timescale. CE - personal memory function.

Continuing dated timescale

Establishing order of events

Affirming. Adding personal detail

Continuing Yvonne's story

Confirming

Summarising timescale using dates.

Summarising timescale using years

Confirming, continuing - adding quality of timescale / relationship

Commenting, questioning.

Consequences for relationship

Confirming. Suggesting outcome.

FoS - implying too painful to repeat

Confirming, Adding personal feelings / intent.

seeking added information

(leading to comparison of similarities and differences)

Missing body -

presence of lovemaking

Missing mind -

seeing equality through intellectual communication mediated through talk.

Affirming role of talk

Reiterating. Expanding - what talk is used for, demonstrating shared ability.

Highlighting differences

were in that kind-of period - when you separated? Was it months or years?

Yvonne. It was over a year.

Gina. I was - er - '92. I joined in March '92

Yvonne. Too many dates. I don't remember dates

Gina. I joined the company. March 10th 1992 I joined the company. Erm - I was in the flat, - then I bought the little house. We bought this house December '93 -

Yvonne. Right. I lived in -

Gina. and you moved up March '94.

Yvonne. Yeah.

Gina. So it was from March '92 to March '94

Inter. A full two years.

Gina. Yeah - that we had semi-separate existence.

Inter. That was a long time, wasn't it?

_____R37

R38

Relationship consequences

Yvonne. Yes. It didn't work.

Gina. Never again.

Yvonne. I would never do that again. Never ever.

Inter. What did you miss most during that period?

Gina. Oh - apart from physical presence and all the physical side of our relationship, I missed the intellectual interaction. I believe a strong part of our relationship is the fact we're intellectual equals. I missed that hugely. We talk about -

Constructing the timescale of separation - anchoring to events and dates.

↓

↓

↓

↓

↓

Summarising, bringing timescale construction to conclusion.

Constructing a finality to action - learning from experience. Seeing future responses as guided by past evidence.

Looking for specific information - probing

Assuming that 'physical' factors are a first requirement of a relationship?

Valuing equality in the relationship - valuing 'mind' - intellectual equality mediated through talk.

Implying that equality does not stifle individuality.

Agreeing, justifying, seeing the value of talking.	Yvonne. We talk a lot.	↓	
Using humour as evidence.	Gina. We talk a lot. Everything. We are both opinionated. We have opinions.		Applying a positive dimension to a relationship quality seen socially as negative.
Seeing nurturing and companionship as important.	Yvonne. Usually different.		
Characterising self as home-maker.	Gina. Yeah, although they're different, the fact that we talk about them's really healthy. I missed being nagged. Yvonne can nag. I used to ring her up and say 'nag me'.		Characterising self as nurturing, home-centred.
Confirming. Seeing partner as bringing positive effect - sense of completeness. Contrasting with partner's absence - seeing self as detached	Yvonne. I missed making you dinners and things. I am very centred at home, and I missed all that sort of having meals together and watching TV together, and just being - companionship, I suppose, isn't it really?	↓	Characterising self as incomplete, inadequate without the other.
Proposing loss of self, wholeness, adequacy, without the other.			
Modifying partner's view.	Gina. Yeah. - When Yvonne's around I feel complete, whole. When she's not around I don't feel - I feel detached from everything. I feel very strange. Yvonne goes away for university weeks and study weekends, and I'm desolate. I wander around, couch potato.	↓	Seeing characterisation as partially true. Challenging characterisation.
Accepting modification. Citing example, but reiterating sense of loss	Yvonne. You're not always. Sometimes you're all right -		Justifying and modifying view.
Demonstrating difference. (Sense of freedom implied?)	Gina. It depends. Sometimes. I was playing a lot of golf when you were at Study weeks. Yeah, but on the odd days, I don't feel right when she's not around.		Presenting self as opposite / independent.
Confirming, accepting difference (with humour?)			
Continuing discourse	R38 R39		Coping with difference - assenting to it.
Questioning discourse. Information seeking. Answering - Presenting self - conflicting / surprising responses. Showing differences between expectation and reality. Implying puzzlement	Yvonne. I love it when you go away.		
	Gina. Yeah. Wicked, isn't it?		
	Yvonne. Even if it's only for a little while.		Presenting conflicting views of self - expectations of self as social, independent.
	Inter. Why's that?		
	Yvonne. I don't know. I thought		Implication that

Rationalising - seeing limited separation as positive.	it was going to be great when Gina came down here and I stayed in Edinburgh. I thought it was going to be fabulous, cos I thought 'I'm goin' to be out. I'm going to have a good time.' not that we don't have a good time anyway, but I just thought - but I just hated it. But now, when you go away for like - when you went off to Chicago, it was really nice just for a little while.	independence <i>depends</i> on the predictable presence of the other ('good mother'?)
Responding / confirming		↓
CE Being aware of differences as well as similarities. Citing examples of different interests.		
Using separate time differently	Inter. Mm. Mm. Gina. Cos fundamentally we like different things - although we're great together. So when Yvonne likes to go to things with some of her friends that's not my idea of entertainment. Although we do a lot together we do a lot separate as well. I play golf - Yvonne sings in a choir. When I'm by myself I don't do the things I like doing but when Yvonne's by herself, she capitalises on the things I don't like doing.	Seeing different interests as causal explanation for behaviour.
Responding		↓
Agreeing		
Changing focus, exploring other areas.		
Roles and stereotypes Being subject matter of talk Finding 'roles' problematic	Inter. (laughing)	Introducing discussion of roles - implying gender stereotypes.
Confirming - countering the desirable with the probable	Yvonne. Yeah, I do. _____R39 R40 Inter. It almost sounds as if you kind-of adopted something from conventional roles .	Meaning uncertain - where exactly does the problem lie?
Characterising personal view (against stereotyping) Assuming others use relationship stereotypes for the couple	Gina. We talk about this don't we? We have a problem with that concept.	Implication that conventional roles exist in the relationship? Seeing others as stereotyping partners according to gender expectations - perhaps according to personal characteristics?
'Owning' a role	Yvonne. Yeah - I hate to say it, but we normally have though.	Implying the 'woman's work'?
Owning another role	Gina. It was never my intention. I'm sure people look at us and try and stereotype us. She's the 'him' and she's the 'her' - OK - in the relationship.	Implying the 'man's work'?
Refusing 'domestic roles.		
Stating shared antipathy	Yvonne. I do the cooking.	Both rejecting the chores most typical as 'woman's work'?
adopting remedy CE - won't do it CE - justification (lack of	Gina. I do the 'do it yourself'. Yvonne. Neither of us do the	

skills)	cleaning or the washing or the ironing. We don't do that	CE for employing others - justification being - lack of skill. - unconscious 'dissembling'?
Continuing - outlining further tasks	Gina. We both hate that.	
Denying stereotyping		
Comparing with heterosexual relationship	Yvonne. We pay people to do it because we won't do it. 'Cos neither of us were ever any good at it.	Challenging the stereotypes - even in a heterosexual relationship.
Demonstrating the absurdity of deducing gender of the <i>doer</i> , from his or her <i>doing</i> .		Implying that it is acceptable to step 'out of role' in a heterosexual relationship; that people search for stereotypical pointers in a lesbian relationship in order to make sense of the partnership balance.
Recalling use of justification / CE based on role reversal in heterosexual relationship	Gina. Yvonne does the flowers. I do the lawns. That is nothing to do with stereotyping. When I was married to a man I used to do the do it yourself and he used to do the cooking. No one would look at that relationship and point the finger at me and say 'That's the him', and point the finger at Matthew and say 'That's the her'.	Implying that stepping outside the normative roles in a hetero relationship can be a legitimate cause of relat. break-up.
Confirming mother's view. Explaining childhood roles		
Seeing father as instrumental	Yvonne. Your mother would say that's why the relationship failed of course.	Presenting mother as bound by normative views.
Characterising self (not feminine child)		Implication - mother critical of Gina? CE for the couple's preferred choices - father as teacher / permission giver, and personal qualities of partners.
Assuming that childhood is implicated in role development	Gina. Yes yes, my mother would. I was the middle daughter of three daughters and I was the one that father used to teach to carpenter and to hang wallpaper, and I was the tomboy. But if our life has fallen into a pattern where we seemed to have dropped into those roles, it's coincidence not intent. Now whether it is innate - I don't know.	Using <i>chance</i> vs. <i>deterministic</i> discourse.
Storying the development of relational roles as unintentional		Contemplating and seeking to avoid nature/nurture issue / discourse.
Seeing CE as unclear.	Yvonne. Oh no, don't answer that.	Continuing the discourse which separates male / female characteristics from male / female domestic roles
Responding. Implying fear of 'innate' explanation.		Justification for roles adopted - pragmatic issues - interestingly, mirrors what might be true of a traditional heterosexual relationship - Implication here, that there is a choice.
Engaging in discussion. Allowing for not-knowing	Gina. I was asking the question, not giving the answer. I don't know. I think we are both very feminine people underneath.	
Believing both partners to possess fundamental feminine characteristics		
Continuing. presenting further CE - practical differences.	Yvonne. The other reason why we have probably dropped into roles is because I'm at home all day and you're not. So I'm the one that goes and does the shopping and gets the dinner ready cos it's not fair frankly, for you to have to come home from work while I've been at	
Implying that 'home all day' results in more feminine activity - whatever else is happening		
Seeing an issue of 'fairness'		
Continuing story - recency effect		
Confirming		Negotiating, planning for dealing with future change.

Negotiating new approach to roles.	home all day - whether I've been studying or what.	
Affirming and extending role negotiation	Gina. Well, we were talking just this evening, weren't we?	↓
Seeing stereotyping as inappropriate when choice or skill is more relevant to the task	Yvonne. Yeah	↓
Characterising own approach in contrast	Gina. When you go back to work we'll share the cooking.	
Affirming Yvonne's approach	Yvonne. Yeah. But that's the only thing we have to do - oh, and the the garden. But em -	Assuming about the other an internal factor which overrides gender expectations - (own comment - however, stereotyping can be internalised too)
Responding, mentoring	Gina. But you find pleasure in the garden. Gardening's your hobby - that's not stereotyping. You know, I would concrete the thing over and paint it green.	
Apologising (for digression)	(Laughter)	
Justifying (on the grounds of elucidating relationship issues)	Gina. Gardening to Yvonne is a hobby.	
Leading to next event choice	Inter. That's interesting.	Creating a link with the task.
	_____ R40 (Pause)	
Reiterating present task status	Inter. So - em - sorry to keep going off on these tangents but it highlights a lot of things about how the relationship is between you. How you work things out together. Well, what about the next em -	Suggesting that the relationship involves negotiation.
Introducing next event	_____ R41	Couple negotiation of the next event of importance.
Agreeing, suggesting different (personal) event	Inter. So - em - sorry to keep going off on these tangents but it highlights a lot of things about how the relationship is between you. How you work things out together. Well, what about the next em -	
Confirming, agreeing Yvonne's event	_____ R41 Yvonne. After this house -	↓
Suggesting overwhelming effects. Questioning.	_____ R42 Gina. Well, the girls' weddings.	↓
Reflecting, questioning.	Going to university GE6	
Relationship consequences of University. Confirming, proposing effects	Yvonne. Oh yes. I was going to say 'university'	Presenting one partner's event as having significant impact on the relationship and the other partner (as do a good number of previous events)
Suggesting differing, but constraining impacts for each partner	Gina. Well yes, 'Uni' came first.	
Confirming. Acknowledging Gina's critical role. Implying a position of dependency. Presenting personal consequences - life change -	Consequences of GE 6 Yvonne. University. It's kind of taken over our lives, hasn't it?	
	Inter. So its affected both of you.	
	Yvonne. Yeah. We argue more now.	

life-style effects	Gina. Yvonne's in it and I'm married to it.	Note use of name - Yvonne - as if Gina is aware that she is telling the other's story.
Continuing - seeing preferred self - contrasting / commenting on Yvonne	Yvonne. Yeah. You pay for it as well. Yeah, cos I'm doing two modules a year, it takes up my working day. Luckily I don't have to do it in the evenings or weekends. I don't know how people do it - and work for a living. But it does take up your life as well - a bit.	Presenting the role of Uni work as overwhelming for Yvonne.
Continuing, elucidating own role (implied), citing example		Presenting self as supportive, if slightly critical.
Continuing, building a story of co-operation	Gina. I like to be supportive but it appears to me that Yvonne sort of -	Presenting self as suppliant.
Confirming	Yvonne. I thrust something under your nose every day and say 'Read this!'	Discussing how each contributes to the work involved - impact on each partner.
Continuing story of own role - supporter, needed. Illustrating with Yvonne's role	Gina. I take part in research sometimes and do these tests and whatever.	↓
Confirming, adding to Gina's story	Inter. Yeah.	↓
Context as CE	Gina. But I try and be supportive, and Yvonne needs to bounce things sometimes. and she'll bounce them off me and em	Possible implication of power relationship between 'giver' and 'given to'
Responding. Suggesting self interest as motivation		
Bargaining - weighing costs and benefits -		
Needing to move on planning for the future	Yvonne. Yes, you're very supportive round exams as well. R41 Context of GE 6 R42	Causal explanation for self as supportive - planning for change, maintaining stability
Seeing shared goals	Gina. Well, I have a very selfish view of this. Part of the - I use the word advisedly - 'deal' - when Yvonne gave up work to take up Uni - is, I'm 17 years older than Yvonne - I'm going to retire definitely within the next ten years OK - Yvonne wanted to pick her career up and take it a level beyond it was going at the time. And it's almost as if this was an investment in Yvonne's future and an investment in Yvonne's future is an investment in my future too. Because when I retire, although I'll be on a very healthy pension and all that type of thing. If we want to	Notion of investment in the present to provide future 'pay-off' (Deferred gratification?)
Ensuring the future is safe / comfortable.		
Needing things to stay the same		
Responding		
Summarising cost/benefit		

analysis. Concluding 'context' discourse	sustain the lifestyle we have now right through and beyond my retirement, Yvonne has to be in a position to command as much salary as I do now.	
Continuing, suggesting openness, deliberation		
Confirming cognitive effort. Reiterating commitment to success of the other. Acknowledging resulting changes	Inter. Mm Gina. And this was a way of doing it. So I have a vested interest in her success.	Presenting selves as thinking things through together.
Responding, confirming	Yvonne. And that was a very conscious thought as well.	↓
Commenting positively. Detailing the process of choice	Gina. It was. We thought that one through. So I do have a vested interest in the University. It's had an impact on both our lives.	↓
Having no control / success		Providing context for achievement of final outcome. Portraying effort, lack of choice, and implying a final, (expected 'no-hope') attempt.
Describing the pain of searching		
Clarifying personal abilities, experiences	Inter. Yeah	
Rationalising, seeing choice as positive	Yvonne. God bless it. Its fabulous actually cos I applied to Manchester and Leeds and I think, Birmingham and couldn't get a place to study at all. I was just dismissed summarily. It was quite hideous, but em, I had done some study before and I thought 'I'll try Sheffield just in case' and it just turned out to be the best thing to do.	↓
Commenting. Predicting success. Speaking with pride in the other?		Making predictions of success.
Responding tentatively, modifying.		
Responding positively		
Modifying (Gina's confidence)	Gina. She's going to get a One. She's going to get first class honours.	Negotiating positive expectations with caution.
Continuing 'confidence discourse' - making predictions, seeing the other as able	Yvonne. You hope. I hope	Implication - the partner responsible for possible outcome uses less positive, internal attributions. The non-responsible partner is freer to use positive external attributions.
Responding cautiously	Gina. I know. I have absolute confidence.	
Reflecting? Responding positively?	Yvonne. I've got two exams to do first.	
Commenting. Questioning - directing the task.	Gina. She is going on next year to do her MSc. She is going to do her Masters and then a PhD.	↓
Career Direction		
Stating direction	Yvonne. One day.	
Predicting choices.	Gina. One day. _____R42 R43	
Outlining previous experience	Inter. That's great isn't it. What	

as context for choices.	would you like to do in the future?	Presenting self as having firm personal goals, and contemplating changing opportunities, based on past skills and experience.
Commenting. Prompting.	Yvonne. I'm pretty fixed about what I'm going to do. I am going to go into business management. That's what my MSc is going to be - and work in industry in one form or another. It builds on what I used to do - I used to be in personnel training. I did a lot of training work and it builds on that and its quite nice cos I've got work experience that's relevant as well. _____R43	Seeing a link between past experience, and future skills in affecting satisfactory change.
Returning to task. Addressing weddings		
Continuing. Providing information. Implying conventional behaviours.		Presenting the weddings - both heterosexual, full ritual events.
Commenting. (Suggesting surprise? Why?) Affirming	Inter. That's great! - So - Weddings GE7	
Seeking information Weddings - relationship effects	Yvonne. I'm going to put the girls weddings in here.	Detailing the negotiation of the conventions of the occasions - a) 'first family' issues b) 'acceptance' issues.
Responding positively	Gina. Both my daughters got married within six weeks of each other - both white weddings,	
Suggesting effects - leaving meaning open Affirming. Relating to issues of convention	Inter. My goodness.	
	Gina. the lot. Introducing context for GE7	Seeing the difficulties -
	Inter. How did that affect you and your relationship?	being in the photographs
	Gina. That was good.	↓
Seeking further information Ex-husband's partner	Yvonne. It was interesting.	
Answering. Providing context.	Gina. It was interesting. It was who stands with who in the photographs. That took an interesting discussion.	what to do about FP's new partner
Relating role of other to the wedding Implicit understandings about relative positioning at formal occasions - role of 'wife' 'mother' etc.	Inter. Has Matthew married again?	↓
Releasing tension? Understanding the nuances? Implying a rivalry, presenting self, and presenting other	Gina. No. He's in a fairly stable relationship now. The woman he was having an affair with at the time, is still in the picture - I think. I tend to get things second hand from the girls, but he has a fairly stable relationship with a woman and she was er - prominent at the wedding.	Sensing 'competition' and unpredictability
Presenting self in contrast. Presenting self as observer. The daughters		Presenting other as losing? Sense of struggle, rivalry.
Continuing. Evaluating weddings.		Some of the above carry the same meanings for Gina and

Providing context - daughter's choices. Making comparisons (by implication)	(Laughter) Gina. And er - she has a job upstaging me.	Yvonne, as they would for a heterosexual couple in a similar position.
Comparing levels of couple involvement	Yvonne. I'm quite retiring - I can stand back away from all of this just watch it all going on. ----- R44	
Comparing attachment to daughters. Self and other characterisation. Modifying, clarifying attachment Comparing relationships and weddings of daughters. Applying evaluation, being uncertain, needing affirmation / feedback. Providing affirmation, feedback. Tentative?	Gina. But they were good. We were very involved in the youngest one. She got married first - in her arrangements. She liked us being involved. We were there at the house when she was getting dressed. That was quite significant. We were less so involved - Yvonne. I'm closer to her. I think you are as well.	My comment - Observing these reported events as if they are the accounts of 'any' new couple reflecting on the weddings of the children of a former relationship, there is little difference between these reports, and those of a heterosexual couple - presenting - 1 Awareness of differences between siblings, and feeling towards them. 2 Dealing with practical arrangements - negotiating with children, and where possible, former partner. 3 Awareness of the difficult issues - how to <i>be</i> at the wedding, how to negotiate with FP, who will be in the photographs, will the new female partner act as 'stand-in' mother? etc.
Reflecting, summarising part of the story.	Gina. Emotionally yes. The eldest one we weren't so involved but enough - yeah, they were good do's - I think. Weren't they? What do you think?	
Answering. Comparing daughter's choices	Yvonne. Yeah. Great. (a feeling here of some underlying agenda/disappointment)	
Stressing equality of opportunity.	Inter. So you got particularly involved in the first daughter's marriage -	
Negotiating with former partner	Gina. Well, she had a more complicated wedding. You know - classic cars, and big receptions, whatever. The second one didn't have such a big wedding. The way Matthew and I dealt with the weddings - we gave them an equal sum of money. We agreed we would not try and upstage each other,	With this couple, the differences with some couple accounts seem to be that they are presenting a narrative of - 1 being involved practically. 2 being able to negotiate, have their views taken into account. 3 being able to provide options.
Commenting? Affirming story. Continuing. Reiterating efforts to be fair paying attention to equality being non-directive leaving choices to others	Inter. Uhm.	
Continuing. Suggesting a gentle pressure	Gina. Em, gave them an equal sum of money and said 'You can do whatever you want. You can either spend it on the wedding or have a quiet wedding and keep the money. We don't	
Confirming Continuing. Implying a solution pleasing to all - nice for daughters, avoids embarrassment for couple.		

