

Couple Congruence and Spirituality: Expanding Satir's Model Through
Seven Couple Narratives

by

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ABSTRACT

Family therapists have generally resisted discussing the experience of spirituality in their work in that “spirituality” has been omitted within the positivist social science paradigm or to avoid any confusion with particular religious counselling. While the pioneer family therapist Virginia Satir included spirituality in her practice, she did not offer an extensive meta-theory to link her perspectives with her approach.

This inquiry begins with an exploration of theoretical issues pertaining to the inclusion of a universal sense of spirituality and inter-subjectivity in psychology. It explores the transpersonal constructs of Abraham Maslow, Ken Wilber’s integral psychology and arguments given by Carol Gilligan and Donald Rothberg. The discussion proceeds with “ dialogical/spiritual” constructs of philosophers Martin Buber, Jurgen Habermas and Luce Irigaray and the psychological process work of Satir, Erikson, Frederick and Laura Perls and Stephen and Ondrea Levine.

The inquiry then explores “the impact of spirituality on couple congruence” to discern its therapeutic value within several religious contexts. Fourteen participants (seven couples) who have been in mature, couple relationships were involved, and who self-identified as being Catholic, Jewish, United Church, Christian Science, and “North American” Tibetan Buddhist. They participated in non-structured interviews that were then analyzed as each couple’s conjoint narrative. A hermeneutic interpretation was placed in the context of theory in the Satir Model. This included: a) major challenges for each of the couples in regard to self, other, “us-ness” and context; b) discerning the

couples' "conjoint" universal yearnings and c) changes to self, other, "us-ness" and context.

Findings from the study indicated that six of the couples had experienced major change or transformation during their life as a couple, with three couples making active changes to their religious context. An expansion to the Satir Model was developed to discern the impact of universal yearnings on the couple's various contexts, particularly through the diagram of the "couple mandala." These diagrams offer a metaphor to illustrate challenges and new directions for the couple across their diverse contexts. The study offers an expansion to the Satir model of family therapy and the further inclusion of spirituality into academic discourse.

Limitations of the study included an aspect of similarity in the selection of couple participants, in that most were in leadership standing in their communities, and that the interviews were not designed as therapeutic encounters. However, the study offers an expansion to the Satir model of family therapy and the further inclusion of spirituality in academic discourse.

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DEDICATION:

In memory of my beloved grandparents
Alex and Annie
for their unconditional love

In loving memory of my parents
Esther and Arthur
who were dedicated to seeing the good in others

Chapter I: Purpose Of The Study

A. Introduction

Family therapists have generally resisted discussing the experience of spirituality in their work in that “spirituality” has been omitted within the positivist social science paradigm or to avoid confusion with particular religious counseling, as noted by Walsh (1999) in *Spiritual Resources in Family Therapy*. It was the pioneer family therapist Virginia Satir who included the experience of spirituality while engaged within the individual or couple encounter. As she did not offer an extensive meta-theory to describe her approach, it continues to raise questions as to the ways in which the dynamic interplay of feelings, beliefs and expectations between the couple can change or become transformed through spirituality. Furthermore, her constructs of “self” “other” and “context” have far-reaching implications on the nature of relationship, challenging the more conservative modalities that attempt to define them.

It is my intent to further explore Satir’s model through a hermeneutic, narrative inquiry of mature couple participants, and to include their own conceptual frameworks of their conjoint experience, a discourse which has been largely omitted in academic literature. Selecting well-integrated couples is intended to follow a “wellness model” rather than a pathological study and follows Abraham Maslow’s explorations in humanistic and transpersonal psychology by noting the qualities of those who may be seen as highly integrated personalities. I will be mindful of my various “locations” as a researcher, a co-participant, and as a spiritual student of each participant couple. I will

then follow each of these narrative constructions with an interpretation that is situated as interdisciplinary, and connects theoretical foundations within counseling psychology, integral psychology, and religious studies. It will be my endeavor to draw findings that are suitable for those working and teaching in the fields of human and social development.

B. My Location In The Study

1. Context as a Family Therapist

My initial training was in Satir-based family therapy while I was employed at Pacific Centre Family Services Association, a large, community-based agency. Recently, I updated my clinical skills under the direction of John Banmen and Kathlyne Maki-Banmen at the Satir Institute of the Pacific. Most of the client families at my community agency were referred through social service or mental health agencies, and had presenting issues of moderate to severe levels of abuse. Many of our families were either single-parent or remarried, and with whom much work was invested on family-of- origin and “unfinished” couple issues. Adult children of divorce face particular difficulties in trust and intimacy, essential for establishing their own families of creation. In Nicholas Wolfinger's study in the *Journal of Family Issues* (Wolfinger, 2000), the researcher offers that while there may be less impact on children as divorce becomes normalized, it "remains hazardous to [the] offsprings [own] marital stability" (Wolfinger, p.1079). Furthermore, in Judith Wallerstein's study *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce* (Wallerstein, J., J. Lewis & Sandra Blakeslee, 2000) it is suggested that adult children of divorce can become afraid of marital conflict and thus afraid of marital commitment.

At our agency, we primarily offered Satir's basic model of family counseling, assisting behavioral change through effective communication and family-of-origin work. While some of us were aware that Virginia Satir incorporated a universal, "spiritual" dimension in therapy, this was rarely articulated, and rarely requested by a client. In hindsight, I believe many of us seemed to extend Roger's "unconditional positive regard" to making a "sacred space" to assist our clients to make internal, affective changes. At that time, the "Iceberg model" had not yet been offered in training (Satir, et. al., 1991), which explicitly links the behavioral, affective and perceptual levels of one's Self with spiritual levels, for intra-psychic congruence.

For purposes of my therapeutic work with client families, I wish to further explore Satir's construct of the spiritual dimension in "transformational" process work with couples. While there are various religious groups offering "marital encounter" workshops, I would like to keep my focus on Virginia Satir's particular methods, with her construct of a universal spirituality.

2. Context as a University Instructor

As a university instructor, I have taught counseling courses during the past five years, primarily at the University of Victoria. I share some of my clinical experience with my students. However, I was surprised to find that during their own family-of-origin exploration, many of my students were omitting how the couple relationship of their parents had impacted them. I should clarify here that my students were generally able to articulate how they were emotionally impacted by each one of their parents, but they often omitted the impact on themselves by the relationship *between* their parents. This

issue is a potent one for both my students as well as for the youth and families that they will be asked to counsel. I find this a significant omission, as a main reason cited for failure in young marriages is the fear of conflict with a marital partner, particularly for those who grew up without the healthy modeling of conflict between couples (Brown, P. 1995). Indeed, many of my students, like myself, did not grow up with both of their natural parents, and this number increases with the rising rates of marital separation.

I am also aware of the minimization of focus on the couple relation within many of the provincial counseling programs, possibly due to their being situated in educational psychology or child and youth care programs, wherein the emphasis is on the “child” and “adolescent” stages of human development, and thus the parent-child, or counselor-child relationship receives more focus than that of the couple. This comparable lack of academic focus on couples may reflect institutional mandates, but this focus need not fall between the cracks. In contrast, in theologically-oriented institutions, there are schools of family studies which offer a more complete “marital therapy” - albeit from a conservative-religious paradigm. The more secular American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy training, while also complete, is not generally offered within Canadian academic institutions. I believe that this has led to a lack of mainstream academic discourse in Canada on couple relations and therapy.

In regard to the dimension of spirituality in the counseling process, this seemed taboo until quite recently, and has been generally omitted in all secular academic texts on family counselling. In the literature review, I will cite some family therapy texts of the past decade that have regrettably presented religious beliefs and expressions in an odious manner. Thus, spirituality has been caught between territorially conservative frames on

one hand, and omission in the materialistic, modernist frame on the other. The Satir model posits a spiritual dimension distinct from any specific religious frame, and this has not had a proper voice until recently.

Thus, my professional and teaching experiences have contributed to my interest in exploring couple relations and spirituality, and the interplay of the two, by this apparent omission in the academic field . I understand that I am walking in some uncharted waters, and that my drawing on various disciplines (counseling psychology, integral or transpersonal psychology and religious studies) places my scholarship in the “interdisciplinary” arena.

I am drawn even more compellingly into this topic by my personal journey. As this presents an even keener edge for my “location” as a researcher, the following is offered.

3. Personal, Cultural and Religious Context

My personal, cultural and religious “locations” impact both my inquiry and my biases as a researcher. To begin at the beginning, I was raised in a single-parent, working-class Jewish home, receiving my elementary education at an orthodox Jewish school. This led to internal feelings of “not belonging” in several ways. Jewish culture is very family-based, and not having my father living with us made me feel more marginalized in a very traditional, family-centered culture. I was also a “go-between” in my parents’ unresolved issues with each other, and a “go-between” in their differing spiritual beliefs and religious practices. Early on, I felt overwhelmed by my parents’ contrary views, yet I believed that I could still carry much of the very positive moral, family and intellectual values of my cultural and religious identity. However, this also

meant that I carried a certain sense of shame from being a “minority within a minority” - growing up in a religious context wherein children of divorce were less than five percent of the orthodox Jewish population.

With the many unresolved issues from my family of origin, it was difficult for me to “launch” into young adulthood and marriage. My “crises” occurred during my last years as an undergraduate. I was academically influenced by Erich Fromm and I sought to broaden my philosophical views through psychology. When my father then told me that Fromm was “mein Freund” (my father’s former classmate in Germany), this seemed more than coincidental. Both Erich Fromm and Erik Erikson fled Germany prior to the Holocaust, and I felt an affinity with the deep level of conscience that I found in their writings.

During the anti-war movement of the 1960’s, I played an active role against the Vietnam War. I felt I had expanded my cultural identity as well, aligning with the various peace movements, and sought to transcend national and ethnocentric barriers. However, I did not have much of a personal identity off of the campus, and when my parents demanded for me to fulfill their many unmet needs, I sought psychological support. I was led to spiritual explorations through books and psychedelics, and eventually to the feet of Ram Dass, formerly Richard Alpert, a Harvard professor whose own life changed through meeting his yoga “guru” Neem Karoli Baba (Dass, 1971). I then left university and journeyed with a yoga community throughout much of the 1970’s. This I am compiling in a forthcoming book of collaborative memoirs, *The Blue Goddess; Reflections on Spiritual Community Living* (2005). I will describe, along with several other participants whom I have contacted after twenty-five years, our difficulties with

issues of community leadership, marriage and family relations, differing models of spiritual development, and how we responded to our teacher's mis-handling of her psychic gifts. Obviously, these years had a huge impact on my life. It was during this time period that we were attempting to become a community of "holy families". This ideal of the holy family – particularly of the "spiritual couple"- still intrigues me. Does the concept promise more than it can deliver? Can it be a fulfillment of human psychological growth? Do conventional religions offer this? Why or why not? And, from my present "location" as researcher, can healthier and more fulfilling processes for couple relationships be documented?

a. Legacies from three religious contexts

My mother came from a Hasidic, Russian family, and moving to America, she retained only a basic observance of Jewish ritual. However, she held a messianic belief in a world-to-come, wherein all religions would shake off their unnecessary differences and live together in peace. I had my elementary education in a private Jewish school, but was withdrawn when my mother feared I might become too religious.

In his twenties, my father was drawn to Nechamia Noble, a mystical Berlin rabbi. After I entered university, my father believed I was distancing from my religious roots, and he encouraged me to read the more universally spiritual perspectives of Martin Buber.

Perhaps I surprised them both when, in my early twenties, I entered Shor Yoshev Rabbinical Academy. Although I found I could not completely commit to the proscribed theology and observances, I left with a profound respect for the orthodox commitment to

a religious life. In particular, we studied *mussar*, a deep examination of one's moral framework.

During my years in an eclectic yoga ashram, I experienced what might be termed varieties of spiritual experience, through meditation and devotional singing. Following Ram Dass, there was a focus on both dualistic and non-dualistic aspects of one's spiritual consciousness. Following this, I taught yoga for several years, along with meditation classes and teachings from the *Bhagavad Gita*.

During this period, one of my closest spiritual teachers introduced me to the writings of Joel Goldsmith, who had been a Christian Science practitioner. He left the church when he discerned that the spiritual principles offered by the founder were becoming "writ in stone" by other church elders, rather than being a living presence. For me, his writings offered a sense of spiritual guidance, safety, a freedom from repressive situations and outlived modalities, creativity and healing.

b. My present, pluralistic framework

My religious locations has been pluralistic, as I have connected with Jewish, Christian and yogic frameworks. It is primarily through my awareness of a "universal" sense of spirituality that I have had the "fluidity" to move through these different religious frames and be able to be connected on some level with each of them. I experience spirituality beyond any particular cultural or religious frame. Spirituality appears to me in at least these several ways;

1. as a refuge,
2. as supply for my needs,
3. as an intuitive connection with others, and

4. as a transforming and freeing force throughout my life's many changes.

However, my concerns regarding religious and spiritual communities are primarily in the area where there is confusion between human emotional development and spiritual development in a way that has been problematic for many participants, myself included. This is reflected in a research project I conducted for my Master's degree in counseling psychology - "A Study of Significant Relationships in Contemporary Religious Groups" (Bentheim, 1990).

My cultural, religious and spiritual frames have been reflected in my couple relationships. These relationships have offered me both great and difficult learning, continuing to leave me with still more questions. I am offering my location in this inquiry as integral to recursive rigor. I can thus reflexively visit how I am situating myself in professional, and academic modalities and also in my frameworks of culture, religion and spirituality. As I carry multiple perspectives, I will need to ask how this might affect my perceptions of "others" who are more "mainstream" in their cultural, religious and spiritual frames.

C. Focusing The Study

1. Defining "Couple Congruence"

In the Satir Model (Satir, et. al., 1991), the term "couple congruence" is used to describe a harmonization among the many levels of each individual with the other - a harmonizing of self and other that includes an "us". In the Satir Model, the term "congruence" is used as both a process and a therapeutic goal. In Chapter II, the Review of the Literature, I will describe in detail the Satir Model's perspective and approach for

interpersonal growth. It will not be my intent to discuss the various perspectives of other couple therapists, as I am well aware that differing modalities are often blended during practice. However, I will extrapolate meta-theory from Satir's Growth Model to connect with conceptions of couple congruence from various religious contexts.

2. Defining "Spirituality"

A difficulty that arises at the outset of such an inquiry is the defining or describing of spirituality, which is often caught between conservative religious paradigms, on the one hand, and its omission in western-modernist social sciences on the other. Therefore, I will utilize a general definition from psychology that is most closely related to my inquiry, particularly that of Abraham Maslow (1970) a formulator of humanistic and transpersonal psychology. In his later years, he defined spirituality as *transcendence*:

Transcendence refers to the very highest and most inclusive or holistic levels of human consciousness, behaving and relating [and] as ends rather than as means, to oneself, to significant others, to human beings in general, to other species, to nature, and to the cosmos. (Maslow, 1971, p.279)

Family therapist Virginia Satir defined spirituality as the deepest level of oneself, which she termed "The Self: I Am" (Satir, et.al.1991). Her construct emphasizes the individually experienced nature of spiritual experience, as distinct from any religious, ideological concept.

Many of my research participants offered their own descriptions of spiritual experience, particularly within their experience as a couple. This will be presented

through the interviews, and further articulated in the Findings (Chapter IV) and Discussion (Chapter V).

3. Satir's Formulation of Psycho-Social-Spiritual Process

Satir drew from a variety of philosophical and psychological thinkers, including the “positive existentialism” of Soren Kierkegaard and Martin Buber, the system thinkers Ludwig Bertalanffy and Gregory Bateson, and psychologists Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow (Satir, et. al, 1991). She also taught alongside Federick “Fritz” Perls, the formulator of Gestalt, or encounter therapy, and incorporated other frameworks for interpersonal growth, such as “core-belief” work.

In terms of linking psychological and spiritual growth process, I will discuss several links that are incorporated in her meta-theory, in Chapter II, the Review of the Literature. I discern how her meta-theory incorporates Martin Buber’s dialogical process, Erik Erikson’s conception of the later stages of human development, and Erikson and Maslow’s conception of an organic process. In extending her model across religious and psychological disciplines, I will look to Ken Wilber’s formulation of “integral psychology” as a pluralistic model, and as contemporary discourse in spirituality within the academy.

4. Various Religious Constructs of the Spiritual Marriage

I am interested in how Satir’s Growth Model may interface with several religious constructs of spirituality in marriage. I will be particularly interested in ways that members from various religious roots, or frameworks, may connect with her meta-theory, not as an intellectual exercise but explicated through their own lived experience in partnership. I am interested in what others have experienced, particularly those who have

experienced religious or spiritual growth through their partnerships, and are able to articulate this. My inquiry will ask whether any spiritually transformative experience has impacted not only the couple, but also the context of their marriage. Certainly, Erikson wished to explore this in his book *Gandhi's Truth* (1969), albeit in the failure of the marriage, not in its fulfillment. I will also explore the Stephen and Ondrea Levine's contemporary text, *Embracing the Beloved; Relationship as a Path of Awakening* (1996), for its striking demonstration of psycho-spiritual process work between a couple, and also as a springboard for a more diverse and coherent study of couple congruence and spirituality.

D. Developing A Methodology

1. Interdisciplinary Approach

In order to address the highly interdisciplinary nature of my inquiry, I follow Roger Mourard Jr.'s well stated position that as inquirer, I am the active agent, and may then cross disciplinary bounds as the inquiry moves over the ground. Furthermore,

Cross-disciplinary inquiry can be interpreted as manifesting a desire to allow the impetus of a particular inquiry to not be bound or constrained by established theoretical parameters, metaframeworks, and modes of inquiry... One might think of this process as something like composing a narrative, in that the ground of a particular inquiry is shaped by what emerges in the course of that inquiry itself. (Mourad Jr. 1997, p.87)

2. Hermeneutic Narrative Inquiry

My key concepts of the study are couples and spirituality. My inquiry includes engaging mature, articulate couples who can strongly identify with this topic and share their individual and conjoint experience. Therefore, I will discuss hermeneutic, narrative inquiry in Formulating a Method for Inquiry (Part III). I will need to distinguish between my various locations as researcher, co-participant, and interpreter of the narratives that can be constructed. I then offer my specific research design. In Chapter IV, the Findings, I present my vertical and horizontal analysis of the data. In the Discussion (Chapter V), I offer the implications of this inquiry, drawn from my interpretation of these couple narratives as

- a) an expansion to the Satir Growth Model,
- b) research in marriage and family therapy,
- c) spiritual and religious studies in general.

Chapter II: Review Of The Literature

A. Virginia Satir's Perspective Of Couple Congruence

Virginia Satir was a pioneer of the family therapy movement, and she promoted the therapeutic significance of working with all family members rather than the individual. I present this overview of her lifework as it offers her particular focus on the couple relationship. It also presents her inclusion of the spiritual dimension in therapy.

1. An Interactive Perspective

Virginia Satir, who was trained as a social worker, began her work with schizophrenic patients at the Mental Research Institute of Palo Alto California, where she worked with Don Jackson and Jay Haley and was a colleague of other pioneers of family therapy, Murray Bowen and Salvador Minuchin. The common ground of all these therapists was that the identified patient's intra-psychic pain could be alleviated through addressing the identified patient's intra-psychic family pain, observing that the symptom's were actually "serving a family function as well as an individual function." (Satir, 1967, p.1). Increasingly, the early family therapists began to focus on the marital couple, as "the marital relationship is the axis around which all other family relationships are formed" (1967, p.1), Thus Satir believed that assisting the interaction between the couple to be paramount in alleviating family pain.

In her first book, *Conjoint Family Therapy* (1967) she demonstrated how the lack of the couple's individual self-worth and their subsequent lack of intimacy acted to

subvert their son's identity formation. In this clinical illustration, the little boy "Johnny" is described in relational context with his parents:

...because he is helpless, his own survival needs must be met within the framework of his parents' needs and expectations if he is going to get what he needs, his asking must be tuned to what his parents are willing and able to give. (Satir, 1967, p.20)

...as males and females continued to find their relations with each other thorny and threatening.....they agreed to 'live for the child'. Yet, they implicitly asked that the child live for them; he as the important one, the one who had the power, the responsibility, the mandate to make his parents happy. (Satir, 1967, p.26)

This interactive, relational model of family therapy is quite distinct from a singular focus on the psychological development of the child. Here, Satir emphasized the significance of understanding interactional patterns in the family. Although Satir often spoke of the couple as the "architects of the family", she acknowledged and recognized "special families," divorced, single-parent, foster and remarried families, and she was very accepting of this in today's world, given that messages from the adults were not felt as conflicting within the child (Satir, 1988). That being said, her concern for the couple relationship remained central in her work.

Satir contrasted her model of treatment for mental illness to the medical model. The latter assumes that the cause of illness is in the patient, and that the illness must be then destroyed within the patient. Another model of therapy she labels the “sin model,” wherein the therapist insists that the patients’ thinking, values and attitudes require changing, and the patient must accept the new values, usually those of the therapist (Satir, 1967, p.181-2). In contrast with either approach, Satir offers the Growth Model, wherein change occurs through *process* and *transactions with others* wherein one can “*communicate their feelings, thoughts, and desires accurately*” (Satir, 1967, p.182). Satir continued to develop her growth model in her subsequent books, *Peoplemaking* (Satir, 1972), *The New Peoplemaking* (Satir, 1988) and articulated it further with John Banmen in *The Satir Model* (Satir, et al, 1991).

2. *Congruent Communication*

Satir utilizes the concept of the “Primary Triad,” composed of oneself (the “Star”) and one’s parents, as the basic building block of internalized feelings and beliefs about oneself, which then could be altered through the process of “Family Reconstruction”, either directly with one’s parents, or by dealing internally with one’s image of one’s parents, but nonetheless communicating in a different, healthier manner. Both the method and the goal of this process is termed “*congruent communication,*” wherein one’s words and feelings are in accord, as distinct from one’s coping stances that are often used to mask true feelings. Satir noted that at a first level of growth, one accepts one’s feelings of others (“feelings about feelings”). At a second level, one re-perceives one’s expectations about self and other, in order to “let go of unfulfilled expectations we have projected on others” (Satir, 1999, p.80). At a third level of growth, Satir invoked a spiritual dimension,

particularly for a client who must confront feelings of tremendous unworthiness, in order to bolster “spiritual energy” for positive re-framing of the past experiences. Thus, for therapists to utilize Satir’s growth model, they “must be willing to be more experimental and spontaneous than many therapists are” (Satir, 1967, p. 182). Furthermore, “the therapist sets the example of an active learning, fallible human being who is willing to cope honestly and responsibly with whatever confronts him”. (Satir, 1999, p.183). The therapists’ role follows Carl Roger’s model of authenticity and unconditional positive regard, whom Satir credits. She also credits Abraham Maslow, for incorporating the spiritual dimension as an integral part of human growth. However, what is a unique strength of Satir’s growth model is in the specific use of therapeutic, interactional communication between family members.

3. Self, Other and Context

In *The New Peoplemaking* (Satir, 1988), Satir clearly describes what she considers to be the “self, other, and context” in the couple relationship: “Every couple has three parts; *you, me, and us*, two people, three parts, each significant, each having a life of its own. Each makes the other more possible” (Satir, 1988, p.145). The paramount factor in a couple relationship is the feeling of worth each has, and this is something that Satir insists must be rebuilt each and every day of the marriage.

