IMPASSE IN RELATIONSHIPS:
A WOMAN'S EXPERIENCE

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the phenomenon of impasse as it relates to women who are experiencing ambivalence regarding their intimate relationships. An analysis of literature and a case study illustration are integrated in an attempt to develop an understanding of this phenomenon.

The literature about impasse consists primarily of the writings of Frederick S. Perls, and other theorists from the Gestalt school. Perls' definition of impasse focuses on intrapersonal factors. The suggestion is made in this study that an impasse which occurs within the context of a relationship is further influenced by factors which are not purely intrapersonal; interpersonal and sociological factors also have an impact on this experience. Examination of the case study, and analysis of conceptual similarities between the impasse literature and other writings suggests what some of these factors may be.

Implications for counsellors are discussed, in terms both of a theoretical base and practical interventions which may be particularly helpful in working with this phenomenon.

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CHAPTER 1: RESEARCH PROBLEM AND OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY

Research Problem

Statement of Problem

Social or personal change is rarely a straightforward linear process. Indeed, in sardonic moments one might be tempted to conclude that part of the human condition is to exchange new problems for old. The women's movement has sought to provide women with opportunities for greater choice and fulfillment, and while there has certainly been progress, many women find themselves now caught between old ways and the new. They are unable to accept the old roles, but have no clear vision, too few models, and inappropriate "training" or support to actualize the new possibilities. Creating satisfying interpersonal relationships seems particularly difficult, as not only personal expectations, but also economic and political conditions challenge the familiar institutions of marriage, career, motherhood. In my personal experience as a woman talking with other women, and as a counsellor working with couples, I have been struck by two interrelated issues; the first being the many facets to the conflict and

ambivalence women experience in and regarding intimate relationships, the second being the inordinate degree of difficulty experienced by some women in their attempts to resolve these conflicts. I suggest that the concept of impasse is a useful key in understanding this dilemma. The issue to be examined in this study, then, is that of women who feel ambivalence in and about their intimate relationships, with a particular focus on understanding the nature and determinants of the impasse reached in attempts to resolve this conflict.

Statement of Purpose

This study has three purposes, listed below in order of priority:

1. To add to the understanding of the psychological concept of impasse by examining how it applies in the situation of women who feel ambivalent about their intimate relationships; to use the concept of impasse as a focus to develop both a phenomenological and theoretical base for understanding this experience.

2. To create from diverse theoretical sources and from a phenomenologically based case example a synthesis, which will consolidate methodologically and deductively a body of information about this issue.
3. Utilizing this base, to suggest theoretical and practical implications for counsellors working with this issue.

Research Questions

Questions to be examined are:

1. What is the nature of impasse, both generally and in this specific context? What are the contributory factors, what is the inner experience, and how does this manifest behaviorally?
2. What are the implications for counselling, in terms of facilitating movement through this impasse?

Limitations and Constraints

This study will remain within the following constraints:

1. The focus will be on women's experience of this issue. This is not to suggest that men have no such experience, but rather that both sociological and psychological influences may be different for men and women. In the interests of manageability and simplicity, this assumption is left unchallenged, and the findings of the study must then be interpreted with this in mind.
2. The relationship of primary concern to this study is an intimate, long-term heterosexual one, as has been conventionally defined by marriage. For the purposes of this study, I am also including common law or "living together" relationships in this category. I am aware that there is research suggesting that there are differences between legal and common law marriages, but I am making an assumption that these

differences are not critical to the experience under examination. Again, findings must be interpreted within this constraint.

Overview of Methodology

Research methods used in this study are a review of literature and a single case study. This review is not intended to be completely comprehensive, given the breadth of the areas of research included, but instead aims at synthesizing salient concepts from several areas of literature. The case study, which is undertaken from a phenomenological perspective, is intended as an illustration of the theoretical base developed from the literature.

Literature Review Methods

Selection of Literature

My interest in the issue of impasse in relationships developed out of conversations with several women, out of my counselling work with couples, and from reading Colette Dowling's The Cinderella Complex (1981), a book which discusses women's ambiguity about work, success, and relationships, and the effects of that ambiguity on their

lives. Tracing some of Dowling's references suggested to me that relevant research could be drawn from four broad areas: (1) feminine psychology and sex role literature, (2) relationship theory and marital counselling literature, (3) impasse in therapy, and (4) existential psychology.

Within these four areas I used as the focus the concepts of ambivalence and impasse. A computer search of Psychological Abstracts yielded few studies which related directly to women in this situation. Therefore, as well as tracing references from these key articles, I searched within the four areas mentioned above for major "state of the field" articles and recent reviews. From these reviews, references were traced until there began to be sufficient overlap that I concluded the search was, if not complete, at least representative of major trends.

Analysis of Literature

Articles were read through and abstracted. Most of the articles were theoretical or based on clinical experience rather than empirical in nature, thus critical evaluation of the literature in terms of research design, instruments used, or methods of analyzing findings was not

appropriate. Instead, I began to look for "unifying concepts", that is, concepts or themes which appeared in articles from very different orientations, but which were similar or identical in essence. Using these concepts and deductively relating them to the specific issue led to some degree of synthesis of the various areas of literature concerned.

Case Study Methods

Selection of Subject

The Subject for this study was a woman who was known to me through our mutual involvement with a counselling agency, where she worked in a volunteer capacity. She was also known to me as having been in conflict over her marital relationship for a prolonged period of time. Selection was therefore purposeful rather than random. This subject not only demonstrated the dilemma I wanted to investigate, but was also a potentially good subject in other ways: she was articulate and experienced in the counselling setting, and therefore, unlikely to be unduly stressed or inhibited by the interviews. Additionally, there was nothing particularly "atypical" or "deviant"

about her situation, and while the purpose of the case study was not primarily to generalize, I did not on the other hand want a subject whose experience was so unique as to be purely idiosyncratic. My final consideration was that this woman was already established in a setting where she could readily receive support should the interview process in any way prove stressful.

Data Collection

The primary method of data collection was a series of interviews conducted by myself. Three interviews of approximately two hours each were conducted over a period of four weeks. All were audiotaped for later transcription; no notes were used or taken during the interviews. Some open-ended focusing questions were used, but as the intent was to have the subject relate her experience as it appeared to her, structuring was minimal. The subject was also provided with a journal in which to record any thoughts or feelings that occurred between interviews, however, this was not utilized by the subject, who stated that journal writing was not a helpful mode for her. The subject was aware of my research purposes at all times,

and was free to question or comment on the research as well as to relate her own situation.

Six months following the initial interviews, a follow-up interview was conducted. As my analysis of the transcripts was completed, the subject was invited to add further comments, particularly in terms of whether she felt accurately portrayed by my interpretation of her situation.

Finally, quite coincidentally, I participated in two separate weekend workshops which the subject also attended, and in which she did some further exploration concerning this issue. Her permission was obtained to incorporate my observations of these experiences into my analysis. These workshops took place in the time period between the initial three interviews and the follow-up.

Data Analysis

All tape recorded interviews were fully transcribed, including my observer's comments and observations regarding nonverbal behaviors, changes in voice tone, and so on. Transcripts were then analyzed using the procedures described below.

Transcripts were read through to extract factual data (e.g. duration of marriage, nature of subject's job). In short, any information that could be termed "objective" in the sense of being observable and/or verifiable by external sources was noted. From this, the "bare bones" of the descriptive narrative were developed. Also, sought in this reading were the subject's accounts of relatively concrete issues within the relationship. While these issues are not objective in the same sense as the "facts" noted above, neither are they purely subjective. For instance, it would be relatively straightforward to confirm that there is a sexual problem within this relationship, although the subject's report is obviously from her bias.

Transcripts were read through again, this time extracting verbatim quotes from the subject which dealt specifically with her subjective experience (her feelings, interpretations, thoughts). Quotes relating to the experience of impasse were transferred to index cards, on the backs of which relevant observer's comments were noted. This was done separately for each of the three initial interviews, and for the follow up interview, in order to

develop an awareness of any change in the reported experience over time.

Transcripts were read through once again for examples of the main theoretical notions of Perls and other theorists, as well as for other factors which seemed important in the maintenance or movement of the impasse.

My observations as participant-observer in the workshops attended by both the subject and myself in the time period between the initial and follow up interviews were written.

All of the above were read by the subject in order to allow her to determine if she felt fairly represented by my portrayal of her experience.

CHAPTER 2: RATIONALE AND DISCUSSION OF METHODOLOGY

Although the debate over the value of qualitative methods has diminished over the past decade, there is still much controversy over the relative merits and demerits of these two perspectives. Since some of the methods used in this study (in particular the use of a single-subject case study, and the nature of involvement of the researcher) are controversial, I am prefacing the findings of the study with a discussion of some of the issues in this debate which I consider to be germane to the methods used in this study.

General Considerations in Qualitative and Quantitative Research

Some researchers contend that qualitative research is not justifiable because it is not "scientific". I would argue that while it does indeed proceed from a different set of guidelines than research based on the particular scientific model derived from the physical sciences, it is nonetheless scientific in the broad sense that it's aim is discovery or knowledge as opposed to ignorance (Web-

ster's, 1982). The guiding principles of qualitative research dictate that it is richer in description, and therefore, more difficult to reduce and to analyze than is quantitative research. It often deals with internal process rather than external events, and seeks to understand that process through the subject's own frame of reference. Hypotheses are generated and examined throughout the research process rather than being formulated beforehand as in quantitative research. I see the major arenas of difference between the qualitative and quantitative perspectives as being: (1) underlying assumptions, (2) goals, (3) differences of method, (4) ethics, and (5) criteria for evaluation. Each is briefly discussed below.

Underlying Assumptions

Paul Colaizzi (1978), in his excellent article on psychological research points out that qualitative and quantitative methods stem from different sets of assumptions, neither of which has been proven or disproven. Colaizzi suggests that quantitative or experimental methods drive from the four main assumptions that (1) the

world is reducible to what can be seen by the natural scientist, (2) human beings are no different than any other thing, (3) human existence is caused, and (4) human experience and the world function as independent processes. Phenomenological research* on the other hand assumes what Colaizzi terms "intentionality", that is, that human existence and the world constitute a unity, therefore, neither causes the other, but rather, each inextricably influences the process of the other. A further assumption is that human beings are different in some way or ways from other "things", and that some part of this human dimension is not reducible or definable in operational terms. Often the researcher proceeds from these assumptions without recognizing even that he or she holds them, and certainly not acknowledging that these assumptions lead to different concepts of "truth". The quantitative methods define truth or "objectivity", in

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*For the purposes of this discussion I am using the terms qualitative and phenomenological research interchangeably, although I recognize that not all qualitative research is phenomenological. By phenomenological I mean an attitude rather than any one method: I refer by this word to any method which attempts to describe the quality of a person's experience in terms of that individual's own frame of reference.

terms of that which can be observed, measured, counted, manipulated or operationalized, whereas a phenomenological view of truth or objectivity is seen to be "fidelity to phenomena" (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 52), a concept which demands the recognition that both our own and others' experience is a part of that truth. Defining or describing what experience is once again has been the subject of many pages of philosophical and scientific debate; for the purpose of this discussion, what is meant is that which we encounter through our senses and process or interpret with the input of our minds, emotions, belief systems, etc. Personal experience may or may not coincide with consensual or observable reality.

This last point brings up the question of whose reality is then most important - those inside an experience, or those observing it from the outside. Researchers have tended to use only one or the other perspective when studying a phenomenon, and because the two perspectives are often contradictory, one is assumed to be more valid than the other. In a paper discussing research methods used to study interpersonal relationships, David Olsen (1977) disputes this assumption, stating that insiders

can provide information about their "subjective reality" and outsiders can provide data on "objective reality", and that both realities are necessary in understanding relationships. In other words, "phenomenological reality" and "objective reality" can both be true, and yet contradictory. It follows then, that research methods appropriate to the study of each form of reality are equally important.

Goals

A second difference between qualitative and quantitative methods is in the goals of each perspective. Quantitative research aims at developing an exact science, and thus focuses on developing a rigorous methodology as well as on establishing facts and laws which will promote the understanding and control of behavior. Qualitative methods aim primarily at understanding the experiential world of those persons studied, and is less concerned with finding ways to change or control elements of the subject's world.

Quantitative methods have most often sought to discover "universal laws", that is, in the classical argument

of idiographic versus nomothetic research, quantitative researchers have favored a nomothetic approach. William Runyan (1982, p. 7) proposes an alternate model in which he suggests that the goals of psychological research should be threefold: that is, to discover what is true of all human beings, what is true of groups of human beings, and what is true of individual human beings. These three levels, states Runyan, are semi-independent: there are some overlapping or ripple effects from one level of inquiry to another, but it cannot be assumed that what is true at an individual level can be generalized, or conversely, that what is true at a general level can be invariably applied to all individuals. Therefore, there is a need for methodologies at all three levels.

Differences of Method

It is not within the scope of this discussion to examine in detail the many specific methods employed within the two perspectives. Rather, there are some blanket differences in method, of which I wish to discuss several.

The first such generalization to be noted is that the two perspectives differ in notation systems used, and in method of analysis (Schwartz & Jacobs, 1979, p. 4). Quantitative methods use a system of notation which involves, as the name implies, counting and measuring, whereas the qualitative methods employ descriptive and naturalistic language. The system of analysis used in quantitative methods is based on reduction by statistical analysis, whereas qualitative data are generally not reduced.

Another generalization regarding these two perspectives is that qualitative research has tended to focus on the study of persons from a holistic point of view, that is, the whole individual within his or her environmental context is studied. Quantitative research has tended to isolate small units of human behavior for study with the assumptions that, first of all, it is possible to do this, and secondly, that these bits of information when summed yield an accurate representation of the whole.

The last methodological difference to be mentioned here concerns the involvement and influence of the researcher, and of the setting in which the study is con-

ducted. In quantitative research, attempts are made to control, and hence "cancel" these effects by standardizing them for all subjects. In his article on the relationship of experimentor and subject, Sidney Jourard suggests that such attempts to eliminate bias fail, because they do not credit sufficiently the intelligence or freedom of the subject to present him or herself in whatever way he or she chooses. He writes:

> A person truly can choose a being, in the laboratory, that will uphold or refute his experience (fantasy or perceptual) of what the researcher wants him to show. (Jourard, 1967, p. 111)

Qualitative methods make more use of naturalistic settings, and acknowledge more explicitly the presence and influence of the researcher, often making the presence and aims of the researcher quite available to the subjects. It is assumed, first, that no satisfactory and ethical method exists to remove or even truly standardize the confounding effects of a contrived situation, and second, that the overtness of the researcher's approach will foster greater trust and openness in the subject, thus eliminating some of the need for more covert measures of control. In other words, instead of trying to

eliminate the effect of the researcher, qualitative methods take into account that the researcher is one variable influencing the outcome.

Thomas Cottle (1977) writes of the researcher as an instrument:

> As the life-study makes plain, what we know about another person, what he or she gives to us in conversation, is in great measure that person's response to us. We ourselves are the agents of information; people give us what they believe we want or assume we are willing to accept... To a degree that can never be calculated, I, the researcher, determine the phenomenology and expressions, and hence, the personal accounts of those people I study. (p. 16)

While Cottle is speaking specifically of the life-study method here, I suggest that to some extent this is true of any method, even those in which the researcher has no face-to-face contact with the subject. This does not destroy the validity of the research; it is simply, from my perspective, a given of any and all research that cannot properly be removed.

Ethics and Values

As well as differing in their assumptions about the nature of reality, and in the methods used to explore this reality, qualitative and quantitative perspectives also lead to differing sets of ethics or values. The separation of ethical guidelines from their methodological concomitants is somewhat artificial, as one gives rise to the other; nevertheless, there are two areas in which I see the two schools of thought differing in fundamental ways.