<p>Choosing what seems right - implied. (Guilt suggests a social rule is broken?) Continuing, elucidating context factors - reasons behind choice. Continuing, clarifying</p>	<p>mind.' and - Yvonne. We tried to encourage them to go off to the Bahamas or something</p>	<p>Is this because of the nature of the first relationship between Gina and Matthew, or because the second relationship involves two women - (less threatening to the first)?</p>
<p>Continuing, adding information Producing reason for guilt and bad feeling. Choosing out of sense of fairness, and for the sake of others. Assenting</p>	<p>Yvonne. and do it quietly on a beach. - and not involve any of us. But they wouldn't would they? They felt guilty.</p>	<p>The function of the narrative is to present the story of the wedding arrangements, demonstrating the control of events taken by <i>this</i> couple.</p>
<p>Outlining outcome.</p>	<p>Yvonne. Cos we could have gone with them.</p>	
<p>Affirming personal understanding? Continuing, storying the outcome for one daughter - Implying significance</p>	<p>Gina. They nearly did. They felt bad because we could have afforded Yvonne. Cos we could have gone with them. Gina. and Matthew could have afforded to go and see them, but my son in law's parents couldn't have afforded to go, and that was a bit unfair.</p>	
<p>Carrying implications of social expectations? Continuing, confirming, storying the differing interpretations of conventional behaviour - i.e. both daughters engage in expected behaviour, but to differing extents.</p>	<p>Inter. Yes. Gina. and so they decided to do it in England. Inter. Yes. Gina. So Emma decided to go the hog - the vintage cars, the big reception,</p>	<p>Presenting the role of 'props' in giving the wedding ritual significance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - dress, - cars, - food, etc.
<p>Affirming and commenting positively</p>	<p>Yvonne. White frock.</p>	
<p>Continuing, comparing weddings</p>	<p>Gina. whatever, and the frock, yeah. Jane, the oldest one, who was getting married six weeks later - decided to have a more toned down wedding She only had about 30 guests?</p>	
<p>Affirming individual choice</p>	<p>Yvonne. Mm. It was nice though.</p>	
<p>Questioning, seeking clarification</p>	<p>Gina. Emma had about 250. Jane had about 30 guests in a very nice restaurant. Nice wedding. Hired the frock. Didn't buy it. So it was the same but different. But it was their choice. _____R45 _____R46</p>	<p>Use of emphasis or figure of speech to convey the notion of self in a traditional role - complete with the 'sign of</p>
<p>Describing stereotype - role and dress.</p>		
<p>Citing evidence - implying a role</p>		
<p>Elucidating evidence - implying that the couple are</p>		

accepted, seen as a couple, and seen as part of the 'family' or 'friendship' group.

Continuing - implying doubt as to private acceptance as distinct from public acceptance

Confirming private acceptance.

Showing photographs, evidence of pride? in event.

Commenting. Suggesting positive affective response

Confirming
Comparing daughters, characterising as opposites
Marriage for the couple?
Questioning. Relating the idea of marriage to the couple.

Confirming willingness, pleasure at the idea.
Assenting. Suggesting the idea is already a focus of talk.

Continuing, adopting 'asking' role - implying stronger, dominant partner? Suggesting shared choice, limited by lack of appropriate social structures and rituals.
Modifying story. Implying lack of drive, rather than lack of opportunity.
Questioning potentiality

Affirming possibility

Questioning nature of opportunity
Answering - No legal ritual (Implied)
Questioning, seeking clarification

Describing possibilities for ritual

Providing details related to established social structures.

Outlining limitations.

Suggesting possibilities for the

Inter. What was your role in the family photograph thing?

Gina. I was 'Mother of the Bride', hat and all.

Yvonne. We have photographs of us two and the bride.

Gina. They were part of the formal photographs - Yvonne was in the formal photos. (Gets photograph) And er - it was always -

Yvonne. Whether they have them in their wedding albums I don't know.

Gina. Yes they do. There's the youngest and and that's the eldest. (General admiring of photographs)

Inter. They're beautiful. You must be very proud of those.

Gina. Yes I am. They are very different girls - **chalk and cheese**. _____ R46
Gay marriage
R47

Inter. How do you feel about marriage for you two?

Gina. I'd love to.

Yvonne. Yeah, we talk about this actually.

Gina. I ask her to marry me at least once a week. If we could figure out where or how that's non-religious.

Yvonne. We haven't got round to it. We could do it.

Inter. Is it possible?

Gina. It is possible yes.

Inter. Legally or -?

Gina. & Yvonne. Oh no.

office' - the hat.

Using **name** - the implication is that this identifies the importance attached to the inclusion of Yvonne - possibly unexpected - perhaps signifies an earlier assumption that this would not happen.
Being a lesbian partner this may signify acceptance more so than if Gina had had a heterosexual partner?

Using **metaphor** to signify extent of difference.

Applying a heterosexual model to the couple.

The passage suggests how the 'meaning' of *marriage* is interpreted by this couple.

1 Presenting selves as talking openly about the possibility - assumption that there are no personal tensions - e.g. no fears about commitment.

2 Gina is adopting role of instigator / Yvonne as less 'driven' / motivated?

3 Acknowledging that there is no legal weight to a gay marriage - implication - no social sanction and no protection.

4 Exploring possibilities for ritual - implying -
a) the 'props' of a heterosexual marriage are inappropriate, or otherwise unspecified for gays.
b) the ceremony has no legitimacy, and in

future.

Continuing - making the best of the situation. Doing what is possible.

Describing feelings

Assessing probabilities

Being philosophical

Questioning, summarising.

Assenting to possibility

Confirming.

Injecting humour. (Implying sadness? Making light of it?)

Continuing humour (Implying underlying meaning about the relevance of the frock?)

Life after the Weddings

Questioning, assuming anticlimax.

Denying assumption. Seeing positive outcome. Building a picture of busy-ness

Having a full life

Affirming by presenting opposite / reverse

Storying expectations, goals, having good times.

Christmas

Adding 'good times' info - implying significance to Christmas.

Confirming. Suggesting the value of goals, and good times

Inter. How would you do it then?

Yvonne. You can do it. There is a church where I go and sing every week. You can do it there. You can have a religious ceremony, or you can do a humanist ceremony kind of ceremony. It's like a relationship blessing rather than a marriage. It has no legal weight at all. Does it? We'll get round to it one day.

Gina. I've persuaded my company to recognise Yvonne as a partner in pension terms which I thought was a **step forward** and I would love to be legally married but `I'm not sure in our lifetime if that's ever going to be a reality in this country. But that's one of those things.

Inter. So is that something then that you might do in the future?

Gina. I think we will.

Yvonne. Yes I think we might.

Gina. Yvonne would do *anything* for a frock!

Yvonne. Not a white one though. It wouldn't suit me.

_____ R47
(laughter) R48

Consequences/after GE7

Inter. After the weddings then, life must have felt flat?

Yvonne. No. It was lovely

Gina. There was so much going on.

Yvonne. Life is never quiet, is it?

Gina. We always have *something* to look forward to. There is always something in our lives that you can look forward to. We always have a very exotic

heterosexual use, would be regarded as an 'add-on'.

5 Taking practical steps to protect the partner financially - claiming the rights which would be taken for granted in a marriage (but not in a cohabiting relationship?) **Figure of speech** to suggest a change, an achievement.

6 Partners presenting differences in intensity towards the idea of 'marriage' - Gina - 'love to' / 'will', Yvonne - 'might' - implying either different intentions, or different ways of storying aspirations.

Making light of the situation - minimalising the issues.

⇓

Changing the focus.

Reflecting on relationship quality -

1 Having a full life seen as consistent with good relationship quality.

2 Planning things together, having objectives is part of relationship quality development - implied?

3 Social times add to

<p>Questioning, seeking elucidation - involving other people?</p>	<p>holiday every year. We always focus on something. Once the weddings were past probably the focus straight after that was our next holiday</p>	<p>relationship quality - especially involving family.</p>
<p>Clarifying, implying a conventional approach to Christmas Suggesting a family time.</p>	<p>Yvonne. Christmases we've had as well.</p>	
<p>Parenting father? Interposing GE. Couple directing action - (implying taking control?).</p>	<p>Gina. Yeah. When we're home we have big Christmases. There's always something there that we can focus on which is important for both of us I think.</p>	<p>Implication of choice as to which members of the family involved. Implied control of events?</p>
<p>Commenting</p>	<p>Inter. Big Christmases - what, that means you have people here?</p>	<p>Contrast between desire to invite family members, and resentment of family members in other parts of the script.</p>
<p>Clarifying events Outlining context poor health distance loss</p>	<p>Gina. Oh, the kids and their husbands.</p> <p>Yvonne. Family. There's my dad and my sister and her man. _R48</p>	<p>Recalling important family related event.</p>
<p>Clarifying health details</p>	<p>GES(b) Father's flat R49 Gina. That was a bit we didn't put in <i>there</i> - we bought Yvonne's dad a flat opposite.</p>	<p>Providing justification for decision.</p>
<p>Suggesting a process of change</p>	<p>Inter. Gosh. How lovely.</p>	<p>Explicit account providing context for decision</p>
<p>Completing, continuing</p>	<p>Gina. He lives opposite - He was a bit dodgy on his pins, and he was in a very bad situation down in Hereford. He'd lost his job because he was quite ill.</p>	<p>⇓</p>
<p>Repeating, continuing. Adding detail</p>	<p>Yvonne. He has a degenerative disease of his cerebellum and he's going very - em -</p>	<p>⇓</p>
<p>Building the story</p>	<p>Gina. wobbly.</p>	
<p>Commenting. Noting story</p>	<p>Yvonne. wobbly. He has bad arthritis and walks with sticks.</p>	
<p>Providing CE. Linking father's context to couple context.</p>	<p>Gina. He's registered disabled.</p>	
<p>Adding context, suggesting antecedents.</p>	<p>Inter. Yeah. Yeah.</p>	
<p>Continuing, Finalising this aspect of the story. Outcome. Taking the lead, using persuasion, orchestrating actions.</p>	<p>Yvonne. and he needed a bit of looking after.</p>	<p>Implicit belief that sick / troubled parents need to be cared for. Need to take responsibility for.</p>
<p>Giving importance to couple taking action, taking control, aiding the other.</p>	<p>Gina. It was an old damp house and he was all by himself</p>	
<p>Reporting timescale. Effects on relationship (of father living nearby)</p>		

Seeking clarification - effect on the relationship

Assenting

Confirming, but limiting effect

Re-confirming.

Needing to have boundaries.

Citing evidence from partner's past.

Confirming

Continuing. Relating past experience to present choices.

Commenting, justifying view.

Clarifying personal resolve,

suggesting shared views (with father).

Balancing needs and desires.

Reiterating resolve to have limits. Admitting effects nevertheless.

Confirming. Citing evidence - relationship discord.

Continuing story - characterising father.

Continuing. Addressing issues personal to self. Suggesting that partner assumptions are problematic - implication - not shared assumpts.

Clarifying, distinguishing assumptions - self and father. (Yvonne 'taking blame')

Continuing story. Describing personal response.

Needing to keep separation between different social others. Needing independence?

Modifying account, suggesting limited application.

Confirming, continuing

Continuing, building case - a problematic situation.

Clarifying case. Inter-family

Yvonne. We moved him up here.

Gina. so we persuaded him to sell it and Yvonne got a mortgage and we bought the flat opposite. That was quite significant, getting him sorted out. That took up the best part of the end of that year.

R49

Consequences of GE5(b) R50

Inter. Does it impact on your lives with him so close?

Yvonne. Mm. Mm. Mm.

Gina. Yeah, a bit!

Yvonne. Yes it does. It's close enough. I don't think we want it any closer. You've had your parents living with you

Gina. Yes

Yvonne. and you always said never again, didn't you?

Gina. I think it is a bad move.

Yvonne. I would never have my dad to live with me in the same house. I don't think he'd want it either, but he needed to be nearer because he needs help now and again. But never any closer. It has an impact on us though doesn't it?

Gina. It does. We disagree now and again about it.

Yvonne. He's not the easiest of men. He can be quite difficult at times.

Gina. I have a problem when we have guests to dinner sometimes, and there is an assumption that Tony will come over and join us.

Yvonne. It is my assumption I have to say, not his.

Gina. and I have to say, 'Well,

Implicit belief that couple relationships suffer if parents live too close, or with, partners.

An assumption of mutual views.

An implicit belief that boundaries between parents and adult children need to be protected. Implication that freedom is restricted?

Presenting CE for relationship effects - personality of father.

Presenting self as being angry when boundaries are breached.

Taking 'blame' - admitting to making assumptions.

Presenting self as angry - challenging assumptions.

Presenting 'special case' evidence.

rivalries.	hang on a minute. Its our friends have come to see us and it's nothing to do with him.'	Reflecting on inter-personal difficulties of others.
Reflecting, confirming		
Defining ideal self, seeing self in role - 'monitor'?	_R50	
'Understanding' another	Family implications R51	↓
Predicting another's response.	Yvonne. It is usually when my sister's coming though.	
Seeing partner as ambivalent.	Gina. Yes that's right. Well -	Characterising self as orchestrator, other as torn / ambivalent. Assuming course of events.
Reflecting difficulties - other to other role conflict.	Yvonne. That's what makes it difficult.	
Describing ideal self, preferred role	Gina. Yes, well, sister's boyfriend doesn't like Tony.	Presenting self as constrained, but willing to negotiate.
Admitting difficulties.	Yvonne. doesn't like Tony.	
Comparing, weighing different effects.	Gina. I like to keep everyone happy, and I know the minute Tony comes in, Tim the boyfriend isn't going to like it. And poor Yvonne is pulled in the middle.	Assessing relationship cost vs. personal cost - implied.
Modifying cost/benefit analysis. Personal meaning an added cost.	Yvonne. I'm a bit stuck in the middle sometimes but I try to make everybody happy.	
Continuing, affirming this as rationale for original choice.	Gina. It's not the easiest thing in the world. It would be easier if he wasn't there.	Outlining the antecedents leading to the decision. Implying a forced choice?
Summarising causal process from a different angle.	Yvonne. But I'd would worry if he wasn't there.	↓
Telling an additional story	Gina. That was the thing you see. Again, we made a choice when we were buying the flat. We actually went down to Hereford for one week and we took him around looking at new flats, but with him not being well if anything went wrong Yvonne would have to get in the car, drive several hundred miles, stay there, sort him out, and that wasn't fair.	Confirming the implication of limited choice - weighing costs and benefits as implied CE.
Weighing evidence	Yvonne. That was what I was doing. Every time he was having traumas, I was having to go down there, and it was only going to get worse. It wasn't going to get better.	Outlining alternatives as justification for the choice eventually made.
Continuing, adding evidence - compelling - forcing choice (implied)		
Continuing, summarising rationale		
Reiterating cost / benefit analysis		
Responding, assenting.		
Coming to a decision		
Continuing - causal analysis - leading to splitting of roles - persuader and persuaded.		

Implying effort.
Continuing, suggesting different timescales - self and other.
Implying struggle, effort, even exhaustion.
Continuing, seeing competing desires in the other.

Concluding decision making story. Describing painful issues - financial losses.

Responding to decision making demands.
Implying uncomfortable timescale - modifying presentation of negative view.

Releasing tension, covering negative feelings?
Commenting. Setting time and event context

Commenting, clarifying.

Confirming

Questioning, moving task forward

Answering, completing previous discourse.
Questioning, completing.
Grandson
Continuing story - grandson

Continuing, changing mood, portraying delight.

Reflecting. Implying ownership
Commenting / getting the picture.
Establishing timescale
Providing context
Describing emotional response.

Continuing positive emotional response.

Reflecting, confirming.
Relating event to couple relationship.

Gina. So if we put him in a nice flat, she was still going to be trotting down when he wasn't well, so it made so much more sense to bring him up here, where he is close and where Yvonne doesn't have to travel for miles to sort him out.

Inter. Yes. _____R51
R52

Gina. That's why we persuaded - and he took a lot of persuading.

Yvonne. It takes him longer than I do to make up his mind. Oh God. It was such a long time.

Gina. And he wanted to do it, didn't he?

Yvonne. But he did. (sighs)
Selling his house was difficult and it went for a song in the end because it was falling to pieces. So he didn't have much money. And then we had to think what we were going to do and how we were going to fund it. It was all a bit - yes, well - protracted - is the kind way to put it.

(laughter)

Gina. That happened the year - we moved in here.

Inter. Right, so quite soon after your move.

Gina. That's right. _____R52

Inter. So is there anything after the em -

Gina. Weddings. R53

Inter. the weddings?
Birth of grandson GE8

Gina. Oh, Ben.

Yvonne. Oh gosh! The prodigal grandchild.

Gina. My grandson.

Underlying assumption - that having weighed up the implications, Gina and Yvonne had made the decision, and the necessary adjustments. Father still had that to do. Presenting father as slow to decide.

Presenting the process of implementing the decision as troubled.

Linking back to storyline.

Presenting this event as special.

Presenting impact of personal event on self

and on the relationship.