Satir offers specific definitions for healthy couples:

1. Relationships are between equals in value,
2. Roles and status are distinct from identity,
3. Acceptance of sameness and differences,

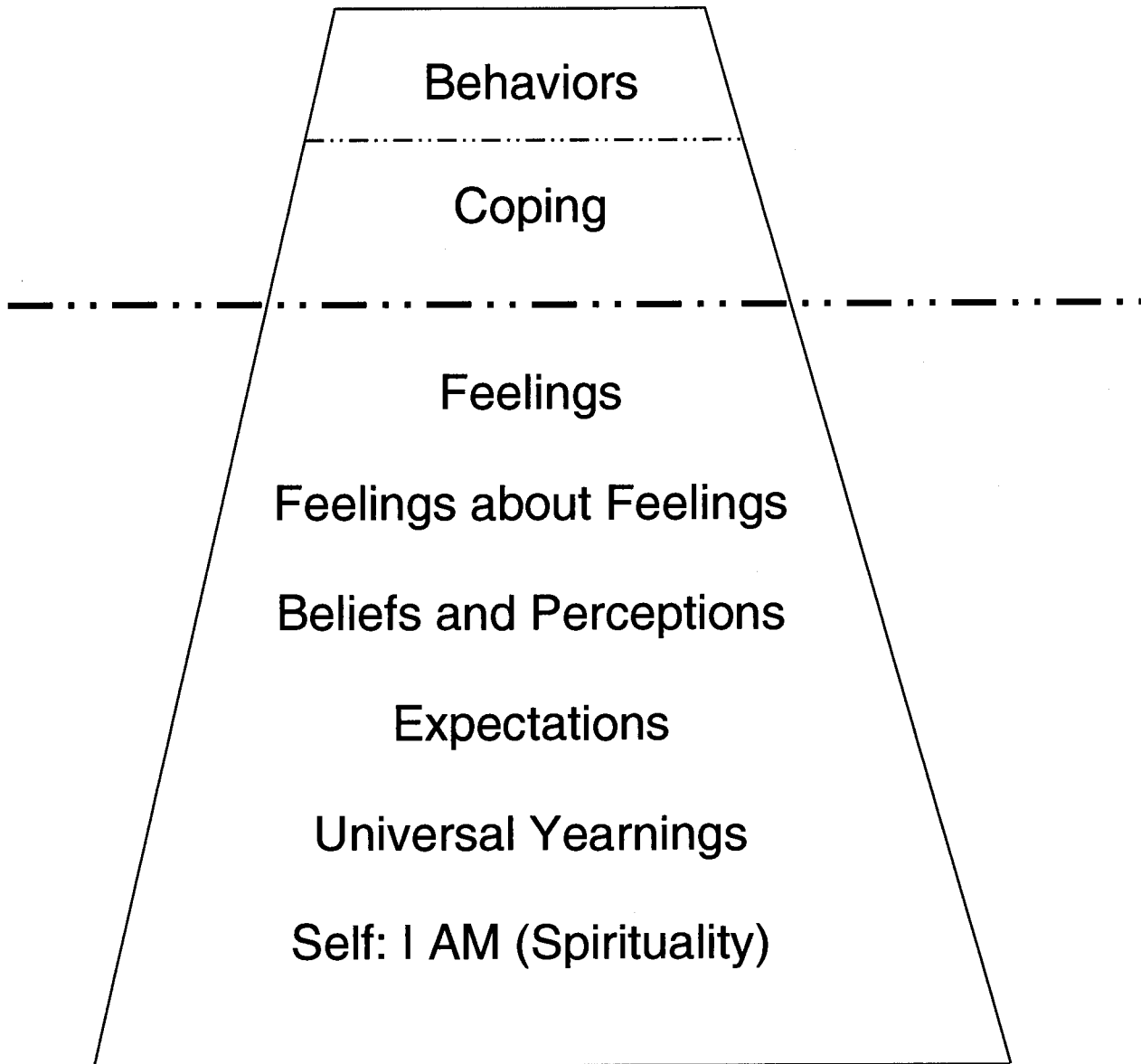
4. People feel love, ownership of self, respect of others, freedom of expression, and validation. (Satir, et al. 1999, p.14)

This is placed in distinction to hierarchical models of couple relating, and separates her perspective of role relations from that of more conservative religious models. Although both invoke spirituality as integral to a happy marriage, the goal in Satir's view of spirituality is to develop an "individuated self."

4. The Iceberg Metaphor

In her later life, Satir's student and faculty trainer, John Banmen, collaborated to create the "Personal Iceberg Metaphor," based on her approaches with individuals and couples (Satir, et al, 1994). At the most surface level on the "iceberg", are one's observable *behaviors*. Below this, are one's *coping stances*, which are generally responses to stressful situations. At the next level below, one reveals *feelings*, and, especially if blocked, one must uncover one's feelings about feelings. The feelings we have for one another are created by our *perceptions*, the next deep level of the iceberg. Our perceptions are often molded by our *beliefs*. And we have created these beliefs to fulfill our *expectations*, from what we yearned for throughout our lives. However, these *yearnings* are universal, as they are spiritual yearnings - for love, trust, meaning and freedom.

Fig. 1 THE SATIR ICEBERG MODEL



5. Transformation Process and the Level of Spirit

Satir firmly believed that we are each entitled to draw from and be supported by the spiritual dimension, the deepest level of oneself, which she termed “The “Self: I Am”.

When Satir and Banmen worked together with couples, they first listened to whether there was *congruent communication* between the couple. They then explored with the couple where they had gotten “stuck” in their inner worlds and on their individual “icebergs”, projecting unfulfilled expectations, perceptions or feelings onto each other. The therapeutic work for the couple would be to access their joint spiritual yearnings, and to realign their needs more congruently with one another. However, the process is more complex than it may sound, as “transformation on any of the levels can create chaos at any other level” (Satir, et al, 1991, p. 173). The resolution of the transformation process comes through each partner’s “integration process...to work at all these levels... examine all our parts (and to) discover how our parts can support, help and love each other” (Satir, et al. 1991, p. 187).

The “healing” for the couple might seem spontaneous, as they become “de-enmeshed” from their past and from former expectations of each other, and their mutual relations begin to align congruently on all levels. This “transformation process” is somewhat beyond predictability in terms of the scientific method, but as Carl Rogers would suggest, “Life at its best is a flowing, changing process in which nothing is fixed” (Rogers, 1961, p.27).

A fine summation of Satir’s model might best be captured in her words, written near the end of her life:

When one views human life as sacred, as I do, family reconstruction becomes a spiritual as well as a cognitive experience to free human energy from the shackles of the past, thus paving the way for the evolvement of being more fully human. (Satir, in Nerin, W.F., 1989, p.55)

6. Satir's Model and Contemporary Couples Therapy

In 1964, Virginia Satir offered her first training guide to couple and family therapy in the pioneer work in the field *Conjoint Family Therapy* (Satir, 1967). As she offered herself primarily as a trainer, her academic works may be considered “thin.” Nonetheless, contemporary couples therapists have relied heavily on her work, often without open acknowledgement.

One of the leading couples' therapists is John Gottman, co-founder and co-director of the Gottman Institute in Seattle Washington, and a professor of psychology at the University of Washington. Primarily a research psychologist, Gottman offers “the four warning signs” of marital distress – “criticism, defensiveness, contempt and stonewalling.” (Gottman, 1994). These closely resemble Satir's earlier formulation of the four coping strategies (respectively): “blaming”, “placating”, “super-reasonable” and irrelevant.” Gottman's main therapeutic approach is offering “emotional communication skills” and extensive checklists are provided to each member of the couple to rate their past and present responses. Couples are encouraged to develop positive rituals for altering past emotional responses (Gottman, 2001). In comparison, the couples attending the Satir Institute of the Pacific are more fully engaged in developing their own family

maps. Training of therapists at the Satir Institute of the Pacific offers more focus on the self of the therapist and on the spiritual dimension.

Harvelle Hendrix, founder and president of the Institute for Relationship Therapy in New York City is perhaps the most acclaimed contemporary author in couples' therapy. His two major works, *Getting the Love You Want; a Guide for Couples* (Hendrix, 1988) and *Keeping the Love You Find; a Guide for Singles* (Hendrix, 1992) remain in press. Hendrix instructs each member of the couple to focus on their "unfinished" attachment needs, and he bases the conflicted patterns of adult relationship from John Bowlby's attachment theory (Bowlby, 1988). Although this has much resonance with the unfinished attachment needs in Satir's "Family Reconstruction Process," he neglects to cite her work, particularly *Conjoint Family Therapy* (Satir, 1967) in his otherwise extensive bibliographies. Differences in perspective between Satir and Hendrix include the latter's focus on "blocked core energy" for each individual to work through, whereas Satir-trained therapists will more often challenge both partners together to "unblock" the stuck spaces. Hendrix a pastoral counselor, includes spirituality in his writing. He writes of "an awareness of our essential union with the universe. This gives marriage an essentially spiritual potential" (Hendrix, 1988, p. 281). The difference between them here is that Hendrix ascribes "eros" (romantic, sexual love) as a lower category of relationship, and believes that the phenomenon of romantic love has "generally been extramarital and often adulterous" (Hendrix, 1988, p.277). Satir is more open and fluid regarding human love and less proscriptive. Finally, I find his therapeutic approaches, while often similar, remain focused more on each individual's growth than

Satir's inclusion of "us-ness" in her model. Her work remains a pioneering achievement and well deserving of further academic recognition.

B. Developing A New, Essentialist Paradigm

This section presents some of the academic struggles of the past thirty-five years to re-integrate the notion of spirituality into psychology and its possible applications to field work. I begin with Satir's differences with Salvador Minuchin over his insistence on utilizing the positivist paradigm only in order to legitimize family therapy within the social sciences. I then follow Abraham Maslow's work on offering a "transcendent" dimension to academic psychology, through "transpersonal psychology." Ken Wilber then picks up the torch, aligning his "integral psychology" with yogic and Buddhist models of human and spiritual development. In doing so, I believe he argues effectively against his critics from either side of the debate – those who present "positivist paradigm" objections on the one hand, and conservative religious objections on the other. My objection to Wilber's model is his premise of a religious-cultural hierarchy that closely resembles Hegel's metaphorical spiral. It is here that I offer Carol Gilligan and Donald Rothberg's counter-arguments. Gilligan calls for relatedness-to-others as a moral value applicable at all levels of human development. Rothberg calls for balance between masculine and feminine perspectives within therapeutic and spiritual approaches. Finally, I offer evidence of evolutionary change within a particular religious context to illustrate the significance of Gilligan and Rothberg's perspectives.

1. “*Caught Between a Positivist and a Conservative-Essentialist Paradigm.*”

In 1974, a meeting was held for the editorial staff of the journal, *Family Process*, in Venezuela. Salvador Minuchin, a pioneer of the structuralist approach in family therapy, spoke critically of Satir’s “evangelical” approach, questioning how she could call on the “healing power of love” to repair dysfunction in the family. Minuchin’s goal was to further legitimize and incorporate family therapy within the social sciences, but Satir was not willing to ground her work in the accepted methodology of positivist psychology. Most of their academic students followed Minuchin at this juncture. She then re-directed her energies outside of the academy, forming the Avanta network, and worked broadly for world peace (Pittman, F., 1989).

Satir was marginalized because she was seen as “too interested in creating loving, soulful connections between people, rather than getting them in control of one another” (Schwartz, R., in Walsh, F. 1999, p, 228). This break may have made it difficult for Satir-trained therapists to be accepted in “mainstream” family therapy, which had followed mainstream social science in not validating the intra-psychic or spiritual dimensions of persons in the therapeutic encounter. Shortly following Satir’s passing, I worked in a governmental-referring counselling agency, wherein the director and staff encountered some objections to using Satir’s model. They involved differences in major foundational perspectives:

1. The first objection to the Satir model came from those invested in the “medical model” for mental health treatment and research. This objection, from some government funders, was primarily derived from belief in the *positivist paradigm*. This model is colloquially

referred to as the “fix the kid” approach, which centers on individual treatment, and often administers psychopharmacology with treatment.

2. The second objection came primarily from referred clients who were invested in hierarchical relationships from their conservative, Christian religious or military backgrounds. These families retained distinctly held beliefs, values and rules of relationship. While these religious beliefs are in accord that there is an essential nature of the self, this essential nature prescribes the individuals’ roles and rules to be followed according to age, gender, and position in the family. I follow the sociologist John Connell in referring to this broad grouping as the *conservative–essentialist paradigm* (Connell, 1995). However, as some contemporary philosopher’s have objected to dividing “essentialism” in this way (Brunk, C., 2003, personal communication), I will refer to this grouping as “*conservatively religious*”. While many conservative-religious clients approved of our staff who believed in a spiritual dimension of life, the differences were highlighted through Satir’s stance of the “individuated self” within the family, a goal that seemed outside of the client families’ particular religious values.

2. Maslow’s Formulation of a Transcendent Psychology

In forming her therapeutic perspective, Satir drew on both Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow. Rogers’ humanistic approach of providing “unconditional positive regard” for his clients (Rogers, 1961) was taken by Maslow to mean perceiving “the sacredness of each individual” (Maslow 1970, p. 16-17). As mentioned above, Satir viewed human life as sacred (Satir, in Nerin, W.F., 1989). Maslow developed a needs hierarchy in which transcendence is the summit, and within every member of the human species: “[Humankind] has a higher and transcendent nature, and this is part of his (sic)

essence, i.e., his biological nature as a member of a species which has evolved.”(1970, p.xvi).

Maslow provides a condensed definition of “transcendence” in his notes, published posthumously: “Transcendence refers to the very highest and most inclusive or holistic levels of human consciousness, behaving and relating [; and] as ends rather than as means, to oneself, to significant others, to human beings in general, to other species, to nature, and to the cosmos” (Maslow, 1971, p.279).

Maslow takes a stand counter to that of the conservative-religious paradigm, not only in his insistence on the biological nature of transcendence, but against the role of any religious “priesthood” to define spirituality for its members: “If the sacred becomes the exclusive jurisdiction of a priesthood, and if its supposed validity rests only upon supernatural foundations, then, in effect, it is taken out of the world of nature and of human nature”(Maslow, 1970, p.14). Furthermore, “Organized religion, the churches, finally may become the major enemies of the religious experience and the religious experiencer” (1970, p. viii). His “antidote” is not to undertake an extreme mystical aloofness, but rather to integrate between the two:

I see in the history of many organized religions a tendency to develop two extreme wings: the “mystical” and individual on the one hand, and the legalistic and organizational on the other. The profoundly and authentically religious person integrates these trends easily and automatically. (Maslow, 1970, p.vii)

Maslow rejects the more behaviorist conception of human *stasis* as ideal, or even normative, but instead, as does Satir, depicts the necessity of *process*: “Life as a process of choices, one after another. At each point, there is a progression choice and a regression choice... *Self-actualization is an ongoing process*” (Maslow, 1971, p.45). Maslow is here running counter to traditional cause-effect determinism of positivist science, as discussed in my following section “Responding to the Western-Positivist Objection.”

Another aspect that is in accord with Satir’s Growth Model is demonstrated in Maslow’s approach to couple relations: “The relations *between* the sexes are very much determined by the relation between the masculinity and femininity *within* each person, male and female” (Maslow, 1971, p.160).

Finally, Maslow seeks a new philosophical term for his formulation of human self-actualization and transcendent experience, one that is neither conservatively essentialist nor one that is labeled “existentialist”. Of the latter, he notes that his formulation:

...is a flat rejection of the Sartre-type Existentialism [and] Its denial of specieshood, and of a biological human nature. Because [many of its exponents are contradictions of each other, and because of] this diversity in usage, the word is almost useless, and, in my opinion, had better be dropped. The right label would have to combine the humanistic, the transpersonal, and the transhuman... it would have to be experiential (phenomenological)... holistic rather than dissecting. (Maslow, 1971, p.349-50)

This call would lead Ken Wilber to develop his essentialist paradigm for an “integral psychology”.

3. *Wilber's “Integral Psychology”*

Ken Wilber is the founder of Integral Psychology and a leading theorist of psychology and spirituality among various cultural contexts. He formulated “Integral Psychology” (Wilber, 2000a) in order to connect the diverse aspects of psychology, and to reclaim the inclusion of spirituality as mentioned by several founders of psychology, acknowledging it as both a ground and ultimate state of consciousness. This follows, in some ways, the transpersonal formulation of Abraham Maslow that peak experiences are also a part of our biological nature.

Wilber describes how the modernist academy, since Kant, has separated the modes of human consciousness (aesthetic, moral, and scientific) from each other, resulting in the dominance of the positivist, materialist paradigm, which accepts only sensory data and reason to verify what may be considered “scientifically true.” This is a very limiting perspective of human consciousness, and the result has been a decided loss for humanity (Wilber, 2000a).

One might imagine a rather grand affinity between these two souls whose life work has been to incorporate spirituality into the “human” sciences. However, Ken Wilber is not a couple or family therapist, and his models of growth are primarily for the individual. In a sense, he needs much of Satir’s contribution to make his more complete. Satir had passed on twelve years prior to Wilber’s philosophical compendium, *Sex Ecology and Spirituality* (2000b), and *Integral Psychology* (2000a), so she cannot herself dialogue with him. Wilber does name Virginia Satir in his latter work, albeit only in a

footnote on exemplary relational therapies (2000a, p. 251). Au-Deane S. Cowley offers to bring the work of these two theorists together in her article, “Transpersonal theory and social work practice with couples and families”(1999). However, she does not incorporate the “iceberg” model developed between Satir and John Banmen, which I believe is a key construct in linking the two theorists. Furthermore, Cowley’s article precedes Wilber’s more recent formulation of Integral Psychology and the Kosmos diagram (Wilber, 2000a; 2000b), which helps to distinguish the appropriate areas between positivist-objectivist “ways of knowing” from subjectivist and intersubjective “ways of knowing.”

Wilber describes his formulation of the “Integral Psychology” perspective as one that can encompass and “embrace the enduring insights of premodern, modern and postmodern sources.” (Wilber, 2000a, p.5). Premodern, traditional sources of being and knowing are inclusive of levels of existence incorporating body, mind, soul and spirit. The importance has been to accept these four elements within a “Great Chain of Being” or “Great Nest of Being”, as described by world-known philosophers from Plotinus to Aurobindo, and were found carefully “charted” in the metaphysical systems of the Western *Zohar* and the Indian *chakras*.

While these premodern paradigms have provided an integral model of human and spiritual development, they are somewhat “closed” systems, according to the Enlightenment’s conception of the individual self. It was modernity, following the early humanists and the Enlightenment, that brought consciousness to the rational, personal self, leading to the “differentiation of self.” It was under the modernist paradigm that present-day psychology emerged. Wilber contends that the major gain of the

Enlightenment was the theory of human evolution, the flourishing of technology and the move to the elimination of slavery. What was lost, however, through its solely materialistic worldview, was the balance between body, mind, soul and spirit, as psychology became embedded within the scientific paradigm of the nineteenth century. The downside of this “differentiation” was its “dissociation,” especially between science and morality, hence the linking of scientific respectability with the creation of the most horrible weapons imaginable. While behavioral and cognitive approaches in psychology flourished, following the positivist model, affective and intuitive domains of knowing and being were less valued, and in some cases dismissed altogether as irrelevant. This loss drove Abraham Maslow (1971), Wilber, and other humanistic and transpersonal psychologists to reassert spirituality back into psychology. However, they also sought to include the dimension of the individuated “self”, which they did not believe to be included in premodern paradigms of human and spiritual development (Wilber, 2000a). This issue, and possible suppositions of cultural and/or religious “hierarchy” will be later discussed in “The Premise of Religious Cultures in Hierarchy” (Chapter II, B, 6) and in my further argument, “Gilligan and Rothberg’s Objection to the Premise of Hierarchy” (Chapter II, B, 7).

Wilber offers to “restore” what was thrown out of the modernist paradigm in his Kosmos diagram. The Right-Hand of the Kosmos represents the two exterior aspects of consciousness – “It” and “Its.” “It” is the material world observed through the senses and “Its” represents societal functioning, or how we develop the material, sensory world through cognition. The Left Hand of the Kosmos represents the interior aspects of consciousness – “I” and “We.” “I” is the individual self, where aesthetics is centered, and

“We” is our intersubjective selves, the basis for social morality through communication. Through recognizing each individual’s aspects of body, mind, soul and spirit, and by designing a four-sided “Kosmos” of consciousness, Wilber offers an integral model of human consciousness, in which emotion, morality and spirituality co-exist with the cognitive and sensory world.

Whereas both Maslow and Wilber’s formulations are helpful in the construction of philosophical meta-theories that are supportive of Satir’s Growth Model, another concern is that they are generally more monological than dialogical. That is, there is much focus on human growth as a process, but it is primarily on individual growth rather than growth through relationship. However, in his last writings, Maslow recanted on his former omission:

I now consider that my book *Religions, Values and Peak Experiences* [Maslow, 1970] was too imbalanced toward the individualistic, and too hard on groups, organizations and communities. ... I can say much more firmly that basic human needs can be fulfilled only by and *through* other human beings. [italics mine] (Maslow, 1971, p. 347)

In my section on “Constructs of Dialogical/Spiritual Philosophy”, I offer how Martin Buber has responded to both the individual and monological limitations of the “positivist” human sciences.

4. Responding to the Positivist Objection

Satir's formulation of conjoint family therapy, particularly in its inclusion of the spiritual, is not well understood by the standard western medical model, the latter being rooted in positivist science. Body and mind, or sense and cognition, are accepted by the medical model, but soul and spirit – feelings and intuition- are not codified as part of positivist reality. What has occurred then is a reductionism of human consciousness to materiality, and the moral, aesthetic and spiritual dimensions are excluded as non-scientific, “subjectivistic” psychology. What this means in terms of therapeutic regard is that validity of healing can only be ascertained by measuring bodily or cognitive functioning, but not by interpersonal relating, which is an inter-subjective domain. In order to respond to those who preferred “positivistic” outcome measures, our work was “quantified”, to offer a mathematical proof that healing occurred. However, the pioneer family therapist Murray Bowen quipped, how do you chi-square an emotion? Wilber's (2000a) main critique of scientific materialism when applied to psychological development is its reductionism of all interior processes to exterior ones:

... (from the) stages of consciousness development to degrees of moral growth are all discovered, not by looking carefully at any exterior objects, but by investigating the interior domains themselves... where it becomes obvious that some levels and stages of growth are better, higher, deeper, more encompassing, and more liberating, and... they cannot be reduced to [their exterior correlates in

organic brain functions] without completely destroying the very factors that define them. (p.77)

Wilber goes further to distinguish this as the “mind-body” problem, which ...is not the *differentiation* of mind and body... but the *dissociation* of mind and body which is a peculiar lesion in the modern and postmodern consciousness.. the mind (consciousness, feeling, thought, awareness) ...can find absolutely no room in the world described merely in terms of material body and brain. (2000a:174)

In summation, it is Wilber’s contention that consciousness cannot be reduced to material brain functioning alone, and that there are indeed intentional (subjective and intersubjective) dimensions of life that can be experienced by people, and situated within the “Left Hand” of his Kosmos diagram.

Emergent research, particularly in psychiatry and neuroscience, does seek to explore the relations of consciousness to the brain, and looks to extensions of chaos theory to explain “spontaneity, unpredictability, and self-organizing properties of nonlinear dynamical systems” (Globus & Arpaia 1994 in Skolnick, 1994) which will further inform this debate. Also encouraging is the acknowledgement of spiritual issues by the American Psychiatric Association in the 1994 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV, V code 62.89): “Examples include distressing experiences that involve loss or questioning of faith, or questioning of spiritual values that may not

necessarily be related to an organized church or religious institution.” (American Psychiatric Association, 1994, p. 685).

5. Responding to the “Conservative-Essentialist” Objection

In practice, particularly in my field experience with referred client families, there is sometimes a resistance to engage for therapy when the family’s religious beliefs and expectations seem to be counter to the democratic notion of the Satir approach. The conservative-religious objection to Satir’s Growth Model generally posits that family members should follow a formula of hierarchical roles and relations to one another, usually proscribed by a religious text: Generally, the male gender would occupy the lead role, with the woman obedient to the man, the children obedient to both as the parents represented “God’s word” to them (Connell, 1995). The conservative religious expectations of family role-relations are often rigid. In contrast, the Satir Model works for a transformation from the rigidity of structures, which often brings a therapeutic change in the expectations of self and others, and may impact long-held beliefs. Pastors have expressed their objection to “secular” therapy to several of my religiously conservative clients, often due to this difference in perspectives.

While not a family therapist, Ken Wilber has attempted to respond to the conservative religious objection through his view of human and spiritual development as a spiralling tower in the Hegelian sense (Wilber, 1980, 1983). Wilber connects cognitive development (such as found in Piaget) with Lawrence Kohlberg’s model of moral development, to produce an ascending tower of cognitive, moral, social and religious development of both the person and culture. Wilber credits Abraham Maslow (1971) in

particular for extending his level of human self-actualization to include the experience of self-transcendence.