The first concerns the issue of depersonalization. Quantitative research, in its anxiety to be objective and not biased by human subjectivity has at times contributed to what becomes a mechanistic and "heartless" view of the world. Maslow has called this process "desacralizing" (Maslow, 1967). This depersonalization has been part of a long historical process, in which the sense of numinous content or value has gradually been removed from the world, including human beings, making political processes of exploitation and abuse easier, and resulting in a consciousness of "estrangement" (Starhawk, 1982), in which people come to feel themselves as isolated, powerless, and insig-

nificant. Starhawk comments wryly that:

> no longer do we see ourselves as having even a dubious image as flawed images of God. Instead we imagine ourselves in the image of the machine as flawed conputers with faulty childhood programming. (p. 7)

The conceptualization of the research process as non-manipulative and overt can make some stand against this sense of depersonalization. Colaizzi suggests replacing the notion of "subject" with that of "co-researcher". As stated, this is closely linked with methodology: the subject can become co-researcher only when viewed as an informed equal, whose experience is as valid as that of the researcher. The two must engage in "dialogue" in the sense meant by Martin Buber, as "I-Thou" rather than "I-It" (Buber, 1970). Traditional criteria for interviewing have not fostered this type of dialogue: on the contrary, values such as detachment of the interviewer, structure, and unilateral exchange of information have been promulgated as correct interview strategy. This orientation may also be viewed as consistent with stereotypical "masculine" values:

> the paradigm of the "proper" interview appeals to such values as objectivity, detachment, hierarchy and "science" as an important cultural activity which takes priority over people's more individualized concerns. Thus the errors of poor interviewing comprise subjectivity, involvement, the "fiction" of equality and undue concern with the ways in which people are not statistically comparable. This polarity of "proper" and "improper" interviewing is an almost classical representation of the widespread gender stereotyping which has been shown, in countless studies, to occur in modern industrialized civilizations" (Oakley, 1981, p. 38)

A second issue on which the two perspectives adopt different ethical stands is that of control. Colaizzi has suggested that the aim of traditional research is not primarily understanding, but rather the ability to control (i.e. to seek out "technological manipulanda") and that this aim in fact can never be ethical (Colaizzi, p. 57). While this is perhaps an extreme position - after all, one wonders for what purpose do we then wish to understand if not to affect in some way our world - however, the two perspectives obviously differ in their notion of where acceptable limits to the use of information lie.

Criteria for Evaluation

Since the two perspectives differ in so many ways, it seems reasonable to suggest that the criteria for evaluation would also differ. Notions of reliability, statistical significance, validity, while obviously appropriate to experimental methods may not be the most appropriate criteria by which to judge qualitative research. Even within the two broad perspectives, more specific orientations (e.g. psychodynamic, behavioral, phenomenological) find their strongest support in different methodologies, and appear inadequate when judged by the criteria pertaining to a different methodology. Runyan states this clearly:

> Each orientation seems to find its strongest support in different methodological foundations and to be particularly suited for different applications. For example, a behavioral view seems to receive its strongest support on experimental grounds and to be particularly suited to problems of behaviour change. A psychodynamic view seems to receive its strongest support from clinical observation and from personal experiences in therapy and to be most useful for the interpretation of disturbed thought, affect and behavior. A phenomenological view seems to receive some support from both clinical and scientific contexts, and to be most useful in the conduct of interpersonal rela-

> tionships....Each orientation may appear unimpressive when viewed from different epistemological bases or when applied to different uses. (Runyan, 1982, p. 97)

Given that this is the case, then, what are some possible criteria which would be appropriately applied to qualitative methods?

First of all, let me hasten to say that I am not unequivocally advocating throwing out criteria such as reliability or validity when it comes to evaluating qualitative research. Much qualitative research can indeed be subjected to these criteria, and many researchers are attempting to refine qualitative methods such that they will withstand scrutiny from this point of view. Runyan (1982a, 1982b), for instance, has done extensive work on developing a more rigorous case study methodology, in which tests, standardized measures of process and outcome, validation of introspective reports by comparison with behavioral or other external data are just a few of the ways in which the gap between quantitative and qualitative methods can be bridged.

However, to some extent, this is skirting the issue: there remains still the problem that some qualitative methods simply do not lend themselves to evaluation by

these traditional criteria. At this time, while much has been written that begins to point in directions for evaluating qualitative research, no neat set of criteria exists of comparable refinement to those criteria that have been developed for quantitative methods. Some preliminary ideas have been suggested. Colaizzi has suggested that all research must be existentially significant, and must oppose dehumanization. Additionally, he proposes that in order to ensure that researchers uncover their own biases and presuppositions, all research must be dialogual, that is, the "subject" must be granted equal status as a co-researcher. A closely related criterion might be that of meaningfulness. Conflicting evidence as to the effectiveness of psychotherapy may be explainable in terms of the fact that therapy can be shown to have a demonstrable effect without altering the well being of the subject (Strupp & Hadley, cited in Gurman, 1978, p. 520); conversely recipients of psychotherapy often claim great personal meaning in their lives without any external effect of change being observable (Kisch & Kroll, 1980). The criterion of meaningfulness can be similarly applied to research: because a piece of research irrefutably

demonstrates a "fact" of human behavior does not yet make this meaningful in the lives of individuals, and conversely, some issues which are greatly significant to the individuals are not able to be clearly understood by the research processes most often used. Another possible criterion is the degree of clinical usefulness, as suggested by George Howard (1983), who cites several recent surveys of practitioners which suggest that they rely very little on research findings in their clinical work (Cohen, 1979; Ivens, 1980; Larsen & Nichols, 1972).

Finally, both research perspectives have in common certain basic criteria, such as clear and complete description of methods used (whatever those methods), and that conclusions be data based (regardless of whether that data be "outer" and objectively observable, or "inner" and subjectively reported).

Obviously, these evaluative criteria are not yet defined clearly enough; they are offered not as a conclusive set of criteria, but rather with the intent to caution that our judgement of qualitative research not be based on an inappropriate evaluative process, and that instead attention be devoted to developing criteria that will make

rigorous evaluation of alternate methodologies possible.

General Considerations in Case Study Methodology

Even more controversial than qualitative research in general is case study research. Many criticisms have been levelled at case studies, many quite justifiably, but many also because as William Runyan has stated, there is a great deal of conceptual confusion regarding just what a case study is: much of the opposition reflects either disagreement with the ideology of qualitative research (as discussed in the previous section), or problems with the specific methods used to conduct the case study, rather than with case studies in themselves (Runyan, 1982b, p. 441). For the purposes of this thesis, I am adopting Runyan's definition of a case study as

> a form for organizing and presenting information about a specific person and his or her circumstances. (Runyan, 1982a, p. 127)

The method of collecting this information should be considered a separate issue.

The two criticisms most frequently directed at case studies are first, that case studies have no valid re-

search purpose since one cannot generalize from such small numbers, and, second, that case studies are not reliable for testing cause and effect, so alternate interpretations of the data are possible.

Generalizability of case studies is indeed limited, particularly in single-subject designs. However, generalizability is not the only reason for doing research; exploration and understanding of a single person or phenomenon has also an inherent value. Seeking general laws of behavior is one approach to understanding human behavior; explorations into diversity and individuality is equally valid, and case studies can contribute to the latter. A second point regarding generalizability is that both case studies and experimental designs have problems of generalizability, albeit different ones. Case studies have limited generalizability because of their small sample size, whereas experimental designs are limited because the method and process often is so far from any naturalistic process that generalizing across settings becomes a problem.

The second criticism noted was that case studies are unreliable and cannot rule out alternative explanations

(due to reliance on either the subject's or the researcher's interpretations) and therefore, cannot be used for hypothesis testing. First, it may in many situations be reasonable to consider the interpretations of the subject or researcher as having merit. Second, even judging case studies by criteria usually used in experimental designs, it is possible to achieve acceptable standards of reliability by utilizing standardized tests, and process and outcome measures rather than the researcher's subjective impressions (Hill, Carter & O'Farrell, 1983; Lambert, 1983), or by cross-checking any subjective interpretations with external data (Runyan, 1982b, p. 443). Finally, hypothesis testing is only one of several approaches to research: some research does not set out with the intent to support or disprove a hypothesis, but rather seeks to answer questions about an individual's experience that cannot fully be answered except by asking "What is it like?". The answer to this question is best provided by the subject; little "interpretation" is required, and neither does it matter whether the subject is giving "objective" truth or a "subjective" account, for it is the meaning conferred upon the event by the subject that

must be understood. It is this meaning - not the meaning seen by the researcher - that determines the subject's living in the world. This meaning may or may not coincide with the perceptions of others; as was noted earlier, both "truths" may coexist and yet be different, even contradictory, since one is an insiders experience and the other an outsider's.

Finally, it is quite possible that it is the understanding of this inside meaning that gains a potential helper entry into the subject's world in a way that facilitates change. As counsellors, we meet a client armed with our knowledge of behavioral laws and our knowledge of techniques, but ultimately this must be suspended, or at least placed in the background in order for us to truly hear the individual. This, then, is not so very different from the research process of conducting a case study, and may be one of the strongest reasons for continuing attempts to learn from case studies. Ease of translation into clinical practise by counsellors is certainly an important asset.

Considerations Specific To This Study

The above has been a discussion in general terms of considerations in qualitative and more specifically, case study research. In this final section, I wish to present the reasons that my study utilized the particular methods it did. These reasons fall into two categories: the suitability of the research method to the researcher, and the suitability of the research method to the topic.

Suitability of Research Method to Researcher

Each individual's personality, background and training leads to the formulation of an idiosyncratic existential base. This base or world view will influence not only the types of issues a researcher is interested in but also the ways in which he or she thinks to investigate. Carl Jung wrote in his Introduction to The Secret of the Golden Flower

> An ancient adept has said: "If the wrong man uses the right means, the right means work in the wrong way"... everything depends on the man and little or nothing on the method. For the method is merely the path, the direction taken by a man. The way he acts if the true expression of his

> nature. If it ceases to be this, then the method is nothing more than an affectation, something artificially added, rootless and sapless, serving only the illegitimate goal of self deception. (Jung, 1969, p. 83)

The research method, then, must be congruent with the personality and the world view of the researcher.

For me personally, while my academic background included training in methods of traditional quantitative methods, I found several elements in my "nature" that left me frustrated with the exclusive use of these methods. The first such element was an interest in holism, and in trying to integrate or synthesize knowledge from diverse areas, a task which I felt psychological research too often ignored. A second element was my interest in the "inner" perspective, and in the strivings of individuals to make sense of and find meaning in their own experience. A final element was my concern with the sense of powerlessness and "desacralization" (Maslow, 1967) experienced by many individuals, and the ramifications of that despair in the world. I saw qualitative methods and the phenomenological-existential approach to the study of persons as fitting very closely with my own needs and beliefs regarding these issues.

Suitability of Research Method to Topic

I chose to combine a literature review and theoretical analysis with a case study in an attempt to link together the insider's perspective (the subject's experience) and the outsider's perspective (mine, and the various theorists cited). I wished to provide some background and sense of context by examining the literature, but also to avoid losing touch with the essential data, that being the experience of the phenomenon of impasse as reported by an actual person.

Secondly, as discussed in a previous section, my research did not begin with a specific hypothesis, but rather with my puzzlement about the phenomenon of impasse: the questions and answers which arose throughout my research developed out of my basic question "What is this phenomenon of impasse all about?" I also found "impasse" to be a somewhat slippery and intangible phenomenon, and not a readily observable behavior, thus it seemed the person's reported experience was an important key to understanding.

CHAPTER III: CONCEPTIONS OF IMPASSE FROM THE LITERATURE

Purpose of the chapter

This chapter has two aims:

a. To extract and gather together the scattered writings of Perls on impasse, in order to achieve a unified presentation of his thought.

b. To enrich this basic concept of impasse by reviewing the writings of followers of Perls who have tried to develop in greater detail various aspects of Perls' concept.

This chapter then, is largely paraphrastic, giving in a consolidated form the basic conceptions of impasse as found in the literature.

Perls' Thought On Impasse

Historical Antecedents Influencing Perls' Theory

Philosophical

Perls was born at a time when the general philosophical zeitgeist was beginning to shift from the Aristotelian tradition of strict cause and effect and dualism

(mind-body, God and human, etc.) to a more organic conception emphasizing interrelatedness, change, and freedom. The belief in a static cause and effect reality was being challenged both by discoveries in the natural sciences as well as by new philosophical thinking such as Edmund Husserl's phenomenology, and Sartre's existentialism (Stewart, 1974, p. 13).

As well as being influenced by the general philosophical climate, Perls also acknowledged very specifically the thinking of Sigmund Friedlaender, in particular for two concepts. One is the notion of differential thinking, based on the theory that events relate to a zero-point, from which there is differentiation into opposites (e.g. pleasure-pain). This closely relates to Perl's notion of homeostasis, and "personal splits". One of Perls' therapeutic techniques involves identifying and clarifying inner polarities or splits, such that the individual could integrate both sides and return to a more "centered" position (i.e. the zero-point). This relates directly to Perls' concept of impasse, as will be described later.

The other of Friedlaender's concepts which Perls adopted is that of creative indifference, by which he

means that the polar extremes deriving from the zero point are unimportant whereas the process of differentiation around the zero-point is significant. Perls similarly placed no value judgement on either extreme in a polarity, but believed that it was necessary to activate the cultivation of a balance, such that the individual could return to a "zero-point".

Eastern philosophy, particularly Zen Buddhism, was the other major philosophical influence on Perls. From Zen Perls was perhaps most influenced by the Eastern conception of nothingness, which he described as "no-thingness":

> Nothingness in the Eastern languages is no-thingness. We in the West think of nothingness as a void, an emptiness, a nonexistence. In Eastern philosophy and modern philosophical science nothingness - no-thingness - is a form of process, ever moving. (Perls, 1970, p. 19)

This concept is central to Perls' work with impasse, in that he believed that the individual experiences a sense of emptiness, which in fact is not empty at all, but rather is a "fertile void", out of which come the answers the person needs (Perls, 1969, p. 61).

Psychological Influences

Perls was trained as a classical psychoanalyst, but came to differ with Freudian psychoanalysis in terms of both theory and technique. One of the influences which was important in Perls' movement away from the Freudian model was Wilhelm Reich, who was Perls' personal analyst for several years. A number of Reichian ideas can be seen to have a direct bearing on Perls' thinking with respect to impasse (E. W. Smith, 1975). These ideas are listed below:

1. remembrances must be accompanied by appropriate affect in order to be therapeutic.
2. frustration is as important as support in producing psychological growth.
3. the style of communication is more important than the content (leading to Perls' emphasis on "how" not "why").
4. the concept of muscular armor, and of resistance as a total organismic function (leading to Perls' emphasis on body awareness and nonverbal behaviors).
5. the concept of "breakdown of secondary narcissism", which involves a condition of temporary helplessness followed by a very strongly energetic period as cus-

tomary defenses break down (leading to Perls' idea of movement from impasse to explosion).

Perls on Impasse

Definition and Origins of Impasse

Perls defined impasse as:

> the position where environmental support or obsolete inner support is not forthcoming any more, and authentic self-support has not yet been achieved. (Perls, 1969, p. 31)

He believed that the prototypical impasse occured in childhood, when a child does not receive appropriate support from the environment, and can not yet provide its own support. At this time the child begins to manipulate the environment by playing phony roles (helpless, weak, charming) in order to get the needed support (Perls, 1969, p. 39).

The adult experiencing impasse is still using this strategy; even though she/he does now in fact possess the resources to cope, she/he <u>believes</u> these resources are not present. The person in impasse, then, prevents him or herself from actualizing his or her potential in favor of the security of the "status quo", which for Perls meant

remaining as a child, incapable of dealing with frustration and refusing to mobilize inner resources. The avoidance of utilizing one's own resources is justified by the holding of catastrophic expectations.