1 Presenting Yvonne as

Gaining affirmation (implying acceptance of relationship status)

Confirming, reiterating new status - formal role.

Confirming, elaborating new status - culturally sanctioned.

Responding

Handling the transition with family and former partner

Continuing.

Providing context,

protecting others, (i.e. FP) doing things correctly, taking care of other's feelings

Characterising other's (FP's) response

Commenting on character of other.

Confirming comment

Continuing. Elaborating character of FP.

Wondering about public vs. private responses.

Commenting. Suggesting unimportant.

Confirming, summarising enduring character of FP.

Effect on couple relationship

Questioning, seeking clarification re relationship effect.

Intervening issue - a child of their own Good e.g. of change

Answering, thinking, introducing new thread. Applying age-related information.

Correcting age-related info.

Confirming/modifying age

Inter. Oh right!

Consequences of GE8

Gina. That was a year ago. I had a grandson from my youngest daughter. So that was unbelievable joy!

Yvonne. That was quite exciting wasn't it?

Gina. It was very exciting. Yes. The nicest thing about that is at the beginning of the year he was christened and they asked Yvonne to be a godmother.

Yvonne. Yeah! So I have an official role.

Gina. So Yvonne is godmother to my grandson.

Inter. Mm. _____ R53
R54

Gina. and Emma asked me initially that she would like Yvonne to be a godmother and I said I wouldn't even ask her unless Matthew agreed because I didn't want Matthew to feel he was being bull-dozed into Yvonne taking a much closer role in his grandchild. It was important. But he had no problem at all. He was great about it.

Inter. He sounds a really nice man.

Gina. He is.

Yvonne. He's never been anything other than civil actually about the whole thing. I mean, the worst he ever does is not say anything. What he says behind our backs I don't know.

Gina. It doesn't matter.

Yvonne. No. It doesn't matter. He has never been anything other than nice to me. _____ R54
R55

Inter. Do you think this little

begin accepted by the family - having an 'official' role
2 Identifying a greater opportunity for involvement, (than might have been available had Yvonne been Gina's new male partner).

Presenting self as careful with FP's feelings.
Presenting FP as being fully accepting. (Would he have been so if Yvonne had been male?)

Underlying IB that difficulties could be expected to arise - contrasted with a need to have a co-operative family dynamic.

Presenting FP as affirming of Yvonne.

Implicit belief that things said privately / not known, will not be harmful.

Probing relationship effects of the new grand child.

A good example of negotiating change.
Negotiating a cognitive change.

⇓ ⇓ ⇓

issue.
 Providing context - talking, weighing issues.

Continuing story - personal decisions,
 Personal strategies, weighing and testing,
 Deciding for or against.

Continuing, elaborating story.
 Seeking family (daughter's) views

Confirming

Continuing story - exploring possibilities. Seeing an increase in family cohesion - shared activities
 Modifying account

Confirming (implying pedantism?) Storying indecision, and impact of event on decision.
 Continuing story, recounting emotional / fear response.
 Realising implications.

Continuing story. Affirming new decision through events.
 Rationalising

Challenging Gina's perception, communicating personal desires.
 Establishing CE
 Debating issues - time and space
 seeing life plan

Questioning possibilities - implying impossibility?
 Conferring together
 Accepting limitations.

Continuing story. Presenting stark choices - no guideline of

grandson has made any change in the balance of your relationship? _____R55
NGE contemplation of own child. Change episode R56
 Gina. Er, it's quite interesting. Before he was born, we were growing through the - Yvonne is 34?

Yvonne. 5.

Gina. 5, now. And for a couple of years we'd been talking about Yvonne having a child - and we'd gone to quite some depths figuring out how, and -

Yvonne. I'd decided how twice. Two different ways. First of all I found a man, and then I decided that was a really terrible idea, and then I found a clinic - a donor clinic, and then I was going to do it that way.

Gina. And even to an extent we used to talk to Emma - that's my youngest daughter

Yvonne. Yeah.

Gina. on having babies at the same time, and bringing these babies up as close cousins.

Yvonne. almost cousins -

Gina. Yeah, whatever. Em - and you were still humming and hawing, and then Ben was born.

Yvonne. And then he was born and I thought 'Oh my God. I can't do this!' This takes over your life!

Gina. And every time he visits now, it enforces the fact that you don't want one.

Yvonne. I do desperately actually. I quite desperately want it - probably more hormones than anything. But I could never quite figure out

Playing with ideas.
 Looking at possibilities
 Addressing the difficulties peculiar to wanting children in a gay relationship.

Trying, and rejecting a conventional, expected approach.

Experimenting, planning to made their baby part of a wider family network.

⇓

Admitting reality. (i.e. never able to be close cousins in reality)
 Against the context of planning - the shock of reality.

Change of mind implied.

Additional evidence reinforces the cognitive change.

Presenting unchanged self, but justifying indecision on grounds of practicality rather than personal responses.

Presenting Gina as a sounding-board, voice of realism. Use of 'you said' - signifies direct influence of partner in personal decision-making process?

'rightness' to aid decision.
Urging action
Continuing,
outlining struggle,
indecisiveness.

Recounting couple dialogue -
suggesting response of other
made sense, applied limits.

Continuing, implying the
voice of reason, experience.

Implying some things (e.g.
childbirth) cannot be tightly
controlled

Modifying account.
Justifying own approach.

Confirming

Continuing.

Detailing confusion, implying
anxiety?

Changing perspective after
experience - role of event
Changing understanding
Changing view

Rationalising changes

Commenting, continuing,
questioning emotional response

Responding, confirming
sadness. Suggesting different
context may produce different
response.

Questioning context. Voice of
reason, or implication of fears re
desire for hetero relationship?

Answering partner.
Providing limiting context
information.

when I was going to do it,
because I was doing Uni. I'd
finished work - and I can't do
nothing. Then I was going to do
Uni. Then I was going to do the
next bit. Then I thought, 'When
am I going to have a baby?' -
and you said, 'You can't do it all.
Yvonne, you have to - '

Gina. I kept saying 'There's
never a right time. If you're
going to do it, do it!'

Yvonne. and I would say 'Yeah,
yeah. As soon as I - and then I'll
do my exams, and then I'll have
the baby and then I'll go and do
the next thing.' (hurried) - and
you kept saying, 'No. You won't.
No, that's not very sensible. You
can't do that.'

Gina. Well, it doesn't work like
that. You were putting the plan
together saying 'I'll do my exam
in October, and get pregnant in
November. That means I'll have
the baby in' - and I'm saying,
'But you can't just say, "I'll get
pregnant in November".'

Yvonne. Oh no, I was planning
on being pregnant by *now* and
be pregnant while I was doing
exams

Gina. That's right

Yvonne. and give birth some
time round Christmas and then
go off and do the next bit, but I
couldn't quite figure out how I
was going to do it. But as soon as
she had her baby - well actually,
when she was pregnant I
realised just how thoroughly
incapacitating children can be.
That was it really. It put me off
for ever I think. It's probably a
good thing it did - when you
think about it. R56
R57

Inter. Mm. So there is no sadness
- or -

Presenting self as voice of
experience - implied? Being
motivator to action.

A role reversal - this time,
Yvonne is learner - anxious
to plan, organise. Gina is
the 'old hand' - exercising
caution, injecting realism.

Gina's assumption that
nature must take its own
course.

Yvonne's assumption - I
will fit the pregnancy into
my own schedule.

↓

↓

↓
Detailing awareness of
growing anguish brought to
a head by realisation of the
impact of pregnancy,
prompting a sudden and final
change of heart.

↓

Presenting self as
ambivalent, having *some*
regrets.

Implying self doubt, anxiety
at not 'doing' enough to
make it happen?

Clarifying a more amenable
context.

Responding, confirming - implying relief?	Yvonne. Yeah. I think yes, there is. And I think given different circumstances I probably would, but	Implying a sense of relief. (Not my <i>fault</i> ?)
Continuing story, planning life. Suggesting role of age and 'right time'	Gina. What different circumstances?	Struggling for justification -
Redirecting rationale to Gina's needs.	Yvonne. Well given - if I wasn't doing what I'm doing, and I mean, my life is planned three or four years ahead	↓
Responding, rejecting argument implied?	Gina. Oh, I see what you mean, Yes. (worried?)	each partner anxious about the needs of the other
Responding, affirming partner, presenting argument - modifying factors.	Yvonne. I've got plans which is going to take me up pushing forty. I think it's too late then. And I know you don't want me to make a decision on this basis, but I also don't think it is fair to inflict a child on <i>you</i> .	↓
Suggesting different view.	Gina. I've always been totally supportive -	Each partner needing to be self-denying?
Responding (angrily?) (Implying, you don't know me?)	Yvonne. I know you have, and I know you'd be supportive now but when the child's five and you're retired, you really don't want to have a five year old child around, you want to be off playing golf. That's something else, isn't it?	Reverting to CE of personal needs. Perhaps seeking support for view.
Confirming, collecting, recounting supporting evidence from other.	Gina. That's an assumption.	Quoting implicit beliefs about self and having babies.
Detailing negative effects.	Yvonne. Yeah. I actually had a conversation about this with my Dad. Me and my dad don't talk very much, but we had this conversation about babies a while ago and I said 'I can't do it, Dad. I can't be having babies. It just takes over your life. They leave their toys everywhere, and they throw up over everything.' and I suddenly realised what babies are like, and he said 'Well you will probably miss them in your old age' and I thought 'Oo yes, I probably will'. On the other hand, you've to make decisions for now, haven't you?	Providing justification for decision.
Talking leads to awareness (implied) - a reality testing		Making the best of it. Assuming that events / other people can be substituted
Other modifying, presenting opposite case Reasoning re modification, returning to original position Justifying view.		Characterising Yvonne. Commenting on her responses. (Justification for
Commenting, modifying, calming decision effects.		
Accepting modification. Rationalising, seeing the good		
Seeing negative effect on Yvonne		
Responding, Implying -		

uncontrollable	Gina. There's my children, and there's Ben.	her decision - implied)
Commenting, seeking to share the pain - taking away 'blame' from Yvonne? or characterising couple ambivalence. Confirming, justifying. Suggesting self containment	Yvonne. Well yeah. There's Ben and we have a lot of fun with him don't we?	Implying, we share similar characteristics, or - we both are uncertain about a child of our own.
Confirming	Gina. When they come to visit, within days Yvonne's walking up walls.	Detailing shared response to children:- ↓
Expressing (horror?) emotional response Continuing, expanding overwhelming context	Yvonne. Toys! Oh God!	Feeling overwhelmed, ↓
	Gina. We're both very mixed people.	↓
Continuing story.	Yvonne. Yeah. Well, there's only us, and if we don't move something, nothing moves, does it?	Having no control ↓
Characterising effects on, and between each partner Contrasting before and after visit.	Gina. That's right.	Presenting personal and couple need for order ↓
Concluding 'decision story'	Yvonne. babies - oh!	↓
Rationalising, seeing balance of factors - costs, benefits.	Gina. But there's rocking chairs, and highchairs, and bricks, and -	Presenting a justification for the final decision - using CE of practical implications.
Childrearing Continuing, talking through expectations - role of a mother. Seeing age-related issues as important for development.	Yvonne. The kitchen! God, what happens in the kitchen. Its unbelievable!	Presenting implicit beliefs re - upbringing of children - using cultural discourses (Freudian discourses?) ↓
Recalling own early choices.	Gina. And you can see the stress levels go woood - you know. And by the time they leave there's this huge sort-of 'Oh, thank God they've gone!'	Assumption that behaviour patterns are forged before the age of five. ↓
Seeing first five years as important - psychological discourse?	Yvonne. So I'm not sure I could live like that really. It's probably selfish but I think it's best that I realise it now rather than make a huge mistake. __R57	Implicit belief that the carer has the major influence on the pre-school child.
Seeing a particular solution as inappropriate.	Expectations of motherhood R58 Gina. Also we went through the discussion that I strongly believe that a mother should spend the first five years of the babies' life with the child - not out at work. I never went back to work until my youngest was eight and I believe that parents should be the biggest influence	
Foregoing justification leading to choice urged upon Yvonne.		
Citing experience of Ben (GS) Continuing discourse. Citing		

contrary evidence

Judging evidence.
Modifying view.
Suggesting a debatable issue.

Impact on couple's feelings
(GS)

Questioning, probing
implications for couple
feelings, self concept

Answering. Sensing negative
feelings re self
self blame
intolerant
anxious

Responding, justifying, citing
CE for Yvonne's self image

Responding, confirming CE?

Continuing CE

Repeating confirmation.
Admitting unawareness.
Reiterating anxieties.

Absolving others from
responsibility.

Realising own needs - feeling
bad.

Presenting personal response.
(Is 'ownership' an influencing
factor?)
Labelling other (with fondness
- implied)
Continuing, repeating.

Expressing new feelings

Applying CE linking GS and
quality of year. Choosing
timescale as a structure - chunk
of experience.

Being a grandmother

on the child's formative years
up to the age of five. So the
thought of Yvonne having a
baby and then immediately
getting a nanny, or dumping it
on a childminder, means that
the influences are not yours. So
I wanted Yvonne not to go back
to work until five years after the
baby was born. _____R58
END OF SIDE ONE R59

Back to consequences GE8

Gina. Emma's gone back to
work, she's a career woman -
and Ben's gone to a childminder
and he's fine so maybe I was
wrong in that opinion. But that
did go through our thinking as
well.

Inter. Have you had any sense
that it's had an effect on how
you feel about yourselves
having this little grandson?

Yvonne. Having him around
makes me feel incredibly selfish
actually. I realised just how
intolerant I can be, and twitchy
about things like toys cos they
make a lot of mess, don't they,
children. I can't stand it.

Gina. It's the first time you have
been exposed to babies because
there are no babies

Yvonne. No

Gina. in your family.

Yvonne. No, and I've never
realised that before, and I feel
very selfish as well, because I
can get very very uptight when
there's bottles all over the
kitchen, sterilising units and
nappies, and God knows what
else. Ben is a good baby and
Emma's neat and tidy. They're
very good but I'm very
territorial and it's made me
realise how selfish I am.

Gina. I'm totally besotted by him.

Behaviour of another leads to
the challenging of
assumptions, and
questioning of cultural
(psychological) discourses.

Probing for self-reflection.
Assuming a change of self
perception.

1 Detailing how learning
about babies involves
learning about self.

2 An implicit belief that
past experience is significant
in developing coping
strategies.

3 Presenting self
negatively, and as anxious -
justifying?

4 Assuming importance of
own space. Justification
through 'confession'.

5 Gina presenting a
contrasting response.

6 Grandson as CE for
quality of a time.

The couple adopt roles in the
foregoing passage - Yvonne,
the practical, anxious
partner; Gina, the ecstatic
grandmother.

Questioning, exploring feelings. (Hoping for self perceptions in terms of GM role)	Yvonne. He's prodigal.	Probing the social role. Assuming change of feelings.
Questioning expectations, or challenging a silly question. Implying no awareness of changed focus, self concept or intergenerational changes. Seeing added value in interaction.	Gina. He's prodigal absolutely. I was never aware how you can love a baby as much as that. Besotted is the only word, and I think he brought me another layer of happiness this year that I never knew existed. This year has been a great year I believe. A real happy year, and he's quite a contributory factor.	Rejecting the social definition in favour of the relational / emotional definition.
Adding intergenerational issues. Differing approaches to chd. / grandchild. Quoting supporting evidence.	_____R59	Addressing a cultural discourse - a family story.
Agreeing to meaning,	Inter. Do you <i>feel</i> like a grandmother?	R60 Centring an implicit belief on a family 'proverb'
citing social discourse	Gina. If you define for me what a grandmother should feel like I could tell you yes or no. No. I just feel like a person that's got another little thing to love. They're so sort-of genuine.	Recalling former rejection of discourse. Experience changed cognitions.
Recalling past scepticism.	Yvonne. But you said that loving a grandchild isn't the same as loving a child. Your mother said the same thing, didn't she?	Assuming that love can have different qualities and depths.
Finding 'truth' through experience.	Gina. No. There's an old French saying - my mother's French, and in English it translates to em - 'The love you have for the child of your child is twice the love you have for your child.'	↓
Arguing the case for different qualities of love.	And I used to think oh yeah - French sayings. Until you suddenly have a grandchild. And you suddenly know that although I love my children like any mother would love their children, and I love them very differently, this is something - its like falling in love all over again. Weird feeling. Weird, weird feeling. But it's not until you love lots of people in different ways for different reasons - I love Yvonne because she's my partner, and I love her. I loved my husband before. I love my daughters, and I love my grandson. It's not competing love. It's just different types of, you know - and each one has its own level of passion. But this	IB that love can be inclusive. Making comparisons.
Widening comparison.		Love of GC is different from other love.
Seeing different levels and kinds of love, with CEs		Aligning self with other.
Setting GC love apart. Creating 'special case'.		Presenting self as needing to play a part in Ben's life.
Responding, introducing personal experience.		Implicit fear / feeling - that
Questioning, seeking information.		
Elaborating personal experience. Affirming 'special case'		
Confirming, elaborating personal (cognitive) responses.		

Repeating, confirming responses. Admitting tender feelings for child (and Gina implied)

Continuing. Planning ahead, bringing purpose to own changes?

Questioning, pushing task forward, commenting

Confirming.

Continuing task, referring to previous discourse, introducing as new task.

Setting a timescale.

Five years from now

Continuing, repeating timescale. Looking ahead to personal goal - **retirement**
Reflecting goal.

Looking ahead optimistically. Inferring that chance events may affect achievement of goal - **employment, academic status**

Proposing level of achievement of goal.

Confirming. Commenting. Proposing **domicile** unchanged.

Adding modification - influencing factors, the unknown - job-related. Weighing feelings - long-term vs. short-term

Continuing. Adding modification, learning from experience. - changing thinking, changing behaviour. Assenting

Continuing. Suggesting flexibility, being open to influence. Seeing stable basis - implying that change can be absorbed, coped with.

Continuing. Suggesting a different direction.

one with a grandchild is unique.

Inter. Yes, I feel very much with you in that

Gina. You're a grandmother?

Inter. My daughter has just had a little boy, yes. - it is something really special.

Gina. Yes. I plan his future in my head.

Yvonne. She's already got his future planned, poor lamb.

Gina. When I retire, I'm going to show him the world. _____R60
The present - GE9 R61

Inter. So does that bring us up to now? I suppose it must.

Yvonne. Yes.

The future - GE10

Inter. I know you've mentioned it already. But what about the future? Say what would you hope to be doing in five year's time?

Gina. Five years. I'll be planning my retirement.

Yvonne. You'll be planning to retire. I'll be working hopefully. I'll be a management consultant with a bit of luck and the wind behind me, and em, planning my PhD I hope.

Gina. You may be well into it by five years.