In responding to the conservative-religious objection (but in order to retain the spiritual baby without the conservative bathwater), Wilber draws upon the work of anthropologist J. Gebser (1985), in order to distinguish *pre*-personal levels of *religious* experience (which Gebser refers to as archaic, magical and mythic) from *trans*-personal levels of *spiritual* experience (including the Western mystical, Hindu yogic, and Buddhist levels of compassion, insight, and non-duality). This latter expression of spirituality emphasizes individual freedom along with compassion, and appears to be consistent with Satir's later writings on the unlimited potentials of the self, its connection with the body, and its regard for all of humanity (Satir, 1985): "I am a life form based in divinity, I am able to see, to hear, to feel, to smell, to touch, to move, to speak, to *choose*" (Satir, 1985, p.7) and, "Freedom and its manifestation is the kind of perfection we are all destined to have" (Satir, 1985, p. 49). The above quotes clearly express a more "autonomous essentialist" paradigm, rather than a conservative-essentialist one, a view that is inclusive of the body, non-deterministic, and promises even greater freedom of choice in our lives.

6. The Premise of Religious Cultures in Hierarchy

While I agree with Wilber's positioning of spirituality as beyond the territorial boundaries of the conservative-essentialist paradigm, I believe there is a two-fold problem with Wilber's formulation: First, he posits spiritual growth as an individual ascent, which leaves out the family and the larger community, just as surely as Hegel had left the family and social relations hanging on the middle of his spiral rung. Wilber is presently formulating an "intersubjective" meta-theory for the forthcoming volume of his

“Kosmos” trilogy, but has asked his online readers not to be authoritatively cited on this at present (Ken Wilber Online, 2004). However, in his last published volume, he recognizes the critical need for intersubjective knowing when he states, “Without a paradigm of mutual dialogical recognition and care, there is no way to pull anyone out of divine egoism and into worldcentric compassion...” (2000b, p.740).

The second major difficulty I find with Wilber’s formulation is his uncritical acceptance of Gebser’s theory of historical cultural development that emphasizes cultures according to a “hierarchy” of values. The difficulty is its presumption of what may or may not have been true in “pre-modern” history, especially given the hermeneutic notion of the bias of historians, and especially when dominant religious sects write about those outside or “beneath” themselves. The sociologist Donald Stone has questioned the research orientation Bellah uses to distance himself from the religions he studies: “A distinction can be drawn between cognitive openness and experiential participation. Bellah’s emphasis is on a cognitive rather than an experiential affinity for the religion under study” (Stone, 1978, p 149).

Wilber also invokes Robert Bellah’s theory of five major stages of religious development (Bellah, 1970) as corroboration, showing “very strong and wide ranging correlations and similarities” with Wilber’s description of evolutionary stages, taken primarily from Gebser (Wilber, 2000b, p.757). But here, in his critique of Bellah, Wilber reveals the short-coming of his own model:

It is precisely the incapacity of monological, cybernetic, representational systems theories to integrate dialogical, intersubjective, and interpretive occasions that has

increasingly become obvious. The subjective space that builds those representational cybernetic models is *not itself* built only of representations but also of interpretive and intersubjective occasions, themselves *not* modeled in the theory that is supposed to explain them. The belief that such monological models *can* explain them *is* the fundamental Enlightenment paradigm in all its inadequate aspects, is everything bad about the disengaged and hovering Cartesian ego.... Meaning cannot be reduced to monological representation without completely destroying the sought integration. (2000b, p.758)

To his credit, Wilber dialogues with his critics as to whether or not there is any basis for perceiving a hierarchy of cultures, and his dominant concern is not to appear “relativistic”, which he believes is an error of some proponents of deconstructionism (Wilber, 2000b, p. 748). While a discussion of “cultural pluralism” would then be helpful, he unfortunately returns again and again to his model of individual development as the locus of his grand theory (2000b, P.320). What I take from this is that major world cultures - and world religious cultures in particular- contain individuals from such a wide range of personal development that the very ground of the argument loses itself whenever generalizations are particularized. To use Wilber’s own argument for the need for a “worldcentric culture”, I would respond that the great individuals from all cultures - past

and present- who have touched a “worldcentric consciousness” have positively affected the world, although often have themselves been reviled within their own home culture.

7. Gilligan and Rothberg’s Objection to the Premise of Hierarchy

It is here that I invoke the response of Carol Gilligan to Lawrence Kohlberg’s moral hierarchy (and likewise to Wilber’s cultural and religious hierarchy) as part of discourse in working within religious culture and with cross-cultural understanding. If it may seem appropriate to situate the moral values of differing cultures in a hierarchic pattern - especially religious cultures - when one is called upon as a caregiver, it may quite unhelpful to perceive differing cultural values in a hierarchical formulation. Carol Gilligan, the ethical theorist, while not disagreeing with differentiation among cultures, observes that it is a “male” mode to primarily examine the “rights” held within any given culture, while a feminist response would be to view “care and responsibilities” at any level within or among cultures (Grimshaw, 1992). As Gilligan states: “the morality of rights differ from the morality of responsibility in its emphasis on separation rather than connection, in its consideration of the individual rather than the relationship...”(Gilligan, 1993, p.19).

Let us look at Kohlberg’s classic moral dilemma of “Heinz and the Druggist”. Heinz may need to steal from the druggist because he cannot afford medicine for his wife who is dying. Two eleven-year-olds are asked to respond to the predicament, and the boy, Jake, says he should steal the medicine, giving life a higher order than property. Amy, on the other hand, suggests that Heinz should try and work something out with the druggist. “Kohlberg saw Jake at a ‘higher’ stage of moral development than Amy, and this, for Gilligan, is symptomatic of the way in which women’s processes of reasoning, if

different from men, will be judged to be inferior” (Grimshaw, 1992, p.226). “Gilligan ...saw the actors in the dilemma not so much as opponents in a contest of rights, but as members of a network of relationships on whose continuation they all depended” (Grimshaw, 1992, p.226).

Therefore, Jake’s approach was one of logic and law, while Amy’s approach was through engaging the druggist in communication. I believe that here is an excellent illustration of how we may include the feminist approach whose main intent is inclusion, as distinct from a linear model of morality, which tends to reject “lower” levels as inferior approaches. Other moral theorists, such as L. Blum, take Gilligan’s work further, and asks why are there only two positions; i.e., Kohlberg’s impartiality or Gilligan’s care model. “Why not ... a random selection [which] might include community, honesty, courage, prudence?” (Blum, p. 227). Here Blum offers several other virtues which may be at par with “impartiality” and “care” and just as central to moral excellence.

What could Gilligan’s contribution mean for couples therapy? I believe that when a relationship is sacrificed for a hierarchical “correctness,” rather than an inclusion of all stakeholders, the ensuing loss of the relationship will be felt by everyone. Thus, we must lean heavily on the side of dialogue! But, one may ask, if the differences are too great, should the marriage in question be maintained at all costs? With the exception of disclosed or apparent abuse, Gilligan’s approach, as Satir’s, would be to support the couple in dialogue. And it is for this reason that I find Gilligan’s response to Kohlberg so compelling.

Gilligan’s critique of Kohlberg’s linear hieracrchy of morals finds a similar voice in Donald Rothberg’s (1986) critique of the linear, hierarchical design of states of

consciousness as presented by transpersonal psychology. Rothberg hopes to reconcile two competing perspectives - those that are informed by developmental models (Wilber) and those that are more “mandalic” (Jungian). Rothberg describes Wilber’s model as mostly encouraging the “masculine” tasks of differentiation and activity. He then suggests this orientation can be balanced by the “feminine” tasks proposed by Jungians, Alan Watts, and other cross-culturally oriented theorists that promote “integration in relationship, receptivity and openness, and immanence or the “always already’ quality of enlightenment and liberation” (Rothberg, 1986). It may be at least equally helpful to appropriate these two orientations as “yang” and “yin,” thus underscoring their complementary nature from the onset. Rothberg warns that therapeutic perspectives that stem primarily from developmental models (Kohlberg, Piaget, etc.) may become so “yang” as to cause dissociation from emotional balance. Likewise, group therapy, existentialistic, and “mandalic” orientations may become so “yin” that critical analysis may become submerged by the raw data. In terms of the Satir Growth model, this dynamic is ever at play - as developmental concerns for each individual member in the family must interact with the family as a whole.

Rothberg is clearly hoping to defuse the “spiritual one-up-man-ship” that occurs between therapists as it does between religious scholars, and may be very acute in inter-faith counseling perspectives and approaches. Although holders of the conservative-religious paradigm have not ignored the contemporary issue of inter-faith and cross-cultural marriage, it has not been in a manner that calls for widespread change in the conservative-essentialist paradigm. However, it has been the significant change in the

make-up of the contemporary family unit that has brought meaningful discussion within religious community, with some changes emerging, as will be presented below.

8. Evidence of Evolutionary Change within a Religious Context

What has been argued thus far has been centered on the issues of developing a “new” essentialist paradigm due to the apparent “stuckness” of conservative-essentialist paradigms. However, Gilligan calls for dialogue *within* any religious or cultural context. Can there be *change within* a conservative, religious paradigm? I intend to here illustrate how a conservative religious culture has changed, despite any claim that it has always understood its scripture, laws, etc. to be the same. Thus, I invoke an evolutionary aspect of religious-cultural change through its interaction with the needs of its diverse members and to unexpected outside situations. As Satir promotes the use of self in therapy (Baldwin, M. & Satir, V. ed. 1987), I will begin by describing changing perspectives within my own “religion-of-origin”. The context of the Jewish faith is primarily very positive toward couple relations, albeit within the seeming paradox of the strict orthodox rules for marriage. It is believed that the great strength of the Jewish marriage has been its scriptural interpretation of the first creation story in Genesis, and the first divine command, “Be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:28), to signify that the sexual urge, for both partners, is a blessing, not a sin. However, there have been historical changes to the importance of the couple relationship, which either made the marital partner an “object” to adhere to religious observance, or to use the ritual to enhance the partnership. Furthermore, the Jewish-feminist perspective of Susan Heschel (Heschel, S. ed. 1983) has sought to address the needs of non-heterosexual couples, single parents,

and all who have felt excluded by the traditional nuclear-family model within the religious community.

In order to provide evidence that there can be evolutionary change to beliefs about human relationship *within* a religious context, I present an overview of that change within a Jewish-religious context. After the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, the temple rituals could not be carried out as before. This brought significant change from unexpected outside circumstances to the religion. The great Rabbi Akiva then declared that holiest of temple rituals should now be carried out in the home (as opposed to the synagogue or the learning academy), with the family dining table at the center. But the most sacred of all rituals became the conjoining of the couple on the Sabbath, as in the “Song of Songs,” and, within mystical Judaism, the consummation was elevated into spiritual dimensions (Jung, in Litvin., 1987; Matt, 1997). Without proper understanding, consummation could be taken as a necessary “religious obligation” of each partner to the other, instead of a celebration for both partners.

There are minority factions within each religion, and Judaism is no exception. Two centuries ago, the “Kotzker” Rabbi led an opposition during the peak of the “joy-filled” Hasidic movement. The ascetically-inclined Kotzker Rabbi viewed “sexuality as the opposite of spirituality”, being closer to his Christian counterpart Kierkegaard, than to traditional Judaism (Heschel, 1995). This perspective “objectifies” one’s partner as a temporary crutch, to be “used” as needed for one’s sexual urges. But, for the followers of the Kotzker Rabbi, any sexual relations with their marital partner could not be connected with spirituality. This split in perspectives became reconciled only rather recently.

Responding to the growing interest in mysticism that began during the 1960's and '70's, Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburg offers to take Jewish couples into mystical, kabbalistic states of consciousness, through his manual, *The Mystery of Marriage* (Ginsburg, 1999). I find that these lessons are presented more in a prescriptive manner than an illustrative one, but they offer the possibility of an esoteric experience uniting the human with the divine: "...The expression of love and compassion between husband and wife are reflected in their mutual relations, [and] cause the reconciliation and reunification (on successively higher levels) of the Divine couple" (Ginsburg, p. 354).

Thus, the biblical model that simply offered religious sanction for sexuality was changed by ascetical "purists" during the Diaspora in Europe, and changed again by more contemporary, liberal perspectives about sexuality. While each advocate for change will invoke a precedent from the ancient oral or written law, nonetheless change in both belief about marriage and marital expectation has taken place.

In the past twenty years, Abraham Heschel's daughter, Susannah, has taken on the feminist perspective within Judaism. *On Being a Jewish Feminist* (1983) presents her voice and that of Rosa Kaplan's for the position of women who are single, divorced, or widowed, and who then have difficulty integrating into the family-oriented religious community. This position takes on the "exclusivity" of the broader religious communities, which may not be an issue for the insulated couple, but may become one should marital loss occur (Heschel, S. 1983).

What is significant in these above "evolutionary-but-not-hierarchical" changes is the nature of *change within* a conservative, religious paradigm, when it must interact with the needs of its diverse members, or unexpected outside situations. Thus, those seeking

change should not overlook the possibilities for creating dialogue within a religious context. With the inclusion of religious and spiritual dimensions in family therapy, this aspect of discourse should hold significance for both the practitioner and the theorist.

In summation, for spiritual dimensions to be openly included in the therapeutic process, an understanding of the client family's religious paradigm is required. If the therapist introduces a Satir-based, "universal" spiritual dimension, this may be challenged by either the positivist objection or the conservative-religious objection. Developing a "new," more universal spiritual paradigm has been the particular pursuit of the transpersonal psychologists Abraham Maslow and Ken Wilber. I have discussed their contributions and some of the limitations of their work. In particular, Carol Gilligan and Donald Rothberg offer more conciliatory models of spiritual and moral growth. Finally, I demonstrated how the ebb and flow of evolutionary growth can move through a particular major religion. Below, I offer various constructs of a dialogical- spiritual philosophy and constructs of a psychotherapeutic, dialogical-spiritual process.

C. Constructs Of A Dialogical-Spiritual Philosophy

The project to offer a new essentialist paradigm, primarily transpersonal psychology, has emerged within- and as a response to- modernist, scientific psychology. However, many continental philosophers have been engaged in countering the preponderance of scientific psychology for the past century.

This then leads me to offer the contributions of three, twentieth-century philosophers. I begin with the dialogical-spirituality of Martin Buber, who broke with the positivism of early Marxist sociology to develop an inter-human subjectivist knowing

and a concern for the spiritual dimension in the community. Secondly, the leading philosopher of Critical Theory, Jurgen Habermas, has focused on the reformulation of Hegelian thought, in order to re-open the door to “metaphysics” after more than a century. However, Habermas insists that the project for human freedom also be adopted by the religious. Finally, I present the constructs of the contemporary, feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray. She offers specific constructs of her project, “The Way of Love”, which more easily situates the Satir Model into philosophic discourse.

1. Martin Buber and the Spiritual Centrality of “We-ness”

Virigina Satir credits Martin Buber for the influence of his “positive existentialism” on her theoretical perspectives. I believe the theoretical constructs of his work supports the Satir Growth Model, in both its perspectives for psychological, social, and spiritual transformation, and in its dynamic of Self, Other, and Context.

Buber followed the sociological discourse of his day, following Marx, Tonnies, Weber and Simmel, and responded to Ferdinand Tonnies’ particular concern for the spiritual isolation of the individual (Buber, 1979, p. 33). Buber then formulated “Das Zwischenmenschliche” (the inter-human) as an academic category, one which must be understood psychologically, not objectified sociologically. Buber then links the psychological dimension to an underpinning, spiritual phenomenon of inter-relationship which he terms the “essential We” (Mendes-Flohr, 1989). For Buber, the central spiritual experience is beyond that of solitary mysticism, which he had experienced in his youth, but of a dialogical relationship between “I and You” (from the German “*Du*”, which was previously translated as “Thou”). As Laurence Silberstein surmises, “Buber [had] concluded that moments of private religious experience only impede our genuine relation

to the divine” (Silberstein, 1989, p.211). Buber had come to the realization “of the Divine on earth is fulfilled not within [humans] but between [humans]... it is consummated only in the life of true community” (Buber, 1967, p.113). Here, Buber makes an imperative that all three aspects of relatedness- the Self, the Other and the Context (as community or culture), need be in a sacred, dialogical relation.

As one of the main philosophers cited by Satir, Buber perceives the spiritual as the integral dimension of marital intimacy: “Love is a responsibility of an I for a You” (Buber, 1979, p.66). Thus, to use Satir’s more contemporary terms, the I of the “Self”, must apprehend the sacred Self of You, the “Other”. For Buber, marriage is based upon a meta-physical and meta-psychical fact of love between an I and a You. A true intimacy “can never be renewed, except by that which is always the source of all true marriage; that two human beings reveal the You to one another” (Buber, 1979, p.95).

I believe I am not reaching very far in connecting Buber’s ideation of the transformational process and that of Satir’s. Martin Buber used the Hebrew term *Teshuvah*, (turning, or inner transformation) to describe what is needed in both personal and social dimensions to create a positive change. He acknowledges this as difficult for many, particularly because it requires a great deal of trust, just at the very time when trust for a healthier outcome does not seem possible. Buber used the Hebrew word *emunah*, “to trust”, as a parallel for his religious faith (Buber, 1979, p.202). Understanding the existential *angst* of modernity, he offered that “Existential mistrust cannot be replaced by trust, but it can be replaced by a reborn *candor* (italics mine)” (Buber, 1957, p.206). In this way, Buber suggests the significance of the deeply honest encounter in which to overcome mistrust, just as Satir did many years later, when formulating her own model.

In summation, Buber offers three very central constructs that can be found in the Satir Growth Model;

- a) the positioning of self, other, and context in dialogical relation,
- b) that the Other must be engaged as the “You”, as the divine within the other,
- c) the inter-human encounter, when approached with this level of intentional trust and candor, can allow for a spiritual transformation in human relationship.

2. Fackenheim’s Critique of Buber Regarding “Evil”

A critical response to Buber’s last position has come from the contemporary Jewish philosopher and theologian, Emil Fackenheim, who writes that after the occurrence of the Holocaust, “Buber no longer wrote of overcoming. It had become impossible.” (Fackenheim, 1982, p. 136). The charge is that

We have seen him lapse into inauthenticity in dialogue with another...did he -could he- confront the Holocaust? Buber had a lifelong difficulty with the recognition of evil. Religiously, he was predisposed to hold ‘no one to be absolutely unredeemable’. (p. 195)

While standing in the role of his critic, Fackenheim also speaks on behalf of Buber in answer to this very targeted accusation:

In this whole matter, the thinking and teaching of a [Buber’s] lifetime may be said to have found its climax in the statement that ‘evil cannot be done with the whole soul, good can only be done with the whole soul’” (p. 195).

Thus, for Buber, the experience at the level of the soul, as with Hegel, transcends without excluding the historical plane. Fackenheim's point, in contrast to both, is that "redemption" from evil is only possible as a mending of the past, but not a "transcending" of it. Understandably, this particular discourse remains a difficult one in religious scholarship. I see this as a significant point in terms of dealing with historical abuse within the family, where Satir posits that it is possible for the client to transform her or himself through the "Family Reconstruction Process".

3. Habermas; Freedom from Eternal Recurrence in the Hegelian Spiral

Whereas multi-generational patterns of family dysfunction – particularly in regard to the abuse of children- was a cornerstone for pioneering family therapists such as Murray Bowen, the first social psychologists, such as Erich Fromm, focused on how the phenomenon of these unhealthy family patterns were carried into the larger society. Fromm began with his prescient early study of German families in the 1920's - which pre-dates the Nazi atrocities. The point here is how the particular is then seen affecting the broader social culture. Fromm belonged to The School of Critical Theory (The Frankfurt School), for which the microcosm of psychoanalytic theory was joined with the macrocosm of neo-Marxist theory. For me, an interesting dynamic of this joining is the confluence of inductive and deductive directions – how the individual and family pathologies affect culture, law and politics, and, in obverse order, how economics and politics affects culture, the family and the un-free individual. A part of this dynamic tension is often unsaid – does change need to be initiated at the level of macrocosm to free the individual, or does freedom come from the level of the individual, thus effecting change to the context of the macrocosm?

Regarded as the contemporary main philosopher of Critical Theory, Jurgen Habermas continues to bridge both the psychoanalytic and neo-Marxist schools of thought. He has come to formulate the necessity of both schools to offer dialogical discourse as a means for change – in both the microcosm of family relationship and the macrocosm of society. His term for this approach to change is “communicative action”. Interestingly, this term and its significance are wholly resonant with Satir’s “congruent communication” as a process and a goal of healthy family functioning.

In affirming his philosophical roots as a neo-Hegelian, Habermas is now addressing the metaphysical dimension of Hegelian thought (generally taken up by the religious “right wing Hegelians”), but in a reconciling manner that rescinds nothing from the socialist “left wing Hegelians.” In other words, he offers to reconcile both the socialist and the psychoanalytic project for human autonomy with religious, metaphysical sentiment, provided the latter accepts freedom through dialogue.

In Habermas’ latest work, *The Future of Human Nature* (2003), he takes issue with Hegel’s metaphysical spiral as a metaphor for evolutionary growth for individuals and culture within history. Habermas objects that Hegel’s spiral metaphor is not evolutionary, in that its outcome is pre-set, and is thus a pre-modernist, deterministic metaphysical formulation:

But Hegel sacrifices together with sacred history [*Heilsgeschichte*] the promise of a salvaging future in exchange for a world process revolving *in itself* [sic]. Teleology is finally bent back into a circle. Hegel’s students and followers break with the fatalism of this

dreary prospect of an eternal recurrence of the same. (Habermas, 2003, p. 112)

Whereas Hegel's metaphor of human and social development as an evolving spiral may *suggest* that it is open-ended, it is not. All humankind is fated to follow this same design, and, as I indicated above in my critique of Ken Wilber's use of Hegel's formulation, it is both hierarchical and deterministic.

What Habermas sees instead for the postmodern age is for theology to enter the secular realm, to be tested through the correctives that the Enlightenment has offered, and to re-emerge in a more truly universal, religious context. For this, he cites Adorno: "Nothing of theological content will persist without being transformed ; every content will have to put itself to the test of migrating into the realm of the secular, the profane" (Adorno, 1998, p. 136, in Habermas, 2003, p.112).

It is indeed interesting that what may have been considered anti-religious, modernist philosophy, embraces the very core of metaphysical moral values:

Postsecular society continues the work for religion itself, that religion did for myth...those *moral feelings which only religious language has as yet been able to give a sufficiently differentiated expression may find universal resonance*, once a salvaging formulation turns up for something almost forgotten, but implicitly missed [italics mine]. (Habermas, 2003, p. 114)

Habermas offers a calling for those interested in spirituality to become invested in positive outcomes for intercultural relations, and offers what Derrida had so well

articulated: Simply, “messianicity, stripped of everything” (Derrida, 1998, p. 18, in Habermas, 2003, p.113).

I find here that Habermas appears to support many of Buber’s central constructs. Although not specifically attributing these themes to Buber, Habermas clearly affirms the former philosopher’s aforementioned propositions that:

- 1) There is a necessity for self, other and context to be in a dialogical relation, as when Habermas states: “One knows that there can be no love without recognition of the self in the other, nor freedom without mutual recognition” (Habermas, 2003, p. 114).
- 2) The inter-subjective dimension is a link to the spiritual dimension. However, as a critical theorist, Habermas asserts the importance of human freedom, autonomy, and self-determination in what was formerly a deterministic, conservative paradigm; “the fact that God gives form to human life does not imply a determination interfering with man’s self-determination ...[but, rather] obliging him to be free” (Habermas, 2003, p. 115).
- 3) The inter-human encounter, when approached with a level of intentional trust and candor, can allow for a transformation in human relationship. Habermas offers, “The mode of non-destructive secularization is translation. ... Intercultural relations may find a language other than that of the military and the market alone” (Habermas, 2003, p.114).

These three postulates of Buber resonate clearly with Habermas, and situate Satir’s formulation for the inclusion of communicative and spiritual dimensions within the philosophical context of critical theory. In the following piece, I demonstrate why I believe that the philosopher Luce Irigaray’s perspectives strongly connect with Satir’s Growth model, and that Irigaray is a very fitting guide into twenty-first century philosophy.

4. Luce Irigaray: *Difference as The Wisdom of Love*

Luce Irigaray, a continental philosopher, is presently Director of Research in Philosophy at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, in Paris. In 1972, she was dismissed from her academic post at the French Psychoanalytic Institute for her critique of the institute's lack of a feminist perspective and for her critique of theoretical constructs that maintained gender hierarchy. Undeterred, she has persisted as an important new voice. Her present work is inclusive of both post-Hegelian critical thinking and postmodern metaphysical thinking, and appears to me as quite visionary in that it posits connection to the spiritual dimension through our very differences – particularly the mental, emotional and sexual.