Impasse as a Layer of Personality

Perls described impasse as a "stuck" point in attempting to resolve specific issues, but also as a layer of personality which could be seen in the individual's growth (Perls, 1969, p. 59). He developed a model of neurosis involving five layers of personality, stressing that these layers were to be viewed as a process, rather than as rigid structural layers. He merely considered the movement toward authentic (that is, organismically appropriate) behavior as proceeding through this process. The five layers he described are:*

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*Perls himself, and others using this model, have not been consistent in either labelling or ordering of layers. Sometimes Perls labels the five layers as Phony, Phobic, Impasse, Implosive and Explosive, other times as Cliche, Phony, Impasse, Implosive and Explosive. The ordering of the Impasse and Implosive layers is sometimes reversed. Again his emphasis that these are not discrete layers but rather a flowing process should be considered the main point.

Cliche Layer. The first layer Perls described is the cliche layer, which consists of formalized and very superficial interaction in the world (for instance, the ritualized exchange of greetings, prescribed behavior at meetings, etiquette). These interactions simplify our daily lives to some extent, but do not involve the personal needs of the individual in any significant way.

Phony Layer. This is also a superficial layer, in which we play "as - if" roles. We attempt to actualize and/or present to the world an ideal self image rather than to live authentically. This leads to the formation of "holes" in the personality: those parts of our person that do not fit into our ideal self image are alienated and in effect become missing.

Impasse Layer. The impasse layer is characterized by avoidance and resistance. Once we become aware of our phoniness, and that our needs are not being fulfilled through the roles we play, we become "stuck". We are no longer blindly satisfied with our roles, yet we are still unwilling to give up manipulating to get what we want. We maintain our roles with catastrophic fantasies of what might happen should we behave differently, and with many

reasons that we "should not" change. We avoid frustration. Perls calls this avoidance the "phobic attitude". Immediately behind this avoidance is the feeling and fear of deadness, emptiness, nothingness: we are afraid that there is no alternative, no real self behind the phony roles.

Implosive Layer. At this level, we continue to be paralyzed by opposing forces (i.e. growth/avoidance, authenticity/manipulation) and continue to feel emptiness and deadness (Perls also calls this the death layer). All the energy of the organism is pulled inward or "imploded" in an attempt to safely hold ourselves together. The energy invested in holding these opposing forces in check is tremendous, even though from the outside nothing appears to be happening.

Explosive Layer. The final layer in the process involves the breakthrough of the authentic experience of the organism. Perls believed that this breakthrough happens as an "explosion", and that there are basically four types of explosion into authenticity: explosion into grief, into joy, into anger, or into orgasm, depending on what feeling or needs have been denied. These explosions

may be intense or mild, depending on the degree of holding back. Perls did not believe that a single explosion was curative, or that explosion without understanding was beneficial. Instead, he likened the process to that of a gasoline engine, in which minor explosions must occur constantly as long as the engine runs.

Movement Through Impasse

Perls stated that impasse or stuckness was mostly a matter of fantasy, that is, that the individual in fact possesses the resources to cope despite the belief that he or she does not. Perls believed that awareness in and of itself could move the impasse, because once the person becomes fully aware of what his or her organismic needs are, there is no longer a pull between opposing forces, but only the natural urge of the organism to fulfill its needs. He writes:

> The impasse cannot be broken...experience, awareness of the now, is sufficient to solve all difficulties. If you are fully aware of the impasse, the impasse will collapse, and you will find yourself suddenly through it. I know this sounds rather mystical, so I will give you an example. There are two items on the menu and you cannot decide which to order. But nature does not

> work by decisions, but by preferences. If you prefer one food more than the other, you are through the impasse. (Perls, 1970, p. 26)

Perls used many techniques to facilitate this awareness, some of which will be discussed in a later section. At this point, it is sufficient to say that the fostering of awareness as Perls saw it involved both frustration and support. Efforts to manipulate others into providing support, or to avoid the experience of emptiness and confusion characteristic of the impasse layer were to be frustrated; attempts at self-support were to be encouraged.

Impasse in Relationships

Perls did not focus to any great extent on how impasse would be manifested in a relationship. His work on impasse deals primarily with intrapersonal, not interpersonal processes. At one point, however, he commented that "the average marriage" could be considered an example of impasse:

> Another good example of impasse is the average marriage, where the two partners are not in love with each other but with a concept of what the other should be. Each has almost no idea of what the other is like, and as soon as the behavior of one doesn't fit with what the partner

> expects, he becomes dissatisfied and starts playing the blaming game. He blames her: she should change; he blames himself: he should change - all this rather than realize that they are in an impasse because they are in love with an image, a fantasy. They are stuck. But they don't know how they are stuck, and that's the impasse. The result of the impasse is to keep the status quo. They may want to change, but they don't: they keep the status quo because they are too frightened of going through the impasse. (Perls, 1970, p. 25)

Other Researchers on Impasse

The following section abstracts the work of five researchers who have examined impasse. Much of their writing echoes the thinking of Perls; their articles are primarily more detailed expansions of some of the concepts or techniques mentioned by Perls.

George Wills (1978)

In this article, Wills develops a theoretical model to clarify Perls' technique of facilitating movement through the impasse. He presents a brief case example of a transition from impasse through implosion to explosion,

then develops a model which demonstrates and expands this process. He envisions the process as movement from a predominantly "there and then" mode dominated by the therapist, through a transitional stage to a predominantly "here and now" mode dominated by the client. Wills gives examples in some detail of both therapist and client behaviors throughout this process. For instance, in the initial "there and then" mode, the client often expresses confusion, sets him or herself double-bind tasks, wants two incompatible things, displays discrepant verbal and nonverbal behavior, and uses past or future tenses. The therapist is active in this stage, frequently initiating with the goal of increasing the client's awareness. Techniques include empathic focusing on the minutae of the client's behavior, confrontation about inconsistencies, and suggesting Gestalt awareness games. In the transitional stage, the client experiences a growing sense of despair and emptiness, often verbalizing such statements as "I don't know what to do" or "I feel hopeless". The client begins in this stage to notice how he or she evades feelings. The therapist must continue to strongly encourage awareness, despite the despair. Wills believes

that the critical point at which the implosion changes occurs in this stage, when the client ceases to resist or manipulate and enters instead into an "I-thou" relationship with the therapist. In the final "here and now" stage, the client's awareness of needs and feelings is dominant, and there is recognition of previously blocked memories and feelings. The client no longer engages in approval or permission seeking, and initiates much of the exploration. The therapist's role at this time is primarily to listen, and to encourage greater concreteness by giving feedback about how the client is perceived.

Wills believes that the most important aspect of this process is locating the polarized emotion that relates to the client's impasse (e.g. love-hate, kindness-cruelty):

> The experiencing of both emotions together with the attendant memories (visual, auditory, olfactory, and tactile) seems to allow the client to move to the zero-point where both poles can be experienced simultaneously. The gestalt is complete, the fixation over, and flow is restored in that area. (p. 189)

In other words, where there is impasse, there is a "frozen" polarity - only one side is experienced. Experience of both sides with accompanying affect is necessary to

move the impasse.

Edward W. L. Smith (1978)

In this article Smith recapitulates earlier claims that Gestalt techniques which can be categorized as presentification (bringing into the present real or fantasied past event such that the whole organism experiences the event) and concentration (intensely focused awareness of moment to moment experience) lead to experiences which could be considered altered states of consciousness. An altered state of consciousness was defined by A. Ludwig in 1969 as having the following criteria: alterations in thinking, disturbed time sense, loss of control, changes in emotional expression, body image change, perceptual distortions, changes in meaning or significance, sense of the ineffable, feelings of rejuvenation and hypersuggestibility. The remainder of the paper focuses on impasse, and suggests that the experience of impasse is an example of such an altered state.

Smith also discusses the notion of contact. Having reached the impasse layer, the client will experience phobic anxiety, and as a result will avoid making contact.

Smith describes contact as interaction with the environment which involves both awareness (recognition and experience) of a need and excitement (organismic activation). Awareness is easily overshadowed by catastrophic expectations, leaving the organism in a state of excitement without the direction provided by awareness. This undirected excitement is experienced as anxiety, which causes the individual to restrict and control contact. Smith writes:

> Returning to the impasse phenomenon per se, it is the lack of healthy contact which leads to the feelings of helplessness and confusion. The way out is not to withdraw, but to endure and experience fully the feelings of confusion, helplessness, and fear. If this is done, the organismic process will continue and implosion will be followed by explosion into powerful, healthy contact. (p. 91)

Smith suggests the therapist's use of both frustration and support, and gives several specific examples of each. If the confusion of impasse can be fully encouraged, the resultant awareness for the client can be particularly intense. Perls termed this a "mini-satori"; Smith likens it to a hypnotic trance or an altered state of consciousness. The result is a completion of a Gestalt, which may be at one of two levels. A "behavioral gestalt" involves

the completion of some specific behavior, or experience; a "person gestalt" involves reowning a whole class of behaviors which had been split off and denied.

Richard Wallen (1970)

Wallen also conceives of impasse as resulting from faulty formation of "Gestalten". This may result from (a) poor perceptual contact with the outside world, (b) blocked expression of a need, or, (c) repression (i.e. basically a motoric response in which the individual holds back the appropriate organismic response, for instance, smiling when there is an urge to cry). Since the need either does not come to awareness, or does not get expressed, the result obviously is that the need is not met, and therefore, continues to interfere with other needs. Thus, impasse occurs because there is no clear "figure": the "ground" becomes cluttered with unfinished needs which prevent the individual from clearly experiencing present needs. Hence, he or she experiences indecision, confusion, and lack of clarity, which may be expressed behaviorally in fixed, repetitive behavior, lack of interest or lethargy, or confused, poorly organized speech.

Richard Miller and Lawrence Bloomberg (1968)

Much of this article is devoted to a case study which documents a specific technique. In their introduction, Bloomberg and Miller discriminate between two types of impasse: therapist impasse (which occurs as a result of a lack of awareness on the part of the therapist); and Process impasse, which corresponds to the phenomenon described by Perls.

Susan Campbell (1980)

Campbell writes about impasse with respect to relationships. She postulates 5 stages in the development of a relationship, and suggests that impasse often occurs when a couple is at a transition point between developmental stages. These transition periods are characterized by one set of needs having been satisfied, and therefore, not being felt as pressing, and a feeling of unrest arising out of the emerging new needs which have not yet become clear. She believes that every couple at some point feels "stuck": they experience frustration in the relationship and yet are uncertain about how or what to

change. She conceives of impasse as an opportunity to learn something new, and to move forward to a new stage of relationship. Her description of impasse in an interpersonal setting closely parallels the experience of intrapersonal impasse described by Perls and the other theorists cited above:

> The impasse exists because the forces pressing toward change (usually the awareness of a "problem" or an unmet need) are exactly equal to the forces resisting change (usually due to a perceived lack of inner or outer resources or to a "hanging on" to familiar patterns). And as long as this stasis is maintained, no change will occur. The "new input" needed from a counsellor, then, is for something which will alter the stasis and break the impasse: a stronger clearer realization of a need perhaps; recognition that one possesses resources that were formerly unknown or unused, or perhaps simply a greater willingness to risk the unknown, to stretch oneself. (Campbell, 1980, p. 169)

CHAPTER IV: THE CASE STUDY

Purpose of the Chapter

The case study portion of this research was undertaken as an illustration of the phenomenon of impasse. There are three purposes served by the case study:

1. To enrich the understanding of impasse by hearing the subjective experience of the phenomenon, that is, to gain some understanding of "what is it like?"
2. To illustrate some of the theoretical notions from the literature with specific examples, thus clarifying the constructs, and "grounding" them in data.
3. To examine what has been considered primarily an intrapersonal phenomenon within the context of a relationship, in order to develop some preliminary ideas about how intrapersonal and interpersonal dynamics may be related with respect to this phenomenon.

Format of the Chapter

As described in chapter one, interview transcripts were analyzed for both "objective" and "subjective" con-

tent. The first portion of the case study presents this material as a narrative, with verbatim quotations from the subject where appropriate. This section, then, is presented as the subject's account of her experience as understood by me. The subject was asked to read this presentation, and confirm that she felt fairly represented. Identifying names and details have been altered to protect the subject's anonymity. The second portion of the case study is my report as a participant observer of some therapy done by Mary at two workshops, which we both attended. This was serendipitous: the workshops were not in any way connected with my study.

The final portion of the case study is a discussion, again with illustrative quotes, of how the theoretical conceptions of impasse described in Chapter 3 are manifested in this woman's life.

The Case Study

The Subject (co-researcher) and Her Impasse

Mary is an attractive, well educated professional woman, age 53, who has been living with Bill for 10 years. For the past 7 years, she has felt strong ambivalence

about this relationship, to the extent that she has thought a great deal about leaving the relationship. Yet she has not done so, and continues living with Bill. The interviews focused on this experience of ambivalence, and on how difficult it seems to Mary to resolve her conflict. Mary seems unable to come to terms with the relationship: she cannot resolve to stay and either accept the relationship as it is or work to change it; neither, apparently can she leave it, though she toys with the idea often. This, then, is Mary's impasse. She is only too well aware that she is "stuck". The following is her account of her relationship, her ambivalence, and her experience of impasse.

Mary's Account

Her First Marriage

This is Mary's second marriage. She was first married when she was 24. This marriage lasted 14 years, and was ended at the wish of Mary's husband, who had become increasingly discontented with the sexual side of their marriage. Mary remembers this marriage as being satisfying and creative. She admired and respected her husband;

they were intellectually compatible and shared many interests and dreams. They had little money, but did not find this a great problem. In fact, Mary reports with some satisfaction that they lived a rather "improvident" life, and thoroughly enjoyed it. At one point they sold all their belongings, mostly wedding presents, and went travelling in Europe with the money. Their one difficulty was their sexuality. Mary had been inexperienced sexually prior to her marriage, and says that sex was simply not very important to her. She did not actually dislike sex, and did not "refuse" sex to her husband, but neither did she initiate sexually, or respond enthusiastically to ideas he suggested to encourage her to become more active. Mary believes that because she never initiated, her husband came to feel unwanted and undesirable.

Near the end of their marriage, although neither partner had ever expressed any interest in children, they began also to explore why they had not had children. Mary had fertility tests done; her husband refused. Mary was puzzled by this sudden concern about children, particularly at a time when they were unsure of whether they could continue to stay together.

At Mary's insistence, she and her husband did seek counselling at this time. They went separately to counsellors, and neither found the experience helpful.

After her marriage ended, Mary lived for 5 years on her own. For the first year, she struggled with grief and feelings of "inadequacy as a woman" -- she had not been able to satisfy a man sexually, and she apparently had no "mother instinct". Gradually, however, she began to enjoy her life as a single woman. As well as maintaining her career, she became involved in university courses and community work involving leadership training and group work with teenagers. Through this interest, she began learning new ways of relating to people, of exploring her feelings, and felt herself involved and "fitting in" with a network of people who shared many of her beliefs and interests. She lived alone in a small inexpensive loft apartment, which suited her needs well, and where she was "happy as a clam". She worked only part-time, and because her living expenses were small, had considerable freedom to pursue the various other interests she enjoyed. She had a number of relationships with men in which she came to change her attitude about

sex, finding that she could enjoy and value sex as a meaningful and important part of her life.

Mary describes herself as believing in a philosophy of life which she calls "the lilies of the field". She doesn't like to plan her life in great detail, or to worry about financial or practical matters, and has found that when she lives in accordance with this philosophy, things go well for her. The life she lived at this stage suited her well, and she looks back at this phase as a very exciting and happy time.

Toward the end of this 5 years she met her present partner. They worked in the same field, and met at a conference. He was married at the time, but shortly after separated from his wife. Mary had relationships with several men at the time, and was not very interested in becoming closely involved with Bill. He, however, once separated from his wife began to want more and more from Mary. She states:

> I had to kind of...push him away almost. He seemed to want me to do this and that and the other, and I didn't want to get involved in doing his laundry, I didn't want to cook his dinner, I didn't want any of that. I told him "go away and do your own thing and let's be friends".