Yvonne. Yeah, you never know. I think we'll still be here, still be in Manchester.

Gina. Just depends where jobs take us.

Yvonne. We don't feel fixed here, but we're fixed right now.

Gina. We definitely made our mind up that we'll never get as

this may be negative - or 'tongue in cheek'?

Identifying self as facilitator, bringing purpose to her own changes.

Returning the narrative to the task.

⇓

Looking at the future from the perspective the present and the past.

Assessing change in terms of -

- 1 Planning events.
- 2 Predicting level of accomplishment.
- 3 Guessing the time effect.
- 4 Judging the role of external factors - jobs - to influence events.
- 5 Determining to avoid past mistakes.
- 6 Hoping to remain flexible.
- 7 Using present stability to judge future opportunities.
- 8 Introducing the possibility of a special (extra) goal.
- 9 Assessing some of the difficulties in achieving the goal.

This section is more propositional than the

Repeating, modifying - adding a timescale.

Continuing. Introducing a challenge.
Responding affectively.

Seeing disadvantages, difficulties.

Countering - welcoming challenge.

Comparing relationships

Changing direction

Identifying different relationships.

Asking for perceptions of each.

- dynamics and prospects

Comparing being in a heterosexual relationship, with being in a lesbian relationship

Answering. Setting first focus - relat with husband. Suggesting a cultural / age related CE.

Recalling economic control - power not through imbalance of resources, but how resources were allocated.

Relating timing / timescale of beginnings of personal independence. Taking for granted (implied) - unaware of any other way - expectations as CE.

Identifying focal point of change - cognitive first, behavioural second. Needing to take power, appraising self.

Seeing as a small beginning of a larger change.

Applying to the structure of the marriage - beginning of dissolution.

Recalling partner's behaviour - accepting change

Seeing a power imbalance in the relationship.

Identifying gender roles.

Control allocated according to

fixed as we got in Edinburgh.

Yvonne. No.

Gina. We, we'll go where the wind takes us. We're financially sound. I could retire at any time from five years onwards. If Yvonne cracks a really good job somewhere - Edinburgh, wherever?

Yvonne. We'd like to go abroad actually.

Gina. We wouldn't mind going abroad for a while.

Yvonne. Saw a very nice job in Hong Kong the other day. Thought that would be very nice for a couple of years? We don't speak any languages apart from French, do you? I don't speak anything other than English. It might be a problem but we'd quite like that.

R61

(pause)

Differences in relationships

R62

Inter. It strikes me that you've got experience of two different relationships, your relationship with your husband the relationship with Yvonne. What, for you, are the major differences in terms of how you've conducted them so far and how you look into the future?

Gina. Relationship with a husband - I don't know if this is a generation thing was - I never felt as independent as I do with Yvonne. All the money went into one pot and he decided how it was spent. It was only the year before we divorced or separated, that I actually had my own bank account. It didn't cause me any bother, because I knew no different. At one point, I suddenly got - I had a sudden realisation that I had the right

previous text - rather than recollecting the past, the focus is on 'playing' with the possibilities for the future.

⇓

⇓

Re-directing the task, seeking new information.

Attempting CE related to the past - either cultural, or age-related effects.

Recalling self as dependent in heterosexual relationship. Dependency based on control of resources within the relationship, rather than access to money outside of it.

Presenting self as behaving according to cultural and personal expectations.

Seeing change as sudden - cognitive - perhaps also affective - angry.

Contrasting self as professional woman with self as wife.

Metaphor signifying a forced change.

Assessing the formation of the marriage as being dependent on the power structure.

Figure of speech signifying automatic control, pre-eminence.

gender.
Citing cultural gender discourse as CE for own lack of power.

Presenting second focus - relationship with Yvonne.
Applying timescale.
Contrasting potential power with sharing of resources.

Storying potential heterosexual role expectations (implied?) where one partner provides economic resources, and therefore has control.

Continuing. Making little of decision making or control.
Seeing no power struggle.
Sharing decisions.
Talking things over.
Implying a mutual negotiation
Appraising difference - between the two relationships (as if this issue were symbolic of other issues in each relationship)
Having no awareness of how other gays or heterosexuals conduct their relationship.
Arguing that this way of handling control is an issue, personal to this relationship.

Relationship dissolution
Appraising personality of FP (positively). Citing evidence from dissolution.
Outlining different roles - each economically sound, Gina 'allowed' personal income, FP responsible for bills, implying FP as 'steward' of resources - having control, using, giving, and saving resources
Gina, not-knowing, not-asking, in role of 'accepting' - giving control.

Seeing FP as generous

to some control here, I'm an intelligent woman, I held down a very powerful job - and started to demand those rights, and that was almost **the thin edge of the wedge**, and that was long before I met Yvonne. It was almost like there was some sort of cracking up of the infrastructure of the marriage. Matthew never ever objected. There was a definite positioning in marriage of - **he was the man of the marriage**, therefore in a lot of scenarios he was in control. Because I was the woman, I had no right to that aspect of control. _____R62

This relationship _____R63
In my relationship with Yvonne, although right now and for the past 2 and a half years I have been the only earner, it has never been my money or your money, it's just *the* money. It's never I'm in control of it, you have to do as you're told. Its never Yvonne has to come to me and ask permission to spend or do something. It's -

Yvonne. (Indistinct)

Gina. its almost incidental. One gets on with it. There's **no jockeying for position**. Decisions are always made together. We never make any decision about anything without we discuss it. It's just totally different, in relationship terms. It is different. I don't know if that's the case in other lesbian relationships - or gay relationships, or whatever. I don't know what's the norm in heterosexual relationships. I just know that's the way it was with me. _____R63

Hetero relat dissolution _____R64
My husband was the most generous of men. When we divorced, we were both on very good incomes, and they went into this bank account, and I could spend - I had a pocket money allowance, and a clothing

Contrasting with the role of the woman - no 'right' to control.

IB that control in hetero relats. is based on gender rather than ability.

Presenting lesbian relationship as egalitarian - both economically, and in terms of action. Implication that permission is needed for action in a hetero relationship.

Figure of speech to signify lack of power struggle, shared decision-making etc. Different decision-making process - use of discussion - by implication, not a feature of the hetero. relat.

Questioning cultural vs. personal norms. Implying that behaviour may be personal choice rather than culturally normative.

Presenting attributions of FP.
Implying a dependent position in being given 'an allowance'.

Applying self attribution - accepting, unquestioning. Giving away personal power implied?

Appraising FP. Implying honesty, fair-mindedness.

Responding (with surprise)

Characterising FP positively.
Citing age-related/cultural CE
Implying no choice available, unchangeable.
Contrasting with the present (implication of utmost freedom)
Continuing, confirming.
Citing **metaperspectives of others** re couple performance
Comparing couple practices with those of others
Characterising selves, adding dimension drawn from responses of others.

Questioning, seeking clarification.

Answering, clarifying - implying that both kinds of couples views have *some* influence on self appraisal.
Modifying, relating to hetero others. Others perceiving couple

Continuing earlier theme. (Same practice, different responses in this relationship)
Emphasising sharing (financial resources)

Relationship description

Moving on, shifting focus. Introducing the next task.

Asking.

Seeking clarification, questioning.

Confirming. Leaving open

allowance and whatever. He paid all the bills, and obviously there was money over and I never used to ask where it went, or what happened to it - we used to have good holidays. When we separated, within weeks he came to me with a cheque £* was it? £* - A very big cheque, and he said 'Well, I disinvested half of the shares'. I said, 'What shares?' 'Well', he said, 'I've been investing what was left'. He needn't have told me about that. I didn't know about that, but he'd been investing money over the years that was left over, both of us earning, and he gave me that money.

Inter. Gosh

Gina. So he was not a selfish spendthrift or whatever - that was the generation. That was the way that it was done. We just spend it all! _____R64

This relat _____R65

Yvonne. We do. Our friends look at us and think we're peculiar - talking about whether we do what other people do, because we're very calm about things. We just get on with things. Things like money don't normally worry us. People think we are strange.

Inter. Do you mean by that, other gay relationships, or - ?

Gina. Bit of both.

Yvonne. Straight relationships actually I think, mostly. Straight friends and family think we're a bit, sort-of

Gina. But even when we were both earning it was the same, it was never that's yours. this is mine. We have joint bank accounts, joint credit cards, joint everything.

_____R65
(Someone at the door) Tape

Depending on the fair-mindedness of FP. (One's fate in the other's hands - implied)

Presenting FP positively - attributions with CE in terms of past cultural norms. Assessing current relationship as a complete contrast.

Seeing the relationship as an object of other's scrutiny and comment.

Being seen by others as 'different'.

Presenting relationship as unique / eccentric?

Probing for more info.

Seeing the relat as object of scrutiny both in peer group, and hetero circles.

Seeing heteros as more critical - implied?

Reinforcing the equality, shared aspect of the relat.

Note that the foregoing strongly links power and control with manipulation of economic resources. How far normative expectations depend on cultural discourses, or on personal responses seems to be questioned.

Directing to the next stage of the task.

Suggesting a typical response. Underlying assumption about

interpretation	turned off for a few moments.	relationships?
Being self-effacing? (Preparing for ridicule?) Justifying - happy	Task - characterising relationship R66	Presenting a commonplace idea that has special significance.
Modifying, expanding	Inter. The next bit is to consider this bit at the side. One thing I was going to ask you, is - if you were to use a word to characterise your relationship. What would it be?	Adding a personal dimension.
Confirming, repeating	Yvonne. You mean a word like happy?	(In counselling terms, the different definitions could be seen to reflect the individual needs of each partner. Gina, the bold narrator being inwardly insecure; Yvonne, more task centred, practical, needing less intense emotionality?)
Confirming, questioning.	Inter. Mm. That sort of thing.	Accepting characterisation - not seeking clarification.
Changing focus (to closeness)	Yvonne. It sounds a really ineffectual kind of word. But I would say it was very happy.	Moving focus on.
Repeating, confirming	Gina. Secure.	Accepting closeness definition.
Repeating, confirming	Yvonne. Secure.	Applying a quality (attribution) to it as a current effect.
Telepathy story	R66	
Confirming, interpreting - adding information. Implying closeness = telepathic	Task - closeness R67	
Modifying, confirming.	Inter. Secure yes. Would you have ever have described yourself as close?	
Citing examples / experience	Yvonne. Oh yeah.	
Characterising experience	Gina. Close	
Applying timescale	Yvonne. Yeah. Very. Telepathic.	Making attributions about the relationship - seeing differences in quality - implying a special kind of closeness - affecting behaviour, talking and thinking.
Commenting, assenting, leading into need for clarification	Gina. Almost. We are lately, aren't we? We go out and buy the same things separately. Weird. Its only recently that's happened isn't it?	This takes the relationship to a different level - implying that it is unique, and more intimate and intuitive than other relationships.
Citing new experience	Inter. Oh right. When you say only recently -	
Grading experience.	Gina. Recently we've been aware of levels of telepathy.	Implying a feature of relationship development?
Clarifying shared nature of experience.	Yvonne. We think the same things.	
Repeating, confirming. Citing examples	Gina. We think about the same things. I'll start a conversation. I'll say something, and Yvonne will say, 'I was just about to say that.', or- we both think about	Probing closeness.
Sharing intentions and thoughts.		
Implying unconscious accord		
Questioning, seeking clarification		
Answering. Giving general timescale.		
Continuing. Adding baseline timescale		
Modifying, agreeing.		
Questioning. Changing focus.		
Thinking, preparing reply?		

Preparing (to respond)

Continuing, identifying property of closeness - physical aspect

Confirming. Citing examples, experience.

Identifying further properties of closeness. Sitting together, being quiet

Proposing a definition

Agreeing.

Adding further dimensions of closeness. Sitting together, cuddling always - pre-emptive construing?

Continuing, modifying, widening meaning of closeness.

Agreeing, citing examples / experience of the wider meaning

Adding further dimensions of relationship closeness.

(Emotional closeness, painful feelings)

Continuing, summarising extensiveness

Confirming, tentatively.

Changing focus, describing next task

Asking that couple will be -

Using imagination

Recalling the past

Making a judgement

Identifying feelings

Making predictions

Responding in practical

terms

Completing last task

Commenting, adding humour.

the same thing at the same time.

Inter. How long has that kind of thing been going on?

Yvonne. For some time now.

Gina. Since we've been settled.

Yvonne. Probably. Mm

Inter. So, how would you define closeness then?

(Pause)

Yvonne. Oh -

Gina. There's a physical aspect of it, isn't there?.

Yvonne. Yeah. I think it's about - we can be very quiet together. We can just be sat together reading a book or something, and be quiet and not talk to each other, and be quite happy - and I think that's close.

Gina. Yes. We will be physically close. We will never sit in a room on separate settees. We'll always sit together. We will always cuddle when we're together.

Yvonne. But we can sit in separate rooms and be happy.

Gina. Yes, that's the other thing. Yvonne can be in the study and I can be down here, and we're still close. We look forward to seeing each other. Don't like leaving each other. Even in a morning, saying goodbye is still -

Inter. So it includes a broad number of features really.

Gina. I think so yes. _____R67
Task - marking closeness levels

R68

Inter. What I would like you to

Defining closeness as having certain qualities. Implying that closeness is not necessarily about overt communication.

Defining proximity - use of space within the relationship.

Defining distance - adding modification.

Being apart but being close - a paradox.

Setting out the next task. Assuming a grading of closeness, and that such qualitative dimensions can be applied to assessments of events.

Perhaps partners adding comment to recollections below?

Commenting - as if to

sharing humour.

Answering, modifying, elaborating story.
Characterising self. Applying age related CE

Responding, challenging age-related view - citing example - interviewer?

Responding. Applying evaluation of / to others.

Relating to age factor.

Negotiating the task.

Changing focus. Applying self to task.

Joining in. Commenting on task

Questioning, seeking clarification. Outlining personal approach. Suggesting different approaches for each.

Continuing, commenting on self completion, commenting on Yvonne's task completion

Answering, justifying.
Characterising the other.
Seeing her reality as polarised.

Characterising self - astrological discourse.

Commenting. Characterising relationship responses in general terms. Seeking support for argument.

Responding, qualifying, modifying.

Continuing. Characterising self, relating to timescale (events implied?)

Continuing. Characterising self

Handing over the graph.

Commenting. Identifying patterns.

do if you wouldn't mind. Imagine that this line here is a kind of barometer of closeness with 0 being not close at all, and 5 being very close. For each of these significant times you could think about what you feel was your closeness level at the time, and now of course. Then in the future, say in five years time when you get to thinking about retirement and so on, and just mark

Yvonne. That's when you do *your* PhD isn't it?

(laughter)

Gina. I'll start playing golf all the time. I am too old to study.

Yvonne. You can't say that to people who study with the OU!

Gina. I admire people who study - at whatever age.

Yvonne. Right. I'm going to write something then.

Gina. This is closeness. (Filling in the graph)

Gina. Are we doing this separately? I won't copy yours, I've got different opinions.

Gina. I haven't done the perfect house yet. Considering the perfect house. That was pretty good. You haven't done Uni.

Yvonne. No I'm waiting until you get out of my way. Gina thinks in black and white - everything is completely perfect or completely terrible.

Gina. I'm a Scorpio. _____R68
(Pause)
R69

Gina. We aren't argumentative. We don't often have arguments, do we?

suggest that Gina has a similar opportunity.

Gina responding with good humour - turning down the challenge with age discourse as CE.

Yvonne countering the age discourse.

Gina closes argument - modifying age discourse?

Both attempt practical aspects of the task.

Gina questions whose responsibility, and establishes her independence.

Partners banter in the negotiation of the task, commenting on each other's performance, and applying attributions to events, self and other.

Justifying attribution through use of astrological discourse.

Providing attribution to relationship interaction.

Reflecting on past self, identifying changed self - with implications for relationship.
Presenting self in the present - self-attribution of stability - also implying relationship impact of personal characteristics.

Commenting on graph, and identifying similarities and







<p>Commenting (on particular period). Speculating on effect.</p>	<p>Yvonne. No not nasty ones, door slammers.</p> <p>Gina. I used to have black moodies and I haven't had those for years.</p>	<p>differences - identifying patterns.</p> <p>Commenting on event - reflecting with hindsight on past relationship fragility.</p>
<p>Affirming effect.</p>	<p>Yvonne. I can't live with arguments. I like to be stable.</p>	<p>Reflecting on self as relationship 'interpreter'.</p>
<p>Commenting. Thanking.</p>	<p>Inter. That's lovely yes. Thank you very much. That is very interesting isn't it? Its incredible how often you see this pattern - up and down, then one being down, and so on.</p> <p>Gina. We wondered to what extent when that down happened - the relationship must have come close to not happening any further.</p> <p>Yvonne. I told you that it was close to it.</p>	<p>Implying a knowledge not understood by Gina.</p> <p>Winding-up the task.</p>
	<p>Inter. Yes that was an incredible time. Thank you very much. I do appreciate your help and your honesty.</p>	

KEY:

Codes and Colours

CE	Causal explanation
FP	Former partner
GC	Grandchild
GE	Graph event
IB	Implicit belief
NGE	Non-graph event

Interactional Styles

	Collaboration
	Conflict
	Confirmation
	Laughter-Continuation
	Non-response
	Confirmation-collaboration