I find that her overall philosophical perspective may best be described in the following:

Perfection will not correspond to a movement internal to the circle of Being, as one and unique, but to a movement between two different Beings interweaving attention to the other and to his, or her, contribution and fidelity to self, in order to secure a possible reference to this other. (Irigaray, 2003, p. 100)

This positioning of the individual within human relationship for spiritual growth echoes Satir's work with the couple encounter, and the inclusion of the level of spirit in the transformation process. Irigaray clearly advises that this encounter neither creates enmeshment nor issues of control:

Two who are neither halves nor complimentary nor opposed but who, while each other has a proper human identity to accomplish, can realize this task only by maintaining between them a relation with respect for their difference(s) (p. 103). ...the masculine and the feminine are in no case the inverse or the opposite of each other. They are different (p. 106). [However], a difference between two terms autonomous to each other which, at the first and the last level, constitute a unity (p. 108).

I appreciate Irigaray's use of the term *autonomous* in connection with a base and summit experience of *unity*. This conforms to Satir's vision of a couple: "Every couple has three parts; *you, me, and us*, two people, three parts, each significant, each having a life of its own. Each makes the other more possible" (Satir, 1988, p.145).

Irigaray speaks critically toward the architects of Western philosophy who preceded her, who had developed an objectivist, monological design that failed to honor difference and subjectivity:

The masculine subject has also left behind him nature, women, and even children. His culture amounts to a sort of monologue more and more extrapolated from the real, unfolding itself parallel to this real in order to carve it up and thus dominate it (p. 6). The masculine subject has in fact been more concerned with the Being of the things of the world, of his world, than with the Being of

another subject (p. 90). In this way, man loses the intuition of what he is, and lets himself be governed by that which distances him more and more from himself. (p. 122)

Irigaray then describes the difficult journey to re-incorporate the body, nature, woman, and everything that has been devalued as the other in Western philosophy:

[This] requires going back beneath the very foundations that serves as a floor or as a roof for Western metaphysics. (p. 91).

If Hegel tries to free philosophy from the exteriority of History itself, his own philosophy still remains exteriority in relation to the man who he is. (p. 94)

The task would be to climb little by little to the calvary of the spirit without asking this to transubstantiate in return, the flesh that has been devoted to its service. Without caring about bending the spirit as well as the body to a dialectical process that enriches both of them for a historic becoming of man as man. (p. 95)

As a psychoanalyst, Irigaray concisely describes the journey of healthy human growth to leave the maternal bond, to reach toward autonomy, and to then develop a co-relation with a partner. This involves an engendering process, one that requires a reciprocal regard for differences:

There exists another relation to the other than the relation to the mother, a relation more specifically human than either maternity or paternity is (p .76).

It is only after having already won autonomy that the child can discover how it belongs to a human being to enter into relation with the other (p. 102).

Whether in his body or in his 'soul', also called spirit, a man thus originates in an other from whom he has to differ, as mother, and with whom, as woman, he has to find alliance (p. 128).

Such a becoming is then corporeal and spiritual... The mother seems to unilaterally engender the child, but, as adults, man and woman have the responsibility of continuing to engender themselves reciprocally... [through] reciprocity in the respect for differences (p. 130).

Irigary then connects the social-psychological with the cultural – in a way similar to that of Jurgen Habermas - with the individual and the cultural effecting the other. She uses the term “verticality” to point to a Hegelian summit, as the celestial “Wholly-Other”. This is in contrast with the relation of Other in the present here and now - as a “horizontal dimension of human becoming”:

...our culture has favored verticality, the relation to the Idea allegedly at the summit of approximate reproductions, the relation to the Father, to the leader, to the celestial Wholly-Other. The

relation to the other, present here and now beside or in front of me on the earth, has been little cultivated as a horizontal dimension of human becoming. Now this dimension is probably even more specific to humanity than verticality, if it at least involves the respect for the other in their irreducibility, their transcendence. (p. 145)

As with becoming, Beingness is experienced with the other so long as the subject does not attempt to reduce the other in any way. Furthermore, there is not even an “objectified” context that dictates the relation between the two if they are truly to unite through difference:

If a recourse to the divine is then necessary, this cannot be to the detriment of the divine of the other, nor of the divine to cultivate between oneself and the other. (p. 147)

I find this a particularly significant construct, as related to Satir’s formulation of “*you, me, and us*”, that the divine is experienced without lessening the other. Furthermore, and even more significantly, it extends Satir’s model of context (as in “self, other and context”) – in a way to view the latter as a *co-created* context.

Along with her philosophical constructs, Irigaray’s latest work (2003) offers some constructs of *process* - which connects well with approaches in both Gestalt therapy and to the couple work of the Levine’s (in Chapter II, Part D). I find that the following are

effective constructs of process in that move us from perspectives to experiential approaches –

1. In order to meet with the other I must first let be, even restore, the nothing that separates us (p. 168).
2. The interval between the other and me can never be overcome...and the gap has to be maintained (p. 66).
3. To experience this co-belonging implies leaving representative thought and letting oneself go in the co-belonging to Being, which already inhabits us, constitutes us, surrounds us... “there where we truly are” (p. 70).
4. In order that the “you” take place in a relation with the “I”, the “I” has to secure a faithfulness to its Being in which the other can trust (p. 82).
5. Advancing toward what is most veiled in oneself, the subject receives some enlightenment for a more conscious construction of his becoming (p. 87).

The above psychological constructs bring her philosophy to an experiential level.

However, I believe that her greatest gifts are in turning Western philosophy to relational intimacy, and in offering a co-created spiritual dimension: “Philosophy and theology will find in this wisdom of love a possible reconciliation” (Irigaray, p. 11).

D. Constructs Of Dialogical/Spiritual Process

Whereas the above three philosophers have outlined the necessity for the dialogical –spiritual encounter in order for both the individual and the culture to advance, several psychotherapists focus on specific processes to enable the fruitfulness of this

encounter. Of these, Erikson offers the least specific constructs for the couple encounter, but I present his work first because he offers a psycho-social, life-span perspective, which I find invaluable for offering a developmental context within to better understand the location of the couple who are in the encounter.

1. *The Life-Span Perspective of Erik Erikson*

J.Eugene Wright Jr., former Professor of Evangelism and Pastoral Ministry, has, I believe, effectively linked the life-work of the social psychologist Erik Erikson within both psychoanalytic and religious frameworks. He describes Erikson's work as a uniquely interdisciplinary approach to human growth (Wright, Jr. 1982). Wright suggests that Erikson did not develop the later stages of the human cycle (the stages of intimacy through integrity) as fully as the former stages, which impelled him to extend Erikson's religious formulation.

Wright's interest is to explore the deeper processes that may emerge by moving the psychological constructs through to moral and then to deeper ethical levels of being. Wright refers to Erikson's psycho-biographies of Martin Luther and Mahatma Gandhi, in which Erikson illustrates issues at the developmental stages from intimacy to integrity. Wright champions the religious value of Erikson's work, where "real truth and mature ethics can emerge, superceding [even] the moralistic approach of Gandhi" (Wright, Jr. 1982, p.114).

Wright is referring here to the "case illustration" in Erikson's psycho-biography of Mahatma Gandhi, in *Gandhi's Truth* (1969). While elevated by Gandhi's devotion to *satyagraha* (inner truth) Erikson was dismayed by the Mahatma's relationship with his wife, quoting from Gandhi's autobiography: "I was a cruelly kind husband. I regarded

myself as her teacher and so harassed her out of my blind love for her.” Erikson was extremely upset by this, and by the lack of honesty in the marital relationship

...which almost brought *me* to the point where I felt unable to continue writing *this* book because I seemed to sense the presence of a kind of untruth in the very protestation of truth: of something unclean when all the words spelled out an unreal purity; and, above all, of displaced violence where nonviolence was the professed issue. (Erikson, pp.230-231)

It is also here that Virginia Satir’s work with couples would compliment Erikson’s position, as she would focus primarily on the couple’s ability to develop congruent communication on all levels, which is the heart of the matter when it comes to the development of couple intimacy.

Wright views Erikson’s final stage of integrity as a synthesis between the former stage of generativity - the ability to give to others - and “mutuality”, which echoes both Buber and the philosopher, Hans-Georg Gadamer. Whereas “self” and “other” are to be met through the existential encounter, Wright asserts that, in addition, “context is everything for Erikson” (Wright Jr., 1982, p.11). Like Satir after him, Erikson hopes that “a wider sense of identity may emerge within our world, one that does not exclude nations, races or religions... leading to a sense of belonging that is authentic for the entire species of humanity” (Wright Jr., 1982, p.13). As in Martin Buber’s conception of human relating, Erikson ends the human life cycle in the “grand final synthesis of integrity”, by

returning again to the beginning of life's crises of trust versus mistrust, but "without surrendering the strengths of all the other stages" (Wright Jr. 1982, p. 97).

2. The Here and Now-ness of Fritz and Laura Perls

While Frederick "Fritz" Perls, the founder of Gestalt Therapy, may not be regarded as a spiritual mentor in any conventional religious sense, his appeal has been to offer the "Zen"-like sword of discrimination against following outmoded and dysfunctional expectations of oneself and others, in order to reclaim an openness to one's more authentic self. Unlike Erikson's contribution of charting a crises along a grand, developmental life-cycle, Perls believed that "nothing exists except the here and now" (Perls, 1970, p.44). Several of his followers discuss the Gestalt experience as similar to their experience with Zen or Taoist meditation practice (Van Dusen, 1975, Resnick, 1975, Joslyn, 1975). In that it strives to be so highly experiential, it might best be said that Gestalt therapy has "strenuously resisted constructing a fixed paradigm" (Skolnick, 1994, p. 65).

Virginia Satir worked alongside Perls at the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California during the 1960's. The goal of therapy, for each of these pioneer therapists, is "to let go of parents, especially to forgive one's parents, which is the hardest thing for most people to do" (Perls, 1971, p. 45-46). This goal is also articulated by Erik Erikson, when he asks that we behold "a new, a different love of one's parents"(Erikson, 1950, p. 268). In Satir's formulation of the Family Reconstruction process, she states "we cannot be totally whole unless we have connected to our parents as people" and are "communicating with our parents as human beings of equal value" (Satir, et.al., 1991, p. 224). "[This process]

provides a spiritual, emotional, philosophical, physical, and cosmic experience” (1991, p.251).

Perls believed that the ego boundary is not fixed, and that “once you have a character, you have developed a rigid system”. Furthermore, “The *We* doesn’t exist, but consists out of I *and* You, [and] is an everlasting boundary where two people meet” (Perls, p.7). This connects well with Irigaray’s postulate that there will always be difference, and that this is good.

For Perls, “objectivity does not exist” (1971, p.13). Perls maintained that we need to make a “transition from linear causality to thinking in process, from the *why* to the *how*” (Perls, 1971, p. 47). He connects false objectivity and errant causality to the dysfunctional relational stance of “You Should”. And it is this very “‘You should’ that interferes with the healthy working of the organism” (1971, p. 20). Thus, we are tripped up by unexamined expectations of the self.

How did Perls utilize these constructs as an approach in couples therapy? He asserts that “a bad marriage, [is] a fantasy, an ideal of what the spouse should be like, [and] rather than [each] taking responsibility for their own expectations, they play the blaming game (1971, p. 43). His approach is to use resentment in therapy, because “behind every resentment there are demands” (1971, p. 52). Demands of others are what Satir terms “Expectations,” which is the fifth level on her iceberg metaphor. This is a deep level, one below that of one’s feelings and perceptions of others, one that stubbornly maintains dysfunctional parent-child or dysfunctional couple relations (Banmen, personal conversation, 2004). One can also see a parallel here between Satir’s iceberg metaphor and Philip Lichtenberg’s Gestalt approach for couple’s intimacy:

Intimacy requires that each person declare what is his or her thought and feeling, his or her truth of the moment, his or her leading desire, and at the same time it requires that the person move to lose self in the creation of a transcendent unity.

(Lichtenberg, 1991, p.33)

Here are presented several layers that are also within Satir's iceberg metaphor: feelings, beliefs and perceptions, universal yearnings, and spirituality.

In an interview with psychotherapist Laura Perls, wife of the late Fritz Perls, she speaks of why her husband chose the term "Gestalt" over "existential" therapy: "What we did I wanted to call 'existential therapy' but at the time the term 'existentialism' was understood mainly in the sense of Sartre and certain nihilistic attitudes..." (Rosenblatt, 1991, p.12). She then links the very personal approach of Gestalt psychotherapy with the work of the theologians Tillich and Buber, saying "They were really psychologists... They were interested in people, they were not talking about subjects... You felt they were talking directly to you and not just about some *thing*" (p.24). Describing the intellectual milieu in Berlin and Frankfurt during the 1930's, she surmises that "we all took from Eastern philosophies and their holistic approach (p.25). Finally, Laura Perls describes Gestalt as an "anarchistic" dialogical process, and further clarifies its basic goal: "It doesn't try to adjust people into a certain system, but rather [assists people] to adjust to their own creative potential" (p.21).

3. From “self” to “Self” - Richard C. Schwartz

Richard Schwartz, a family therapist with a background in Buddhist meditation practice, offers a reconsideration of the self in therapy. In “Releasing the Soul; Psychotherapy as a Spiritual Practice” (Schwartz, 1999), he compares the self’s growing awareness in therapy to the Self-as Witness, the Self as Soul, the Self as Leader, and the Self as Compassionate Witness. “I had to deconstruct my developmental assumptions and consider the possibility that this Self was not derived from parenting but came from somewhere else.” (Schwartz, 1999, p.227). Schwartz raises the materialistic sense of self to the spiritual Self. His new perspective informs his therapeutic approach for developing “the Self-to-Self connection” the clients’ way of connecting with the true Self of other family members. Schwartz maintains that “this is a different endeavor than coauthoring new narratives; directing solution-oriented conversations...or making interpretations” (Schwartz, 1999, p.235). How so? First, the client is not being led to co-construct what the therapist may have in mind. The client is now taking Self-leadership. Secondly, and here I find the key to his approach, the client is speaking from her/his Self to the Self (the fuller fullest dimension) of the Other. Schwartz further offers that

Some people think that Self-leadership means always being warm, open, and nurturing, so they are reluctant to trust their Self in situations that call for assertiveness. This is a misconception. The Self can be forcefully protective or assertive. The energy of the Self is both nurturing and strong – yin and yang... Much of the martial arts is about the practice of Self-leadership (Schwartz, 1999, p. 237-238).

I find this “Self to Self” connection, which is in recognition of the spiritual dimension of one’s significant others, to be wholly consistent with Satir’s “Family Reconstruction Process”.

Schwartz cites his mentor Maslow, as a non-Buddhist psychologist, for pointing to the biological, yet transcendent nature of the self. In this, Schwartz has incorporated both the biological and essentialist aspects of oneself and others. Schwartz also credits Virginia Satir (Schwartz, 1999, p. 238) as being the sole pioneer family therapist who openly discussed the spiritual nature of people in her clinical work.

4. *The Couple Process of the Levines*

Although they were not directly influential on Virginia Satir, who passed on in 1988, in my estimation this couple demonstrates a significant development of her Growth Model for couples. Stephen Levine, a spiritual colleague of Ram Dass, has utilized primarily Buddhist perspectives in his work with the dying. He met his wife Ondrea during this work. Both of them had been married with children previously, and began a new, larger family. He and Ondrea chose to live very consciously together, creating a new, larger family, and now write of their experience in *Embracing the Beloved; Relationship as a Path of Awakening* (Levine, S. and Levine, O., 1996).

The Levine’s consider relationship as not lesser than, nor equal to, other spiritual paths, but proclaim that "Relationship is one of the highest and most difficult of the yogas" (p. 24). Here, they are referring to the several yoga paths of spiritual discipline as described in the *Bhagavad Gita*, a sacred text of Hinduism. However, these paths do not speak specifically of couple or family relations. The closest is “Bhakti yoga”, the

discipline of the heart. This yoga practice involves purifying the human heart of enmity through devotional practices, and to then experience God and the created world of beings through a heart filled in its essential bliss.

The Levines have developed an acute honoring of the wholly subjective nature of the couple relationship, with approaches that break down the barriers that have been built between them: “The devotional quality of a conscious relationship allows us to see the other not as *other* but as self” (p.22). While this might seem in contradiction to Irigaray’s insistence on difference, the following offers a doorway that connects to Irigaray’s philosophical construct of both difference and union. The Levine’s speak of a combined human and spiritual experience: “This union is not just with another but with the mystery itself, with our boundary-less essential nature” (p. 24). In this way, their human self connects with each of their Beingness, and seems for a time to be in a state of union.

The Levine’s primary work is one of continual openness and forgiveness. However, they have had to answer to critics that their experience together is not one of co-dependency: “In co-dependency the scales are always tipped. Often one has to be ‘down’ for the other to feel ‘up’... In a balanced relationship there is no ‘dominant other’, the roles are constantly changing. Whoever has the most stable foothold supports the climb that day” (p.82).

During one evening meditation, they had each received the same words of inner guidance “Only fear can destroy the relationship”. The exercises they offer to relate to one another more deeply emphasizes their pioneering work as a couple: "Nothing bonds like the truth. Nothing dispels distrust like the revealed heart. A conscious committed

relationship is a bonding of two whole human beings attempting to be mercifully human together”(p.83).

The Levine’s take this expression of couple harmony to a universal level: “When we see all women as the divine mother and all men as the merciful father, everyone you meet is sacred” (Levine, 1996 p.165). Their avowed, conjoint spiritual dimension is in accord with Satir’s suggestion that of couples transform themselves through the doorway of “universal yearnings”. The Levine’s seem to conjointly yearn for truth, trust, and apprehension of the divine.

One may rightly ask, how practical is this for couples to achieve? How practical is this as a goal of family therapy? This is dependent, of course, on the interest of the couple, on their choosing to make their relationship together one of a conjoint spiritual journey. As an extension of Satir’s formulation, it is an affirmation of Satir’s Growth Model for couples, including her insistence on congruent communication, and her hopes for a “universal level” of family reconstruction.

My main critique of the Levine’s writing is that their conjoint narrative does not offer a contextual framework, in order that the reader may connect the other dimensions of their family life with their specific approaches; thus, who did not and then who does do the dishes?

E. Emerging Discourse In Family Therapy And Spirituality

1. Limitations within Family Therapy Literature

In a review of family therapy literature of the past decade, Anderson and Worthen (1997) noted that of 3,615 journal articles, only 1.3% addressed spirituality and therapy.

In the department where I teach, religion is generally presented as a subset of “culture”, a diminishment of the former, which may be seen as a very foundation of culture.

Certainly, there has been no “home” here for spirituality, nor do we offer what was once academically designated as the psychology of religion. An example of this diminishment, one of the classic texts for working with families, *The Family Life Cycle*, (Carter E. and McGoldrick, M., 1980), written just over twenty years ago, has no mention of spirituality, and when two of the authors present a client’s religious dedication, it comes across in a decidedly pejorative fashion:

The role of the mother in relation to her children is idealized in the Mexican culture as being close to the Hispanic images of the Virgin Mary... To try and convince a Mexican-American mother that she needs time for herself, a vacation or relief from her children, usually meets with disbelief and denial since it goes against a cultural [i.e., religious] norm.
(Falicov, C. and Karrer, B. 1980, p.400)

Here it is presumed that the mother’s idealization of the Virgin Mary keeps her from complaining about what the authors see as burdensome childcare. However, what may have been gained by the mother’s religious dedication is omitted, along with the mother’s own voice. What might have been a very productive dialogue is lost because any positive aspects of the religious and spiritual dimensions are not herein acknowledged.

Notwithstanding, the couple’s experience of religious or spiritual companionship is omitted. On the other hand, it is only fair to note that *The Family Life Cycle* fares better in its chapter on ceremonies and rites of passage, which are given their due within the context of family relating patterns.

Thirteen years later, religion and spirituality are both linked together in another academic text, *Normal Family Processes*, but only as a single reference, written in the chapter “Race, Class and Poverty”, by Nancy Boyd-Franklin (1993). Here, religion and spirituality are reduced to “survival skills” (author’s term, p. 369). While the author lists church membership as an expression of strength-in-community, she appears to denigrate experiential spirituality when she writes that there are Black “family members [who] may not go to church but they may ‘pray to the Lord’ when times are hard” (p.370). What is completely omitted by her caricature, is the work of Martin Luther King Jr. and his well-documented spiritual approach in defeating racial segregation in the American South, some thirty years earlier. While Boyd-Franklin does offer a complete section on minority “Empowerment”(pp.372-375), she totally omits mentioning King, and the non-violent resistance movement that has been based on King’s call for the spiritual development of civil rights activists. She cites instead the importance of Salvador Minuchin, founder of the school of Structural Family Therapy, who, while indeed important, had vigorously opposed Satir’s use of spirituality in family therapy.

From 1980 to as recently as 1996, Irene and Herbert Goldenberg produced popular academic texts on family therapy where there is no mention at all of either religion or spirituality (Goldenberg I. & Goldenberg, H.,1996). Thus, the entrance of spirituality in contemporary family therapy literature must be seen as “emergent”.

2. Froma Walsh; Breaking the Silence

In the past five years, this absence has begun to shift. The editor of the prestigious *Journal of Family Therapy*, Froma Walsh, decided to break the silence, her own as editor, and as a practitioner:

It was as if all consciousness of spirituality had been erased by our clinical training. Even when it was right in front of me, I was blind to its significance... Throughout the mental health professions, spirituality has been regarded as a taboo subject to be checked at the office door by both the client and the therapist... Clients sense that spirituality doesn't belong in the clinical context and censor themselves from bringing this dimension of their lives into the therapeutic conversation (Walsh, 1999, p.28).

Walsh then produced a fine compendium text, *Spiritual Resources in Family Therapy* (Walsh, F., ed., 1999) which now includes the positive mention of Martin Luther King Jr. While a good beginning, it is predominantly composed of the autobiographical reflections of the therapist-researchers themselves, describing their *own* experiences of self, and the self-therapist relationship, but there is much less from the clients' own experiences. How spirituality impacts marital therapy or couple counseling is surprisingly omitted, and is yet to be written. It is this, with the narratives of the client-couples' own experiences, which I seek to explore in my research inquiry. Indeed, training and research in family therapy needs the further inclusion of religious and spiritual issues - including the challenges of intermarriage, how religious constructs might be experienced as limiting the intimacy of the couple, or how a couple might discover conjoint possibilities of spiritual development within the relationship.

3. Couples in Cross-Cultural Encounter

Within Judeo-Christian religious cultures, intermarriage has been questioned (and formerly condemned), although the rate of interfaith marriage is high in North America.

In a recent study of intimacy between Jewish couples compared with couples comprised of only one Jewish partner, the level of couple intimacy was not significantly different with either combination (Heller, P. & Wood, B., 2000). This leads the researchers to speculate that the very process of negotiating ethnic differences may lead to a greater mutual understanding.

Another situation of cross-cultural encounter may exist when both partners adopt a religious form that is itself a hybrid from two cultures, and the context may be misconstrued by both partners. For example, some of the “charismatic” Eastern spiritual teachers who came to North America during the 1960’s and 1970’s offered a model of spiritual ‘dispassion’ that was misconstrued by their followers to mean “un-attachment” in human relations. Buddhism in particular, not having foundations in western ego psychology, could be particularly problematic for those who were having difficulty in couple relationships, as the doctrine of “no-self” as a spiritual experience could be misconstrued within relationships. Baba Hari Dass, an Indian yogi brought to the attention of the West by Ram Dass (in *Be Here Now*, 1971), came to America and discovered that many “Western Buddhists” and “Western yogis” had misappropriated Eastern wisdom in this regard. “Spiritual” marriages were made and fell apart, despite the blessings of the guru. Baba Hari Dass soon realized that the ideal of abstinence as a tool for spiritual development- whether it be dietary or sexual- was a problem in the West. “Brahmacharya (sexual abstinence) is almost impossible, because of free association with the other sex in the West. People go crazy by reading books and trying to become hermits” (Hari Dass, 1977, p.107). Instead, he proposes that the path of the householder is equally spiritual: “In ancient times all saints were householders. When both wife and

husband surrender to each other, automatically their desires and ego will be surrendered to God” (Hari Dass, 1977, p.108).