After about a year, Bill finding weekend visits with his family too much of a strain, began looking for work elsewhere, eventually finding a job in another city. Mary was by this time quite absorbed in the leadership training program, which she found exciting and challenging, though a little scary. She made no promise to do more than visit Bill. However, four months after Bill left, she followed, and moved in with him.

Life with Bill

From the beginning, Mary wondered at her motives for joining Bill:

> Sometimes I wonder if I came back to join Bill because I was a bit, a bit afraid of that work, although I was interested in it too...I don't know... Anyway, I decided to come and live with him...I suspected myself at the time. I told myself I wanted to see if I could make a relationship with a man work...but I kind of feel in a way that I was running a little, running away...I don't really, know, really. I told myself and I told my friends that I wanted to see if I could make a relationship with a man work.

She remembers writing a letter to Bill at this time saying "let us live passionately, let us live spontaneously, let us have joy in our lives", adding "we never really were

able to achieve it". Their sexual life, which had been satisfactory before they moved in together deteriorated, and Mary soon began to find a number of dissatisfactions in their relationship. Also, the support group and involvement in community work which she had so enjoyed was not available in the new city to which she had moved.

After several years, they moved again, this time to the West Coast, where Mary once again found the opportunity to pick up her former interests, and to meet people whom she found stimulating. She also obtained a job, and eventually was promoted to a high level managerial position. It was at this time in her life that I first met Mary, through our involvement in a program at a counselling agency. We had both been in this agency for approximately two years, during which Mary had made occasional reference to problems in her marriage, when I asked her to do the interviews.

Mary's Ambivalence

When Mary and I began the interviews, I asked her to tell me a little of the history of her relationship, and to fill me in on the current status of her situation. Her

first statement captured a great deal of her feeling about her marriage:

> Well right away, the ambivalence is the thing that comes up. I - I, ah like Bill's company mostly, you know, as much as one could hope to like another person's company, I enjoy doing a lot of things with him - the way we run our lives seems mostly fairly pleasant and smooth - we fit in together, we work together, we do a lot of the same things. It doesn't feel like a passionate relationship, it never really has. And I sometimes think there must be more to life.... I guess I miss sex in my life, and we don't have any sex, that's one side of it that's always there, and that makes you feel unwanted. I can go on a long time and not think about it, and then when I start to think about it I feel terrible and I want to go away and do something about it. I tell myself that's not all there is to life, I've got a happy life in many ways, and it's always like this, you know, up and down. Is it so bad that I can't stay? Sometimes, for brief periods it is but most of the time it isn't...so I sit around with a feeling that life could be better, life might even be better alone, um, and yet don't do anything.

Mary states that the main problem in the relationship is the lack of sexuality, and that it is almost always around the issue of sex that she becomes upset enough to think of leaving. She noted the irony of her first marriage having ended because of her husband's dissatisfac-

tion with her lack of sexual interest, and now finding herself in the opposite role. She is now the one who wants more sex, and who feels hurt and rejected because Bill does not initiate sexually, and is unresponsive to her advances. Their sexual dilemma has an added element: Bill has had numerous affairs with other women, and his impotence and lack of sexual desire is apparently confined to their marriage. Mary feels hurt and betrayed by his affairs - not she claims, because she necessarily insists upon fidelity, but because the affairs are secretive, and because Bill seemingly would rather meet his sexual needs with other women than try to "work out" the problem with Mary. Attempts to discuss their problem occur only at Mary's occasional insistence, and both Mary and Bill find these discussions painful and embarrassing.

As the interviews progressed, Mary discussed many other dissatisfactions she feels in the relationship, though none of them as clearly defined as their sexual problem. Mary describes herself as generally optimistic and positive, perhaps even "Pollyannaish" in her attitudes about life, whereas Bill perceives life as a hard struggle, and is often negative. She finds herself

irritable and critical of his tendency to see the dark side, and cannot resist her urge to disagree and contradict him. She says she "loves to put on dreamy glasses" and to fantasize about adventures and alternative life-choices; Bill sees the logical reasons why her schemes would not work. She desires more spontaneity and frivolousness in their life together: Bill is practical and frugal, and likes their life to be sensibly planned.

My sense as Mary spoke was that on the surface these two lead an even, unruffled and generally pleasant day to day life. They read in bed and drink tea until noon on Sundays, they sip cocktails and watch television together, they diet together, they discuss her job (he is now retired from the field in which they have both worked). However, in terms of their deeper values they differ greatly. Mary believes in living like "the lilies of the field", and while she readily admits that Bill's good business sense has provided her with much more financial security than she would otherwise have had, she would have been just as content to go on "being improvident". She longs to become more open, more spontaneous, more passionate, more "silly", to dress in flowing colorful

clothing, to go dancing and travelling - but it is in her more serious, sensible, intellectual side that she can live most compatibly with Bill. Quite apart from the sexual problem which so distresses her, it is perhaps this struggle with which side of herself Mary wishes to actualize that keeps her so confused about the relationship. She reiterates:

> Mostly life with Bill is fairly pleasant (small laugh). Not really exciting though (laughs again). I don't know what I want sometimes. Sometimes I think a very comfortable life is what I want, not to be kind of exciting all the time, and...there you go, it's always that way, it's always the sort of two sides. I suppose when it comes right down to it it's not all that bad, most of the time. You know, just sometimes, or if I <u>let</u> myself think about it, if I allow myself to feel, sexual feelings, say, which I don't very often do, then I, then I feel lonely and left out and unwanted (clears throat).

<u>Impasse</u>

For the most part, Mary talked fluently and calmly - almost matter-of-factly about her situation. Yet I heard also that she struggled intensely sometimes, and that her frustration was great enough for her to consider leaving the marriage. She had also on several occasions

asked Bill to consider going with her for counselling, but had backed off quickly when he seemed to show no response. She had herself gone to a counsellor about her "stuckness" for a short period. But despite her distress, Mary's inability to act to change her situation continued. Mary went on to discuss why she found the issue so impossible to resolve, and what that felt like.

Some of the answer to the first question has already been given by Mary: her life with Bill is not dreadful, and in fact has much to recommend it. Mary likes much of their life and is reluctant to give it up, yet there is a part of her that wants something more vital and exciting. And, of course, there is their sexual problem.

But additionally, there are other factors that keep Mary in the relationship. As she talked about the relationship, about her discontentments, I began to think that she was staying in the relationship more for what she hoped it might become than for what she presently had. I asked her about this, and she replied that she was indeed staying for the hope that Bill would change, and that their relationship would change as a result. When I asked her if she thought she would still stay if

she could be sure that Bill would not change, she laughed and said she couldn't say, because that hope was so strongly a part of her. Consciously, she said, she had less and less hope that anything would change, yet somewhere, she clung to a wisp of hope:

> It's so silly, 'cause the intellectual side of me says "this is Bill, you've known him 10 years, he's not going to change, he doesn't want to change", but inside emotionally I still hope that rather than live alone, or go out to find another mate, he'll change, to be the one I want.

This hope was part of what was behind her desire to go with Bill for counselling; the other motive was her need to understand her own part in creating whatever problems lay in the marriage, and not wanting to leave the relationship until she sees clearly. She recognizes that their sexual problems are not all Bill's fault, that part of the awkwardness in discussing it is hers, that she at times expects from Bill passion and spontaneity that she herself does not feel - yet she does not understand how all the pieces fit together.

> I am a lot puzzled by, well, I don't seem to have quite found...the way to make a relationship work...and I don't know what it all is....I guess the part of it that keeps me there is that

> having left one marriage without really discussing it at all, and not ever really having got down to it, I feel as though I would like to have really tried in some way...

Mary gives as yet another reason for remaining with Bill the "hassle" of the actual break up, that is, dividing their belongings, finding a new place to live, selling their jointly owned house, and so on. Mary speaks:

> ...there's always the "trauma" of pulling up and separating, doing all that you know, deciding who should have what furniture and all that sort of thing, and if it isn't <u>too</u> painful to be there it's simpler (laughs softly)...anyway it's funny, but I stay....I don't know what makes me stay there. It's not, again, as I say, it's not that bad, and it's the painfulness of moving out and the <u>bother</u> of it all (speaks very softly, then clears throat).

Mary spent some time in the interviews speculating about whether if she decided to go, she would tell Bill and then start looking for a new place to live, or whether she would plan all the details first, then tell him when she was all ready to walk out the door. I felt a bit puzzled by how important this seemed to her, but Mary went on to talk about her fear that she would lose her conviction in the face of Bill's reaction, which she then dramatized for me with considerable skill and energy. She

anticipates that Bill will not only feel hurt (which will make her feel "mean"), but will take on himself all the blame and responsibility, saying that he doesn't blame her a bit for going, and that he doesn't know what he will do with his life, and so on. Mary feels that she would be undermined by this reaction: I had a hunch that she also does not want him to "get away" with this, but fears that she cannot make him hear that she knows she has played a part.

Finally, Mary talked about how she seems to be waiting for one more incident, perhaps one more affair, to force her to act. She had very nearly left at Bill's last affair, and had resolved to herself that if it happened again she would go. She herself does not understand this reasoning:

> I felt very much used and uh, I often wonder why when I was hurt and angry at the time, yet why didn't I go, why do I go on probably letting it all happen again, waiting till it happens again for the excuse to do it, to move. Why do I do this? I don't understand. What do I <u>need</u> to push me out?... It's all so clear to me when I talk about it and feel it, that I am really not getting out of life what I could be by staying there, and wondering <u>what in the world</u> it will take to move me.

In the end, despite all her speculations, Mary comes back once again to the impasse:

> But it comes back to the sort of, it's always this block, you know, there's a block; there's always an excuse for doing nothing.

So we talked about being "stuck". I asked Mary what it is like to feel blocked, to be stuck. As she answered, she lost much of her calmness. Her voice was agitated, she spoke in a rush:

> I feel frustrated. I feel sort of anger with myself for being in that position...for being uptight and tense and not able to be free with myself and my feelings and not to be able to behave and act for me the way I want to, whatever that is, I don't even know sometimes, but I do feel that I'm stuck, and that I'm not doing whatever it is that I want to do, or not being how I want to be. I just feel that I'm not, I don't know what I want to be. I just feel this tense sort of frustration, kind of anger, like if I could scream it might break the dam. I feel there's a dam to be broken, you know, something that's holding me back from being the real....me, whatever that is...and it's just, yeah, just, I don't know, I guess, a scream - you want something - Uh, when I was in Hawaii I read or somehow came across and thought again about Rolfing, because that's such deep, painful, hurtful massage, I thought I'm going to go and get Rolfed, maybe that'll

> break the dam. You know, anything, I sometimes feel. And then it'll go away for a time, maybe a month at a time, and then it comes back! Oh, I get - I'm holding my breath as I talk about it (lets out breath). Yeah. And uh, I want, I sort of want someone else to do something so I look for all these outside things to shake me up. I want to shake myself by the shoulders and say "FOR GOD'S SAKE!!" That's how it is. (Sighs, blowing out air hard).... Oh, it's good to talk about it again....

Even as she spoke about how good it felt to talk about her stuckness, Mary shifted focus, beginning to talk instead about a book recommended to her by a counsellor she had seen. It was as if she had had enough of the intense frustration she felt about her stuckness for a time. I asked her if she had felt stuck at other times in her life, or whether it was related only to her present marriage. She could not remember having any similar experience at any other time; she had had "hard feelings to deal with" after her first marriage ended, but finds her present sitaution more painful, more "annoying". She went on to say that she realizes that she is not completely stuck in her life: she has in fact recently begun exploring options regarding changing her career, feeling that her present job does not allow her to express her

current interests. But despite movement in this area of her life, she continues to feel stuck:

> I feel this stuckness...Part of the stuckness, I mean doing the things about maybe changing my life or career is only part of it. Part of it is related to - feeling uptight about my own feelings, not feeling in touch with them enough, or even if I am, not acting on them. Always being willing to compromise, give in to other people, not being able to, to stand up for myself. I think I need, uh, maybe assertiveness training would help, or something that would help me to say "this is all right, I can compromise here" or "no, I can't compromise here, I must go for me" - but to be aware of making the choice, even.

Mary then talked at some length about how she felt alienated from her feelings, and was often not aware of what she wanted or needed because she was too busy trying to figure out what other people expected from her. She states that this is a pattern of behaviour that goes back to childhood: she was always loved for being a "good girl". Now, she intellectually recognizes that she does not have to "go along with the others" all the time, but as yet does not often assert her own needs, partly because she wants to be "pleasant", but also because she doesn't clearly know what her needs are.

> I don't think I'm being who I really am, but I'm not sure who I am - isn't that strange?...It seems to relate to a sense of self, or something that's missing in a way...I don't know if that's quite the right way to put it. I think that's not quite the word, because in a lot of ways I felt a very strong sense of myself, a spiritual strength inside feeling, but the emotional side of myself, the feeling side, I don't trust, I don't understand, I don't know about feelings, I, I'm not clear about them, I don't know what to do about them, I don't pay attention to them, and I really think that I miss a lot, that in fact that keeps me from being the spontaneous passionate whatever person I'd like to be, because I can't...uh, get in touch with them at all. I fear them, that's there too...um, maybe I'll lose control.

I asked Mary what might happen if she did lose control. She replied that she thought she might be more "silly" - she'd like to dance, she would stop wearing smartly tailored "appropriate" clothing, she'd be able to "do things that came to mind like a child does". She seemed in fact to have quite a number of inklings about how she actually would like to be, and what she needs, but finds that in her marriage she slips very easily into "Bill's ways". She sums up:

> I guess if I was more clear about me and what I need, and uh, would put some priority on that, then I might work out a decision as to whether or not I can go on living with Bill, perhaps in a different way.

The Workshops

In the time between the original interviews and the follow up interview, Mary and I were both participants at two workshops for counsellors, which utilized video and psychodrama techniques. As stated, these workshops were in no way connected to my research; however, at both workshops Mary brought up her problem of "stuckness", and worked with it in the following ways.

The Video Workshop

The first workshop involved use of video equipment and theatrical props in order for the participants to discover what they looked like, and to experiment with new behaviors and receive visual feedback. Each participant was asked to prepare a short presentation, which was to be done for the group, filmed, and played back. For her presentation, Mary asked for members of the group to form

a tight circle around her while she attempted to "break out". She asked other members of the group, including myself, to cheer and encourage her efforts. This seemed to me a vivid dramatization of her statement in the interviews that something was "holding her back".

Later in the workshop, Mary did a second presentation, in which she performed a "vampy" dance on camera, complete with rose in her hair and a feather boa. She began her dance cautiously and conservatively, gradually becoming braver and evidently enjoying herself as the other participants applauded. Here several elements relate to statements Mary made in the interviews: she used dancing, which she referred to on several occasions as something that made her feel free, and she was also experimenting with aspects of herself that did not fit her usual role as a "nice girl". Instead, she was being playful, flamboyant, and sexual - none of which she expresses in her day to day life.

The Retreat

The second workshop took place at a weekend retreat. One portion of the workshop included a guided fantasy in

which the participants were instructed to visualize a mask which made some statement about their "inner selves". These masks were then created using theatrical makeup, and participants interacted while wearing the masks. Mary painted herself as a sad clown, explaining that she feels a great deal of sadness in her life that she rarely shows. Later, still wearing her mask, Mary asked once again to set up a dramatic presentation similar to the one she had done at the first workshop. She again chose to have a circle of people to "imprison" her, and this time asked a member of the audience who is a dancer to dance outside this barrier, inviting and encouraging Mary to join her. Mary's struggle to escape was intense - she eventually did break free of the barrier. As she discussed her experience with the group later, she seemed still to be feeling some frustration with her feeling of stuckness, and also expressed sadness, saying that she believed her relationship with Bill was probably over. At the end of this workshop, participants were asked to bring into the group a symbol of their experience throughout the weekend. Mary chose a leaf with three prominent veins. The two veins running out to the sides represented

to her her two relationships, both of which she felt to be "in the past". The long vein running up the center of the leaf represented her "true self" and a new direction.