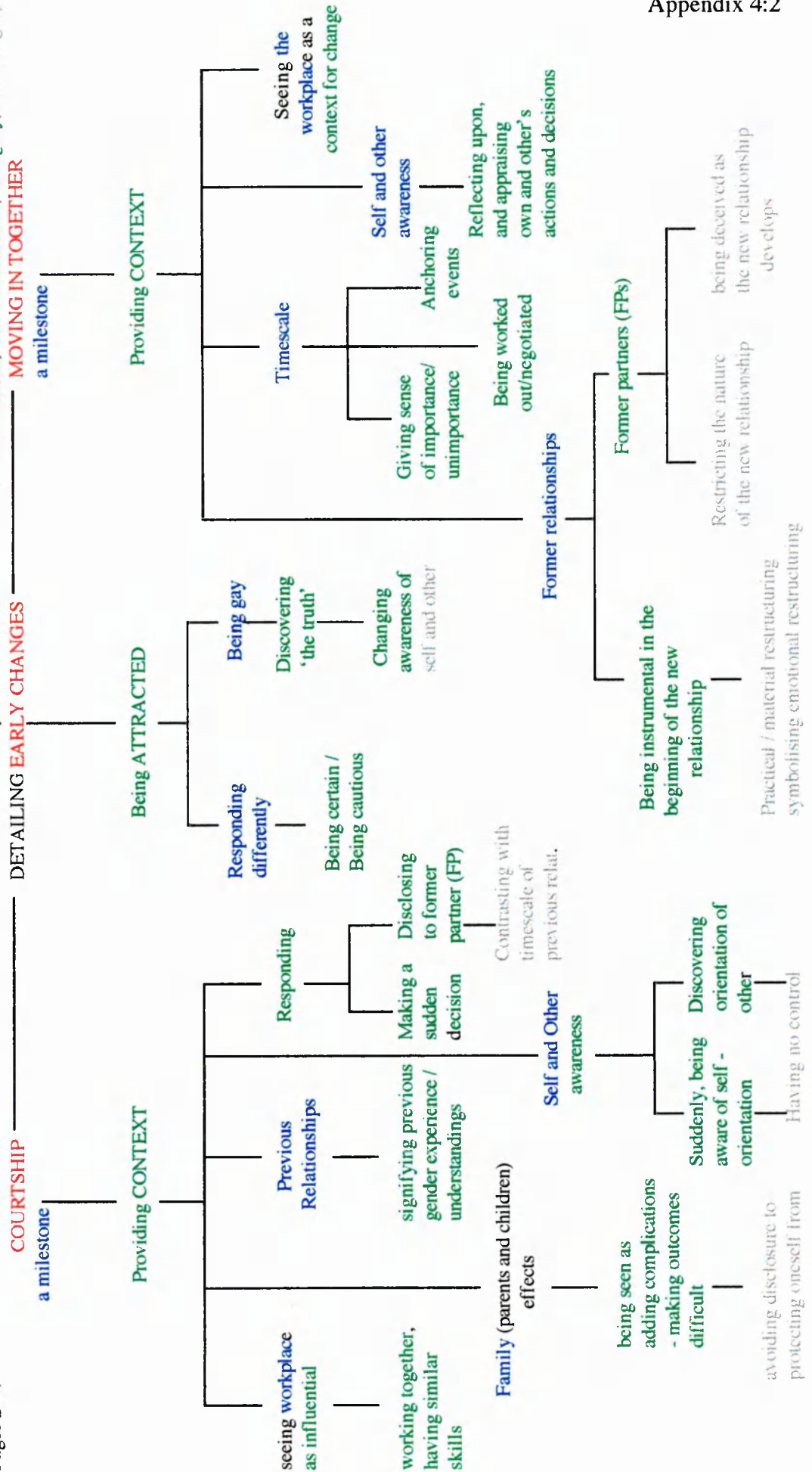
- Stages 1 and 2 themes
- Metaphors and figures of speech (stage 5)
- A change episode
- An example of an interpretative repertoire

APPENDIX 4

FOCUSED CODING OF FULL SCRIPT

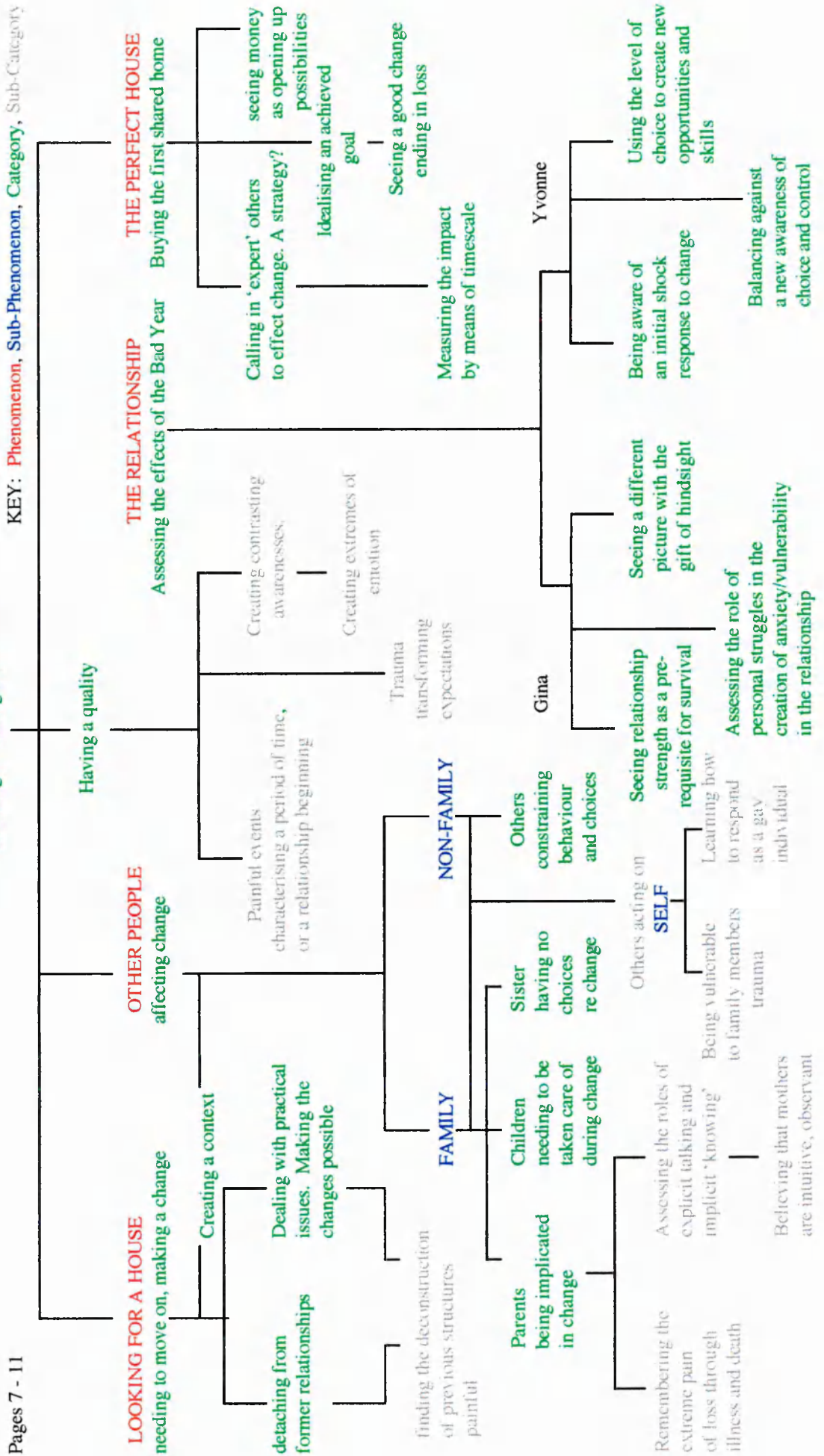
'IN THE BEGINNING'

KEY: Phenomenon, Sub-Phenomenon, Category, Sub-Category



THE BAD YEAR

'chunking' - naming a timescale



GINA'S JOB

Traumatic change leading to unexpected solution

Pages 16 - 21

KEY: Phenomenon, Sub-Phenomenon, Category, Sub-Category

PROVIDING CONTEXT

EFFECT OF JOB

LOOKING FOR A FINAL SOLUTION

Assessing timescale

Providing relationship development context

Characterising a chunk of time

Outlining the strategies used in coming to a decision

Living apart

Being at a distance

Threatening the relationship

Assessing similarities and differences in experience

Sharing distress

Role of others in making the experience more bearable / unbearable

Responding to trauma

Withdrawing

Being afraid

Fear of change being stronger than the experience of trauma

Using others as justification

Being driven to change

Needing to talk

Needing to take control

Exploring possibilities

Changing cognitions

Assessing different options

Giving unlimited choice

Making an easy decision

Putting changes into effect

Finding a partial solution

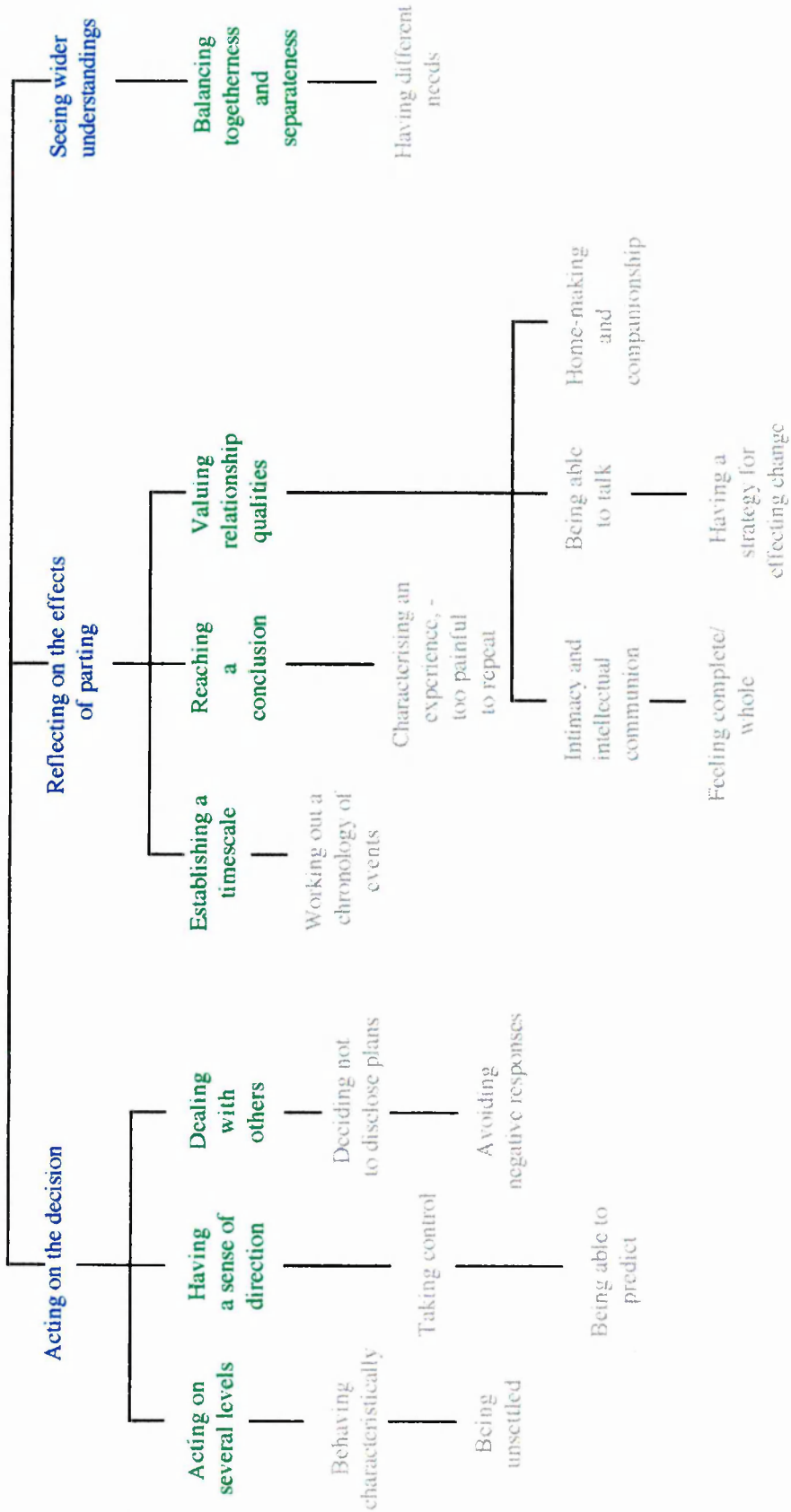
Creating a home

Seeing limited change

MAKING THE CHANGE

KEY: **Phenomenon, Sub-Phenomenon, Category, Sub-Category**

Pages 21 - 24

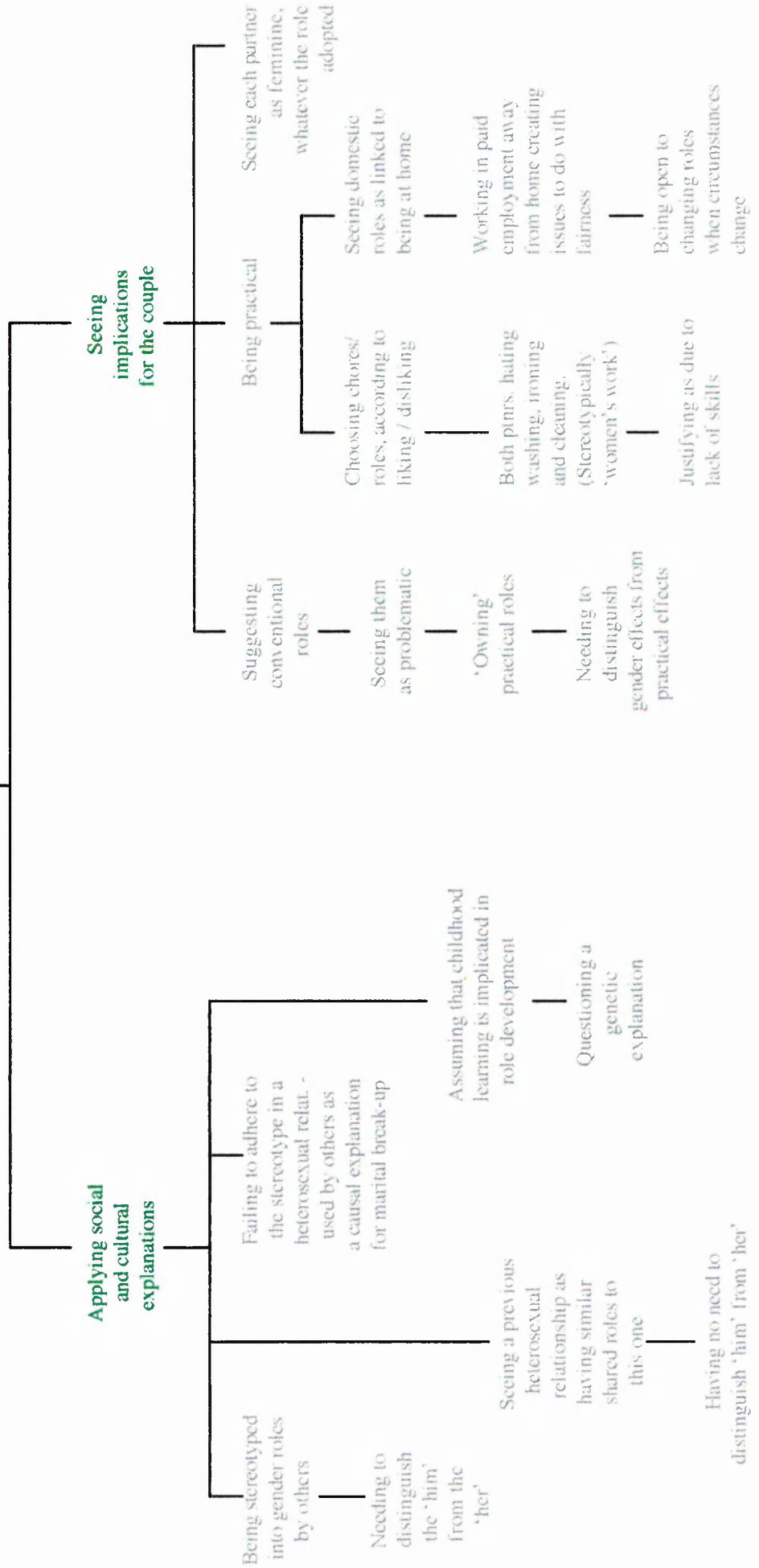


DISCUSSING ROLES

Seeing household chores, gender expectations, and male/female characteristics as linked