The Unification Church was developed as a new Korean Christianity by Reverend Moon Sun-myung, or referred to as Reverend Sun Myung Moon in the West. The church leads its adherents into the opposite direction from celibacy. Here, Moon and his wife hold mass, arranged marriages of his followers, and the new couples are required to become “perfect couples”:

Moon ... believed that Jesus had been a failed messiah because he died before he had a chance to marry. Furthermore, [humankind] can only be redeemed through the messianic creation of the perfect family.... Individuals [will] become full members of the church by joining one another in perfect marriage, determined and blessed by the original perfect spouses [Rev. Moon and his wife, called the Holy Mother]. The theology... stresses divinity as a family. In the Unification Church, the true Christ is a couple, male and female, bringing to fulfillment God’s intention for humans to live perfect lives as perfect couples (Paper, 1997, p.252-3).

From Satir’s perspective, should a couple adhere to a “religious” context from either of these belief models – whether that be “unattachment in relationship” or “perfection in relationship” – it negates the self and it negates the other. Both oneself and one’s partner are sacrificed to the context. A healthy, dialogical relation might certainly be inhibited by this imbalance.

4. Approaches for the Cross-Cultural Encounter

For the purpose of training graduate students for work in culturally diverse situations, the Marriage and Family Therapy Training Program at Purdue University has instituted a “cultural genogram” for their therapists in training. This allows for both self exploration from one’s family of origin, and cross-cultural interactions with classmates, including emotional explorations regarding racism, sexism, and oppression (Keiley, M, Dolbin, M., Hill, J. Karuppaswamy. N. Liu, T., Natrajan, R. Poulsen, S., Robbins, N., Robinson, P., 2002). Another newly developed tool for assistance in “untangling” multi-religious issues in families is the “spiritual ecomap” (Hodge, 2000) which then can be used by the therapist to help understand the multiple religious and spiritual influences on family members.

When one partner has decided to embrace a spiritual practice that was not chosen by both, a practice that strongly impacts the relationship, a marital therapist might first ask whether this was known at the onset of the relationship, or later, perhaps as a reaction to their partner. I believe that Jurg Willi, an outstanding couples’ therapist, offers an important direction for the couple. Willi (1984) proposes “*collusion therapy*” to unlock the deadlock - the couple’s need to discover their unvoiced purpose, that “their joint problem gives them a common foundation, namely the hope of being able to help each other overcome their problem”(p. 222). Thus, when couples remain together with one “opposing” the spiritual practices of the other, this may often be a collusive process.

However, a clerical family therapist may unintentionally engage in collusion, which may easily become detrimental to the couple relationship. This particular issue has

been presented within a Christian religious paradigm, and is shown to occur when the therapist is also a church minister. The minister/therapist may perceive one spouse as being 'spiritually correct,' generally through a subtle messaging by one of the partners who is hoping to get the therapist to take their side over the other partner. This issue for the therapist's own positioning and possible collusion with one spouse over another is well presented in the article "The Therapist who is perceived as 'spiritually correct': strategies for avoiding collusion with the 'spiritually one-up' spouse" (Rotz, E., Russell, C., & Wright, D., 1993). The minister/therapist must then avoid collusion with the 'spiritually one-up' spouse.

A significant challenge in cross-cultural training exists when the couple holds similar perspectives, but it is the "helper" -or the therapeutic trainer- who holds a differing cultural perspective from the trainees or the couples themselves. In the following situation, the couples are from Hong Kong, whereas the therapeutic approach is predominantly Western. Bringing the Satir model of family therapy to a population in Hong Kong has proven difficult for two therapists, despite their own Chinese nationality: "Many clients expressed having difficulty to communicate congruently, particularly... with parents and elder siblings. They simply could not bring themselves to say what they truly wanted to say" (Cheung and Chan, 2002, p.208). The therapists must now deliberate between themselves what cultural sensitivity, understanding, and reformulation may be required for Satir's therapeutic model to work within a traditional Chinese context.

The solution for Cheung and Chan was to present the Satir model in a reverse ordering, by first exploring the couples' expectations of themselves (Level II), and then through exploring the harmony with one's spiritual essence (Level III), before exploring

and explicating one's personal feelings (Level I). "While Level I (feelings) indicates what is generally suppressed in Chinese culture, Levels II (the Self) and III (The Life Force) echo similar values" (Cheung & Chan p.209). Fortunately, the Satir Institute of the Pacific is inviting more research on training for cross-cultural issues in family therapy.

F. Summary Of The Literature Review

I first felt somewhat challenged to find "sufficient" published academic material related to the work of Virginia Satir. However, during this period of writing, I undertook a training course with Dr. John Banmen, and Karhlyne Maki-Banmen, the main trainers of her approach, and subsequently felt more empowered to examine and "dialogue" with the resources she had herself listed as influential to her work. In Part B, "Challenge in Developing a New Essentialist Paradigm", I searched to bridge my own journey as a practitioner and an academic instructor to find what seemed to be missing in the present Satir material. I recognized that, at this time, there is not a clearly "defined" academic arena for a psychological-spiritual paradigm, but that it is necessary to build one and respond to the two dominant paradigms –the western objectivist model (primarily used by clinicians), and the growingly popular "conservative religious" paradigm in North American family life.

Along this journey, I re-traced some of Virginia Satir's stated mentors; Martin Buber, Abraham Maslow, Erik Erikson, Fritz Perls, and also acknowledged her road from her mother's church, Christian Science. It was clear to me that Satir would have given voice to a "model" of her psychological-spirituality, but that she also respected the emergent nature within each of us to develop our own model (as part of our self-

organizing principle). With the encouragement of John Banmen to add her voice more significantly into the literature, I felt it possible to encircle her work with a new, essentialist paradigm, in the manner that Abraham Maslow had begun the project. I examined Ken Wilber, who attempts to carry the torch of developing a new paradigm, through his “Integral Psychology.” Wilber offers an encyclopedic breadth of spiritual philosophies and has growing respectability in the academic community. However, I discovered that, whereas he offered much in the way of integrating the spiritual with the other dimensions of knowing (sensory, cognitive, affective and intuitive), he lacked in cross-cultural understanding, particularly through following Gebser. and Bellah. All three err, I believe, in extending models of individual development onto religious cultures. Here, Carol Gilligan, the ethicist, served me as a fine voice for multi-cultural understanding.

Thus, my Part B, “Challenge in Developing a New Essentialist Paradigm,” is written as an ongoing work in progress. I believe that it does frame the academic discourse in a direction that is inclusive of religious and spiritual dimensions. Most importantly, however, in developing what I am calling an “autonomous-essentialist” paradigm, I am striving to be true to what Virginia Satir had envisioned, using her words from both her texts and her poetry.

In Part C – “Constructs of a Dialogical/Spiritual Philosophy,” I strive to re-visit the twentieth century shift from monological to dialogical thinking, beginning with Martin Buber’s break from objectivist sociological constructs. I see here the true pioneer for re-linking philosophy and theology with psychology, and Buber presents his discourse with experiential potency. I am intrigued by his construct of the “essential We” as an

affirmation of being that transcends, yet incorporates “I and You”. Thus, I regard it as his legacy to articulate the primary philosophical/psychological construct of Self, Other, and Context to be in dialogical relation. Furthermore, Buber contends that the “Other” must be engaged as “You” (or “Thou”), as the divine within the other.

My critique of Buber comes through Fackenheim’s concern with the former’s premise of a universal goodness, given the shattering experience and legacy of the Holocaust. I find that Fackenheim offers an important construct that may impact our approach to historical family abuse. Namely, that we need to “mend” rather than “transcend” historical abuse, in order that we do not repress our needs to heal, nor to suppress our call for social responsibility.

The philosopher Jurgen Habermas offers the measured voice of critical theory, and its call for communicative action in accord with Satir’s goal of congruent communication. Here, in his eighties, Habermas offers the possibility of re-incorporating a metaphysic into critical theory, should the latter prove true to the project for human freedom and non-determinism, as advocated by the postmodernists. As mentioned, Virginia Satir offers the congruent communication as an approach as well as a goal, and this will be further explored as “Constructs of a Dialogical/Spiritual Process”, in Part D.

I believe that my fourth philosopher, Luce Irigaray, stands closest to the perspectives of Virginia Satir, through the former’s vision of reframing philosophy from a “love of wisdom” to a “wisdom of love”. As does Buber, Irigaray castigates Western philosophy for its monological hold on thinking, while she also incorporates the body into the spiritual realm. Irigaray’s great contribution is on the necessity of respecting and retaining “difference” between the subject and the other (self and other), and between two

partners in love. In this way, they are each enriched; psychologically through greater self-understanding, and spiritually by beholding the Beingness of the other. Satir's transformation process has here received both philosophical constructs and constructs of process.

In Part D - "Constructs of a Dialogical/Spiritual Process," I was thankful to study religious reflections on Erik Erikson. Wright's keen observation was that we do not "progress" from stage to stage in some linear fashion and that we may return to issues of "trust" without losing the strengths we have from being in later stages. As per Erikson's later definition of "Identity", I was pleased to find that his hope was that "a wider sense of identity may emerge within our world, one that does not exclude nations, races or religions... leading to a sense of belonging that is authentic for the entire species of humanity" (Wright Jr., 1982, p.13). Erikson also articulated the importance of "mutuality" as both a goal and process of human development, which I see correlated within the Satir Growth model.

Fritz and Laura Perls offered the "here and now" confrontational style of Gestalt therapy. The goal of this challenging process is "to let go of parents, especially to forgive one's parents, which is the hardest thing for most people to do" (Perls, 1971, p. 45-46). This approach is quite challenging as the client's resentment is used in therapy, allowing for volatile feelings to emerge. This difficult exercise is done because "behind every resentment there are demands" (1971, p. 52). For both Perls and Satir, there must be an examination of unconscious expectations of self and others in order to make positive changes.

Richard Schwartz's message for therapists to leave the direction of therapy more and more to the intuition of the Self of the client. This is to build and support the client's own self-direction, which is a value of self ownership in the Satir Growth model.

The Levine's work on themselves as a couple emphasizes basic work on forgiveness, but is taken to exploring deep levels of feelings, beliefs, and expectations of both self and the other. They then experience a transcendent state of union: "This union is not just with another but with the mystery itself, with our boundary-less essential nature" (Levine, 1996, p. 24). In this way, their human self connects with their unique Beingness, and seems for a time to be in a state of union. Their avowed, conjoint spiritual dimension is in accord with Satir's suggestion that of couples transform themselves through the doorway of "universal yearnings". The Levine's seem to conjointly yearn for truth, trust, and apprehension of the divine.

Whereas the Levine's offer a striking look at couples' relational process as spiritual work, the format of their writing does not offer sufficient contextual understanding. I will return to the couple's work of the Levine's in Chapter III, Formulating a Methodology. I am thus constructing what I hope is a more readable framework for a conjoint narrative.

Finally, through this literature review, I recognize that cross-cultural and spiritual issues on couple's therapy remains emergent. I offered that a good part of this lack in the literature has been due to either bias or timidity on the part of North American mental health trainers. Hopefully, I have pointed to positive directions in which to frame this significant discourse.

Chapter III: Formulating A Method For Inquiry

A. Consideration Of Methodological Approaches

1. Research Methods in Marital and Family Therapy

During the Twentieth Century, both individual and family therapy has developed through three primary methods of inquiry: case illustration, quantitative research through data sampling, and qualitative inquiry. I will offer a brief outline of how perspectives in this field have been connected with these various methodologies, and how studies using positivist methodologies were the most “legitimated” by their dominance as published research.

Since the advent of psychoanalysis, both psychotherapists and social workers have utilized “case illustrations” to both present and detail what was being revealed by the client during the analytic encounter or social work interview. These schools were not legitimized as “mainstream” academically, until long after the Second World War. The difficulties of the “case-study” methodology for many positivist social science researchers was two-fold; what would be considered valid would be only what could be observable behavioral “data” – and secondly, “case studies” carried no external “reliability” from case to case. Thus, case examples were considered more “teaching tools” than scientific research. Social science research largely preferred *quantitative* sampling methods that could be measured and verified as to validity and reliability, following the positive methodology used in the natural sciences. The reason for this shift may be due to the dominance of Talcott Parsons in sociology, whom Ken Wilber (1983a) casts as bringing the field in line with observable, “inter-objectivity”- to respond to

societal-functioning needs. However, this can be quite limiting, and inappropriate if taken as the “only” absolute way of “proving” the ways humans relate.

A recent example of a quantified study of human relating is the recent study, “People’s Reasons for Divorcing” in the *Journal of Family Issues*, (Amato, P. and Previti, D, 2003). One may rightly ask, does a numeric sampling offer an accurate *description* of what goes on for the couple when they come to the place of divorcing? Can the numeric sampling help us to have *mutual understanding* of the actual relationship between each of the partners who has responded to the data sampling exercise? The former question, requiring a description, is a qualitative-phenomenological one. The second question, regarding mutual understanding, is within the dialogical context of the couple, involves a qualitative-hermeneutic approach. While quantitative sampling can be helpful to address a social-functioning concern, such as the rise of divorce (which is *inter-objective*), the appropriate arena for understanding couple relations within a dialogical context is *inter-subjective*.

Toward the latter part of the Twentieth Century, *qualitative* methodologies have become more accepted as powerful tools for inquiries into personal and interpersonal meaning, and mutual understanding of the human experience. These forms of research are becoming both more “mainstream” and varied. The foundations of qualitative research are generally seen to begin with Husserl’s *phenomenological* epistemology, which has been well described by Paul Colaizzi (1978). Here, human experience is taken as broader than what can be known through sensory and cognitive perceptions (positivist science), and can be broadened to include affective, aesthetic and intuitive knowing. As a development in the hermeneutic approach, qualitative research has also sought to

“humanize” the exchange between the researcher and the human subjects of the research. Mishler (1986) offered three specific field objectives in this regard: First, he suggests we engage the participants as “co-researchers,” rather than objects. Secondly, the research should be an empowering experience for the interviewees. Thirdly, interviewees should be allowed free discourse.

While all of the above methods of research have been utilized for marriage, family and couples therapy, until recently, academic journals have been rather restrictive in publishing qualitative research. Faulkner, Klock, and Gale have researched the publication trends of qualitative research in family therapy from 1980 to 1999, and have found it extremely minimal compared to “empirical” studies. (Faulkner, R., Klock, K., and Gale J., 2002). What is termed “participant action research”, wherein the study is initiated by the participants themselves for their own needs and purposes is also being conducted, and is accepted in dissertations and casebooks, but is also not yet adequately found in mainstream academic journals.

2. *Research Methods in “Spirituality”*

“Spirituality” has been subject to an equally interesting journey of the ways in which this phenomenon can be “known”. In traditional Eastern and Western academies, the predominant method to know spirituality was through specific spiritual and religious practices. However, what was adapted from the pre-modern to the more modernist religious academy was *textual analysis*, as applied to scriptural writing until the late nineteenth century. Then, *critical theory* emerged in Germany, questioning translations in the scriptural texts. From this emerged *hermeneutic* inquiry, wherein *meaning* was the main validation of the inquiry (Nakkula, M. and Ravitch, S., 1998).

Outside of social science-oriented research in the history of religions, social sciences in general have not considered spirituality “researchable” except in the context of religious beliefs and values in a given population, which then may be “quantified” as part of data in a conventional, positivist sociological research. Within the humanities, “spirituality” has been a primary subject in the field of religious studies -combining theology, critical theory of scripture, and *psycho-biography*. The latter is preferred to describe the *experiential* aspects of the spiritual life, whether this is exemplified by saints, philosophers, or parish ministers. Currently, there is an attempt now being made to “quantify” spirituality for physical and mental health research, some of it aimed at lowering health insurance costs for the church-going, policy holder. Recent examples can be found in the *American Psychologist* (Hill, P & Pargament, K., 2003; Miller, W. & Thoresen, C., 2003).

Wilber contends that there is a confusion of appropriate domains of knowing. Spirituality, if it is to be known as a phenomenon, belongs in his “upper-left” quadrant of individual knowing through intuitive *intentionality*. Therefore, it cannot be “known” in the empirical manner of the natural sciences (Wilber’s upper right quadrant), nor through the sociological methodologies to “know” social-functioning (Wilber’s lower right quadrant), and not through the hermeneutic-dialogical methodologies of mutual understanding (his lower-left quadrant). This is not to say that spirituality will not impact life’s other three quadrants, and here I am exploring the impact of a phenomenological experience (upper left quadrant) as it may be experienced by couples through a hermeneutic study (lower left quadrant).

My inquiry, which hopes to understand the impact of spirituality on the couple relationship, requires an appropriate research approach in order to address both field areas. What is the prevalence of research in my area of inquiry? What has already been published? Very little indeed! Anderson and Worthen (1997) noted that of 3,615 journal articles on family relations, only 1.3% addressed spirituality and therapy overall.

The contemporary literature on spirituality and counselling is predominantly presented as a combination of case example and psycho-biography, as found in a recent compendium text, *Spiritual Resources in Family Therapy* (Walsh, F., ed., 1999). However, I have found that most of the articles center on the therapist-researchers themselves, to describe their *own* experiences, or their experience of engaging with their clients, with significantly less narrative from the clients' own experiences. My inquiry, then leads me on to dialogue with the voices of the couples themselves.

3. Ken Wilber's "Integral Methodological Pluralism"

Ken Wilber (2000a, 2000b) has sought to retain the "best" of pre-modern, modernist, and postmodernist paradigms for ontological and epistemological inquiry. This "project of synthesis" includes the "Great Nest of Being" of the pre-modernists' which is an ascending and descending ontology of the "nested" domains of body, mind, soul and spirit. The modernists separated the domains of body, mind and spirit, with little acknowledgement of the latter, but offered a more precise *differentiation* of domains. Wilber has sought to include the important aspect of ego-autonomy offered by the modernists, but without the modernists *dissociation* of domains (as when "human science" dissociates the personal-intuitive or the morality of the soul-level). Wilber has sought to be inclusive of all methodologies, asserting that there is a particular validity of

each “quadrant” of knowing (the subjective, inter-subjective, inter-objective, and objective). Wilber also maintains the importance of understanding the diverse developmental structures that reside *within* each quadrant of knowing.

My inquiry seeks the inter-subjective experience of couples, with a focus on the impact of spirituality on their relationship. I am thus centering my inquiry within hermeneutics, which is drawn from the “quadrant” of inter-subjective knowing. Wilber, along with his mentor Habermas, define knowing in this quadrant in terms of dialogical understanding, and distinct from structural-functional mechanisms of knowing. However, as we experience in all four domains (Wilber’s “tetra-quadrant” experience), the inquiry is inter-subjective in its approach, but may also offer insight into the biological, functional, and intentional aspects of each individual in the couple relationship. Wilber brilliantly describes hermeneutics as an inter-subjective “knowing” that is but a part of a larger plurality:

A wholistic web of mutually interpenetrating prehensions across space and time that can be felt and described in a second person (and first person plural) perspective – and which, although far from the whole story, are a crucial aspect of a more integral view. (Wilber, 2004)

Thus, I am formulating a hermeneutic inquiry that includes the inter-subjective knowing of the couple, although their spiritual experience may be deemed a phenomenologically individual experience. Thus, I continue with my formulation of the research design.

B. Formulating A Hermeneutic, Conjoint Narrative Inquiry

1. Narrative Inquiry of Couples' Spiritual Experience

Once again, I begin by asking, what are the *key* conceptual locations and purposes of my inquiry? At the onset, the primary locations are “couples therapy” and “spirituality.” My topic of inquiry will then be connected with these two main locations. Of the two, “spirituality” seems to resist an uncontested objective definition, as it has historically received religiously sectarian definitions, often skewed to be useful for the maintenance of that particular religious sect. Here, I will need to distinguish any definitions solely within sectarian religious (a conservative–religious paradigm), and focus on the more “autonomous” essentialist paradigm of spirituality as offered through Satir and Wilber. As mentioned in the literature review (Part II), both agree with Maslow’s conception of “spirituality”; that “[Humankind] has a higher and transcendent nature, and this is part of his essence, i.e., his biological nature as a member of a species which has evolved.”(Maslow, 1970, p.xvi). In addition, Froma Walsh offers her “working” definition of spirituality as: “transcendental beliefs and practices, either within or outside formal religious structures, that are experienced more personally” (Walsh, 1999, p.6).

The latter concept offered is that it is the “experiencer” who is constructing a personal definition. I am extending this here by asking a couple if they can offer an “inter-subjective” definition, based on any *mutual* experience of spirituality.

However, what I am seeking here goes far beyond any “academic” definition, and explores the impact of spirituality on the life of the couple: How has it impacted them

through dating and mating, through raising children, through mid-life crises? I seek to know in what ways were their challenges and resolutions met?

To return to the example of the Levine's conjoint narrative (Levine, S. & Levine, O., 1995), I have found both positive and problematic aspects. Most importantly, and for therapeutic interpretation and reflection, their joint, collaborative writing is in itself a particularly fine example of congruent communication, with a well-developed linking of feelings, beliefs, expectations of the other, universal yearnings and spiritual experience. Indeed, this "congruent communication" of the couple represents a "goal" of therapeutic practice. However, in the Levine's narrative, there is no developmental time-line of the couple's experience in which to clearly understand when these experiences occurred in their journey. This leaves the reader somewhat "ungrounded" - and unable to link the specifics of their journey to their theoretical generalizations.

I am not speaking here of presenting some strictly linear, structural lines of development, but rather a flow of the story that is more in keeping with Satir's growth model of "process". Therefore, qualitative changes may transform the couple's relationship at any particular time during their relationship, but it is the quality of that change that is of significance. Likewise, although referred to in terms of chronological "stages", Erik Erikson offered particular *states* of psycho-social development that may be revisited at any time during one's life. Erikson expands this organic model beyond the individual to cultural and political development as well:

The dynamism of Erikson's perspective is due to his tendency to employ an organic conceptual model to trace the growth of selected human lives, nations, and cultures. Whatever he touches - young

people, older people, specific historical personages, America, etc., -
 is conceived according to the categories of organic development.
 Such development, wherever it occurs, is marked by stages of the
 life cycle... Nations and cultures, as well as individuals, suffer
 identity conflicts and become enmeshed in crises of confidence.
 (Capps D. & Capps, W., 1977, p. 408)

For my inquiry into couples' experience, I will need to know "when and where" they are, in a developmental sense in relation to each other, before engaging in any interpretive understanding of their narrative. This follows Wilber's understanding of Jurgen Habermas, that there needs to be "some sort of external corrective to the hermeneutic circle, and that... is a scheme of developmental levels of narrative competence" (Wilber, 1983, p.17). Therefore, as in the case of the Levine's, I will require some formulation of sequence in order to relay the experience of the couples' journey.

In summation, the participant couples are interviewed regarding the impact of spirituality in their lives as a couple. Then, the transcribed interview can be analyzed for interpretive understanding. However, it essential to first explore how couple relations may be conceived for the purpose of this study, and in what manner spirituality may be added to this dynamic.

2. Agency and Communion in the Couple Nexus

In my interviews, will there be a dominant member of the couple? The couple process work of the Levine's (Levine S. & Levine O., 1996) suggests that "... In a

balanced relationship there is no ‘dominant other’, the roles are constantly changing. Whoever has the most stable foothold supports the climb that day” (Levine S. & Levine O., 1996, p.82). Therefore, at anyone time, one member may be more representative of the need for *agency* (positive change), and the other for *communion* (positive connection). However, this phenomenon may be misunderstood as a dysfunctional characteristic –of one seeking disassociation or enmeshment from the other. Therefore, I believe it an important awareness in doing research with couples.

Ken Wilber seeks to clarify the confusion in appropriating just one member of the couple as being the one in “agency” and the other more focused on the couples’ need for “communion.” He states this is so when the couple is working on their more exterior, inter-objective roles as well as when they are working together on their inter-subjective relationship; “Agency is always agency-in-communion, in both its exterior or ecological forms, and its interior and cultural forms” (Wilber, 2004). For example, the exterior form of a couple’s relationship may occur when the couple builds a house together. One may take the lead, but both must work together. In their interior, or hermeneutic dimension, there is also “agency-in-communion” which is a part of the *intentionality* (or consciousness) of the couple. This offers the couple its own history, habits and relating patterns. This agency-in-communion is not formed by a “fusion” of the two individuals, but by the *intersections* interior to their couple nexus (or couple network).

The above is a necessary discernment for the way in which I will construct a meaningful narrative with the couple. While I will note their exterior agency – their exterior purposes together as a couple, I am more focused on their interior agency – their individual consciousness, and their interior communion – I am seeking the way their

interior growth processes are in exchange with one another. The couple nexus does not control the individuals in it, but exerts control over the “system” of exchanges between them. Thus, I am always conscious that when I am interviewing a couple, this dialogical effort always includes both of the individuals in the couple nexus. As I am joining the couple during this endeavor, to some extent am I co-constructing the narrative? I will discuss this in the following section, “Situating the Researcher’s Location.”