The Follow Up Interview

The follow up interview took place approximately six months after the initial interviews. Mary remained at this time living with Bill, and explained that much of the same ambivalence was still present: sometimes she felt "tearful and unhappy", at other times she went along quite happily for a while. As we talked, I began to notice some changes from the earlier interviews. Mary had begun once again to see a counsellor to explore why she was so reluctant to discuss her unhappiness with Bill. She had looked at an apartment to see if it might make her feel "oh gee it would be nice to live by myself here". She had answered an ad in the personals column of the newspaper, and met a man whom she found attractive and interesting, and was considering whether she would see him again. She had attended lectures and workshops where she had done further self-exploration. She had approached a counsellor to ask if she and Bill could be seen together, and

planned to tell Bill that what she wanted for Christmas was his agreement to see a counsellor with her. And she had written away for information about courses at a university in another city. Evidently, although no change was as yet apparent in the relationship, Mary had done a great deal of thinking. I thought I heard a stronger message that she could not continue forever as things were, although thus far all her "work" had been within herself. Mary stated:

> I'm feeling more dissatisfied, and I'm getting to the point where I'm saying to Bill in my head, um, things like "I think this is never going to change, and we're never going to be lovers and I don't want to live this way any more, I think I'm going to go and live by myself for a while". I get to a point of saying that, but I don't...say it. In my head I'm saying it, and I think that's different a bit.

Mary still did not feel clear or strong enough to tackle confronting Bill with her unhappiness, at least not without some support. This was why she was now seeing a counsellor on her own, and wanted to go to counselling with Bill: she feared that if she attempted to talk to Bill without support she would become confused and would be undermined by Bill's hurt:

> I really need help. When I try to talk to Bill I get absolutely tongue tied and flummoxed by his reaction, so that I can't...I really need somebody there to say "what's going on with you" and just help, so that I won't just stop talking...

Again, she spoke of her need for a sense of closure if the relationship was to end: she wanted to understand what had gone wrong and to be sure that they had at least tried all that they could. And there remained still a bit of hope:

> I suppose still back in the back of my mind is "wouldn't it be wonderful if Bill could also get inside himself and we could communicate at that level more"...uh, and that could be the beginning of a good relationship, and I vaguely hope that could happen; but I doubt it.

Overall, listening to Mary in this interview I felt that there had been a slight shift, though a somewhat intangible and fragile one. There was still much confusion and ambivalence and much frustration at feeling "still stuck", but there had been much exploration, and some clarity was developing. Mary summarized:

> I've certainly been doing a lot of kind of internal thinking and mulling it over and getting a stronger feeling of what I want to do with my own life...I don't know (whispers this)...Just sometimes when I go on talking like this I feel how stu-

> pid that I'm still there, that I would put myself in a position like this, what's the matter with me?...so...I don't know how long it's all going to take... I'm getting to that point, I think, of getting myself ready to take the step over the edge of the precipice, that's what it feels like till you've done it. I've been in places like this before, where you have a feeling of excitement, that something, life is going to change and evolve to a new phase, and if you can just let go and go with it it'll work, and I feel as though I'm getting into that kind of a place.

Essential Facets of Mary's Impasse

The essence of Mary's impasse is that she cannot resolve to (a) leave the marriage, or, (b) stay and accept the relationship as it is, or (c) stay and attempt to change the relationship. Mary's inability to commit herself to any of these alternatives is the cause of much unhappiness for her. She is not acutely distressed at all times, and continues to be functional in other areas of her life, but neither is she ever completely accepting and fulfilled in her marriage. She has recurrent episodes of feeling unhappy, and thinking that the relationship is too painful to continue. These episodes have been occurring over the past seven years.

Mary's ambivalent feelings about the relationship could be described in terms of her reasons for staying with Bill as opposed to her reasons for wanting to leave. She stays because (1) she likes the companionship and ease of their day to day life, (2) she does not want to hurt Bill, (3) she dreads the inconvenience and painfulness of the actual move, (4) she hopes that her relationship with Bill will change, and (5) she is confused about the dynamics of the relationship, and is reluctant to leave without understanding. She gives the following as her reasons for wanting to leave (1) the lack of sexuality between Bill and herself, as well as her anger about Bill's affairs, (2) she finds Bill's "negativity" draining and annoying, (3) the relationship is never more than "lukewarm", and she believes there is more to life, (4) she is not living in accordance with her own values and philosophy of life, and (5) ultimately, she thinks that her hope that the relationship will change is a vain one.

Concepts from the Literature Illustrated by Mary's Impasse

Basic Definition

Perls defines impasse as

> the position where environmental support or obsolete inner support is not forthcoming any more and authentic self support has not yet been achieved. (Perls, 1969, p. 31)

Mary is not able to receive what she needs from her environment and neither does she believe she has the resources to handle her dilemma by herself. She frequently mentions her need for help, for someone "out there" to give her answers or to somehow "enable" her to do the things she is afraid to do on her own. Perls believed that individuals in impasse avoid utilizing their own resources because they hold catastrophic expectations of what will happen if they behave differently: Mary avoids bringing up her unhappiness or making sexual demands to Bill because "he will be hurt", the discussion will be "too painful" and will "lead no where". She does not proceed with her fantasies of moving out because uprooting herself will be "traumatic" and again, Bill will be hurt. Perls thought that the prototype for impasse occurred

in childhood, when the child learned to play phony roles in order to receive needed support. Mary describes herself as having always been a "good girl", and continues in her adult life to be a "nice lady"; this behavior is pervasive in both her personal and professional life.

Impasse as a Personality Layer

Many elements of Mary's behavior and experience fit into various layers of Perls' model. She moves about in the process; that is, she does not fit entirely into one layer. It must be stressed again that Perls' model is a process model, not a rigid structural model.

Much of Mary's behavior derives from her "nice lady" role - a role which she considers "phony", that is, not representing her real self. Because she has played this role so much, she has developed "holes" in her personality: she does not assert herself, does not express anger, sadness, demandingness. Not only does she fear these behaviors, but, in fact, they may simply not be within her behavioral repertoire: she has been so continually "nice" that she has not learned how to express anger, how to assert herself. Mary moves also into the Impasse layer:

she is aware that her "nice" style does not fulfill her needs, but will not behave differently: she does not insist on discussions with Bill, she does not show her hurt and anger when he has an affair. She avoids the discomfort of these new behaviors, and also avoids feeling her own needs, telling herself, for instance, that sex is not important, or that she really has benefitted from frugal living despite her own preference for being "improvident". She experiences the paralysis of the Implosive layer: her energies are tied up in opposing directions. She wants change but fears the pain necessary to bring about those changes. Finally, she occasionally moves into the Explosive layer (for example, at the workshops), breaking through her frustration and stuckness into anger and sadness. As Perls noted, one such "explosion" is not curative. Mary must experience many such explosions, retreating back to the safety of the Impasse after each venture. Perls believed that this retreat to a more "regressive" position was an important part of the process, and allowed the individual to consolidate his or her resources and provide some self-support (Perls, 1969, p. 65).

Awareness

Perls stated that awareness of present preferences would move the impasse. Mary has made many attempts to strengthen her awareness (self-knowledge). In the past year she has attended a variety of workshops, talked to counsellors, explored her situation in the interviews, and with friends. She is not yet fully aware of her needs or her contribution to her marital problems, but she certainly expresses a desire to understand more.

Impasse in Relationship

Perls believed that impasse in relationships develop because the partners are in love with an image or fantasy, not with a real person. Mary expresses a wish for a partner who will be spontaneous, passionate, sexually aggressive, adventuresome, open, etc., so that all these qualities may be encouraged in herself. She dislikes many of Bill's actual qualities; she blames both Bill and herself for the way their life together is, but as yet, she holds onto the "status quo" rather than face the pain of the change she desires.

Frozen Polarity

Wills conceives of impasse as a frozen polarity, that is, only one side of a polarity is actualized. Mary is frozen in the "nice" end of a polarity. In order to free herself, she would need to experience the other side of this polarity, and "reown" this side of herself. Only then can she hope to achieve a balance which will be functional for her in meeting her needs.

Reduced Contact

Smith notes that the person in impasse restricts contact (meaning awareness of need and organismic activation). Usually it is awareness that is restricted, leaving the person in a state of undirected readiness for action, experienced as anxiety. The way through this anxiety is to endure the confusion and fear that contact produces. Mary often expresses fear and confusion, but most often quickly moves away from these feelings by changing topic, or by intellectualizing about "why" she feels as she does, thus stopping the awareness of "how" she feels.

Cluttered Field

Wallen suggests that impasse is a result of unmet needs "cluttering the field", preventing present needs from being experienced, and causing confusion. Mary has a great many unmet needs regarding her sexuality and her desires for intimacy, passion, frivolity. As a result, she cannot clearly perceive what she presently needs, or at least, cannot gauge the importance of those needs to her happiness. She states often that she doesn't know what she wants.

Equal and Opposite Forces

Susan Campbell describes impasse as resulting from forces for and against something being precisely equal. Mary's awareness of the problem and need for change are opposed by her fear of change and perceived lack of resources. The impasse will move when there is sufficient "new input" to upset this deadlock. Either a greater awareness of need (which Mary is developing) or a greater willingness to risk the unknown (Mary feels almost ready to "leap off the precipice") can shift the impasse.

CHAPTER V: ADDITIONAL INTRAPERSONAL, INTERPERSONAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL FACTORS IN IMPASSE

Purpose of the Chapter

This chapter consists of an analysis of impasse in relationship. While Perls does mention impasse in marriage, his model is primarily intrapsychic, that is, dealing with individual personality dynamics. It seems reasonable to assume that an impasse occurring in connection with a relationship might also be influenced by factors which are not purely intrapersonal. The aim of this chapter, then, is to extend the understanding of impasse to include an appreciation of the ways in which the impasse is affected by the context in which it is embedded.

Format of the Chapter

What was most puzzling to me about Mary's impasse was the length of time that it had lasted. She estimated that for seven of the ten years she had lived with Bill, she had periodically struggled with ambivalence without being able to achieve any resolution. Even earlier, she had had doubts about her motivation for moving to live

with Bill, and states that even in the beginning of their life together, they had never been able to live in a way that was fully satisfying to her.

Mary's own account suggested two possible answers to the question of how this impasse could be maintained over such a long period of time: Mary is, first of all, not very clear about her own wishes and needs, and secondly, does not seem to be able to get her needs met even when they are clear to her. Referring back to Perls' definition of the impasse as

> the position where environmental support of obsolete inner support is not forthcoming any more and authentic self support has not yet been achieved. (Perls, 1969, p. 31)

and considering his contention that lack of awareness is the key factor in maintaining this position, Mary's stuckness becomes quite plausible. She is simply not sufficiently aware of her needs to assess whether or not the relationship is tenable. Perls writes that "nature does not work by decisions, but by preferences" (1970, p. 26), and Mary is simply not "in touch" with her preferences, and instead tries repeatedly to <u>decide</u>, finding each time that she cannot quite do so. She is not able to obtain

environmental support (that is, no one is able or willing to tell her what to do, although she states on several occasions that she keeps looking for someone or something outside herself to give her the answer), and neither has she achieved her own support (she either does not know, or believes she does not know how to resolve her problem).

Mary's lack of awareness of her needs could also be described in terms of identity: she has not achieved a solid sense of who she is. Mary talks at length in the interviews about her uncertainty about her identity, stating that she is not "being herself" in the relationship, but that she does not quite know what being herself would mean. She has some nascent ideas about how she would really like to be, but no integrated or coherent sense of self. There are what Perls called "holes" in her identity: she says she is unclear about her emtoinal side, and she habitually gives expression only to the "nice", agreeable, pleasant side of herself.

If identity or awareness is taken as a critical factor in impasse, the point must be noted that while development of identity and awareness can be considered intrapersonal processes, these processes do not take place in isolation,

but in relationship to others. Identity is formed in relationship to specific others (that is, within an interpersonal context); this relationship exists within an even broader, sociological context. These three levels are of course not discrete from one another, but rather interact in complex and reciprocal ways.

Thus, in order to fully understand impasse, it is necessary to examine all three levels (intrapersonal, interpersonal, and sociological), searching within each for factors impinging upon the phenomenon of impasse. The following section suggests factors from each level which appear to relate to impasse in some way. Ideas selected from various theorists and researchers will be briefly explained, and parallels and connections to the Gestalt model of impasse and to the case study will be pointed out. The sampling of concepts is not exhaustive; the purpose of this selection is not so much to provide a complete review of literature but rather to give an idea of the essential similarity across different theoretical perspectives of a number of central concepts.

Intrapersonal Factors

Identity

As noted, Perls believed that awareness was the key to moving through impasse. By awareness, he meant an ability of the organism to focus on its present experience, that is, thoughts, emotions, sensations. I have suggested that Perls' concept of awareness is closely related to the concept of identity, which has been examined in various ways by many theorists. There are commonalities to many of these discussions of identity: the essence of the notion of identity is simply "know thyself", and implicit in these concepts is the idea of an "inner self" which transcends or is separate from the roles played by the "owner" of that self. Some specific ways in which identity has been discussed are examined below.

Individuation

Carl Jung called the process of forming identity individuation, by which he meant "the conscious realization and integration of all the possibilities imminent in the individual" (Singer, 1972, p. 158). Jung states

that individuation means "self-knowledge", but that this requires knowing who we are, so that the process of individuation becomes a search for self knowledge. Jung believed this process involved attending to both conscious and unconscious (dreams, symbols) material, in order to discover the essential nature of the individual. This essential nature, as distinct from the Persona (the character or role we play) includes both strength and weakness.

Jung and Perls both perceived the self as consisting of dichotomous qualities (polarities) which were to be integrated if the individual was to become complete. Mary's stuckness may result in part from her emphasis on the "nice" side of her self. This splitting keeps her from realizing a large part of her possibilities. The "not nice" aspect of herself, which she does not allow direct expression in anger or demandingness might in fact be very helpful to her in clarifying her needs and preferences regarding her marriage, and in obtaining some of what she wants from the relationship.

Self Actualization

Maslow too has proposed an essential inner nature which seeks for expression, or actualization. This inner nature can be easily overcome by pressures against it. Maslow believed, though, that this essential nature, even when not allowed expression "persists underground forever pressing for actualization" (Maslow, 1968, p. 4). Each individual has both the urge toward growth and the need for safety and security. Maslow writes:

> We grow forward when the delights of growth and anxieties of safety are greater than the anxieties of growth and the delights of safety. (1968, p. 47)

As does Perls, Maslow sees the prototype for the choice between actualizing one's self or adopting others' definitions of self as occurring in childhood, when the child's need for safety is so prepotent that it will overcome the urge to actualize self if a choice is forced. This tendency to choose safety, while necessary in childhood, may be carried into adulthood, when in fact the actual need for safety is not in question. Maslow suggests that the adult must then recover his or her ability to perceive delight (the self actualizing tendency is

based on pleasure) in order to rediscover the sacrificed self. Again reminiscent of Perls, Maslow believes that the way to encounter the self is through "experiencing fully, vividly, selflessly, with full concentration and total absorption" (Maslow, 1967, p. 281).

For Mary, the "anxieties of growth" are evidently stronger than the "anxieties of safety", therefore, she chooses the "status quo" and declines to take any action that would make a difference to her marriage. Yet, she cannot accept this as the final position. Her inner self continues to press and nudge her, so that she experiences the pull of the opposing urges, despite the apparent lack of movement which is all that is apparent from the outside.