Pages 24 - 26

KEY: **Phenomenon**, **Sub-Phenomenon**, **Category**, **Sub-Category**

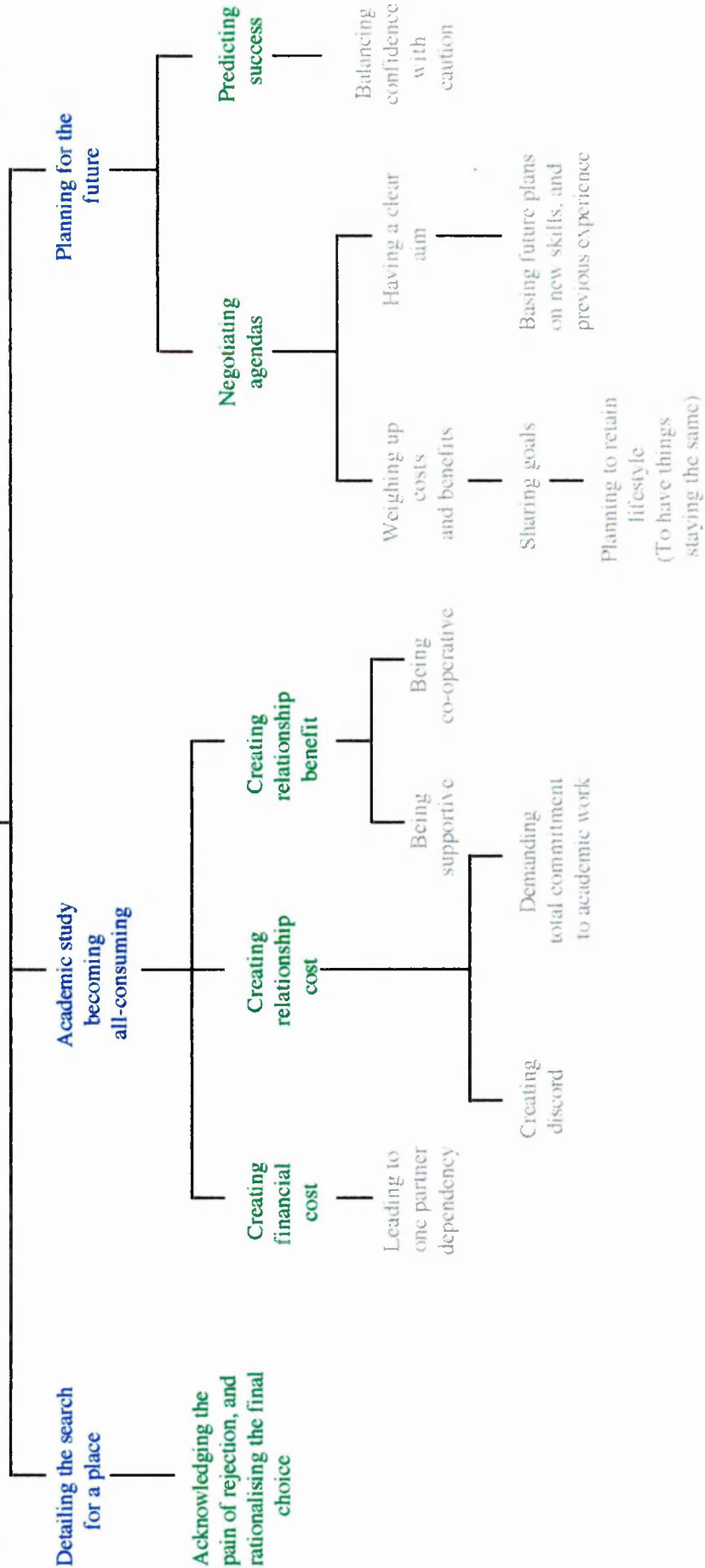


GOING TO UNIVERSITY

Dealing with practical and cognitive changes

KEY: Phenomenon, Sub-Phenomenon, Category, Sub-Category

Pages 26 - 28

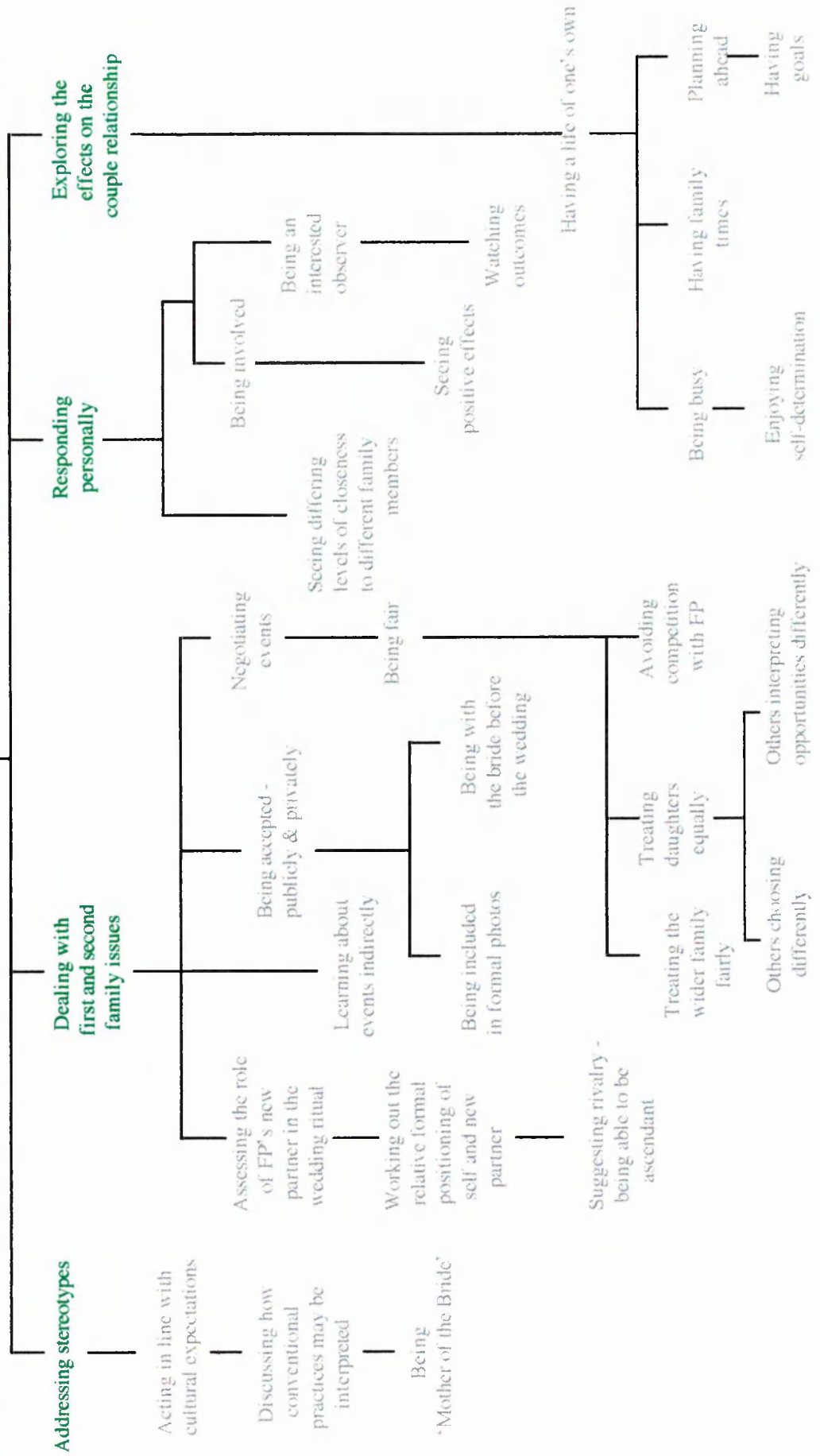


THE WEDDINGS

Experiencing cultural and family rituals

KEY: **Phenomenon**, **Sub-Phenomenon**, **Category**, **Sub-Category**

Pages 29 - 31, 33



EXPLORING GAY MARRIAGE

Pages 32 - 33

KEY: **Phenomenon**, **Sub-Phenomenon**, **Category**, **Sub-Category**

RESPONDING TO THE SUGGESTION

Being willing / eager

Talking it over

Being slow to act

Referring to stereotypes / convention as a baseline

Using humour as a strategy to characterise choices

LOOKING AT POSSIBILITIES

Needing the 'right' place

Providing details of social structures and traditions available to gays

'Doing' the possible

Striving for partnership recognition within limits

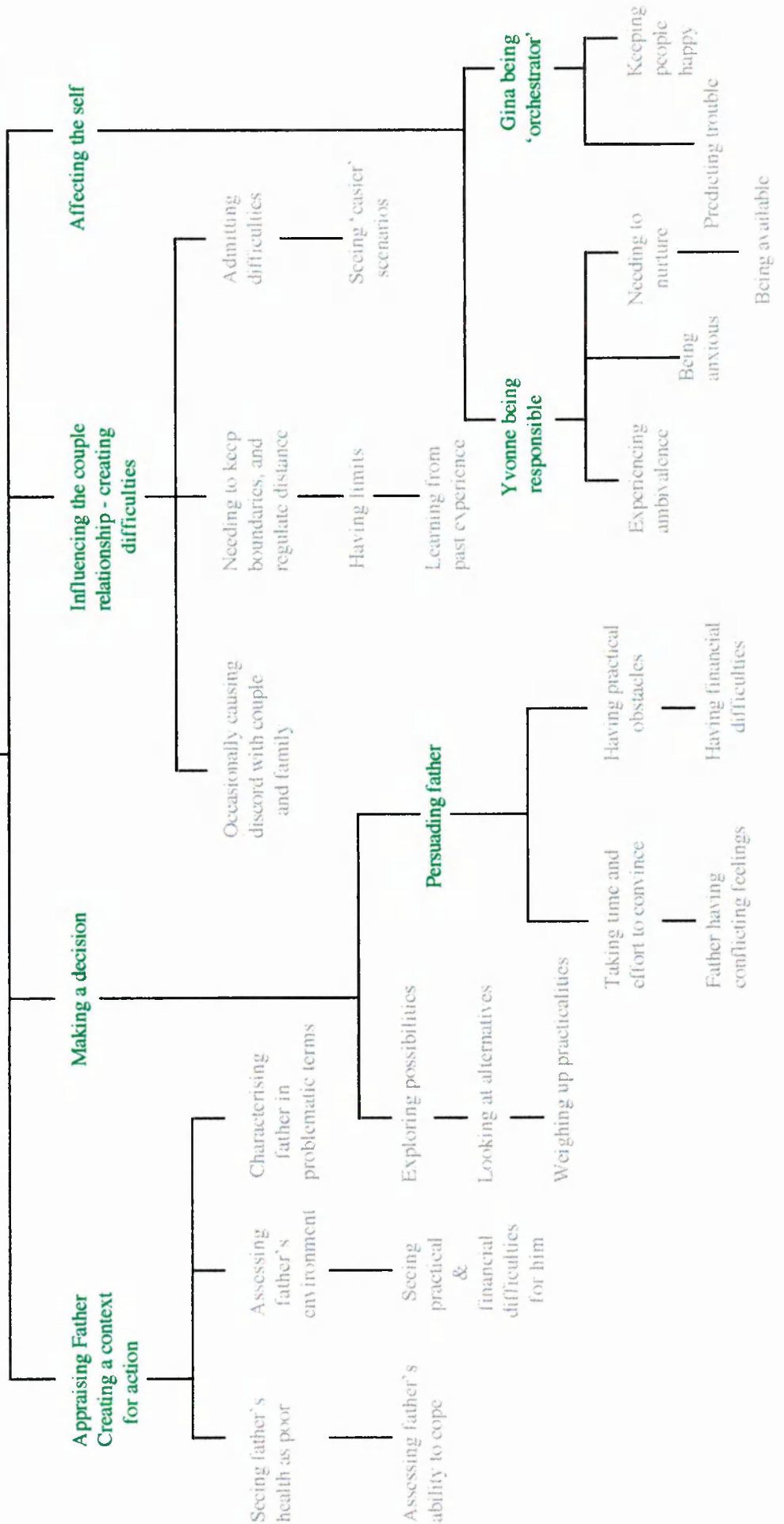
Acknowledging legal difficulties

Accepting lack of legal weight in a gay marriage

FATHER'S STORY
Needing to nurture a parent

Pages 33 - 36

KEY: **Phenomenon**, **Sub-Phenomenon**, **Category**, **Sub-Category**

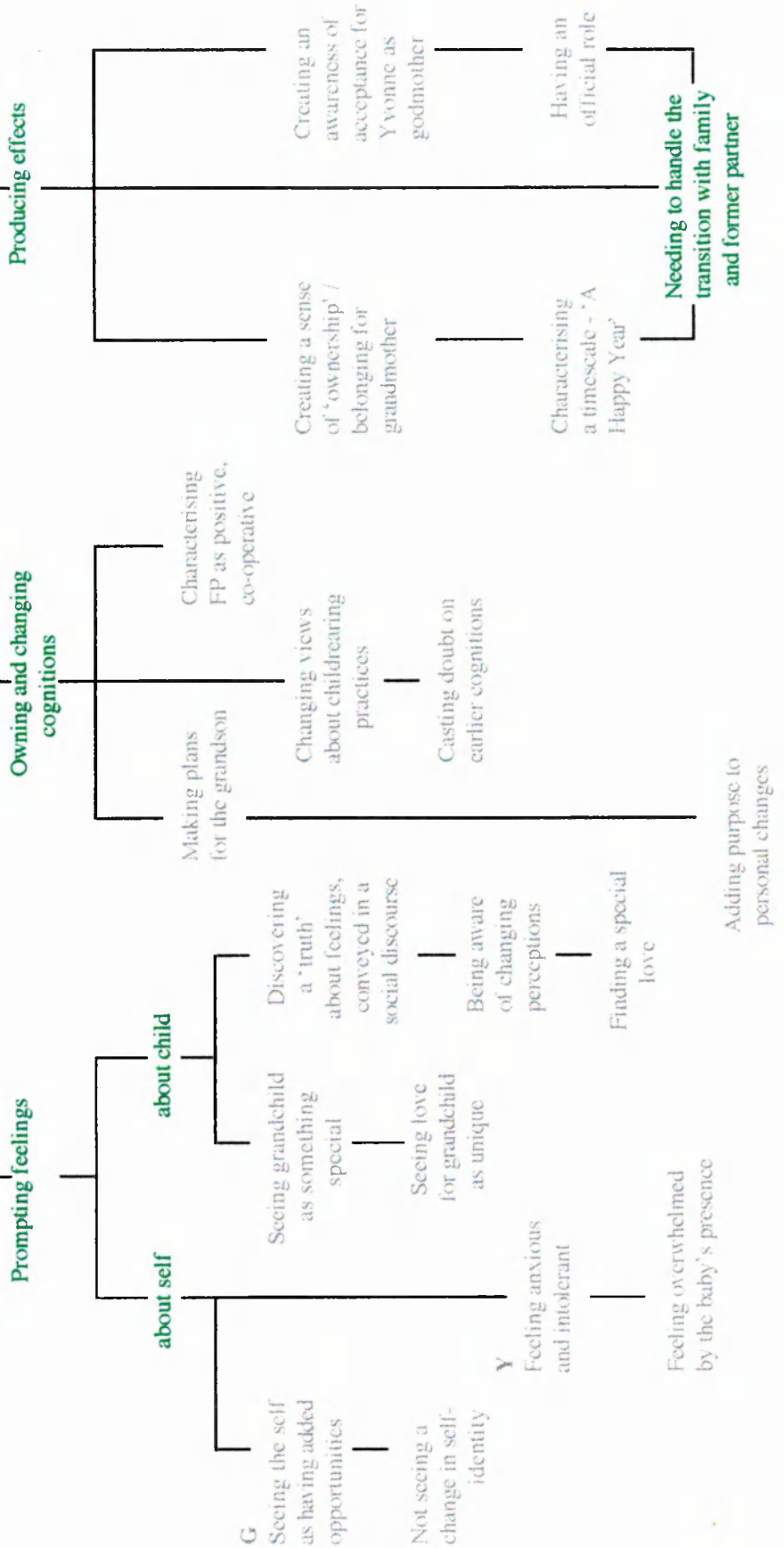


THE PRODIGAL GRANDSON

Bringing a life change

Pages 37, 41 - 43

KEY: **Phenomenon**, **Sub-Phenomenon**, **Category**, **Sub-Category**



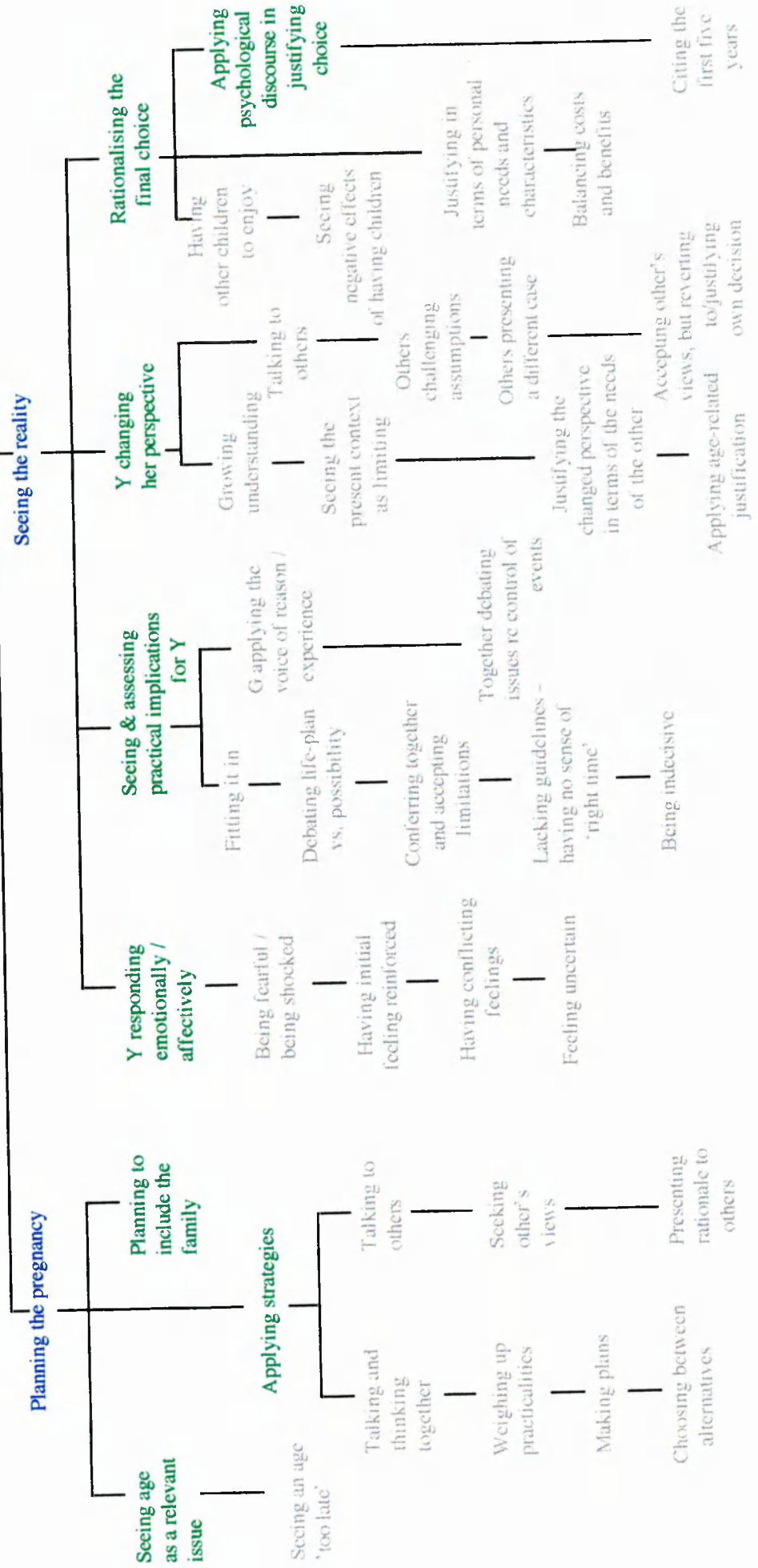
Adding purpose to personal changes

A BABY FOR YVONNE
Making a decision

Negotiating a change of mind

KEY: **Phenomenon, Sub-Phenomenon, Category, Sub-Category**

Pages 38 - 41



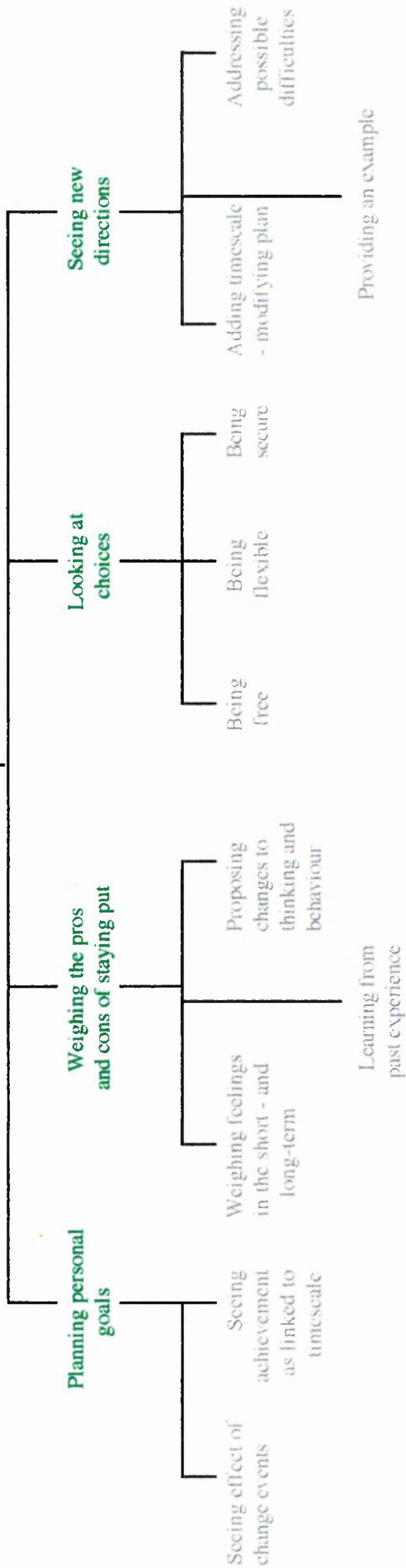
THE FUTURE

A changing reality

Pages 43 - 44

KEY: **Phenomenon**, **Sub-Phenomenon**, **Category**, **Sub-Category**

Looking at a timescale



LOOKING BACK - ADDRESSING GINA'S STORY

COMPARING HETEROSEXUAL WITH HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONSHIP

Pages 45 - 47 KEY: **Phenomenon**, **Sub-Phenomenon**, **Category**, **Sub-Category**. H = heterosexual. L = lesbian

Looking at differences

Applying age-related and cultural explanations

Assessing awareness in heterosexual relationship

Taking for granted, not being aware of inequalities

Accepting, seeing as 'normal' - having no choice

Changing awareness

Cognitive change - rationalising to permit behavioural change

Beginning of dissolution

Leading to present freedom of choice

Assessing power and control

H Adopting gender-specific roles, living according to cultural discourses

Assuming that money management requires no negotiation

Assuming that money use requires 'asking permission'

L Feeling independent

Making joint decisions

Involving discussion, negotiation, not permission giving

Unwilling to suggest personal motives for inequality

Seeing FP as fair-minded - honest 'steward' of relationship

Working out resource allocation

H Having equal resources but unequal allocation

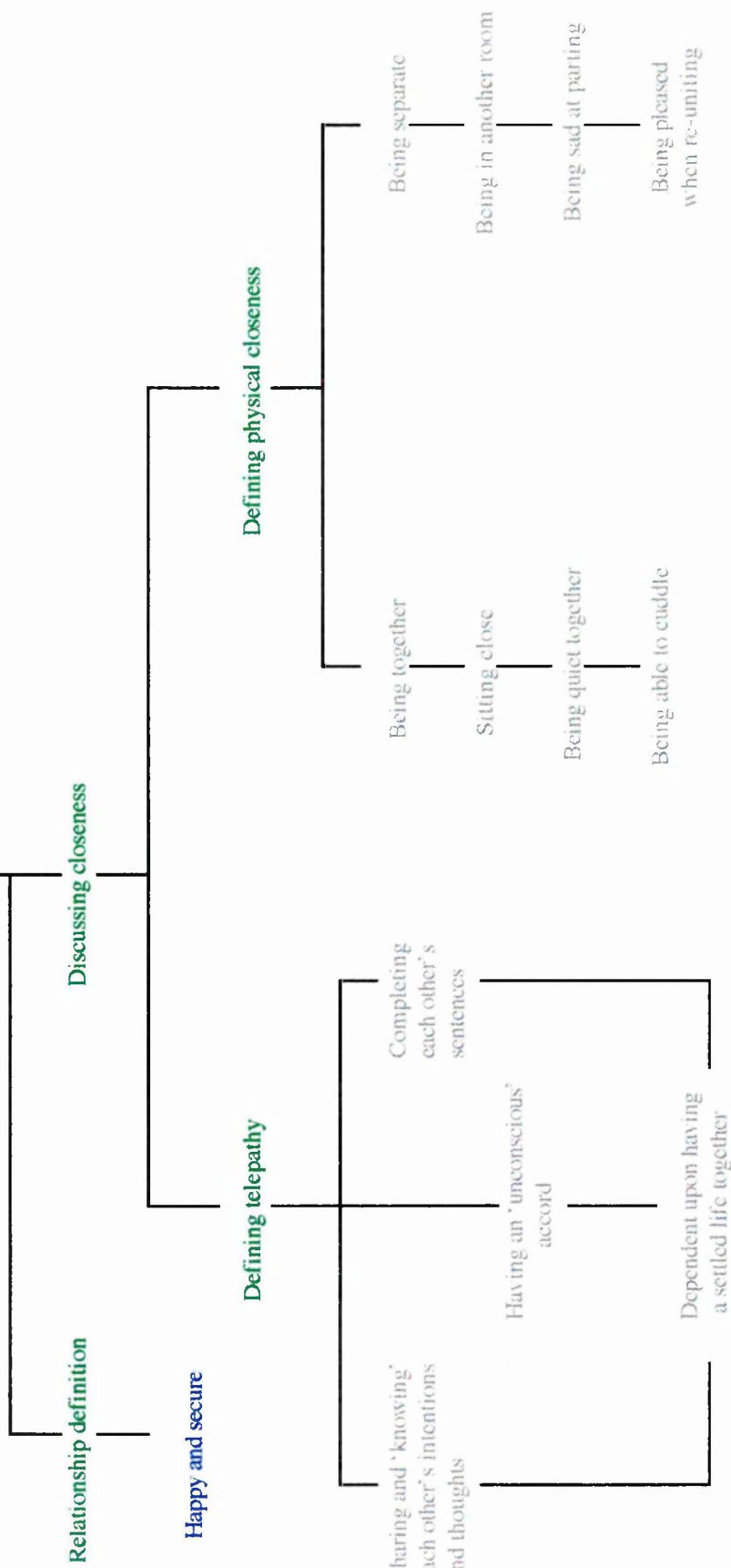
L Having unequal resources, but equal allocation

Applying 'joint - everything' strategy

CHARACTERISING THE RELATIONSHIP

Pages 47 - 49

KEY: Phenomenon, Sub-Phenomenon, Category, Sub-Category.



APPENDIX 5

COLOUR CODING: AN EXAMPLE

Establishing: timescale
illness
Confirming

Adding: illness, other perception
coping. Confirming

Adding to characterisation
Questioning: illness

Characterising self: age
internal disposition
Confirming characterisation
Questioning - clarifying

Establishing: relationship
Factors, evidence from others
Questioning

Establishing: similarity w. others

Establishing: age factors, reasons
gayness
Questioning

Confirming with other perception
Questioning

Confirming - with reservation

Adding evidence - characterising
other.

Questioning - time factor
relationship effect
Questioning

Questioning - relat (devel)

Characterising selves/relat
Adding - lifestyle factors
- characterising
selves

Characterising: other, gay
theme, lifestyle, comparisons.

Establishing - then
- characterising
internal reasons

Establishing challenge
timescale
Confirming

Establishing reasons -
others childhood influences

Age-related & cultural
expectations; outcomes
- gayness, relationship.

P: We parted in the 70s for 12 months, in '72 but I was very ill as well wasn't I?

C: Yea

P: I'd had cancer in '72 which er. and you couldn't actually cope could you? Really.

C: I was a tart. Characterising self

P: Yes

C: Well its honest

M: What do you feel that you couldn't cope with C about cancer?

C: I don't know because I was, bearing in mind I would be late 20s wouldn't I and I don't know I was probably frightened more than anything *

P: Yes I think you were

M: Frightened of losing P?

C: Probably, or what would happen in the relationship. We've got an instance now in the village here that way with P and P

P: What bearing has that got to do with it

C: Well its the same, P's in the same sort of position

P: P's our age we're talking about somebody in their 20s. I honestly don't think C until you were in your 40s, I don't think you were accepted or you couldn't accept the fact that you were gay. I've always thought that. *

C: Do you reckon.

P: Yea and you've said it once or twice

M: Do you feel P's right then?

C: I suppose it was to a certain extent.

P: You used to deny to yourself I think because when I used to deliberately say "oh puffer" you used to huff.

M: Do you think that year out that you had from each other, do you think that was a significant part in your relationship really if you were putting it down on your 'life story' shall we say?

P: Do you think it was?

M: Do you think it was significant in, if you like, the development of your relationship?

Pause

P: I think it made us more dependent on each other

C: What it was, we'd got such a lot hadn't we? TN implied

P: We were spoilt

C: You know with furniture we'd got

P: I think we were spoilt

C: a lot more than a lot of gay couples had got. It seems to be the thing, in a gay couple, they just seem to want, some of the homes they couldn't care less, they seem to want holidays, they want clubs, they want clothes every week and the home is just

P: Yea but I don't, don't you think that's a throw back from the War. I know you were born at the end of the war and I was born during the war, but in the 50s and early 60s we hadn't got it, I think that's er, what's the word I'm looking for? A form of compensation because we hadn't got, we'd got nothing had we? L

C: Not when we first

P: Well I'm talking about when we were kids * TN implied

C: Oh no

P: Absolutely nothing

C: Then sometimes I think with me, I lost my mum at 13, father went off you know and I was sort of with my aunt and P was sort of the 1st one from 13 to 20 sort of thing I'd tried it with girls. I've got engaged a couple of times, I didn't seem to get any satisfaction but he sort of to me, gave me a sort of love, which I hadn't had from my parents and then I must have decided well I am gay, not having had affection from, I hadn't got my mother to go to and my father, he'd gone, it got to the stage, when I met P I got something. *

Graph event

C TN implied

C L

L TN'im L C

TN implied

C - Change
- Timescale

TN - then and now
- Strategy - or lack of
- Perception of others

* age-related.

Establishing: similarity w. others
Establishing: age factors, reasons
gayness

Confirming with other perception
Questioning
Confirming - with reservation
Establishing evidence - characterising other.

Establishing - time factor
relationship effect
Questioning
Questioning - relat (devel)

Characterising selves/relat
Adding - lifestyle factors
- characterising selves

Characterising: other, gay theme, lifestyle, comparisons

Establishing - then
- characterising internal reasons

Establishing challenge
timescale
Confirming

Establishing reasons - others, childhood influences
age-related & cultural expectations; outcomes
- gayness, relationship.

* age-related.
role of others

C: Well its the same, I s in the same sort of position
P: P's our age we're talking about somebody in their 20s. I honestly don't think C until you were in your 40s, I don't think you were accepted or you couldn't accept the fact that you were gay. I've always thought that. *
C: Do you reckon.
P: Yea and you've said it once or twice
M: Do you feel P's right then?
C: I suppose it was to a certain extent.
P: You used to deny to yourself I think because when I used to deliberately say "oh puffer" you used to huff. | C TN implied
M: Do you think that year out that you had from each other, do you think that was a significant part in your relationship really if you were putting it down on your 'life story' shall we say?
P: Do you think it was?
M: Do you think it was significant in, if you like, the development of your relationship?
Pause
P: I think it made us more dependent on each other
C: What it was, we'd got such a lot hadn't we? TN implied
P: We were spoilt
C: You know with furniture we'd got
P: I think we were spoilt
C: a lot more than a lot of gay couples had got. It seems to be the thing, in a gay couple, they just seem to want, some of the homes they couldn't care less, they seem to want holidays, they want clubs, they want clothes every week and the home is just
P: Yea but I don't, don't you think that's a throw back from the War, I know you were born at the end of the war and I was born during the war, but in the 50s and early 60s we hadn't got it, I think that's er, what's the word I'm looking for? A form of compensation because we hadn't got, we'd got nothing had we?
C: Not when we first
P: Well I'm talking about when we were kids * TN implied
C: Oh no
P: Absolutely nothing
C: Then sometimes I think with me, I lost my mum at 13, father went off you know and I was sort of with my aunt and P was sort of the 1st one *
from 13 to 20 sort of thing I'd tried it with girls, I've got engaged a couple of times, I didn't seem to get any satisfaction but he sort of to me, gave me a sort of love, which I hadn't had from my parents and then I must have decided well I am gay, not having had affection from, I hadn't got my mother to go to and my father, he'd gone, it got to the stage, when I met P I got something.

C - Change
- Timescale
- gay theme
- Self perception
TN - then and now
- Strategy - or lack of
- Perception of others
L - lifestyle/Money
- Relationship

P = Peter

C = Chas

APPENDIX 5: Key to colour coding

APPENDIX 6:

Coding Frame - Functional Analysis:

Overall Text
<p>a)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the differences in content or form? • What are the similarities in content or form? • How do these relate across scripts?
<p>b)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the functions of the narrative? • What are the consequences of the narrative?
<p>c)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any good examples of an interpretative repertoire? • What is the subject matter of the passage?

Categories of Discourse	
Explicit Accounts	Causal explanations
Implicit beliefs / attitudes	Justification
Assumptions	Ascribing traits / attributions
Function	Presentation of self
Consequences / effects	Context
Differences	Similarities

APPENDIX 7

An Example of an Interpretative Repertoire

M1 (Lesbian couple)

Maureen and Lyn

Subject - meeting the partner's family:

19

L Mind you, M was vetted.

M Oh God was I vetted?

L The prospective partner - well not prospective. She already was my partner. But em

M Oh God.

L But I was so delighted with my new acquisition that we did almost a grand tour of England 'cos the family

M Yes (indistinct) I didn't know this at the time.

L Family and friends are variously around the country. So we actually went on different weekends to different people, but M had already met my family in Glos. and my ancient Aunt C.

M She's wonderful!

L She's like the matriarch of the family, and so if she thinks something's OK then it gets tannoyed around the rest of the family. That it's OK sort of thing. So by the time we got round to my aunt who's in Suffolk, having stayed some time with M's friends who live very close to where my aunt lives. There wasn't any vetting - it wasn't as strong as it would have been had C not already met M.

M: I was greeted as if "oh we have heard so much about you,

L and you know,

M but if I can just tell the story of actually meeting L's mum and C and I had made a conscious decision that I was going to be me "warts and all" because I was too tired of people trying to make be what they wanted me to be in given circumstances, right. Here you can be happy and effusive and tell silly jokes and be an absolute fool but over here you have got to be terribly serious. HERE you're my status symbol over there you're my partner and I really was so fed up with that so I made the decision they were going to see me "warts and all" and I remember going to L's sister, K's, where they were having their hair done and I remember chatting away to them and then I met Mar, who is very nervous, L's Mum, who is very repressed emotionally but was obviously quite interested to meet me, but C was a dear. We took C back home and L actually said "well C I will have to give you my new address because I am now living with M" and this little lady just THREW her arms about me and just hugged me as tightly as you possibly could imagine and whispered in my ear "you will look after her wont you, this is so wonderful" and it was just such a complete, unquestioning, unconditional acceptance, she'd obviously, I mean, I think what goes between us is fairly self evident, if you don't spend too much time with us, maybe not, but there is something unspoken that goes on here and C had picked that up.

APPENDIX 8

VALIDATION OF THEMES AND INTERACTIONAL STYLES

Inter-rater Agreement of Fourteen Themes

Cohen's Kappa

1: Confusion Matrix

Rater 1, horizontal rows: Rater 2, vertical rows

R 1 2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	sum
1	1														1
2		0				1									1
3			1												1
4				1											1
5					1										1
6		1				0									1
7							1								1
8								1							1
9									1						1
10										1					1
11											1				1
12												1			1
13													1		1
14														1	1
sum	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	14

2: Calculation of P_o

$$P_o = \frac{12}{14} = 0.86\%$$

3: Calculation of P_c

$$P_c = (0.07 \times 0.07) \times 14$$

$$P_c = 0.0049 \times 14$$

$$P_c = 0.0686$$

4: Calculation of K

$$K = \frac{0.86 - 0.0686}{1 - 0.0686}$$

$$K = \frac{0.7914}{0.9314}$$

$$K = 0.85$$

Inter-rater Agreement of six Interactional Styles**Cohen's Kappa****1: Confusion Matrix**

Rater 1, horizontal rows: Rater 2, vertical rows

R 1		1	2	3	4	5	6	Sum
1		6			2		2	10
2			3					3
3				2				2
4					6			6
5						1		1
6							9	9
Sum		6	3	2	8	1	11	31

2: Calculation of P_o

$$P_o = \frac{27}{31} = 0.87\%$$

3: Calculation of P_c

$$P_c = \left(\frac{10}{31} \times \frac{6}{31}\right) + \left(\frac{3}{31} \times \frac{3}{31}\right) + \left(\frac{2}{31} \times \frac{2}{31}\right) + \left(\frac{6}{31} \times \frac{8}{31}\right) + \left(\frac{1}{31} \times \frac{1}{31}\right) + \left(\frac{9}{31} \times \frac{11}{31}\right) =$$

$$(0.32 \times 0.19) + (0.097 \times 0.097) + (0.065 \times 0.065) +$$

$$(0.19 \times 0.26) + (0.032 \times 0.032) + (0.29 \times 0.35) =$$

$$0.0608 + 0.009 + 0.004 + 0.0494 + 0.001 + 0.1015$$

$$P_c = 0.2257$$

4: Calculation of K

$$K = \frac{0.87 - 0.2257}{1 - 0.2257}$$

$$= \frac{0.6443}{0.7743}$$

$$K = 0.83$$

APPENDIX 9

Summary of Themes - read to respondents for follow-up validation

Many couples thought of *change* as having qualities. It might be fast or slow, have beginnings and endings, can be difficult or easy. Some thought of change as being beyond control and frightening, while others thought of it as exciting and challenging.

Some people used different *strategies* to cope with change - talking about things, taking practical steps to control things, using humour to make it seem less frightening.

Decision making seemed for a number of people to be a useful way of controlling change, but decisions often depended on many factors, such as what might happen after the decision was taken, or what happened before the decision could be made.

Time was important to some couples. It was a useful way of measuring change, or controlling its consequences, and sometimes, people found it useful to make comparisons in terms of *then and now* in order to show that change had produced positive effects.

Relationships were important in how change was experienced for some couples. How couples felt about their relationship often affected how they felt about change.

Some couples felt that their ability to cope with change was influenced by factors like financial security, or responsibilities - such as having to bring up children.

Some people found that *former partners* from previous relationships had an influence not only on the present relationship, but also on how they coped with change in the present. Sometimes the effects were seen as good, sometimes seen as bad.

Some couples found themselves influenced by how they perceived each other, and how they perceived themselves as individuals. These perceptions often resulted in making couples feel that some ways of dealing with change were possible, while others were not.

In the same way, some people felt that the way they dealt with change was limited by the responses other people might make to their attempts.

Some partners felt that their options for change were limited because they were male, or female; old or young.

APPENDIX 9:**A Summary of Follow-up Responses****Bill and Jude****Jude**

What Changes have happened since we last talked?

Bill has a job now, and our son, Peter, has come to stay with us. He now has a job locally which is fine.

Our daughter, Sandy has been through a divorce, and now she's got a new partner.

Bill and I are fine. Our relationship's got better over the past couple of years.

My mum died, and my mother-in-law and father-in-law, so there have been some unhappy times.

Its not a lot of things over the past six years, but a lot of things go to make up what happens.

Is change more or less stressful now?

No difference. No. I take a day as it comes.

Responses to themes:

Change

Its more settled, stressless now. I don't think about it. It just comes. I'm an optimist. I always think it will get better.

Decision making and strategies

It depends, if it has to be made, I make it. Bill makes the big decisions. We weigh things up - see which is the best way. I go along with things. I always think there's a way.

Security, and responsibilities in a relationship affect you. I think I'd like to go off and do things, but I've got to think about getting older.

Difference, male and female

Females are less powerful, not because of finance or physical strength, but upbringing. The way you're taught to see how it is.

Perception of others

Other people don't influence us. Its up to you. You do what's right for you.