3. Situating the Researcher’s Location

My “locations” in this study are at least three; as a researcher, as a family therapist, and as a student of spirituality. In addition, each of my locations will be somewhat intertwined with my participants in both the construction of their conjoint narrative and my reflections and analysis of the narrative. Therefore, I must acknowledge my placement in each of these arenas, and articulate how that may enhance or limit my inquiry.

As noted above, I am joining the couple nexus as a third party, as a part of their nexus during this research endeavor. In my direct connection with them, I am choosing to be primarily in the role of the spiritual student, and more importantly, *their* spiritual student.

I am interviewing these couples as a solitary researcher, rather than with a team of professionals, and in their home setting; thus, without any hidden pairs of eyes looking through a one-way mirror. My intent is to allow as natural and comfortable a surrounding as possible, following Mischler’s intent (1986), as noted earlier.

Therefore, I meet my couples as a solitary researcher, presenting them with the purpose of my study, and then sitting with them as their spiritual student. I must take care

when establishing the context for the interviews that I am creating the conditions for dialogue. As Louise Alcoff (1991) suggests, “We should strive to create wherever possible the conditions for dialogue and the practice of speaking with and to rather than speaking for others” (p. 23).

The construction of the couple’s narrative follows my leading question as a researcher, but it will be my intent to specifically refrain from any stances that appear as if I am the couples’ therapist. I am not asking them to unfold any process material, but rather to learn how they have enfolded their past through their present realizations together.

I then interpret the narrative, following their review of the interview in order to change, add or delete together what they will. Here, during my private work, I invoke all the three aspects of myself – the researcher, the family therapist, and the spiritual student, in order to offer a coherent and hopefully significant interpretation that may be applied to both the field and the academy.

C. The Design Of The Research

Steiner Kvale offers that there are seven distinct stages in the qualitative interview research process; thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying, and reporting (Kvale, S. 1996). I have modified Kvale’s seven stages in two ways: I am combining the interview and its initial recording as this was a combined occurrence between myself and the participant couples. Afterward, the couple verified the recorded interview and they created their “conjoint narrative.” I have also inserted

two additional stages in the design; ethical considerations as required by the university (stage 3) and selection of participants (stage 4), as described below:

1. Thematizing:

In my “Purpose of the Study” (Chapter I) I have described my *central theme* as working with spirituality in family therapy, with a particular focus on the impact of spirituality during the course of the couples’ relationship.

2. Designing a Central Question:

In the *designing stage*, I began with focusing my inquiry to a central question. This is intended to offer a springboard for the participant responses. My central question is, “*What is the impact of spirituality on congruence in the couple relationship?*” The couple may “frame” their relationship within a developmental context: (e.g. “How has felt spirituality impacted on relating as a couple through various family stages; courting, resolution with family-of-origin, childrearing, mid-life crises, etc.”). The interviews have been open-ended, for material to emerge that I could not have foreseen.

3. Ethical Considerations:

I followed the guidelines of the University of Victoria’s Human Research Ethics Committee in the following areas, and the consent form is attached in the appendix:

- a. The appropriate selection of participants
- b. Formulating appropriate questions
- c. The assessment and communication of the level of risk (minimal risk)
- d. The assurance of anonymity and confidentiality
- e. The access of participants to my supervisors and to the provost if

needed

f. Creating a form for “informed consent” (see appendix)

g. The interviews proceeded only after I received approval from HREC

4. Selection of Participants:

I initially sought six, mature, articulate couples, (twelve individuals) who have been in long-term, committed relationships, and who can strongly identify with the topic. My intent in selecting well-integrated couples is to follow a “wellness model” rather than a pathological study by noting the qualities of those who may be seen as highly integrated personalities. The selected couples may belong to - or identify with - an established religious group and I expected that their connection to their religious community would be a part of their reflection. I asked both my graduate colleagues and friends for names of couples, and also contacts through the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society at the University of Victoria. I asked a total of nine couples. A Muslim couple and a Hindu couple declined. Another couple whom I had spoken with did not get back to me with a signed consent form. I interviewed six couples, and then was referred to a seventh, totaling 14 individual participants. The individuals were in positions of leadership in the following religious traditions; four Catholic, four Jewish, two mainstream Protestant, two Christian Scientist, and two “North American” Buddhist. One Roman Catholic couple were leaders of a lay congregation. One Roman Catholic couple consisted of a married and “liacized” priest, who were counselors in the community. One Jewish couple strongly assisted in ceremonial worship at their synagogue. One Jewish couple had broken away from the mainstream congregation and started their own congregation for non-heterosexual couples. The Protestant couple were both United Church ministers. The Christian Science couple were comprised of a registered practitioner and a “First Reader”

in the church. The couple that self-identified as North American Buddhist had previously been Catholic and Protestant, and work as a “western” medical doctor and a practitioner of Chinese medicine, respectively.

5. Interviewing:

I met my participants in their homes or backyards, except for one couple whose physical distance required me to connect with them through a three-way teleconference call. There was a brief, preliminary meeting to discuss the interview with all participants. The actual interviews took approximately one-and-a-half to two hours. The first interview was audio-taped, and then transcribed in my office. My second interview was held in the couples’ backyard garden, and was handtranscribed. I became aware of needing to clarify particular words from participants whom English was a second language, thus subsequent interviews were also hand-transcribed. I could immediately ask them to repeat what I was not certain I had heard. The participants were asked as to their preferences, and all said they were comfortable with our arrangement. The participants also responded that they were more comfortable with our interview in their homes than in my office, or in a public location.

6. Verifying the Interview:

The typed, raw transcript of the couple interview was sent to each couple, from which they could add, delete, or change anything on the transcript without my presence. I requested a second two-hours of their time for them to verify our interview. It is at this point that it is then considered to be their *conjoint narrative*.

Kvale indicates that interviewing requires the “trustworthiness of the subjects’ reports and the quality of interviewing with a careful questioning and a continual

checking of the information obtained” (Kvale, S. 1995). Kvale’s model was followed by the participants’ checking of the transcript and was augmented by their ability to revise what was true for them by reflection on the transcript.

7. *Analysis of the Conjoint Narratives:*

In order to appropriately situate myself in the interpretation of the narratives, I will refer to my interpretations as “*Reflections*”. There are seven conjoint narratives and reflections. I begin with

- a. *Couple and setting.* A paragraph describing the couple, their family and their religious context. I also present a brief overview of the couple’s view of their challenges and their universal yearnings.
- b. *Reflections on dynamics within narrative text:* My reflections on couple dynamics- as situated in their life span, their response to crises, religious context, children, their contextual selves, their community selves, etc.
- c. *Description of conjoint, universal yearnings:* This is the participants’ description of their yearnings taken from the transcript, and I then connect this with Satir's model as a door to spirituality.
- d. *Changes In self, other and context:* This offers their change in individual and conjoint beliefs, roles, their marriage, their church community, etc. This may also indicate more than a structural change, as in a *transformation* of their former selves.
- e. *Horizontal analysis of the seven couple narratives:* I noted the similarities and differences in the family dynamics (challenges) of the seven conjoint narratives. This was followed by the seven universal yearnings, and compared

to Satir's formulation. Finally, I looked at changes and transformations for the couples through the impact of following their conjoint universal yearnings.

8. Report of Findings

It is important to relay usable findings for both the field and academic resources. In that spirit, the following may be considered as valued finding outcomes, in addition to the themes that I have presented above:

- a. What are the cultural/religious/and spiritual frames of reference held by my participant family members?
- b. What has been the impact of spirituality on the relationship of my couple participants during the course of their relationship?
- c. In what way have their experiences confirmed or been unique from the theoretical constructs of Satir, Wilber, or other theorists?
- d. Is my expansion of the Satir Model, through an exploration of the couples' conjoint universal yearnings, a valid tool for understanding change and transformation couple relations?
- e. How might the co-constructed narratives from these mature couples be helpful for other academic discourse on spirituality?

Chapter IV: Findings: Reflections On Seven Couple Narratives

As explained in the preceding chapter, I am presenting the “learnings” gleaned from each of the seven, conjoint narratives under the following headings:

- 1) Couple and Setting,
- 2) Reflections on Dynamics Within Narrative Text,
- 3) Description of Conjoint, Universal Yearnings,
- 4) Changes In Self, Other and Context

Following my “vertical” analysis of each conjoint narrative, I summarized general findings through a “horizontal” analysis. Both the general findings and specific findings from each couple will be linked to theoretical perspectives, clinical approaches and teaching applications in the Discussion (Chapter V). The complete, conjoint couple narratives are to be found in the Appendix.

A: The “Diamonds”

- Couple And Setting:

Walking through the front garden of the “Diamonds” home, I was struck by the wide variety of plants and the waist-high statuary of Catholic saints and Chinese Buddhas, which seems to represent a variety of religious traditions. “Julia” and “Paul” have been married to one another since their early twenties and are moving into their seventh decade of life. Julia is tall and elegant, and Paul retains an athletic build from his years of coaching. They have raised six children, and have been very active in the lay Catholic community. Our taped interview was held in their comfortable living room. They spoke of how they were thought they needed to separate from each other at mid-

life, due to their inability to communicate to resolve their family issues. This led them to undertake a Satir-based couples' communication therapy program. What emerged was that Julia and Paul held to religious beliefs about fixed gender roles which led them to make inauthentic expectations of themselves and each other. Now that they were able to allow each other to be who they were (such as allowing Julia to take the lead in traditional male ways), this had an unexpected effect on the Catholic community around them. One priest was supportive of them going to a non-Catholic marital therapy center, but their married friends felt threatened. Their friends intimated to them that whatever issues the Diamonds had in their marriages might come to the surface in their own marriages, and were fearful that their marriages might not survive under the scrutiny of being fully honest. As drawn from this narrative, the conjoint universal yearning of this couple is "honesty."

- *Reflections On Dynamics Within Narrative Text*

I was very pleased to have engaged with the Diamonds as my first couple to interview for several reasons: First, they were able to articulate their various couple issues that occurred during their mid-life marital crises, including the changing role of gender expectations in their relationship and in their religious context. Second, they had participated together in an intensive, Satir-style couples' workshop on *congruent communication* and were aware of the effects of their changes in their own lives and how those changes affected other couples within their religious community. Finally, they have articulated the changing formulation of spirituality during the course of their lives- both individually and as a couple. I felt quite blessed to begin with the "Diamonds"!

1. The mid-life crises for the Diamond's occurred as three of their six children were in adolescence and still living at home. Julia did not feel as capable as her own mother in maintaining the responsibilities for a large, nuclear family and the subsequent commotion from it. The Diamond's were also involved in several community responsibilities as well.

J: When we did get into serious conflict, it was after all the children came! We were involved in social action, too. It was crazy!

However, they also wanted to deal with their difficulties as a couple with a great deal of integrity and not to subsume that aspect of their lives by being parents only.

J: We didn't consider staying together for that (the children). We weren't going to live a pretend life.

The couple was able to pinpoint that their difficulty was with anger and communication, but was unable to get out of the "double-binds" that they felt trapped in. Julia would be very articulate in her anger towards Paul, and he felt he could only respond by being silent, or leaving the house for a time. Whatever issue they were dealing with would not get resolved.

P: J, you get very articulate when we get mad, and I go the other way. So, I felt I couldn't get anywhere.

J: But even then, neither of us wanted the other to capitulate. It wasn't that we wanted to change the other person.

They seemed incapable of changing their reactions to anger while in conflict.

Paul Diamond had carried the masculine role in the relationship, with the supposition of it being the "stronger" role. However, he did not feel authentic about the strength he felt he needed to project, and this was compounded by his perception of the greater strength of his partner in relation to himself.

P: When I first got married, I thought what the male was supposed to be, and I didn't feel right. I felt diminished.

J: Even though I insisted you take on the banking. He was doing all the [authoritative] type of things.

P: But I actually knew the strongest person in the relationship was you.

Paul connected his inadequate feelings about himself with the beliefs he received from his parents.

P: A lot from my parents, but even more from the church. Even the Christian Family Movement. Dad was traditional in the family.

J: And your mother would instruct him if he didn't live up to it.. "You're the man! It's your job!"

P: That's true about mom and dad. But with the church thing it was stronger still. It came with the moral responsibility. I struggled with that. I hadn't found who I was yet... but I was married to a strong woman!

Paul remembers how his parents reinforced that *belief* with each other in their marriage. But even more than the effect of a multigenerational pattern, Paul states that it was the *expectation* within the religious cultural context that made it so difficult to find his more authentic self.

2. The Diamond's brought themselves to an institute that offered couples' therapy led by some facilitator/therapists trained at Virginia Satir's training facility at Gabriola Island and some from Perls' Gestalt training site at Lake Cowichan. The "helpers" took a creative approach to break through Diamond's' communication block:

J: But at first, it was so difficult, at the ... Institute, they had to put a counselor behind each of us, and we would answer each other and they would say to the other person what we really meant. That's how bad it was. (laughter).

S: You really weren't congruent with what you were feeling, thinking and saying.

J: Instead of talking right away, they suggested we just make noises and delay a bit.

S: So you could first feel what you were saying.

P: It's a fearful thing to do. It takes your breath away.

For the first time, at mid-life, the couple were asked to examine their own "iceberg"- to move past their coping stances to acknowledge their own levels of feeling, perceptions, and expectations of the other. Because of this block, they had been unable to hear what the other was actually feeling, perceiving, or expecting of the other, until their own fears could be lessened. Because this processing was so difficult for them, their counselors chose to be "translators" for both of them, until they could speak directly to each other from a more congruent place. The Diamonds found it exhausting, but completely life-changing to their relationship.

3. The Diamonds were also aware of the extent that undertaking this process had on the other couples in their Catholic community.

J: A lot of our friends were terrified, because they don't want to hear about it. It would be a destruction of a world. For us, we knew we were de-constructing some stuff, we were going to re-create something new, or do it with someone else. It was frightening.

The Diamonds speak of a possible "chain reaction" in the marriages of their Catholic friends, because the very context of marriage -within its previously defined borders- was being changed.

S: It's interesting that you said your married friends were frightened about you going through this. Were you aware of why they were frightened?

J & P: Oh yeah! It was a reflection of themselves.

S: Are they afraid that separation might cause a chain reaction?

J: Oh yes.

S: Perhaps women would say more than the men, but maybe they're just as afraid.

J: Oh, of course.

P: Some of our friends, very wisely, did not connect with us at that time.

J: We didn't get into this, "some people are on my side".

S: After this, did your coupled friends say it helped them as well?

J: They said they admired us, but not that they could do this themselves.

Thus, the Diamonds had acted as pioneers within their lay community. However, they may have also been seen as "pariahs" by those finding it safer not to risk such change and transformation to their own marriage.

4. Finally, the Diamonds experienced a new level of harmony in their relationship. They worked together through their conjoint universal yearning of "honesty." The description of their changes is described below.

- *Description Of Conjoint, Universal Yearnings*

In response to my question, the Diamonds first remarked that their universal yearnings were for *wholeness*:

J: I think it's a yearning for wholeness ...

P: ... Tielhard de Chardin seemed congruent with my own thinking, like my longing for wholeness.

However, it became clear that "wholeness" for them was an individual and abstract concept, and as the interview progressed, they focused on their previous marital discord and how *truth and honesty* with both themselves and each other became a central, conjoint yearning.

The couple could have remained locked at the "blame" stage of coping (at the top of Satir's metaphorical "iceberg") rather than examining their deeper level of conjoint

expectations. In this case, it was regarding their traditional male-female role relations, which were not working, and the couple felt they were coming apart at mid-life.

Virginia Satir takes couples through the second level of the therapeutic process, wherein one re-perceives one's expectations about self and other, in order to "let go of unfulfilled expectations we have projected on others" (Satir, 1999, p.80). Here, the Diamonds describe the expectations that went beyond the couple's own relationship, and came from their parents and Church- and had also impacted others in their religious community.

Julia described how they did not choose to remain stuck in a coping stance, living "a pretend life". Instead, they moved to their universal yearning for *truth and honesty*, as quoted before:

J: We didn't consider staying together for that (the children).
We weren't going to live a pretend life.

It is their moving toward their conjoint, universal yearnings that led them to try the Satir couples' workshop, out of an acknowledged need for change, and a mutual commitment to try a wholly new approach. This addressed a need in their "us-ness" which they did not feel was offered by their conventional church community.

- *Changes In Self, Other And Context*

The Diamonds experienced changes in all three aspects of Self, Other, and Context. It may be worthwhile to first reflect on the changes to their context.

Context: The Diamonds challenge to remain a couple also presented a challenge to their connection with their particular Catholic community. Their decision to change the nature of their own relationship was threatening to other couples in their community. Was

it that their friends had accepted less-than-authentic communications with one another? Was it that their married friends had found that traditional gender role expectations were not working for them either? The Diamonds are not specific here, perhaps so as not to disclose their friends' issues to the researcher. While the Diamonds do not specify any specific issues that their married friends were struggling with, they did say they were "reflections" of the other couples' wishes to separate. In this manner, the Diamonds broke through the expectations of couples to be more silent about their own issues to other couples, changing not only the expectations within their relationship, but, by speaking out about it, began changing the *context* of their religious community.

P: Well, it didn't take long to see the church culture did not sit comfortable with me.

J: You have to act with your integrity, otherwise you get sick. (laughter). You're persistent.

Self and Other: Here, there is a clear need to be connected with the "Other"- while wanting the "Other" to be distinct from their Self. But this led to unresolved issues when they argued:

J: But even then, neither of us wanted the other to capitulate. It wasn't that we wanted to change the other person.

What they needed was to change the context of role relations within each of them, and to accept the other without the context of traditional role relation. Whereas previously the couple contemplated separation, and become two individuals again, they report that they now feel stronger, *both* as individuals and as a couple. What has lessened is the "threatening" aspect of feeling quite separate while with the other.

Clearly, their greatest change was finding a new harmony between Self and Other with each other:

S: After, the [healing] experience, did you feel yourselves more as individuals or as a couple or both?

J: Both.

J: We'll never tire of each other!

P: We're still a mystery to each other.

S: There's a lot of parts of "Julia" you don't know?

P: Yes.

S: And you feel the same, "Julia"?

J: Yes. But it isn't threatening anymore. I think, "I just haven't got it, yet." Maybe I never will.

It is truly beautiful to hear them say that they are now "in tune" with one another, and enjoy each other in silence.

P: I feel distinct. But sometimes we're reading each other's minds. It's a paradox. I don't feel we're melded into one. But we're in tune.

J: We're both. We spend a lot of time in silence with each other. Just walking and looking at the lake.

Through their reach for their universal yearnings together, the Diamond's have experienced a rare and beautiful change in their couple relationship.

B: The "Ruby's"

- Couple And Setting

I met with the Ruby's in their downtown counseling office, complete with a large window overlooking their city. "Father Ruby" (who somewhat resembles my childhood image of Friar Tuck) is one of very few Roman Catholic priests who have married, and is part of a progressive group in the church called "Corpus". Catherine, his wife, is also here for the interview. They are used to offering conjoint counseling, and easily share in

taking the lead in responding. Moving into their sixth decade of life, the couple met while he was a young seminarian entering the priesthood, and she was a shy, Roman Catholic schoolteacher from England. Several years after Father Ruby had been ordained, they decided to marry, despite the open displeasure of the diocese. It meant that- while he would always be a priest- he was “liacized”- unable to serve in the Churches of the diocese. A major challenge for the couple has been in response to this, and their marriage has caused changes to their shared religious context. Their conjoint universal yearning appears to be fidelity to “personal conscience.” They have been married for twelve years, and have one son.

- Reflections On Dynamics Within Narrative Text

The Ruby’s could have been stuck at the level of conflicted expectations with each other. Instead, their conjoint narrative reveals that a transformation occurred for them through changing their beliefs, and these changes moved through many levels of their being - particularly their interior, spiritual life. They were then able to re-position themselves with their Church.

1) The Ruby’s main challenge has been their life-change after living within the diocese as a Roman Catholic priest and his former wife an unmarried, Sunday schoolteacher, to now being a married couple who have had to renounce their former occupations and roles. Instead of supporting the young couple, the Church would only assess each one separately as to their allegiance to their former roles:

F.R.: I was asked by a priest to ask myself two questions:
Where do you want to be at the end of your life? And with whom? Well, [I thought], not in the pastoral retirement home!

C: My guidance came over many years. I went back to England to put space between us. My director saw each of us separately...not at the same time.

S: Why separately?

C: We weren't a couple yet. It was important to keep our discrimination separate.

While I can agree with Catherine that it was important to keep their discrimination separate, there was no mechanism within the Church for them to assess how their life together as a couple might be of similar -or perhaps greater- benefit to their religious community.

2) The couple then found themselves positioned against their beloved church, which carried multiple roles for them as religious authority, employer, and as the established faith community. This meant that their marriage would draw displeasure from the religious authority, and also become a severe financial loss for them both.

F.R. The diocese was not pleased. She was marrying a priest. She knew she'd also have to leave without any severance pay.two weeks after the marriage, I couldn't even stand in the front of a church! It's called "liacization" – it removes your license to practice.

3) The Ruby's continue to struggle with once having lived a rich, interior spiritual life within the diocese, to the lesser opportunities for secular couples who are "thinking about groceries".

F.R.: The interior life changes. I miss the periods of quietness I had before. But now I have to make them a priority.

C: The shift is from the church offering days of reflection. [I experienced] a lot of loneliness as a single person. Since marriage, I have not experienced loneliness. This has a direct bearing on spirituality. The loneliness drives you into

the interior life... but now I'm driving in my car and thinking about groceries.

4) However, they also testify to the richness of the life they presently have together, both in its spiritual and mundane aspects. They now assist others who are outside of the parish churches.

F.R.: The spiritual life was richer before, because of the [priestly] conferences. But it is richer after because of our own rituals, and with community that is not in the parish churches. [The lay community] became our "Host" church.

In the sections below, the Ruby's offer their changed perspective of spirituality, and offer how they would see the Church change in regard to the Sacrament of Marriage.

- *Description Of Conjoint Universal Yearnings*

The central change for the Ruby's appears to be at Satir's level of "Beliefs" (on her iceberg metaphor). Whereas the Ruby's former beliefs about spirituality were in accord with their Church, they have now taken a more universal approach that intends to be beyond denominations, and even includes a process of transformation:

F.R.: Spirituality supercedes religion and is beyond denominations. Each of us has a soul – and interior.
 [Whether we look through] Buddha, yoga, the Anglican Church, St. Augustine – we're always looking for more.
 S: We're always seeking. Do we reach a place of "arrival"?
 F.R.: I guess there is – arrival is the completion of the transformation process.
 C: Aware of the presence of God through which we're all connected. The center-point.

The Ruby's have changed from following their former Church's beliefs through their conjoint, universal yearning for *personal conscience*.

C: If you trust [that] people are good, they'll make good choices. .. "The Second Vatican council said the highest authority is your *conscience*."

F.R.: ...My basis is that everyone who comes in the door has spirituality. There are very few pure atheists. They're all seeking. It's a part of freedom.

C: It's my conviction that most people live life sincerely, and want to live good lives. We have to trust God's grace in people's lives.

- *Changes In Self, Other And Context*

Unlike many of my other participant couples, The Ruby's have mentioned their changes in all their three aspects of "Self", "Other" and "Context".

In terms of "Self", both Father and Catherine Ruby have mentioned that they miss a part of the Interior life that they experienced prior to marrying. However, Father Ruby mentioned above that the spiritual life is richer in developing their own rituals. Catherine Ruby speaks of how hospitality has become a form of spirituality:

C: It seems more hit and miss in family life. Hospitality is a form of our spirituality.

The Ruby's enjoy such a sense of "Us"-ness that they do not stay in disagreement very long. The "Other" has become God, the community, and the marriage itself.

S: What of conflict? How does spirituality impact there?

C: God is always the referee; the community is the referee; marriage is the referee. We don't stay in disagreement very long.