Authenticity

Bugental's concept of identity centers on authenticity, which he defines in this way:

> A person is authentic in that degree to which his being in the world is unqualifiedly in accord with the givenness of his own nature and of the world. (1965, p. 31)

Bugental's concept suggests not only knowledge of one's self, and acting in accordance with the needs of that self, but also undistorted perception of the world in which this self operates. The awareness of self and of the world becomes distorted by our efforts to avoid the anxiety we feel when we realize our limitations, our separations, and our responsibilities for our own actions. We trade off our authenticity in hopes of experiencing security, but find instead that this trade leads only to further anxiety. Bugental suggests that the main tasks of psychotherapy are to support the client to discard the distortions of awareness and to encourage acceptance of the responsibilities and opportunities of being authentic. Bugental also discusses the notion of resistance, not as conceived in psychoanalytic thought (i.e. resistance is to the process of psychoanalysis, or to the analyst) but as

> the general defensive wall the patient puts between himself and the threats that he finds linked to being authentic. Resistance is (simply) antiauthenticity. (1965, p. 43)

Bugental would find much in Mary's behavior that is not authentic. She has settled for a relationship that is less than what she wants because she finds it in some ways

comfortable and secure, only to discover that her anxiety or distress cannot completely be denied. Like Perls, Bugental sees "undistorted" awareness as central to the formation of authentic identity. He adds to the understanding of how distorted perceptions of self and others come to be with his idea that it is the fear of experiencing our aloneness and responsibility that causes us to choose inauthenticity.

The Innate Valuing Process

Carl Rogers' concept of self also includes a self-actualizing tendency, that is, there is an innate valuing process, or inborn capacity to determine what experiences are right and pleasurable for the individual. Sometimes the innate valuing process becomes usurped by what Rogers terms the need for self regard, in which case the individual comes to replace his or her own values with those of others. When these socially learned criteria conflict with the innate criteria of the individual, he or she experiences anxiety, which further impedes the creativity of the individual in finding solutions to his/her problems (Millon and Millon, 1974, p. 74).

For Mary, the innate capacity to know what is right for her has been overcome by her need for approval. Like Perls and Maslow, Rogers believed that this process begins in childhood. Mary states that as a child she was "loved for being a good girl"; one could speculate that her family made approval contingent on "nice" (which in her family meant polite, rational, unemotional) behavior. Whatever the etiology, however, Mary is all too aware that at this time in her life her identity is overwhelmed by others, and that she gives way or conforms in order to be liked. She states:

> So, you know, I always seem to have, all these, uh, unclear directions and I fall easily into other people's way...Being liked. That would be another thing - to get over caring, to just be able to be yourself and not worry. That would be the hugest strength...It's all part of the same ball of wax, although there's different things - the feeling that you have to behave according to society's norms when inside you don't want to.

Development of Identity

Erik Erikson formulated a theory of self development in which he proposed eight stages or developmental modes, which he termed phases of epigenesis. Each stage is

characterized by a task which must be successfully completed in order for the individual to progress to the next stage; if the task is not satisfactorily completed, chronic problems result. In Erikson's model, one of these developmental tasks is that of identity versus identity diffusion, that is, discovering and learning to be oneself as opposed to living according to the wishes of others. This task normally occurs in adolescence, and is followed by the task of resolving intimacy versus isolation in young adulthood. Erikson would believe, then, that if the task of identity formation was not successfully completed in adolescence, it would be difficult for the individual to move on to work out the issue of intimacy in adulthood (Millon & Millon, 1974, p. 58).

At one point in the interviews, Mary bemoans the fact that at age 53 she is "still back in her childhood". When asked to explain what she meant, she stated that she still relates to others as she did when she was a child: she has merely substituted being a nice lady for being a good girl. She feels herself to be still living in accordance with the demands of others. Erikson would suggest that she experiences impasse in her attempts at

establishing adult intimacy because she has not yet completed the prior task of establishing her own identity.

Interpersonal Factors

Identity In Relationship

The discussion of identity does not end at the intrapersonal level, but rather forms a bridge to the thinking of theorists who have discussed identity in relationship. The formation of authentic and separate identity and the formation of satisfying and creative relationships seems to be inextricably intertwined processes.

I-Thou

Martin Buber (1970) writes that genuine encounter can be possible only between people who recognize the "being-ness" of themselves and others. He posits two modes of relating in the world: "I-Thou", in which the other is seen as a separate, experiencing being, and "I-It", in which the other is seen essentially as an object. Buber sees development of self and relationship as interdependent: one cannot relate as "I-Thou" without some sense of "I" from which to begin, and, conversely,

reduction of the other to "It" also diminishes the self.

Mary feels "objectified" in her relationship. She feels that she is appreciated by Bill primarily because she is present on a daily basis so that he does not have to experience being alone. She states that she feels "used" by Bill's willingness to share daily routines with her in the manner of a room-mate, yet without true intimacy (which for Mary is exemplified by a sexual component to the relationship). In turn, Mary rarely appears cognizant of Bill's experience or feelings in the relationship, and certainly, she also "objectified" him initially by using him as an opportunity to prove that she could "make a relationship with a man work".

Ontological Security

R. D. Laing (1965) writes about ontological security, by which he refers to an individual's experience of him or herself as real, alive, and whole, and as clearly differentiated from the rest of the world. The person who is ontologically secure does not question his or her identity or autonomy. When this security is not present, the individual experiences anxiety in relationship with others.

Laing writes:

> A firm sense of one's own autonomous identity is required in order that one may be related as one human being to another. Otherwise, each and every relationship threatens the individual with loss of identity. (1965, p. 44)

When someone with poor identity formation enters into a relationship, the result is that he or she cannot comfortably experience the normal swings between relatedness and separateness, but instead experiences a more extreme polarity of isolation or complete merging. In other words, when identity is shaky, it becomes difficult to imagine a dialectical relationship. Instead, what is envisioned is engulfment (the "swallowing" of identity or self by another), the response to which is to retreat into isolation, into disembodiment (splitting off "mind" functions from "body" functions and, generally, identifying more with the mind), or into depersonalization (seeing the other, or oneself, as objects). Interaction with the other becomes sterile:

> A creative relationship with the other, in which there is mutual enrichment of the self and the other (benign circle) is impossible, and an interaction is substituted which may seem to operate efficiently and smoothly for a while, but which has no "life" in it...This interaction is a dead process (1965, p. 80).

Mary's account of her life with Bill illustrates Laing's statement that in a relationship in which one or both partners are poorly individuated, smooth but "lifeless" interaction substitutes for creative relationship. Mary characterizes her marriage as pleasant enough, but without passion or spontaneity.

Mary talks at one point about her concern that she is incapable of loving: she answers my question about whether she loves Bill in the following manner:

> Sometimes I really feel very fond of him...and at other times, no, I don't think it's a strong steady feeling of love...that's one thing I've often, I've thought of before; I've never really loved anyone, am I incapable of loving? Am I too self-centered, too, somehow independent that I can't give that up? I'm afraid to love for fear I'll lose some part of me, you know (my emphasis). But I maybe can't love, haven't been able to ever; never dared to let go of something enough.

Here Mary illustrates Laing's idea of "engulfment", that is, that being in an intimate relationship threatens the poorly defined individual with loss of identity. Indeed, Mary already "puts on Bills ways" to a large extent, with respect to their day to day life and the style and content of their communication. According to Mary, both she

and Bill communicate in an "intellectual" way, by which she means emphasizing the rational and logical. Particularly on those few occasions when they do disagree, Bill becomes very intellectual, and Mary follows suit, losing whatever clarity she may have had about her feelings:

> I'm so much up in my head that at the time something that is happening that is having an emotional effect on me, my mind isn't into the emotions, you know, it's into the head stuff...dealing with the issue on a cerebral sort of way rather than emotional...all I'm thinking about is what is being said and trying to work out what I'm going to say next, but not being in touch with what I'm feeling, whereas what I'm going to say next might better be "I'm feeling bloody mad about what you said"; but I'm <u>not</u> saying that, I'm not even indicating that, I'm going on talking about the details of the issue....

Laing would suggest that this is an example of "disembodiment", the defensive reaction to anxiety in which the individual identifies more strongly with "mind" than with "total being".

<u>Separation-Individuation</u>

The idea that the prototype for the adult sense of identity and ability to relate to others occurs in child-

hood originates with psychoanalytic theory, in particular, from the concept of separation-individuation. Mahler, Pine, and Bergman (1975) have described in detail the steps of this process, which is conceived of as a universal developmental task for the infant in which he or she must gradually emerge from symbiosis with the mother to form a separate sense of self. Mahler, Pine, and Bergman state that this task involves two processes which are intertwined, but which do not necessarily develop at the same rate. One process is that of individuation (developing perception, memory, intrapsychic autonomy and reality testing); the other is separation (differentiation, distancing, boundary formation and separation from the mother). The successful outcome of this process is the estabishment of libidinal object constancy, that is, not only a capacity for relating but also the ability to remain attached to another despite frustrations, disillusionments and disappointments. In other words, the individual who has achieved a strong sense of self can relate to others because they can both perceive and tolerate the difference and separation between self and other. The individual who has not succeeded at this de-

velopmental task (and this a matter of degree rather than absolute success or failure) will carry forward a number of difficulties into attempts to form intimate relationships.

In his article on marital therapy, Meissner (1978) outlines what some of these difficulties may be. When poorly differentiated individuals enter into a relationship they do not have a good idea of whom they are choosing because they cannot perceive or tolerate differences. There is a tendency to select partners who have reached a similar developmental level, which makes the avoidance of seeing real differences easier, since neither partner puts out clearly who they are. They will bring with them into the relationship "residues" of unresolved issues from previous relationships (with parents or others with whom they have had close relationships), thus confusing the present partner's identity not only with their own, but also with others outside the relationship. Dependency or over-compensatory independence will substitute for appropriate interdependency. Often a pattern will develop wherein one partner becomes compliant with the other dominant; alternatively, both will be very inflexible result-

ing in habitual conflict. Intense emotion is problematic for poorly individuated partners: they are excessively affected by hostile emotion - which elicits their fear of separation - and by offerings of warmth and caring, which elicit ambivalent feelings about merging. As a result, there is much blaming and refusal to take responsibility:

> It is relatively impossible for the poorly differentiated individual to take responsibility for his own functioning and feelings without blaming the other for his unhappiness and suffering. It is a fairly common experience that one member of the marital couple will blame the other for his unhappiness and suffering... there is an implicit demand that the partner become different, somehow, in order to respond to or alleviate this suffering. (Meissner, 1978, p. 49)

Individuals in this type of relationship will be prone to <u>introjection</u>, that is, the taking on and adopting as one's own the values, opinions or characteristics of others. These "introjects" lead to splitting or polarization within the personality, because of the unresolved ambivalent feelings about merging and separating. For example, a person who has introjected another's characterization of them as "easy to get along with" will also have a "rebel-

lious" side, but this rebellion is not allowed expression because that would bring into awareness the individual's separateness and differentness. Where introjects form the basis of a person's self-image there is a tendency to project or attribute the split off or disallowed qualities to the partner. When both partners are poorly differentiated this becomes a two-way process: each partner will introject and act out the other's projections, thus reinforcing those very projections and creating rigid patterns. This process is referred to in the literature as projective identification (Mannino & Greenspan, 1976).

These psychoanalytic concepts permeate a great deal of marital therapy literature. The essence of these ideas is that the individual who has not successfully completed the separation-individuation process will continue in his/her adult life to contaminate intimate relationships in various ways; attainment of a solid sense of self as separate and unique is a prerequisite for establishing satisfying adult intimacy.

Mary's relationship with Bill illustrates some of these psychoanalytic theorems relating to separation-individuation. Mary acknowledges that she is in part

responsible for the problems in the marriage, but at the same time, blames Bill. I asked Mary what things in the relationship would have to change in order for her to be happy. Mary's answer is in terms of what changes Bill would have to make:

> He would have to be more, uh, relaxed, and less worried. He worries so much about the future and he would have to be more able to live day to day...and of course, he'd have to change in his desire to make love to me...There'd have to be some need, some physical urge to be with me. Those are the main things I can think of right now.

She perceives Bill as responsible for her in these ways, while at the same time, she takes on responsibility for him in other ways, stating, for example, that she doesn't want to hurt him by leaving because she knows he doesn't like to live alone, and because he fears the idea of growing old alone. There seems to be poor separation of the two partners; it is difficult for Mary to see clearly where she begins and he leaves off. As a result, there is confusion of responsibilities and blaming.

There is also some contamination of the relationship with old issues: Mary cannot relate to Bill without bringing in residues from her previous marriage, and

she now does the same thing in this marriage, and furthermore, "can't see what would stop me from doing it again in another relationship". Also, her concern that this marriage not end without some attempt at discussion and counselling is perhaps amplified by her feeling of incompleteness regarding the ending of the first marriage.

One might also guess that there is some "projective identification" in this relationship, although Mary's words alone are insufficient to assess this. It is interesting to note, however, the reversal of sexual roles between Mary's first and second marriage, and to wonder if perhaps Bill's sexual problem is in some way a collusion between them, an "agreement" that in this relationship he will act out their sexual problem (Bill does not experience these same sexual difficulties with other women). This is, of course, highly speculative; there are several other equally plausible explanations of their sexual problem.

Family and Marital Systems Concepts

A slightly different perspective is added by the family and marital systems theorists. These theorists

have integrated with the concepts of identity and individuation some of the principles from General Systems Theory.

There are many systems theories, and it is not within the scope of this discussion to examine these theories in any detail; only a brief statement will be made to clarify what is meant by family systems theory. Family and marital systems theories arose out of an attempt to apply General Systems Theory as discussed by von Bertalanffy in 1968 to families and couples. Von Bertalanffy developed his principles in reaction to the reductionistic tradition in science which sought to discover linear cause and effect explanations of behavior. Systems theory proposes organization rather than causal reduction as its main principle, that is,

> The essence of the systems approach is defined as attention to organization, to the relationship between parts, to concentration on patterned rather than on linear relationships and to a consideration of events in the context in which they are occuring rather than in isolation from their environmental context. (Steinglass, 1978, p. 304)

The key notions in a systems perspective, then, are wholeness, organization, and relationships (Steinglass, 1978).

These basic principles have been interpreted in different ways, leading to the formation of several different schools of family therapy. Despite their different orientations, though, most of the theories derived deal in some way with three basic concepts or dimensions of family or couple functioning. These three dimensions are cohesion (the emotional bonding between family members), adaptability (the ability of the family system to change in response to stress), and communication (Olsen, 1980). Cohesion and adaptability are viewed as continuua, with the central area being the most functional. At the extreme end of the cohesion continuum, a system would be fused or enmeshed (overemphasis on closeness and identification within the system) or disengaged (members are isolated from one another). Neither extreme is functional. On the adaptability continuum, the extremes would be a rigid system (no flexibility) or a chaotic one (no order).

Using the concept of individuation, Mark Karpel (1976) has developed a model which utilizes ideas from systems theories, and also connects with the phenomenological theories. Karpel defines individuation in terms of the degree of separation from the "relational con-

text" or system in which the individual is living (p. 67). He suggests that individual and relationship problems may be perceived as symptoms reflecting either "consequences of, defenses against, or ambivalence over the persistence of the state of fusion" (p. 67). He postulates two dimensions of individuation: one dimension is the ability of the self to be in relationship with others, another dimension is maturation (the immature human is less individuated than the mature). These dimensions combine to produce the following possible modes of relating:

		Immature	Transitional	Mature
Ability to Relate to Others.	Relation	pure fusion	ambivalent fusion	dialogue
	Distance	unrelatedness	ambivalent isolation	individuation

In this model, Karpel is saying that at an immature phase of development, the individual can relate only by becoming completely fused with a partner, or by remaining unrelated or isolated. At the mature pole, both dialogue and individuation are possible and complementary. Karpel also

proposes a transitional stage, and it is this stage that is of most interest to the understanding of impasse. In the transitional stage, the individual may experience both separateness and fusion, but there is as yet no integration.