Age-related differences.

Yes there's more change when you're young. You change direction more.

Liz and Anthony**Anthony**

What Changes have happened since we last talked?

Mainly children and grandchildren experiences. The family - their sorties into the business world. Rebecca on my knee - a sheer delight to listen to her understanding of life. Laurie about to get married to his feisty girlfriend.

Everything we had hoped for and more.

The relationships with our children are the best parts - to give and receive unconditional love.

Other events - prostate with all the side effects, but thankfully, latent at present.

Heart failure - means I'm physically inadequate. I don't like to show weakness. Illness and getting older takes away your independence.

Another huge change. A negative change. Something Liz said to me. For her it is a blip. For me - it has left me feeling that fifty years of what I thought was a happy marriage - has been wiped out.

Future

The wedding, a trip to the Nile with Liz. Great great grandchildren. These I look forward to.

Strategies

Lack of independence equals weakness. These are difficult to cope with. As you get older there are fewer strategies to call upon.

The only way of dealing with the recent change - you have to look on the positive side. Accept - that's how it is.

Decision-making

Some decisions are taken out of your hands. You get used to that as you get older.

Time

gives a different perspective.

Others

are very important. My friends, and most of all, the family. I'm not too worried that they might cause me to make or not-make changes.

Julie and Philip**Philip**

Things that have happened since our interview:

Andrew was born, but he has been into hospital 15 times since then. Asthma, fits etc. death twice.

Been near to

Affected his development
Seen a speech therapist
Physiotherapist (flat footed)
Has to have special diet - now he is hyperactive
Has PORTAGE - a system for monitoring his development

This has been a strain upon all of us. J teaches the two girls at home, as well as looking after her mum & dad. They live 5 minutes away from us now. A miracle that they were able to get that house. They had to move. J's brother was killed and her parents could see the spot every time they went down their garden. These things have affected our relationship, but not between us. They have brought us closer together.

The worst thing is the extra burden on J. We are worried that the 2 older ones (children) don't feel pushed out. I have come to appreciate even more J's qualities - strength. We love each other more. Now there are problems about where to work, and how to get through them. We don't argue. That's down to J's tolerance.

Is change more or less stressful now?

We're under a lot more stress. Endless conversations. I hurt in myself because I see how hurt she's been. She says things about when they (J and her brother) were kids - I can't believe it's happened. I'm worried that it might be difficult to hold it all together.

Has your faith helped you?

Its never challenged our faith in believing what we believe. Problem is, we can't believe it was meant to happen. We have to see it for the best, but there's no merit in it. (The brother's death). J is able to talk to others. Just an awful, awful thing. It hasn't shaken our faith. I find as I get older that I want a simple child-like acceptance, but I think more and more about what faith means. For example, the whole area of healing (e.g. of a child not healed at a healing meeting - in a wheelchair). There are lots of thing you have to accept. If you could explain it all, it would be wonderful. You can't be dogmatic, but pragmatic. Yes, I believe, but I don't understand. With education, all the things I've done demonstrates how little I know. You have to come to a point to see your position in relationship to the Creator.

You see the changing character of your faith.

Yes, but I don't want to get more complicated than when I was 10 or 11.

Change

FUD - fear, uncertainty & doubt (computer jargon). Life's like that. Fast pace, no job security. Change itself is a great stress. People don't like change. Difficult to keep a handle on it.

Strategies

I'm not good at these - I go in too many directions at once. Change brings opportunity, but I find it difficult to - I wait to see how things fall. I crash into doors. Julie is better. She looks at things coolly.

Talk together?

Yes. Go for long walks, and talk things through - getting it off your chest. Find the threads. Doesn't necessarily solve the problems, but helps to reflect on things, sort things out. I'm a typical bloke. I internalise things, but we have a fair amount of telepathy.

Gender

My background is that the man makes decisions, calls the shots. I don't agree with that. I try and say, 'we'll do this', after we've both agreed. In relationships you get power games going on. We watched a programme on TV - couples talking. One says they get their own way. That's terrible, if you love each other you do it collectively.

Perception and role of others.

Yes people do affect you. The decision to 'home school'. People in my family were very unhappy. We don't see them any more. But before we decided to do it, we went to an open day and interrogated the people there. Got such a positive result - one an Ofsted inspector, so we decided to try. We had trouble with the family however. It upset us, but it doesn't mean to say you've got to do what they say. The inspector gave a brilliant report a couple of weeks ago. I feel very chuffed that its working well.

So you felt that listening to the right people had a good effect?

Spot on. Totally the right thing to do. Only in retrospect can you pick out what was good and bad. The worst thing was the pressure.

Julie*You've had some terrible changes since we last talked.*

Yes, I've had horrendous changes. I don't like it - the uncertainty - very unsettling. Wouldn't jump to change things myself.

Strategies

We stuck together to fill the day, to talk and be together. Fill the time with it - to stop the pain. Its the only way we dealt with my brother's death, and our baby's illness.

Decision-making

We couldn't. Thought we'd have to, but they (decisions) were taken for us. God did it.

Time

Still no further forward than I was then. At first the feelings were so intense and horrific. I wanted time to come in-between and make things better. But I can be right back there even now. (Two years on)

Relationship

Stability. That's been good. Nothing inside this house has been bad, but inside mum and dad's house it is terrible.

Role of others

I can understand that. Paul's family - they're wary of change. Mine are too. We were both brought up with that millstone. Paul is more able to make changes than me. I'm more likely to be wary.

Gender and age-related issues

At just about my age we missed out on what you can and cant' do because you're a girl. I would have gone into (male occupation - or activity at school), but I don't feel limited by who I am. That's God's influence. I can't believe I've got through *this*. If He can do that then male or female doesn't matter, but I still feel a bit removed from things.

Kate and Steve**Kate**

Changes since the interview?

I had my final op after finishing counselling with P., and since then, things (sexually) have got better. Not like we see on telly, but liveable with.

Steve and I are happy with what we've got. We have come to terms with it. Can't keep going on having more and more operations.

We are sad to have missed youthful sexuality. I hear what friends say about sexuality - like it was when they were 17, and I miss it, but we understand what we *can* have, and we have to settle for that.

You've adapted?

That's right. I don't have feelings of guilt any more.

We're lucky. We're both private people, and we don't tell other people what's going on. Luckily Steve wasn't like that, so not many people know how it is.

Did you achieve any of your plans?

Steve started his business, and it was going for 16 months, but we made a joint decision to close it. It wasn't making any money. I helped him decide. He was working 18 hours a day which is fine if you can see it working eventually, but we could see that the best thing was to get out.

That must have been a really stressful time.

Yes, but Steve's changed a lot in the last 18 months. He's become more laid back and calm. We have both mellowed out a lot, and its helped us to deal with things.

Have your plans for the future been achieved?

Well, we went to Amsterdam, and Steve proposed. *I never* expected it. It disturbed me. I wondered, 'What has changed? I hope he doesn't' think I loved him so much that I gave him this holiday, and he feels he must ask'.

But then when we got home, he went quiet on me and wouldn't talk - so then we went to see C (counsellor) for about 2 months. Steve went on his own first, then I went. I think I got more out of it than Steve. C explained that its not that Steve doesn't want it, but that marriage means so much to Steve that he couldn't just *do* it, he needed to really *feel* it.

I was getting a lot out of it, but C found that he was hitting his head against a brick wall, so eventually I said that we could be coming for 2 years - we'd both got to go away and work with what we had.

We didn't talk about it for a while. But we just came round to it, and then Steve became very keen. We're going to Amsterdam in March - on our own, to do it. Neither of us wanted a big white wedding. We want to be on our own.

I'm very happy about that. We're having a holiday as well so that it isn't too important.

The wedding is not the central focus

Exactly. We want it to be really wet and cold. We don't want to live up to anybody's expectations.

Themes - Kate & Steve*Change*

I haven't noticed the changes. They're very slow - over a period of time.

I like change. It's probably brought us together. Steve is like a snail. I'm like a hare. We have different ways with change.

Less frightening if its slow, un-noticeable?

Might be. We've decided that we aren't going to have children and I'm glad about that. I don't know what else could change in the relationship.

Strategies

We like talking about things a lot. There are areas to talk in - we go out for a walk, or talk in bed with the light out, or sit on the sofa and turn the telly off.

Decision-making

If Steve didn't stop the business, he could be in debt. We had to think of that. He wasn't capable of making the decision on his own. It was his vision, but I could see what would happen if he carried on.

Time

Yes, time gives time to get used to an idea.

Relationships

Yes, our relationship has helped us to cope with change because we're very good at talking. I think that counselling is good for anybody - even if they feel they talk anyway. In counselling you talk at a deeper level. You've got to answer questions you don't want to, so this means that you build up trust. You need to be able to trust each other to cope with change. I see a lot of my friends who just don't trust each other at all.

Self/Other perception.

Yes. I agree with that.

People outside don't affect the way you deal with change. We've become quite insular - to do what we want. Happy with each other, and therefore others don't have any effect. I'm happy with myself. If people don't like who I am, they have to lump it. I'm not going to change. The

wedding upset mum and dad, but we still intend to go ahead. We will do something when we get back which will go some way to making up to them.

Age and gender issues

Not age. We would like to change our house, but money is stopping it. So age makes no difference. Now, its financial. I don't feel I can't change because I'm a woman. No the house is the next thing we would really like.

We've both changed together. We have left a lot of people behind. They still stay the same. We've moved on in our heads.

Di and Rob

One of the earliest couples to be interviewed. Being a client couple there was opportunity for written feedback within a short period after completion of the graph. Rob and Di were asked to write their responses to my perception of the personal, couple, and cultural beliefs embedded in their narratives. This was a follow-up measure carried out before the main themes of the study were identified:

My summary of some of the main discourses contained in tape-recorded sessions

Each partner's response to the analysis

*Rob's main 'beliefs'**Rob's response to these**Personal*

If my life is in a mess, therapy or strategies will help me to heal the situation

Personal

Therapy/strategies will hopefully succeed in helping me to see differently, or to change and grow, but not to *heal* the situation.

Couple

We are closest as a couple when we are united against the outside world, but I see no future in our relationship

Couple

This is 100% accurate of my beliefs

The world

'Society expects me to be responsible for Di for the children in my house, and I resent this burden

The world

Yes, I feel this way

*Di's main 'beliefs'**Di's responses to these**Personal*

You can't trust men. They abuse you, and let you down, have different standards for themselves than the ones they have for you

Personal

This is only so in the relationships I have experienced, and I do not apply this generally as I am aware that I have chosen partners who fulfil this belief of mine.

Couple

We are just beginning again. Perhaps we didn't know each other before

Couple

We knew each other, but not our true selves. Although personal growth is an exciting process, it seems impossible to introduce my 'real' self to Rob.

The world

Like most women I think that sex should be about making love, showing feelings. This is how women see these things.

The world

Sex, however lighthearted is fine and acceptable, but in a relationship I believe times of love-making, i.e. attentiveness, freedom, total togetherness, are also needed in addition to sex, to make the relationship feel special.

Nature of Closeness Measures as marked on Graphs

Orientation	Code	Description of measure
Heterosexual	A	No graph measure
Lesbian	B	Measures very close. Sharp highs and lows. High now and in future
Heterosexual	C	No graph measure
Het. Client	D	No graph measure
Het. Client	E	Violent swings. Male much higher. Personal events measured. Male end high. Female no measure of now or future.
Het. Client	F	Violent swings - esp. male. Some in opposite directions to each other. General downward trend - now and in future.
Heterosexual	G	Close except sexual relationship breakdown. Male low, female high. High now and in future.
Het. Client	H	Both follow closely. Marked drop with marriage. High now and in future
Gay	J	Shared 'peaks and troughs'. High now and in future
Gay	K	Closely followed. Drop at 'split', continues up after. High now and in future
Lesbian	L	Very close. Drop during confrontational stage, donor problems, and counselling. Measure rises with parental acceptance. High now and in future
Lesbian	M	Very close. Except with new building. Distressed partner level drops. High now and in future.
Heterosexual	N	Shared graph. Measure drops when male explores reconciliation with former partner. High now and in future.
Heterosexual	O	Very close. Differences when friends told about relationship. Male closeness drops, female closeness rises. High now and in future.
Heterosexual	P	Violent swings. Each follows the other closely. Female high now, male level drops - linked to MA course.
Het. Client	Q	Widely divergent. Sharp lows and highs. Where measures do coincide, female more intense. High now and in future.
Lesbian	R	Measure begins at different levels, then follows closely. Joint low coincides with one partner's job. High now and in future.
Heterosexual	S	Uniformly high. Very close. Slight drop for female when male takes a new job - involves house move. High now and in future.
Heterosexual	T	Male partner - smooth measure. Female more erratic - coincides with pregnancy and neighbour trouble. Male high now and in future. Female slightly down.
Heterosexual	U	Diverse levels followed closely. Joint lows in closeness related to illness. High now and in future.
Gay	V	Begin and end together. Middle section diverse. Related to one partner with cancer whilst the other ran his own business. High now and in future
Heterosexual	W	Violent swings. Shared closely except for female during depressive episode. High now and in future.
Heterosexual	X	Violent swings. Shared closely except for future. Male high expectations, female measure drops.
Heterosexual	Y	Follow closely. Steady climb. No high/low swings. High now and in future
Gay	Z	Violent swings. Shared closely. Low coincides with separation issues. High now and in future.

APPENDIX 11

COUPLE'S LIFE CYCLE EVENTS

APPENDIX 12

Follow up Jeremy and Matt (With Jeremy)

Have any major changes occurred since the interview?

Yes. We moved house which has been great. We have our own space and can relax. It was difficult living with Matt's lodger in his flat.

I came back from my job abroad. For 3 or 4 months I was very anxious - feeling insecure. I had given up a well paid job, but now faced a career change. I now work with celebrities, rather than models. It suits me better, and I enjoy it. I started slowly. I was patient and it has gradually built up.

I will have to make another change soon. This is a 'young' industry. At 55 I will be too old. Its very youth orientated.

Do you still need change as much as you did?

Yes I have to have change but I'm bad at thinking long term, so I make changes on the spur of the moment. I've made lots of changes, and there are lots of things I could do (with respect to jobs in the future). I have to be brave enough to take opportunities.

I get bored easily.

Is change more or less stressful now?

Getting Matt to leave the flat was the undertaking of a lifetime. I threatened him in a non-threatening way. I said 'I am going to move. You stay if you want.' Matt doesn't like change at all. We are totally opposite. Matt is happier to put up with something he knows even if it is bad, rather than venture into something new.

Matt is now in a counselling course. He will go on. I pushed him into it.

I have the airhead schemes. He says 'it won't work'. We balance each other out.

During the interview the subject of gayness didn't seem to be important. Neither of you spoke about it very much. What impact does gayness have on your lives?

It doesn't for me - because I'm in an industry where I'm expected to be gay. Its different for Matt. Nobody at work, or in his family, knows that he is gay. His parents don't even know about me. I feel very sorry for him. He has to watch all the time what he says and does. Its different for him. This is where he was born, and where he comes from. My home is far away, and I had to prove myself before I could come out to my parents. He is now where I was 15 - 20 years ago.

Matt has a great fear of rejection. He is an incredibly private person. Its difficult for Matt to talk about these things.

As a couple we have our togetherness times and our apart times - with two men its important. Heterosexuals always expect to spend their free time together. Its not an issue with us.

Are lifestyle and money issues still problematic?

I still have higher earning power, and sometimes I have to deny myself a treat because I can't afford to pay for both of us, but when I compare the relationship with Alec to what I have now, I don't resent having to make sacrifices.

During the interview it emerged that the choice to opt for Matt was not a completely free one. How have you both dealt with that issue since it was uncovered?

That I chose Matt by default? Well its partly true, but certain things have helped since then. I have seen Alec a couple of times now, and I feel he's not an issue any more. He's tried to goad me. Before, he was still able to provoke me. For instance, I had a haircut and he said 'Oh that's nice' and I was pleased, and then his voice changed and he said 'well the old style never suited anybody.' Before it would have devastated me. I've been with Matt a couple of times, but we just wave if I see him. We don't bother to talk.

What with my input into the relationship with Matt, and now that we're on our own he's realised I'm not hankering after what I used to have.

Matt has grown up a lot in the last year or so. He has only come out (to himself?) recently.

Being emotionally strong seemed to be important to both of you. How do you feel about that issue now?

For me anyway that's the strongest part of the relationship. A lot of my life (especially with relationships) has been free floating. Matt provides grounding. If I'm not sure, worried about direction - he gives me honest, good opinion.

APPENDIX 13: Jill and Ian - Follow up:

Notes of a telephone conversation with Ian.

Have any major changes occurred since our interview?

We are still together. Still love each other.

We have put all our resources together - and have a house that's 'ours' This has cemented the relationship. We have 'joined forces' - its more than *saying* we're together. Involves financial commitment.

Is change more, or less stressful now?

Its stress elsewhere that drives us together. Last year I had a hard time at work. A dreadful class - plus time out for a hernia operation.

I had a job share - a good capable teacher - away for maternity leave, but when she came back they drove her away.

Then they sent me another job-share, a man this time, but placid and quiet. They drove him away. This was 97/98. Then there was an Offsted. I had to go full time for a while. It was horrendous. Now I have hypertension and blood pressure. I can retire in 2000, and might, if things don't improve. A better class now, but the 'Leader' takes in the kids that other schools won't have. It's beginning to disrupt the school, and some of the parents of 'good' children are threatening to take their kids away.

Have your plans for the future changed - to grow old together and not to marry?

We still want to grow old together. Marriage has been talked about - once - for a reason. Society conspires against us in terms of pension rights. Its in our interests to marry. Jill has mentioned it. However, doing something about it would change the relationship. We both have unhappy memories of marriage. It would change things even if we just had a quick visit to the registry office. We ought to do it really. It would be fairer to Jill - if anything happened to me, but I really don't want to spoil things.

How do you organise domestic roles between you now?

Whoever is home first does the meal. We have always shared the chores. We believe in 'give and take' always.

(Own Note: This is not wholly supported by interview material)

Why?

Otherwise its an old-fashioned attitude. There is a head of dep. at work who wants to retire and write a book. He is rebelling against staying at home and putting a meal on. She does everything (wife). Even does woodwork. Both work full-time. I don't think its fair.

Have you ever talked again about the issue of 'seeking reconciliation' vs. 'going back to P'?

What I say is often at variance with what I mean. We may have talked about it, but its not that important.

Do you still see yourselves in terms of Jill as 'organiser' and yourself as 'dreamer, romantic, the creative one'?

Jill is an achiever. I am creative I think. (shy of saying dreamer and romantic)

Gives example to illustrate Jill as achiever. Couple selling the house next door. Jill worked out an imaginative way of re-working their own boundaries before the sale. She is a practical, lateral thinker. A problem solver.