Our interview together mostly focused with their issues of change in Context, as can be read in their conjoint narrative [see Appendix]. Father and Catherine Ruby wish to extend what they have learned about spiritual marriage to others in the Church:

F.R.: We have to demythologize this myth. I don't see it as more than the motions. It should be much more profound! As in Europe, everybody should be married by the state first. Then, a second level is to go to the church – for a sacrament, a really intentional sacrament. Very few people are eligible. We have forced people into the Sacraments without being ready. I'd want them to have had struggles, and communication skills, pray together, romance together... I need to see that couple, and that something stands out.

C: An outward sign of inward Grace. It's not just for the couple, but for the community.

The Ruby's seek to change the presumed authority of the Church in matters of marriage.

F.R.: We don't think at the moment that the Church has the moral authority to teach in that capacity. If the Church moved from the crotch to the heart, it would move it in one generation.

Catherine furthers this view by supplanting the authority of the church with the further development of one's personal conscience:

C: If you trust [that] people are good, they'll make good choices. [Catholic presidential candidate] John Kerry [...had responded in an interview about reproductive rights:] "The Second Vatican council said the highest authority is your conscience."

I believe the Ruby's have well stated their experience and change of belief from their Church's directives. Thus, the Ruby's have well represented a conjoint yearning for *personal conscience*, particularly for their issues of religious context.

C: The “Silters”

- *Couple And Setting:*

The Silvers has been married for five years, and both are in their fourth decade of life . Greg is a male social worker who emigrated to Canada from Israel. Lisa is a Canadian-born librarian who converted to Judaism when a young woman. They have no born children, but regularly invite children and their parents to their home for Sabbath meals, and readily serve as auxiliary leaders in their synagogue. On their living room wall, I see several large, framed pictures of Greg’s family-of-origin. I would later learn that most of these relatives had perished in the Holocaust. This, I would learn, was a central issue in the couple’s marriage, to offset multi-generational feelings of despair and alienation. They spoke of how they relied on their religious context to strengthen their marriage, while both felt they had not relinquished their freedom of choice. Their conjoint, universal yearning appears to be “trust and belonging”.

- *Reflections on Dynamics Within Narrative Text*

At first, I hesitated to interview the Silvers because their marriage had been of less than ten years duration. However, as we proceeded, it was apparent that they had engaged with each other in substantial process work:

- 1) The couple clearly identified their major challenge as working through “second generation” Holocaust survivor issues.

L. He was almost obsessed with the issue of the holocaust – He lost both sides [of his family] except his parents. All murdered. His topic for his master’s thesis was a content analysis of social work textbooks in every [post-secondary] school in [the province]. What was the Jewish content? None! It was a form of anti-Semitism. It haunted him that he had no extended family

Greg was at first very sensitive that his wife not openly reveal their Jewishness:

G: She wore a Star of David from a chain around her neck. I thought to myself, it should be less visible outside of *shule* [synagogue].

L: But it wasn't a large star...it was only an inch and a half. But that's coming from the need of a survivor.

As our interview continued, L. voiced her challenge in contacting her partner when he fell into despair:

L: But I had to climb over 6 million dead bodies to get to him. I took this on – a challenge to move- to make the focus more positive. It was like a black hole he was sinking into.

2) From previous family therapy work, Greg could clearly discuss the difficulties of his parents and how this impacted on his own trust and boundary issues.

L: Yes, the model Greg had from his parents , as he described them to me, were of NO BOUNDARIES. Mom in the kitchen, and dad reading the paper – he wanted to be wherever I was – I was tripping over him! “It’s not right that the kitchen is *your* property!” he said.

G: I think Lisa is right. My parents knew where they were all the time. And [each] returned home on the dot!

G: They didn't say “I'm leaving” if they had a conflict. He lost a whole family as a survivor. He cries every night. Every Friday night he cries. When he saw the candles were lit for the Sabbath, my dad would go into the bedroom and then they'd both be there and come out, as he relived his trauma.... When he was on the bed, I'm the father of my father. The boundaries were fluid.

Lisa is also impacted by the multi-generational effect, but speaks from a place of helpful understanding. Greg extends the family issues to the broader impact of the persecution of the Jewish people in Europe.

L: There's no privacy.

G: Minuchin [founder of structural family therapy] talks about enmeshed boundaries. But Jews have no boundaries. He says it was the only way to survive.
 L: It's antithetical to the rugged individual model.

3) Rather than "escaping" outside of the Jewish community, the Silvers have embraced it more readily:

G...I wanted a Jewish home, whether orthodox or conservative, a Jewish home. She was a religious teacher, and her home was Jewish. I liked watching her bless the candles [his hands motion the ritual].

The Silvers find that their Jewish community is an extension of family, and Greg can extend both his personal and family growth within the larger community.

G: I am now having an "AH-HA" about this community. It's because it's my family! It's as intense and complicated because it's my family. There's no space between me and this community, and that's why I need it.

- Description Of Universal Yearnings

Using the metaphor of Satir's "iceberg", the Silvers had their major challenge as a couple at the level of *feelings*. In order to change their "stuck" place (primarily that of Greg's), the Silvers moved to their conjoint, universal yearnings, which I regard as *trust and belonging*. I view this as the link for Greg's challenges from his family-of-origin; some of whom perished and some of whom survived the Holocaust. While many who survived the Holocaust then rejected any religious ritual, the Silvers chose to address their universal yearning for trust and belonging within their religious community and through the Jewish rituals of their home life.

- *Changes In Self, Other And Context*

The Silvers speak of a particular Sabbath ritual that they find acts as an anchor for both their psychological and spiritual work together. The *Ayshes Chayal* ["A Woman of Valor"] is a devotional prayer which the husband recites to his wife on the eve of Sabbath, after the candles are lit, and just before they eat together. [The *Ayshes Chayal* prayer is offered to the reader in the Appendix.]

L: It's my favorite part of the week! There's been horrible weeks, because of what's out there, and then he reads it [the *Aishes Chayal* prayer]. Ideals to work toward. Like my being patient – OH, that's not me, not me – but that's the idea. Feed the hungry... could that be me? And the notion that my husband thinks it could be you, is very hopeful – it's such a positive model – that's who I could be.

G: At the *Ayshes Chayal*, I surrendered to the relationship – and it works.

However, the couple clearly distinguishes that they feel they are free to choose or not to choose doing the ritual, but do so because they believe it is helpful:

G: The Jewish structure holds it. If I'm angry, I can re-focus and surrender the control over to the ritual – as a commandment, but it's my free choice to do it. So I come to this.

The couple stresses that they can be in active dialogue with each other on this and on all spiritual matters:

L: We're both critical thinkers. That part that analyzes – we analyze our spiritual life ...

S: You're in a dynamic.

G: Constantly!

L: Discussions go on for months!

Finally, the Silvers regard both their marriage and their community outreach as part of a religious dialogue that spans thousands of generations:

G: What helps me when it's difficult times – it's not about us, it's about this community, and the one before this one, and all the way back to [ancient] Egypt. It's not just about us.

G: What keeps us together is the context.

In summation, through their conjoint universal yearnings for *trust and belongingness*, the Silvers perform religious ritual with each other and the community, which assists their congruence as a couple. It is important to them that their context as a Jewish couple has come as an ongoing dynamic between history and choice.

D: The "Emeralds"

- Couple and Setting:

"Amy" is the leader of a very liberal Jewish congregation in a large, metropolitan city. She and her partner, "Dahlia", had been raised from an orthodox background, but desired a congregation that would be more open to feminist beliefs and supportive of lesbian and gay relationship. The two women have been together for over 16 years. Amy has two sons from her former marriage, and she and Dahlia together adopted two daughters. Their four children now range in age from eleven to twenty-five years. Their main challenge has been parenting as a lesbian couple within the mainstream Jewish community. Thus, they have offered some wise words about parent/child relations, and especially about the relationship of adult children and their parents. As a conjoint, universal yearning, the Emeralds have drawn on "intimate respect".

- *Reflections On Dynamics Within Narrative Text*

1). Both “Amy” and “Dahlia” came from orthodox families, and each had to reconcile with their parents about being lesbian. The Emeralds are keenly aware of their need to reconcile with their parents, and not to estrange themselves from their religious context. Their intent has been to transform their context, which - like the Ruby’s - appears to be at the heart of this interview. However, the Emeralds offer a dimension not spoken of in the prior three interviews – that of their own children’s expectations of themselves as parents. Being lesbian parents had given this dynamic quite a significant reflection on their part.

Dahlia begins with discussing how she felt safe to “come out” to her mother as a lesbian:

D: My mother was orthodox and a holocaust survivor. I lived with a man, and that was a deadly secret. She did come around after I “came out” because she didn’t want to lose contact with her granddaughter – Now, she loves “Amy” more than me! ... It was a journey, but it had a good conclusion. One of my sisters is ultra-orthodox and lives on the West Bank, but now is cool [OK about us] because it’s been sixteen years.

It is clear that Dahlia’s mother would not wish to lose more family, and so it was better to accept a lesbian partnership into the family than to disown her daughter, which would mean losing a granddaughter as well. It is also interesting that Dahlia’s sister, although ultra-orthodox, has also accepted her partner, Amy. Dahlia believes that this has been the result of waiting it out (“because it’s been sixteen years”).

2). The second dynamic is the relation *within* themselves between their sexual orientation and their Jewishness. However, neither speaks of having had an internal conflict in this regard:

D: For me, my background and being lesbian is about pride about who I am, so I wouldn't live in shame. It defines who I am. I need to own it in a proud way. For my mother, it was "what will other people think?"

A.: It never struck me that because I came out as a lesbian, I should be turned away from Judaism. I never retreated.

The issue that *has* emerged, however, is a degree of distance between themselves and the patriarchal prayers that are a part of their religious context:

A: Despite my difficulties, and because of my difficulties, I try to find significance in the type of prayers that are said. With the congregation, I try to find some connections. On, a personal level, I have theological questions – "Who am I praying to?" "And why?" I have discomfort .

D: Similarly for me. I get a sense of connection to previous generations. It seems quite archaic, for example [to be praying to God as] "King of our universe".

S: Does [reciting the verses that a man sings to his wife at the Sabbath table] the *Ayshes Chayal* ["A Woman of Valor"] fit into your relationship?

A: [laughter] I am laughing because often at funerals for women the lines said are 'a Woman of Valour' it has become almost a joke and is over-used.

D: We don't use it as a reference point. We never thought of it. We never held hands and prayed together – it is not part of our Shabbat ceremony.

A: Those words [in the *Ayshes Chayal* prayer] do not resonate for me, [although it may be] beautiful for others' relationship.

Whereas the “Silvers” found this to be a prayer helpful for their conjoint universal yearnings for *trust and belonging*, the Emeralds have not found it effective or even relevant for themselves , and have felt free to eliminate it from their ritual.

3). A third dynamic for the Emeralds has been their relationship to their children. Here, the Emeralds contrast their own openness with their children to the way others try to hide their adult or couple issues from their children:

A: Children’s consciousness of their parents is skewed. They can’t see them as people.

S: Yes, that’s Satir’s observation of adult children at the beginning of their [undertaking the] Family Reconstruction Process.

A: There are certain things that the parents don’t want their children to see – so they take their arguments outside, for example.

With D., we want to protect our children and we want to see our parents as much as possible objectively. Most of the adults friends we have rarely see their parents objectively, even when they [the friends] are in their forties. “Give it a break!”

Thus, as parents, the Emeralds have a fine gift for differentiating between their “self” and “other” – their children - without repressing their feelings for their children. I expect that this has come about through their maturity as parents.

Finally, the Emeralds speak of their conjoint journey, in how they moved toward their present relationship with one another:

A: If I let things go that are important, Dahlia will remind me, and vice versa. Possibly as women, it is easier to know and say, “My needs are not being met”.

S: Are there differences with a woman [partner] than from you former relationships with men?

A: Yes, because our core values were not the same. One’s core values have to be the same. and perhaps being both women we can understand a bit more how our ‘psyches’ work.

A: ... our core values are the same. Doesn't mean I don't have disagreements and even anger at Dahlia, and misunderstandings of Dahlia. It's the core sense that this relationship is important. We have to sit down and talk and realize it is a difference, but it's...

D: Not over core differences- The core is there.

Their focus on "core values" would be helpful if illustrated, and needs to be further articulated. However, it is sufficient as a springboard to connect with the Emeralds' stated universal yearnings, as discussed below.

- *Description Of Conjoint Universal Yearnings*

The Emeralds describe themselves as resolved with each other at the level of values- core values- which was extremely important to each, and missing in their previous couple relationships. They describe their conjoint experience of spirituality with each other as an "ephemeral sense of recognition." They describe their mutual, universal yearnings as *intimate respect*, which will be seen to effect their relationships with others and their community as well:

D: A sense of comfort, not in a lazy way, but sharing a life and values.

A: And an attempt to understand. – How can people *ever* [reach an] understanding - that comfort is some form of unity. To the final question - that flush of coming together, not as aliens. We respect each other, but even more there is something that resonates deep inside us that is '*a sense of recognition*' – *something that is ephemeral*.

D: *A sense of respect in a most intimate way*. I couldn't fake it and it wouldn't be worthwhile to do so.

Although the Emeralds do not discuss this in more detail, it appears that this universal yearning for *intimate respect* has helped them to develop not only this close bond

between themselves, but for their parents and children, and as a haven for others who have felt marginalized from their traditional religious context, as seen below.

- *Changes In Self, Other And Context*

In terms of Self and Other, the Emeralds have described their own couple relationship in terms of *intimate respect*. In addition, they also offer this universal yearning as their approach with their parents as adult children, and as parents themselves with their own adult children. I find this to be a very healthy model for family relations:

A: ...I was lucky in my relationship with my father – I adored him, and we went through rough times. I see that many of our friends don't do that with their parents. I'm lucky. When he passed away, I think I could say that we both understood and *respected* and loved each other more like equals.

Amy is able to offer the universal yearning for intimate respect to her father, whom she can regard as a loving equal by the time of his passing. This is both the goal of Satir's Family Reconstruction Process – to see our parents as human and to love them.

A: My sons are in their twenties. We've gone through a lot together. I've apologized to them for the rough times. All I can hope is that they will end up understanding me, faults and all, and respect me when I am in my seventies and they [are] in their fifties.

D: There are kids who act like victims and parents who feel guilty, but we can't live lives wondering how our children will judge us. [It's] not all in our control. They have different dispositions, and unique emotional memories.

Amy extends this value to her children, hoping that they will regard her- not with an idealized love- but with a true respect for who she is. Dahlia furthers this notion by making it clear that there is to be a positive differentiation between the lives of her

children and herself, and she values their uniqueness of disposition and emotional memories.

The Emeralds have come from their mutual base in *intimate respect* to transform their religious *context*. They have created rituals that work for themselves as a couple, which might not be found in the formulaic Jewish ritual or prayer:

D: Often we deal with an event that is difficult in our lives by creating our own rituals. Such as when Amy's cousin died, we went for a walk together in the country.

S: It sounds very experiential, rather than formulaic.

A&D: Yes, yes.

Their sense of mutual respect meant greater *inclusion* for Jewish people of differing sexual orientation to be welcomed within their religious community, thus further transforming their religious context:

A.: It is very important to me to do Jewish rituals for the lesbian and gay community so that they can see that we all can be part of the Jewish community and not need to feel excluded from rites as well as rights.

Deeper and more personal spiritual experience was not forthcoming from our interview, which may have been due to the fact that we had not met in person, and conducted our interview over the telephone. Nonetheless, their conjoint narrative speaks to a growing acceptance of lesbianism and gayness, and the evolution of form and ritual within the non-orthodox Jewish community.

E: THE "TIGERS"

- *Couple and Setting :*

Doctor "John" is a western, medical physician and his partner "Carrie" is a practitioner of acupressure, a form of Chinese medicine. I interviewed them in their large, hilltop home just on the outskirts of a West Coast city. Thirty years ago, they met each other while followers of Trungpa Rinpoche, the founder of the Tibetan Buddhist *Naropa Institute* in Boulder, Colorado. They have been challenged as a couple by many differences with each other; in their cultural backgrounds (she an American Methodist and he a European Catholic), differences in perspectives regarding the field of health care, and their ongoing differences in schedules. It was an interesting observance for me to see in what way their "adopted" religious context offered them a differing vantage point from their occidental religion-of-origin. Their spiritual work is very focused on Self-realization, which I accept to be their universal yearning, although I did not discern it in the sense of "conjoint-ness" as with the other couples. The couple has been together for over thirty years, have raised one son and have acquired a great sense of humor.

- *Reflections On Dynamics Within Narrative Text*

Please allow me to first explain why I chose the "Tigers" pseudonym for these two participants. During the interview, the couple were offering how their ethnic and cultural differences would impact them "without the Tibetan influence", when suddenly Doctor John and Carrie began play-fighting with each other on their couch:

Dr. J: [animal noises and fingers curled into claws]. She is a puma girl! He is a cougar boy!

S: Is this a secret of how the two of you even things out?

Dr. J: When we're threatened, we get to be "jaws and claws" – we can stand objectively without and make fun of it...

There was to be more unexpected comedy during the interview, as when Doctor John offered his mocking "Rodney Dangerfield" jokes about marriage.

Despite the couple's clear exposition of their spiritual philosophy, I found their self, other and contextual dynamics more complex than with my previous couples, perhaps due to their both having changed their religious contexts, and their continued differences in their professional contexts.

Therefore, I needed to work hardest to untangle their sense of couple relation from their multiple contextual bases.

1) The Tigers follow neither their traditional religious and cultural roots regarding their expectations of marriage, nor that of Tibetan culture. They describe marriage as one's choice for doing spiritual work on oneself.

S: Have you offered help to other couples?

C: I don't think anyone has sought us out for that. We have such wild energy [together]. (laughter).

C: ... Things wax and wane, but the work has to be on yourself.

C: ... I had an idea to design a pre-nuptial course, using *Born to Win*. If one knows their own tapes and triggers, you find that knowing yourself is so valuable.

2) Dr. John offers that one of their difficulties is in scheduling time to be together, but that this is part of being supportive of each other's needs to grow spiritually and professionally.

Dr. J.: ... We are trying to support each other while working. And to be household yogi's. She'll be off for a

month in Colorado. I have to run a program without her. Then, there are times when I'm [the one who is] gone. We're committed to help each other get on with our spiritual studies, separate or together.

Unlike my other participant couples, the Tigers are both professionally engaged with work that may take either of them across the continent and even into Asia:

Dr. J.: "We have separate bedrooms, separate vacations, separate bank accounts – I try everything I can to keep this marriage together!" That's a Rodney Dangerfield joke. [we laugh].

3) Carrie is particularly aware of their cultural differences from their families-of-origin. However, she is more concerned about how his training in western medicine presents differences in beliefs between them, and is perturbed by it

S: Are there any different beliefs, Carrie?

C: Cultural differences. He's of Sicilian descent! And his training in medicine and approach to self-care is much different than mine. He's high energy and I am not so. We have conflicts over scheduling.

S: How is the Chinese medicine a difference?

C: Self care issues.

S: Would this be like choosing between homeopathic and allopathic prescriptions for yourselves?

C: Yeah, but he's not rigid about it.

Dr. John reacts to her concerns as unnecessary expectations from his partner.

Dr. J: I don't have time to study Chinese medicine. It's my karma.

C: But you don't tend to go to the [Chinese] practitioners!

Dr. J: Yes I did. I went to an *ayurvedic* doctor [from the Hindu medical system] and an acupuncturist. Just not to Carolyn Myss [a Western faith-healer who advocates changing one's core-beliefs].

However, their sense of humor became quickly “infectious”:

S: But we haven't had a Western alternative to dentists!

C: There's no [specific Tibetan] prayer for teeth! (we laugh).

4) The spiritual practice of the couple has been helpful for them in accepting life changes, such as when Carrie unexpectedly discovers that they are now grandparents of five grandchildren. Before being together with her husband, she had given up a baby for adoption. When the son contacted his mother, it was when he and his wife were pregnant with their fifth child. In addition to this shock for them, her new-found son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren were all fundamentalist Christians. Following their initial shock, the couple reflected that they needed to accept differences as a part of their spiritual progress:

C: ...In a space of three hours, [I underwent] a total life change. I discovered I was now a grandmother of five boys! It was challenging for J. and for both of us! That J. is open to it is a reflection of his spiritual process.

However, Dr. John does not regard their religious choice as equal to his adopted religion of Tibetan Buddhism:

Dr. J: They're staunch Mormons.

Dr. J: The fundamentalists and hardcore have rigidity and dysfunction – but it's the best they can do at the time.

5) Through their professional work, the Tigers work with both Asian and American meditators with deep emotional issues. Together, they emphasize the importance of acknowledging working with the issues from one's family-of-origin as a means toward

one's own self-acceptance. They first discuss their experience with Buddhist meditators from Asia, who are reluctant to engage in psychotherapeutic work.

S: In terms of the Asian couples who've come to your conferences, or who've seen you for mental health concerns, how else have you found they differed from the Westerners?

Dr. J: [They don't engage] to this degree of complexity. [I've listened to very, long-term] grudges they need to work out. Usually, girls who were heavily traumatized by the mother, but maybe not really more than in the West.

C: [And I've noticed there to be some] resentment to psychotherapy.

Dr. John reflects that North American Buddhist practitioners may also use meditation to "escape" emotional work with their family:

Dr. J: [On the other hand], I've noticed that many who teach meditation in the West may miss the boat. In the East, you had to ask permission of your family to be a monk.

In order to help themselves and others with healing from family issues, the Tigers work together to hold conferences on meditation and psychotherapy.

Dr. J.: Our teacher said that it's important to have the right *motivation* ... the watering of the soil is for your greater family. [When focused solely on liberating oneself] it's only half, [but] the other half [completes it when] we're inviting our parents and their parents and their descendants... Let's be together! There's nothing to talk about any more [that may have radically divided us from our parents].

C: You don't have complete self-acceptance without that.

The Tigers do not utilize conjoint family process (family therapy) in their work, but do encourage their clients to include their family members in their thoughts, rather than

excluding them because of painful memories. In this way, they would be positive toward Satir's Family Reconstruction Process.

- *Description Of Conjoint Universal Yearnings*

The Tigers share a complex spiritual philosophy from the Shambhala school of Tibetan Buddhism. In this, they believe that it is humans who join together the differing elements of Heaven and Earth. They do not follow "Heaven-oriented monasticism" – as chosen by those who renounce the world. They believe that working through human relationships is appropriate for the human realm, which makes them good citizens. Their meditative states are experienced for their individual spiritual growth.

C: We are the human principle joining heaven and earth.
This is consistent with Taoist and Buddhist thought.

Dr. J: When you work with your own stuff, you don't give up your point of view. That allows you to work with it. Eventually, there's a place of transformation. But you first become a good citizen. Trungpa said, the quick way is *through* relationship – but I think whatever you're doing is a way to wake up. We're all on a spiritual journey, even the Bush-ites.

My reflection from the Tiger's narrative is that, despite their perspectives and approaches in health care, they are not "stuck" at the level of beliefs. They have together adopted a cultural and religious perspective (as North American Tibetan Buddhists) that harmonizes their beliefs. However, they seem more prone to be stuck at the level of differing *expectations*, coming from their separate cultural backgrounds and professional perspectives. One might suppose that their meditation would involve conjoint spiritual

states of consciousness, but the couple have regarded their spiritual awareness in terms of individual experience, rather than conjoint.

Dr. J: [We use a] *yidam*, a meditation diety, [which is] a mind-protector. Our particular yidam is a *yabyum*, a male and female shown together in intercourse.

C: He is *skillful means*. She is *wisdom*. They represent enlightened states of mind that you can expect to uncover from within. We all have masculine/feminine within. ...This was important to me in how I approach my relationship to "J." Thinking of him as male with female qualities expanded my approach to both he and my son. This also took me beyond my feminine, and solidified me in that.

The Tigers seek to transform themselves through their universal yearnings for "*Self-realization*." By this, it is meant that their spiritual belief is that All is within Self, and not in a dialoguing or merging of selves (Self and Other). It is within one's Self that the dichotomy of masculine and feminine energies are harmonized, rather than through encounter with the Other.

- *Changes In Self, Other And Context*

The changes to the Self and Other were not explicit within the narrative, as the couple did not focus on their childhood, life with their parents, changes to their marriage, etc. However, they consider changes to the Self important for spiritual work, and to include the Other (family) in meditation.

Dr. J: You need your roots. We're not in isolation. [There's] a huge blind spot in the way meditation is usually taught here in the West, unless you have a bigger vision of your family. We're dealing with the humanity of the human realm, of the family – and we're stuck with it.