Karpel describes the characteristics of each mode. Pure unrelatedness is characterized by the absence of any close relationships with others. Pure fusion results when two minimally individuated persons form a relationship. The system is characterized by high dependence, and merging of identities; almost all the energy of the persons involved goes into the relationship, and very little attention is paid to becoming self-sufficient. Partners are terrified of separation and create rigid predictable patterns to prevent conflict or change. Considerable gratification is felt in this form of relationship; there is a sense of "oneness" with the partner, no feeling of aloneness, no troublesome "otherness".

The transitional stage of ambivalent fusion or ambivalent isolation is much more common. Karpel characterizes this stage in the following manner:

> The essence of the transitional period is the conflict between progressive tendencies toward differentiation and regressive tendencies toward identification, between the responsibility and self support that characterize individuation and the blame, guilt and manipulation for environmental support that characterizes fusion. (p. 73)

This mode may be acted out in a number of ways: one partner may "distance" while the other pursues, these roles may alternate, or both may shuttle, moving at times together and at times apart. There may be just enough continual conflict to prevent much movement toward either pole of fusion or individuation. Or, finally, one partner may become impaired while the other appears competent and functions well. Couples may employ several of these strategies, not necessarily adopting one strategy at all times. All these patterns are collusive in that there is an unspoken agreement between partners to maintain these roles such that there is no real change in the system, that is, the basic level of fusion-individuation which the partners have established is sustained.

In the third mode, both "I" and "We" can be experienced, and both aspects are valued as being necessary to the relationship. Differences are respected and appre-

ciated, and as such a supportive context is provided for further individuation. Partners see each other as truly "other" and not as extensions of themselves. Transactional patterns are not predictable or rigid: security in the relationship comes instead from trust and sensitivity to one another's needs. Karpel states that:

> dialogic relationships are relatively free of the inherent anxiety and ambivalence, as well as the various forms of discord and symptomatology they can take that characterize ambivalent fusion. (p. 81)

Karpel's model is based primarily on concepts drawn from various systems theories, yet there are parallels with Perls' model of impasse. The movement from fusion through ambivalence to individuation outlined by Karpel is reminiscent of Perls' concept of movement from environmental to self support - in fact, Karpel uses these same terms in his description of the transitional mode. The major difference is that, for Perls, the process was an individual one; Karpel acknowledges the collusive interaction of the two partners in creating the system. A common notion in systems theories is that families or couples tend to establish a behavioral balance and to resist any change from that balance. Thus, impasse, or getting

"stuck" in the transitional stage would involve contributions from both members, rather than being produced by the psychodynamics of one member.

Mary and Bill's relationship can be examined in terms of the three major dimensions dealt with in systems models, that is, cohesion, adaptability and communication. With respect to the first two dimensions, most theorists agree that "mid-range" functioning is most healthy. Bill and Mary would seem to fall toward the "disengaged" end of the cohesion continuum: they share few interests or values, and feel little passion for one another. Their adaptability is also low: their system tends to be rigid and very predictable. Mary, despite her inability to leave the relationship, for the most part finds it easier to imagine breaking up the relationship than to change it. Finally, Mary and Bill do not communicate well: Mary's assertion skills are low and in particular she finds it difficult to express feelings to Bill that she expects will hurt him. Using Karpel's model, the relationship would be categorized as falling into the transitional stage characterized by ambivalence. Bill and Mary do not represent either a completely fused or disengaged system,

neither have they the ability for individuation and dialogue. The particular strategy employed to maintain the system seems to be that of Bill distancing and Mary pursuing, but the caution must be stated that using a systems perspective would require information from both partners, and this analysis is based only on Mary's account.

Communication Skills

The preceding sections have stressed the importance of, first, attaining identity, and second, of expressing that identity in relationship with others. Throughout the writings of the theorists selected has been the implication that achievement of identity and authentic relatedness somehow involves courage, that is daring to express what is right for oneself despite opposing pressure. Perls, too, stated that impasse is a matter of fantasy: the individual only believes he or she has not the resources to cope.

No doubt this is indeed the "bottom line". I would suggest though, that there may also be a real lack of resources: because of lack of safety or support, the individual may simply not have learned the concrete skills

necessary to put the ideals of the "I-Thou" dialogue into practise. Having perhaps never seen others, for instance, appropriately express anger, or make assertive requests, an individual may genuinely not know how to communicate his or her authentic experience, even assuming that they know what that experience is. Janet Berezowsky (1978) writes that individuation, while essential to the development of intimacy, is not sufficient: process skills (e.g. self-disclosure, empathy, negotiation skills) must also be present. These skills can be taught very effectively. More detail on ways in which this can be accomplished will be provided in the chapter on treatment. Suffice it to say at this point that authentic being and relating requires awareness and courage, but also the possession of basic communication skills.

Mary makes many references in the interviews to particular communication skills that she lacks. She is, first of all not often clear or aware of her own feelings and experience, but her confusion is certainly attenuated by her lack of skill. She describes how she feels anger, but does not express it, and says that when she does try to express it she is immediately silenced by Bill's re-

sponses. Some of her retreat can be attributed to various inner dynamics, but certainly knowing better how to clearly express her feelings would be helpful. She could benefit from training in how to directly tell Bill her wishes, dislikes, and preferences, both generally and specifically to do with sexuality. She herself states that she thinks she needs assertiveness training.

Sociological Factors

The preceeding sections have suggested ways in which the impasse phenomenon is influenced by intrapersonal and interpersonal factors, in particular, by the degree of identity formation and the capacity for dialogic relationship.

Still other factors influencing impasse can be found within the broader sociological context. Sociological factors contribute directly to impasse, and also indirectly, by influencing once again the degree to which authentic identity is formed.

Sex Role Stereotyping

To say the least, the jury is still out on the issue of which of the perceived differences between men and women are "real" sex differences and which result from stereotyping. The best evidence comes from a 1974 survey by Maccoby and Jacklin which critically reviewed over 2000 articles and books on gender differences, most published after 1966. Maccoby and Jacklin did find some well documented differences: girls have greater verbal ability than boys, and boys excell in visual-spatial ability, mathematics, and are more aggressive. No conclusive evidence was found for differences on a number of psychological characteristics commonly attributed to one sex or the other (nurturance, fear and anxiety levels, competitiveness, dominance, achievement motivation, compliance). Maccoby and Jacklin concluded that the most likely explanation for the persistance of sex-linked differences was the presence of stereotypes, which operate in the following way:

> If a generalization about a group of people is believed, whenever a member of that group behaves in the expected way, the observer notes it and his belief is confirmed and strengthened. When a member of the group behaves in

> a way that is not consistent with the observer's expectations, the instance is likely to pass unnoticed. (Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974, p. 355)

Although Maccoby and Jacklin's review is considered a clasic, their findings have been criticized: the studies reviewed are disproportionately dealing with young children (Hyde, 1980, p. 78). There are in fact relatively few studies which deal with differences between adult men and women; those that do are largely confined to college students, which is still a very restricted age group. Further, the review simply identifies differences; it does not yet make any statement about which differences are innate and which are learned. These inadequacies, of course, lie with the original studies, not with the reviewers of that research.

The main point to be made is that we know very little about real differences between adult men and women, and even less about the causes of these differences. It can be said with some certainty, though, that sex role stereotypes exert considerable influence on the development of adult roles. The feminist movement has done much to explode some of the stereotyped ideas of what is "masculine" and what is "feminine", but as Maccoby and Jacklin point

out, stereotypes by their very nature are slow to change. As a result, women are often caught between new ideas and old structures. Not only are there conflicting pressures from the outside, but there is also much ambivalence from the inside concerning achievement, success (Horner, 1971), role choice, and appropriate interpersonal behavior. Bardwick and Douvan (1971) suggest that women continue to "use interpersonal success as a route to self-esteem, since that is how they have defined their major task" (p. 231). As a result of stereotyping, women have also a number of skill deficits (e.g. expression of anger, assertiveness) which in fact contribute to and maintain their continued ambivalence and inability to sort out conflicts in their lives. Stereotyping, then, contributes to the impasse phenomenon in two ways: it makes more difficult the development of authentic identity, and it makes more difficult the dialogue so essential to an authentic relationship. While these processes are difficult for both male and female, a number of authors (Colette Dowling, 1981; Simone de Beauvoir, 1961; Karen Horney, 1967; Madonna Kolbenschlag, 1981; Alexandra Symonds, 1974) suggest that for women the temptation to avoid creating an authentic

existence is strengthened by the institution of marriage, which has provided a "back door"; women have been encouraged to define themselves vicariously, or to fit themselves to the needs of others, and ultimately still have that option should "the going get tough". Additional socioeconomic pressures (unequal job and pay opportunities, day care, etc.) make that retreat in some ways a very reasonable one.

Mary does not fit neatly into the traditional stereotype of the female role in that she does hold a high level, high prestige managerial job, and in that responsibility for household maintenance is shared with Bill (about which she, incidently, expresses some guilt). In other ways, however, she does exemplify some stereotyped female behaviors which are evidently not functional for her: she does not express anger, she is not assertive, she is not demanding, she complies with Bill's lifestyle, she is not sexually aggressive, and she "goes along" with others and is "ladylike" and "nice". Despite her success in her career, she left a life which was stimulating and challenging to live with a man, suspecting that she was making a poor choice, but feeling that she

had to prove to herself that she could "make a relationship with a man work". As Bardwick and Douvan pointed out, it was as though she could not feel adequate as a woman until she had "succeeded" interpersonally.

Sociological Ambivalence

In his essay on ambivalence, Robert Merton states that the term ambivalence was first coined by Bleuler in 1911. Bleuler distinguished between three types of ambivalence: emotional (affective) type, in which the same object arouses both positive and negative feelings; voluntary (conative) type, in which conflicting wishes make it difficult to decide how to act; and, intellectual (cognitive) type, in which contradictory ideas are held. Merton, while acknowledging the importance of this psychological approach to ambivalence, suggests that it is equally important to look at ways in which ambivalence becomes built into the structure of social statuses and roles. The concept of sociological ambivalence refers to social structures, not personality. Ambivalence, in other words, may be inherent in a role, and may have nothing to do with the personality of the person occupying that role.

A single role may place conflicting normative expectations on a single individual. Another source of ambivalence arises when a single individual occupies two or more roles which incorporate different interests and values. Merton delineates several other forms of sociological ambivalence which are of less relevance to the phenomenon of impasse. The point is that some of the ambivalence experienced by an individual in impasse may be a product of the sociological structure rather than any intrapersonal dynamic.

Alice Rossi (1972) takes this a step further in her essay on ambivalence in American women, stating that there is no social role toward which there is no ambivalence. She adds that ambivalence can be most readily admitted for those roles which are optional; where there is little choice about a role, ambivalence will be expressed covertly. The more critical a role is for the maintenance of society, the more the negative side of ambivalence will be repressed. For men, a traditionally prescribed role is that of work, so men's negative feelings about work are frequently suppressed, or disguised as somatic disorders. For women, there has traditionally been little choice about marriage

and family, so that the airing of negative feelings about these roles has been discouraged. The result is that individuals who are aware of the negative side of their ambivalence do not know that these feelings "come with the territory" and assume instead that there is something wrong with them.

The ambivalence inherent in the marital role has become further amplified because broad social changes have occurred without accompanying changes in the institution of marriage. Mervyn Cadwallader (1966) writes:

> Marriage was not designed to bear the burdens now being asked of it by the urban American middle class. It is an institution that evolved over centuries to meet some very specific functional needs of a nonindustrial society... Marriage was not designed as a mechanism for providing friendship, erotic experience, romantic love, personal fulfillment, continuous lay psychotherapy, or recreation... The purposes of marriage have changed radically, yet we cling desperately to the outmoded structures of the past. (p. 16)

More recently, Madonna Kolbenschlag (1979) echoes this sentiment in her discussion of contemporary marriage, adding that this over-expectation on marriage is even more prevalent in women, who are typically socialized to place more value on relationships than on achievement.

Additionally, women's role has changed more radically than men's in the last decades; women's identity is no longer exclusively confined to motherhood and homemaking. Kolbenschlag writes:

> This loss of a clearly defined social role has given many women a new sense of identity and existential space. For some women, however, it has been a cause of confusion and anomie, of paralysis in the face of unanticipated options. In either case, it has made the choice of a life companion even more crucial. Where will the "new woman" find a "new man" who is equal to the shifting roles that personal autonomy may require? Expectations are necessarily much higher; the demands on a mate intensified...Can the institution of marriage and family - as we have known it - sustain what some sociologists are now calling a "quantum leap" in the evolution of its structure? (p. 109)

Mary's impasse, then, can be examined in sociological terms as well as at a purely personal level. Merton and Rossi both suggest that there is ambivalence inherent in most if not all social roles. At this time, the role of "wife" is fraught with ambivalence: women are to some extent still expected to fit the old stereotype, yet must also develop a host of new behaviors in order to cope with demands of jobs and the new expectations placed on inti-

mate relationships. Often the old and the new make diametrically opposed demands. Cadwallader and Kolbenschlag question the ability of marriage to meet the new demands placed on it. Certainly Mary has a great many expectations of her marriage. She likes some of the easy companionship their relationship presently offers, but in addition, she wants emotional intimacy, passion, spontaneity, adventure, sexuality, and freedom for both herself and Bill to pursue their individual interests and goals. Something must "give": either Mary's expectations of her relationship must shift, or she must learn a collection of new skills with which to put these goals into practice.

CHAPTER VI: IMPLICATIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR COUNSELLORS WORKING WITH IMPASSE

As can be seen from the preceeding analysis, the phenomenon of impasse is complex, having many interacting intrapersonal, interpersonal and sociological components. My bias as a counsellor is that it is not only legitimate, but indeed only conscionable to work with problems from as many angles as necessary in order to achieve the best solution (best implying some balance between thoroughness and expeditiousness). Of course, techniques from broadly differing orientations can not simply be jumbled together at random, but as long as no one orientation can be demonstrated to be clearly superior, the ethical counsellor must choose the best from each orientation and incorporate these techniques and theories into an integrated personal style. In dealing with impasse, an effective approach must draw on the various counselling orientations to develop techniques which will impact on each of the three levels mentioned above.

Before going further, the point should be made that the analysis of impasse presented in this thesis is dependent to a large extent on literature and theories which

have little empirical support. However, the validity of the constructs discussed is supported both clinically and by the observation that theories deriving from very different starting points end up to be similar in essence. Furthermore, regardless of the degree to which these theories have been empirically, tested some very useful (and testable) clinical interventions have been generated by these constructs (Gurman, 1978, p. 458). Two assertions made in a critical analysis of contemporary marital therapies by Gurman (1978) are noteworthy in developing a model for treatment of impasse in relationship. The first is a finding that, in treating relationship problems, success rates for therapies involving both spouses were higher than for those therapies where only one spouse was involved (65% versus 48% respectively). Similarly, the reported deterioration or negative therapeutic effects (on the non-treated spouse or on the relationship) were twice as high when only one spouse was involved (11.6% versus 5.6%) (p. 474). This suggests that both spouses should ideally be involved, even when the stated problem may appear to "belong" to one person. A second assertion made by Gurman is that there is not a consistent corre-

have little empirical support. However, the validity of the constructs discussed is supported both clinically and by the observation that theories deriving from very different starting points end up to be similar in essence. Furthermore, regardless of the degree to which these theories have been empirically tested some very useful (and testable) clinical interventions have been generated by these constructs (Gurman, 1978, p. 458). Two assertions made in a critical analysis of contemporary marital therapies by Gurman (1978) are noteworthy in developing a model for treatment of impasse in relationship. The first is a finding that, in treating relationship problems, success rates for therapies involving both spouses were higher than for those therapies where only one spouse was involved (65% versus 48% respectively). Similarly, the reported deterioration or negative therapeutic effects (on the non-treated spouse or on the relationship) were twice as high when only one spouse was involved (11.6% versus 5.6%) (p. 474). This suggests that both spouses should ideally be involved, even when the stated problem may appear to "belong" to one person. A second assertion made by Gurman is that there is not a consistent corre-

spondence between changing behavior and changing experience (p. 528). Changing a behavior does not necessarily lead to increased well being, or to changed subjective experience of any kind. Conversely, altered subjective experience does not always in and of itself bring about desired behavioral change. Thus, in order to ensure stable and thoroughgoing change, it would seem that methods must be used which will facilitate both specific behavior change and changed subjective experience. These two findings must be borne in mind in developing treatment strategies for impasse, and once again, the individual, the interpersonal and the sociological factors must all be addressed. Strategies appropriate to each of these three levels will be discussed separately below, with the reminder that this is an artificial separation : in practice these three components would be integrated and would overlap considerably.

Recommended Interventions

Individual

Although it is preferable to have both members of a couple involved in the therapeutic process, much of the

work must be done individually. This can be achieved either with both members present, or by having some individual as well as conjoint sessions. In impasse, the major intrapersonal contribution appears to be a lack of individuation and awareness. Perls believed that increasing awareness was in itself sufficient, and that facilitating awareness required two "tracks" or strategies: providing support, and frustrating attempts to avoid or manipulate. A number of specific methods would achieve these goals:

Gestalt Techniques

Many techniques have been developed out of Gestalt theories, all of which have in common the goal of increased awareness, and which stress the importance of the present moment. Even "old business" (historical information) is translated into how it is presently experienced. Gestalt techniques are adapted to each situation rather then being rigidly fixed.

The Basic Experiment. In his review of Gestalt practices, Gary Yontef (1971) states that all Gestalt therapy consists of directed "experiments" which help the client to discover the ways in which he or she blocks awareness. There is a "basic experiment" which basically involves the client saying "...here and now, I am aware that...". The therapist is active in redirecting the client back to this basic position whenever he or she leaves it. Pointing out the obvious (e.g. body positions, voice tone) is an important function of the therapist in this technique.

Gestalt Games. As stated, Gestalt techniques are adapted to fit each situation. However, a number of more or less standard "games" have been developed. Some of these games include:

-shuttling: creating a dialogue between various parts of the personality, or between self and other.

-playing the projection: "owning" (applying to oneself) statements previously made about others.

reversal: playing a role opposite to the one usually taken.

exaggeration: exaggerating gestures, voice tones, etc.

Detailed descriptions of these and other Gestalt games and techniques may be found in a variety of sources (Levin and Shepherd, 1974, Levitsky and Perls, 1970, Passons, 1975, Thorne, 1974).

The two chair technique. In his excellent article, Leslie Greenberg (1980) has described the principles and skills involved in the two-chair technique. This technique is particularly useful in working with polarities or splits. A dialogue is encouraged between the two parts of the polarity as a first step in reintegrating the "disowned" side. Greenberg's article outlines the microskills involved in using the two-chair technique as well as the theoretical rationale for each. A comparison of empathic and eclectic methods with the two-chair approach by Greenberg and Dompiere (1981) suggests that two-chair work is powerfully effective in resolving intrapsychic conflict.

Developmental Models

Another approach which would meet Perls' requirement for both support and frustration would be that which Egan called "the developmental model" in his book The Skilled Helper (Egan, 1975). This model is based on three major sources: (1) the research of Robert Carkhuff and other systematic skills-training systems, (2) social influence theory, and (3) learning theory. This type of model has in recent years been at the forefront of counselling research and practise, and is well accepted as being effective and reliable. Egan's particular model is a three stage model, which proceeds from establishing a supportive climate for self-exploration in the first stage, to a more confrontational approach in the second stage, and finally, to developing specific action programs in the final stage. Egan describes the specific skills (empathy, concreteness, self-disclosure, confrontation, etc.) which are used at each stage.

Focusing

Focusing is a technique developed by Eugene Gendlin, in which the client is directed through a stepwise process

in order to make contact with a special kind of bodily awareness which Gendlin calls a "felt sense" (Gendlin, 1981, p. 10). This felt sense is not an emotion, but rather the body's experience, or overall knowing of a problem. Focusing consist of six movements, described in detail in Gendlin's book Focusing. When the client successfully moves through these six steps, there is a physical change in the body which corresponds to a felt shift: the problem is viewed differently. Marilyn Ferguson's forward to Gendlin's Focusing states: "In short, focusing works for any form of stuckness"(p. ix). Focusing, then, may be an especially useful tool in working with impasse.

Cognitive Restructuring

Since the impasse is maintained by "catastrophic expectations" yet another approach might be to work from the end of altering some of those expectations. To this end a number of techniques have been developed which may generically be termed cognitive restructuring. The major feature of these therapies is the direct confrontation and exposure of the irrational belief system until such

point as the client adopts a more realistic attitude. A clearly formulated example of this approach is that of Albert Ellis (1967). Cognitive restructuring, at least as presented by Ellis fits into the "frustration" end of Perls' recommendation; it would be necessary to also incorporate some more supportive techniques.

Interpersonal

Communication Skills Training

The influences of poor identity formation on the capacity to form authentic dialogue have been discussed previously, and can be dealt with by attention to individual dynamics as described in the preceeding section. The other half of this problem, though, is the actual level of communication skills possessed by each member. Particular deficits may exist in one or both partners, as in the case study, where Mary demonstrates a lack of assertion skills, and an inability to express "negative" emotions, and where both she and Bill contribute to failure to process conflicts. A great deal of literature is available regarding effective methods of improving communication skills, most of which comes from the beha-

vioral school. Behavior therapy has refined the art of precisely assessing and targeting what behaviors are lacking or in need of alteration, and utilizing operant learning theory to systematically teach the new skills. Many of the same skills isolated by the microskills training systems for use by counsellors can be viewed also as merely effective communication, and can be taught using the same principles. Research dealing more specifically with assertion skills has also yielded a number of excellent instructional approaches (Gormally, Hill, Otis & Rainey, 1975; Rimm & Masters, 1974). Adaptations specifically for women have also been devised (Jakubowski-Spector, 1973; Kahn & Greenberg, 1980).

Some communication programs have been designed specifically for couples. One such program is Bernard Geurney's Relationship Enhancement (Geurney, 1979). Relationship Enhancement is a highly structured educational model in which couples are systematically trained in both sending and receiving messages clearly. This model is concerned with teaching the process of communication rather than with resolving specific issues, the rationale being that once the basic skills are learned couples will be able to sort out their own issues.

Systems Concepts

In addition to communication skills training, an important therapeutic task at the interpersonal level is to assist the couple to see their respective roles in the system they have created. This involves both diagnostic functions (observing the couple's interaction to determine what patterns have become established) and educative (teaching some of the basic premises or laws of the systems approach and helping the couple to see how these laws operate in their relationship). Different schools within the family systems theories approach these tasks in different ways. Chasin and Grunebaum (1980) have developed a classification scheme which organizes the principle concepts and practises of family therapy into three diagnostic perspectives and three treatment approaches. They suggest that diagnoses may be made using a historic perspective (emphasizing unresolved issues, and the influence of ties with families of origin), an interactional ("here and now") perspective (emphasizing structure, and dysfunctional communication), or an experiential perspective (emphasizing self-image, individuation, emotional climate and inner experience). Treatment approaches may emphasize

understanding, transformation, or identification. Approaches emphasizing understanding may use methods such as role playing, family sculpting, dramatic improvisations, examination of photographs or diaries, videotaped as well as the same basic counselling interventions used in increasing individual awareness. In approaches emphasizing transformation, the therapist strategically directs members to modify their interaction without their understanding being a necessary part; techniques are drawn from behavior modification, communication training, Gestalt approaches. A popular technique within this perspective is paradoxical instruction, in which the symptom is described, for example, if a couple bickers continually, they are instructed to continue bickering as much as possible, or to set aside time for bickering. The behavior changes because it no longer serves the old function, which may have been to resist. Approaches emphasizing identification rely on the modeling of the therapist to promote new behaviors in the couple.

Sociological Level

The remaining components of impasse are the sociological factors defined in the previous chapter as sex role stereotyping and sociological ambivalence. Once again, there is much overlap with individual and interpersonal treatments: increased self-awareness will help the individual to see which of the roles he or she plays actually fit his/her authentic being. Perhaps the other main "treatment" implied in this category is education regarding the nature of stereotypes, and the universality of ambivalence about roles. Some of this educative process may come about through the modeling of the therapist, through exposure to others in group settings, or perhaps through bibliotherapy. The competent therapist has a responsibility to be both an effective model of authentic living, and also to be informed enough of social trends and recent research to be able to recommend literature, or otherwise pass on information which may be educative and facilitate change.

Specific Issues

The above is an overview of principles and techniques that could be applied to most types of relationship impasse. In working with an individual or couple regarding an impasse, issues will also arise that may be specific to that particular situation. Resolution of those specific problems may be all that the couple requires or wants. Change in a specific area may also cause the deadlocked process to begin to move, or may serve to "unclutter the field" so that the couple can begin to see broader issues within their relationship. For example, with regard to Mary's impasse, she states that the lack of sexuality is a key concern for her, and she may need to "defuse" the urgency of the sexual problem before she is able to examine the less pressing but perhaps deeper issues of her identity and willingness to take responsibility for her needs within the marriage. Some form of sex therapy may thus be called for in Mary and Bill's case; different issues may be present in other relationships.

A Concluding Note

This thesis has attempted to synthesize a diverse collection of ideas, all of which are seen to relate in some way to the experience or treatment of impasse. With such a broad scope, presentation of some concepts has been brief, and detail has been sacrificed in favor of developing a holistic understanding. The following summary recapitulates briefly what I consider to be the essential features of the impasse phenomenon and its treatment.

Impasse is essentially a deadlock of opposing forces, resulting in an inability of the individual to move or grow psychologically. Forces for and against alternatives are equally strong, such that, as in a perfectly matched tug-of-war, much effort is expended but no movement results. The clearest descriptions of impasse are found in Gestalt literature most notably in the writings of F. Perls. Perls views impasse as a position in which the individual is not successful in receiving support from the environment, and is also unable (or believes him/herself to be unable) to provide his or her own support. This may happen with regard to specific issues, or in a broader sense, such that the impasse actually becomes a "stuck" place in

the process of developing authentic identity. The impasse is maintained by avoidance of the frustration and fear that occurs when "phony" or manipulative behaviors no longer work, and the individual is required to begin taking responsibility for his or her own needs and behaviors.

The subjective experience of this deadlock is intensely frustrating, confusing, and draining. Perls describes the experience of impasse in these words:

> When approaching the existential impasse (and this does not mean minor hang-ups) the patient gets into a whirl. He becomes panic-stricken, deaf and dumb, unwilling to leave the merry-go-round of compulsive repetition. He truly feels the despair which Kierkegaard recognized as "sickness unto death". (1975, p. 13)

Given the painfulness of these feelings, it is little wonder that much of the individual's energy and creativity is given over to finding ways to avoid this experience. The individual in impasse truly believes that he or she has not the ability to cope without support from others, and finds full awareness of this belief too frightening to tolerate. Unfortunately, though, movement <u>around</u> the impasse is not possible: the individual must go <u>through</u> the impasse. He or she must fully experience the fear of

not being able to cope or survive, and must also become aware of the many ways in which he or she manipulates others into providing support. Only then is the discovery made that behind the fears and manipulations lies genuine creativity and a solution to the impasse.

This thesis has attempted to expand the basic understanding of impasse to incorporate the added complexities which arise when the impasse occurs within a relationship. I have suggested that not only intrapersonal, but also interpersonal and sociological factors contribute to the development and maintenance of an impasse. The Gestalt model of impasse proposes awareness as the tool with which to move through the "stuckness" to the authentic self that lies beyond. I see here a parallel to constructs of identity developed by other theorists. The implication is that impasse is most likely to occur where identity is weak (This may be true globally, with regard to the whole personality, or perhaps only in respect to one aspect of the personality. For instance, an individual could conceivably be very clear about career interests and goals, and yet be undefined with regard to what they need in a relationship). Identity, then, is seen as a thread uniting the intrapersonal, interpersonal and sociological

factors which contribute to impasse.

Treatment of impasse must address all three factors. The overriding goal is to encourage the individual to become more aware, or individuated, to develop a stronger sense of identity. This requires that the individual "stay with" whatever is true for him or her. For the individual in impasse, what is true is the confusion and fear. Encouraging the individual to experience these feelings necessitates a combination of support and frustration. More specific ways of implementing these goals have been suggested above.

In conclusion, resolution of the impasse demands an integration of interventions aimed at several levels, with the aim of helping the individual to become more and more self supporting and aware. Ultimately, only the individual can find the solution to his or her impasse, but the stuckness is genuine. The individual truly does not see the way out, and must be helped to see, yet the therapist must not provide the answer, or the purpose of developing the client's identity and autonomy will be defeated. The input of the therapist must merely provide the client with a tool by which to shift the deadlock; this tool may be a new skill learned, or increased awareness of a need or

feeling, or perhaps the loss of a catastrophic expectation or limiting stereotype. As with all therapy, respect for the wisdom of the client is essential: movement through the impasse is a powerful experience and the client must not be divested of the safety of the impasse before he or she has developed new ways of coping. It is hoped that the exploration of impasse contained in this thesis will provide the therapist with sufficient theoretical understanding and practical guidelines to enable him or her to provide that sensitive balance of frustration and support that encourages the client to "step off the precipice".

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Appendix A

Subject's Consent Form

I, _____, have read the outline of the study "Impasse in Relationships: A Woman's Experience", and understand the nature and purposes of the study. I agree to participate in the study in the manner described in the outline. I understand my role, and the responsibilities of the researcher.

I have read the "Researcher's Assurances to the Subject" and am satisfied with the steps taken to assure confidentiality and anonymity.

I am aware that I have control over what I wish to share with the researcher, and that I will have an opportunity to examine transcripts of my participation if I so desire.

I understand that my participation is at all times voluntary, and that I am free to withdraw at any time.

I understand that the purpose of the study is primarily research, no therapy, and I have access to ongoing support and counselling at the (counselling agency) should my involvement become stressful to me in any way.

_____ _____

Signed Date

Appendix B

Researcher's Assurances to the Subject

The following assurances are made to the subject regarding my purposes and methods, and regarding confidentiality.

1. The purposes and methods of the study are exactly as stated - no concealed motive or purpose is involved, and you are free to ask questions at any time regarding the study.
2. All interviews will be audiotaped. Tapes will be transcribed as soon as possible (within 48 hours) following the interviews with all names and identifying details changed to ensure anonymity. Tapes will then be erased. Interview tapes will not be heard by anyone but myself.
3. If you choose to allow me access to any written journal material, it will also be transcribed with any identifying details altered, then returned or destroyed, whichever is your preference. Original written entries will not be read by anyone but myself. If you prefer to keep a journal as a stimulus for your own exploration

only, then you assume responsibility for its safekeeping.

4. All original data will be stored very carefully until transcription, then destroyed or returned. Once transcribed, you may examine the typescript if you desire, to ensure that steps I have taken to protect your anonymity are adequate in your opinion.

Please feel free to ask any questions you may have regarding the study, its methods and purposes. It is my desire to respect your limits regarding your privacy, and to conduct the study in a manner that will be rewarding to you as well as useful for my research purposes.

_____ _____

Signed Date

VITA

Surname: Fair Given Names: Hanne

Place of Birth: Sabro, Denmark

Date of Birth: November 16, 1953

Educational Institutions Attended, with Dates of Entering and Leaving:

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Publications:

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IMPASSE IN RELATIONSHIPS: A WOMAN'S EXPERIENCE

Author HANNE FAIR

[redacted]

(Signature)

April 24 1984

(Date)