The main changes for the “Tigers” appears to be in their religious and cultural *context*. Their particular context within Tibetan Buddhism appears to be more central than “Us-ness”. There is focus on a mergence into the Higher Self, replacing the ego self, but an absence of a correlative mergence into an “Us-ness”. In other words, the context subsumes the Self and the Other, and even all other contexts, into Itself.

C: We all have masculine/feminine within. It blows apart your small, ego-centered reference points.

Dr. J: Everything is spirituality. Some is more productive to help wake you up, but it’s all spiritual manifestation.

Finally, the “Tigers” suggest that their clients incorporate spiritual thoughts of their family while in meditation. However, I do not have sufficient background to reflect on how impacting these changes may be for themselves or their clients.

F: The “Golds”

- Couple And Setting:

“Brienne” and “Kerry” Gold are both deeply involved in Christian Science as registered healing practitioners and frequently assist troubled families and couples from a Christian Science perspective. Brienne’s parents and Kerry’s mother were also Christian Scientists. I met them at their home, where Brienne does artwork and Kerry has been renovating their house. They have been married for over twenty years, and have not had children of their own. Their main challenge has been living so close to one another - as their home is also their workplace. They were pleased when I mentioned that Virginia Satir had been raised as a Christian Scientist, and incorporated some of its principles.

Their conjoint, universal yearning as a couple is for “spiritual guidance.” My interest is to learn how this couple resolves any differences they might have received in guidance for themselves as a couple, and how they deal with conflicts in their ministry when receiving spiritual guidance for other couples.

- *Reflections On Dynamics Within Narrative Text*

1. The “Golds” have been aware that a key challenge to their marriage has been that both of them have “Alpha type” dispositions, yet must work together in close confines.

B: “Kerry” and I are both “take charge” Alpha types: “I got it under control” types. So this approach is key... or we’d be fighting.

Their main income has come from doing house renovations. Kerry is the primary house builder, and Brianne has her degree in interior design. When they finish a house, they sell it and move on to the next. But this has not been without competing on how each house should look:

K: We’ve been through hassles together; they’ve mainly arisen when working on house renovations.

2. The Golds also answer many calls from their home as healing practitioners, which is like each of them having a second business. Sometimes Brianne will remind Kerry to stop work so that they can have their own time together.

B: We get lots of calls about relationships, or the physical problems that result from inharmonious relationships.

S: Is there ever a drain for you when you are called to love others outside of your couple relationship?

K: It's not about being sucked dry. The more you give, the more you have, and the more you receive. But there are times we'll say "no".

B: There's a balance...[sometimes we'll say] "Let's just watch videos at home!" (laughter).

3. At times, Brianne and Kerry will find themselves in conflict, not over their beliefs or their expectations of each other, but in regard to sharing the same vision for renovating their house, where they should move next, or scheduling. Brianne expresses how they work to avoid "personalizing" the issue, and "externalize" the problem:

B: ...refusing to personalize evil or demonize the other person. ...that which would try to divide you as a couple is often an impersonal influence on the relationship. There is no question that people can feel the influence of other peoples' thoughts.

4. The Golds' mutual expectation is that they will invest as much time together as necessary to receive spiritual guidance for their mutual needs.

S: I think it's significant that you both get "guidance".

B: When you feel a sense of peace about the way to go with something, you know it's a divine answer.

K: The answer is peace. It's *the* answer. We don't actually need to know the long term outcome or plan; but we need that sense of peace – Then, the stressful importance of the question goes away.

Although it may not be clear how they achieve this unity in terms of psychological processes, it is certainly worth further exploration as a significant phenomenon in couple congruence.

- *Description Of Conjoint, Universal Yearnings*

The Golds seem to have received their universal yearnings from both their family's-of-origin, who gave each of them a belief and an expectation that they can receive the same spiritual guidance together.

B: ... "Let's listen for divine *guidance*, the divine will". So we pray to be more receptive to new ideas.

S: Does the inspired answer come through one of you, or both of you?

K: Sometimes one, or both. If we both let go of our own desires successfully, it's both.

Brianne offers a key distinction that their conception of spiritual guidance is distinct from what in the more traditional Christian conception of "divine will" as a pre-determined plan. Brianne states that they pray "to be receptive to new ideas," - that there is always the possibility of a new design for their needs. Therefore, I would describe this particular universal yearning as "*spiritual guidance*." My only regret here is that the couple had not described this phenomenon with more "concrete" illustrations.

- *Changes In Self, Other And Context*

In terms of *Self and Other*, the "Golds" have found their sexual relationship has become less important to them as their spiritual life has developed.

B: ...Interestingly, as we've grown spiritually, we've found it's blessed our marriage.

S: Including sexuality?

B&K: Yes. Spirituality has made sexuality less important.

However, their love for each other has greatly increased:

K: A love expressed on a daily basis.

They find this to be in accord with their conjoint beliefs that even marriage itself is not the ultimate state of spirituality:

S: In Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy states that a marriage between two human beings is not the ultimate state of spirituality. Do you agree?

B&K: (both nod).

Thus, they embrace a sense of Us-ness within a context of spirituality.

The “*Contextual*” field for the “Golds” is their fellow Church members, and for those outside the Church for whom they are called upon as healing practitioners. The “Gold’s” form a clear boundary between guidance for themselves and for others, refusing to discern or dictate what they will encourage others to find for themselves:

S: Do others ask you whether they should stay with their partner or separate?

B: They may ask, but we never advise.

K: We encourage them to look to God for direction and uplift – and they get it.

S: What if one is in the church and the other isn’t?

K: Every case is individual. We don’t judge. Some couples separate even if both are in the church.

Thus, the “Golds” extend their yearning for divine guidance to those who come to them for healing. They do not “discern” what others should do, but encourage and assist others to receive their own *spiritual guidance* that will meet their particular needs.

G. The “Lily’s”

- *Couple And Setting:*

The “Lily’s” are both ministers of a mainstream, Protestant, United Church congregation. They are in their early fifties, with three grown children, and serve together

in a small city. I met them in their home, which was decorated with several stylized paintings of the Holy Cross. Reverend “Jerome Lily” describes himself as more reclusive and concerned with the subject of piety, while Reverend “Mary Lily” describes herself as the more out-going. She offers pastoral training for those working with the dying. The couple regard each other as co-ministers, although they are quite different in disposition. Their current challenge has been in regard to their 21-year-old son. He is choosing to join what they regard as the more “ideological” Roman Catholic Church, and he might possibly join the priesthood (which requires celibacy). Their challenge is to be able to articulate their differences in religious perspectives while staying in a loving, dialogical relationship with him. The Lily’s were aware of Virginia Satir’s work, and that of Martin Buber, whom Reverend Jerome called the greatest philosopher of the twentieth century. Their conjoint, universal yearning of “dialogical embrace” demonstrates how they link the Trinity and the moment of the Cross as a spiritual dialogue.

- *Reflections On Dynamics Within Narrative Text*

The “Lily’s” offered much during the interview, not only for their candidness about their couple relationship, but for continually relating to the centrality of dialogue within all relationship. They effectively linked this to both their personal lives together and to their vocation as ministers.

1). The Lily’s began their courtship as two seminarians. Therefore, their consideration for a prospective spouse meant meeting both their personal and vocational needs. Reverend Jerome looked to his future spouse for her beauty, emotional intelligence, and her gift for the ministry:

Rev. J: She was a beautiful woman; strong, assertive, emotionally intelligent, and aware of what was happening around her.

Rev. J: ... She's gifted for the vocation. I knew she was, out of all in our class in seminary.

"Reverend Mary" focused, not only on Jerome's intelligence, but on their commonality of beliefs, moral values, and dedication to community.

Rev. M: [I discovered that we shared] a core commonality of beliefs and values. Money wasn't as important. I like someone intelligent.

Rev. M: We both shared a moral compass.

Rev. M: Yes, exactly! But [that's OK because] the community is what we're about. So, with "J" we would talk about what our life could be about. What I saw in "J" came as a single experience. I had an apartment off-campus. I felt, 'this is the right person to be married to'.

"Reverend M." was not drawn by other seminary suitors who offered her rides in their flashy cars.

Rev. M: ...Dating as metaphor, in "guy asks girl for a date" did not readily fit with my self-concept. I like to think I'm "in relationship".

S: You truly felt in relationship, rather than seeing him as an "object" on campus.

M: Exactly right!

S: Not like some guy driving a Porsche...

M: Actually, it was a Fiat. Oh, there was also a Porsche...(laughter)

Reverend Mary appreciated that we had defined her selection of Jerome over the others because of this feeling of being in a relationship.

2). The Lily's have differences in feelings and belief regarding sexuality, with Rev. Jerome offering that he was the more "repressed" of the two. He noted the danger of too much sexuality in our culture. Reverend Mary, by contrast, focused on the transcendent aspect of their sexual union.

Rev. J: Too close an association [of prayer and sensuality] can be corrosive of both.

Other Near Eastern religions saw them as close. I saw my relationship with "M" as a gift of God. But let's not have too much Holy Water on what we [humanly] like. Spirituality- in the secular culture- finds it hard to turn off the hose. There's too much potential for idolatry there.

Rev. M: ...Sexuality is about who we are, there is also an aspect of transcendence in our sexuality.

3). The Lily's described their experience of both being ministers, and how they contrasted this with traditional Protestant notions of the "pastor's wife". The dynamic for the Lily's was in changing the traditional role of the minister's "wife" to that of cohort, but not in today's more vague designation of "partners".

Rev. J: I was committed to seeing her as a minister, for her own self.

S: Do you know if this was the relationship of Martin Luther and his wife?

Rev. J: She was his wife, not his cohort.

Rev. M: That's an interesting question about Luther. [We need] models of partners who are also religious. I've fought hard to have the term "wife" or "spouse", instead of the more vague term "partner".

Rev. J: The idea of a single [unmarried] minister is suspect. There is a role for the minister's wife. Even our single parishioners like that we're married.

Rev. M: I think that we're male and female ministers.

The Lily's were questioned as to whether their marriage was impacted by them both being ministers, especially of the same parishioners. I wondered if there could be difficulties of "triangulation" or "one-up-man-ship" when in a counseling relationship:

S: Do you counsel others together, or separate?

Rev. J: Separate.

Rev. M: But we have an understanding that we don't have secrets from each other, and we tell them.

Thus, the Lily's found a way to maintain the integrity of their relationship to each other while in the role of counseling others.

4). The Lily's reflected that they cognized the world around them as a world of change and transitions (e.g., jobs, marriages). Rev. Mary offers that what is central to holding their marriage together is their spiritual beliefs, having a grounded personality, and having a strong relationship.

Rev. M: When I reflect on our married life and that of others, I see transitions. Like my work in hospice. My brother died at sixteen of an aneurysm. Even jobs – you could go through seven [different] jobs, and change partners, too.

Rev. M: What can be most abiding is our spiritual beliefs. As that practice continues, though, it's not a panacea. A grounded personality and a relationship that transcends the momentary despair...

Although the couple has what might be seen as a very traditional marital relationship, they are keenly aware of the increased life changes in contemporary society.

5). A present challenge for the Lily's has been their son's move toward becoming a Roman Catholic. The Lily's are working hard to keep the dialogue open with their son, and to emphasize the centrality of dialogue itself over any ideology.

Rev. J: This is the life we have! Generalized things just don't have the flexibility. Biblical heroes are fallen. Ideology is right or wrong. It's not about ideological values, because that's too static.

Rev. M: ...When Catholic clergy try to talk about discipline in practice, it's easy to misinterpret them saying that sexuality is bad.

Rev. J: It's a painful defining cleavage in the Catholic church - and for our son.

S: Your son is choosing to be Catholic? Do the three of you dialogue about that?

Rev. M: All the time!

In contrast to what they see as the centrality of ideology in traditional Catholicism, Rev. Jerome offers Martin Buber's higher valuation for forgiveness and dialogue with God:

Rev. J: The piety of forgiveness, rather than an ideology.

Rev. J: I think Buber was the greatest philosopher of the twentieth century.

Rev. Jerome has connected his philosophical base with ongoing challenges within the family.

- *Description Of Conjoint Universal Yearnings*

The Lily's experience some difference in their "nature's" – Rev. Jerome speaking of himself as more reclusive and interested in piety. Rev. Mary seems to complement her husband's inner-directedness with her more engaging relatedness to others. Viewing their

relationship through the Satir iceberg metaphor, one would notice a contrast in feelings and feelings about feelings. However, their beliefs and expectations of one another seem highly congruent. Rev. Mary offers how a couple's feelings and attraction for one another may not be as enduring as their uniting "piety". However, she offers that both can be complementary and "provide a window into the other".

Rev. M: ...I think it's also possible in our intellectual, married life to be united in piety. It's often more enduring than attraction, but both provide a window into the other.

The Lily's strongly value their conjoint piety – or what Satir calls "universal yearnings", in a manner that I will label a "*dialogical embrace*". For Rev. Mary, the Trinity itself is about relationship – the dialogue between the discerned aspects of the Godhead – both the dualistic (becoming) and the non-dualistic (being) elements of Christianity.

Rev. M: The Trinity is all *about* relationship.

For Rev. Jerome, this is a very personal dialogue, and is represented by Jesus on the cross. Jesus seems to be in "divine" embrace – not with an impersonal "God-the-Father" – but with those who are being crucified with him.

Rev. J: From a Virginia Satir point-of-view, I'd ask, 'What's the dialogue?' It's the conversation at the Cross. [It's Jesus speaking to the one next to him:] 'You'll be with me this day in Paradise'. The Cross is the word – the dialogical moment in which the "Thou" disclosed a heart of love, forgiveness and destiny.

Thus, for the Lily's, their universal yearning is an dialogical embrace with a heart of love and forgiveness.

- *Changes In Self, Other And Context*

Rev. Jerome, who struggles more than his wife in his realm of feelings, his *religious context* assists him in his marriage – his sense of Us-ness:

Rev. J: Our relationship, marriage, and vocation makes sense here. I don't know if it would have made sense [somewhere else]. But being here gave us certain roles and connections. It's a secular, anti-religious neighborhood, and a different dynamic [from a rural, prairie ministry]. We're the least offensive church for most. We straddle a certain boundary – "M" makes us acceptable. [Speaking to "M"...] Hard to conceive if I was a milkman and you were a doctor, what this life would look like.

For Rev. Mary, on the other hand, her spiritual beliefs, her grounded personality, and the strength of Us-ness is stronger than any "momentary-ness" of any context:

Rev. M: When I reflect on our married life and that of others, I see transitions. Like my work in hospice. My brother died at sixteen of an aneurysm. Even jobs – you could go through seven [different] jobs, and change partners, too.
What can be most abiding is our spiritual beliefs. As that practice continues, though, it's not a panacea. A grounded personality and a relationship that transcends the momentary despair...

Thus, through their yearning for *dialogical embrace*, the couple experiences a stronger sense of Us-ness in their marriage. For Rev. Jerome, his experience of Us-ness needs the support of their religious context; while for Rev. Mary, the two dimensions are more closely intertwined.

H. Horizontal Analysis Of The Seven Couple Narratives

Each of these couples offered a unique experience of their lives together, and shared with me something of what they treasured of their spiritual journey together. I felt very blessed by their goodwill toward me, all the more so because I came as a complete

stranger to most of them. I view my main task as not to misrepresent or reduce the narrated experiences of the participants. What I can then reasonably offer is a “horizontal analysis” that seeks to compare and contrast each of their unique, dynamic experiences as they have presented it to me. I will then incorporate their conjoint, universal yearnings as connected with Satir’s Model, and discuss how this led to change and/or transformation in their lives. I will connect this to my theoretical foundations and a further expansion of the Satir Model in the Discussion (Part V).

1. Similarities and Differences of Dynamics in the Narrative Texts

Three couple narratives (the Diamonds, the Ruby’s and the Emeralds) offered difficulties with Self and Other in regard to their religious context. The Diamond’s felt frustrated in their relationship to each other due to restrictive gender-roles, which were part of both their multi-generational and religious Roman Catholic expectations. As they worked to change the expectations from their religious context, they moved to a place of “Us-ness”. The Ruby’s had a similar experience struggling with expectations from their religious context. As a Roman Catholic priest who then married, Father Ruby had been denied his clerical role in the diocese. He and his wife Catherine focused their conjoint narrative on changing the beliefs and perceptions of the Church.

Like the Ruby’s, the Emeralds are working to change their religious context to open the door for non-heterosexual and other marginalized people who want to worship in a Jewish context. They are able to be exemplars for change not only because of their shared values and “grounding” as a couple, but because they live this way.

Three couple narratives (the Silver’s, the Gold’s and the Lily’s) focused on challenges in strengthening the “Self” and “Other” with the assistance of their religious

context. The Silver's strengthened their personal selves, their view of the other, and their "Us-ness" through Jewish rituals which emphasized the goodness of the Other. This was significant for them given the challenges of second generation Holocaust survivors.

The Golds, who say they feel very compatible within their context as Christian Science practitioners, focused on achieving a sense of "Us-ness" through praying together in an experiential manner. They described to me how they patiently waited to receive conjoint "guidance" for themselves as a couple. They then described how their contact with their essence through meditation moved them into an awareness of their spiritual Self.

The Lily's, each of whom are mainstream Protestant ministers, also felt compatible within their religious context. I was impressed by their keen awareness of the value of the *margins* between themselves, and how their differences served to maintain them in dialogical relationship. This was true to some extent in all seven couples, but was also openly expressed by the Diamond's, the Silver's and the Emerald's. Most interestingly, the Lily's likened the spiritual relationship to the dialogue of Jesus on the Cross. I had formerly pictured the dialogue at the Cross as a religious allegory for solitary suffering, and making one's plea for redemption to God-the Father. The Reverend J. Lily offered a very different picture. He describes the Cross as a place where suffering ends, as Jesus was having a loving dialogue with his compatriots who were also on the Cross, and offering to take them immediately into Paradise (an experience of the higher Self). However, this requires a loving response from the other compatriots on the Cross. For the purpose of this inquiry, the Reverend Lily connects this with the dialogue between the couple.

The Tigers, who are medical practitioners as well as meditation leaders, were an exception from the other six couples. They had changed their religious context by becoming Buddhists, and this in itself would have been of interest to me, but was not their focus during our interview. They focused instead on the present, how it has been challenging for them to maintain a couple connection through their differing medical perspectives (the “western medical model” vs. “Chinese homeopathy”) and schedules. It would seem they have journeyed through several religious contexts, including their different religions-of-origin and their adaptation of Tibetan Buddhism. Their focus has been on harmonizing these differences within themselves, particularly the masculine-feminine dichotomy, but not for the purpose of experiencing “Us-ness”, as much as for an expanded sense of Self.

2. The Couples' Conjoint, Universal Yearnings

I discerned seven universal yearnings that had a clear impact on the seven couple relationships: *Honesty, Personal Conscience, Trust and Belonging, Intimate Respect, Self-Realization, Spiritual Guidance* and *Dialogical Embrace*. I believe each of these yearnings is consistent in quality with the universal yearnings offered by Satir as “Love, Freedom, Belonging, etc.” (1999). Satir distinguishes universal yearnings from one’s values, which are often colored by one’s cultural or religious beliefs. These couples’ yearnings may be considered *universal* in that, although they may have sprung from sectarian religious beliefs, they each transcend any particular cultural or religious value. Thus, my seven couple participants demonstrated a conjoint, universal yearning that had a clear impact on their relationship.

3. *Change and Transformation*

Did the couples' universal yearnings demonstrate change to their experience, or even a deeper level transformation for themselves? My participants were not engaged with me in a therapeutic setting, and so the degree of impact of their changes is a difficult one for me to discern, although it is an aspect of my inquiry. **Change** involves moving from a "stuck" place to an unstuck place around the circle of the couple's mandala (*self, other, us, and context*). **Transformation** involves a deeper change for both, and for their context.

The Diamonds believed they had *changed* individually from their commitment to *Honesty*, but also *transformed* their relationship to one of Us-ness. The Ruby's focus was on *change* to the Church, and they seem to be offering their lives to the eventual *transformation* of the Church itself. The Silvers experienced *change* through *trust and belonging* to one another, through the support of their Jewish-religious context. The Emerald's seek *transformation*, not only for the more conventional Jewish context, but for multi-generational relationships.

The Tigers seek *transformation* of self through their individual yearnings for *Self-realization* through meditation practices. They also seek to assist others in *change* and *transformation* by including one's family-of-origin in individual meditation practice. The Golds speak of daily *change* to their Us-ness through their "guidance", and spiritual transformation is, like the Buddhists, a part of their Christian Science religious context.

Unlike the Buddhists and Christian Scientists, the mainstream Protestantism of the Lily's maintains a duality between the self and divinity, but they do believe in the possibility of *spiritual transformation*, through an experiential opening of the door of

spiritual perception. They have subscribed to “a relationship that transcends the momentary despair” through the “piety of forgiveness rather than an ideology” and the “dialogical moment in which the “Thou” disclosed a heart of love, forgiveness and destiny”. Thus, their conjoint universal yearning for “divine embrace” can bring a deep, *transformative* change to their self, other, and sense of “us”-ness.

Given the uniqueness of each couples’ experience, it is interesting to see that each offers some graphical representation of their directional changes on the “couple mandala”. In the following chapter (Discussion, Chapter V), these learnings will be linked to theoretical perspectives, clinical approaches and teaching applications.

Chapter V. Discussion

A. Summary Of The Findings

1. Each of the seven couples helped to develop a conjoint narrative on how spirituality impacted their lives as a couple. Three couples focused on their challenges with self and other in relation to following their religious context. The couples then made changes to their religious context. In contrast, three other couples found themselves strengthened through the assistance of their religious context. One couple's focus has been to harmonize their differences within themselves, not for the purpose of experiencing "Us-ness" as much as for an expanded sense of Self.

2. I discerned seven universal yearnings from the couples that had a clear impact on their relationship: *Honesty, Personal Conscience, Trust and Belonging, Intimate Respect, Self-Realization, Spiritual Guidance, and Dialogical Embrace*. Each of these is consistent in quality with the universal yearnings as offered by Satir; "Love, Freedom, Belonging, etc." (Satir, 1999). Their conjoint, universal yearnings are distinct from what Satir considers personal "values" – that which may be colored by one's cultural and/or religious beliefs. The participant couple's universal yearnings can be considered "universal" in that they transcend individual, cultural or religious beliefs.

3. I found that the degree of impact of their changes (whether a *structural change* or a deeper *transformational change*) more difficult to discern, as the participants were not engaged with me in a therapeutic setting. However, the *direction* of change (whether between the *self* and *other*, or between the *self* and *context*, or between the *context* and *us*) was clearly expressed and/or discernable.

4. The method of inquiry, a hermeneutic analysis of conjointly written narratives about spiritual phenomenon, seemed to offer clear findings. However, the range of religious contexts was limited, as later discussed in the limitations of the study.

5. The “Couple Mandala” (Figures 4 and 5) was developed during the analysis of the data. It is an expansion of former Satir designs on couples, to include the *self*, *other*, *us*, and *context* in one inclusive design, with the couple’s *universal yearnings*, and *conjoint universal yearnings* at the center. In Figure 8 I added *change* arrows to trace the therapeutic direction from “stuckness” between the couple’s four dimensions on the Couple Mandala. In Figure 9, I added *transformation* arrows to trace the impact from the universal yearnings to the couple dimensions.

6. Finally, I found that marking the impact of spirituality in couples’ lives offers theoretical and practice applications. There will be both theoretical and field implications for marital and family therapy, discussed below. There are also implications for broader academic discourse in dialogical/spiritual experience, and in particular concerning the dynamic relationship between the experience of “us-ness” and one’s religious context, as discussed below.

B. Limitations Of The Study

1. Cross-Cultural Limitations

I had conceptualized that this study would be broadly inclusive of a wide range of multi-faith couple participants. However, many factors limited this aspect of the inquiry. An effective communications therapy requires an understanding of beliefs and values among all participants. One would thus have to have an understanding of familial roles

and relations in cultures for which I was unfamiliar. Further, Satir's Family Reconstruction Process encourages family members to speak about the negative as well as the positive traits of one's parents and siblings. This became an apparent difficulty for Satir trainers Cheung and Chan, as reported in their article "The Satir Model and Cultural Sensitivity: a Hong Kong Reflection." (2002). Another issue that arises in offering the Satir Model cross-culturally is understanding what may be embedded in the different languages - What feelings and values may be imbedded in words and expressions? In broadening itself cross-culturally, the Satir Institute will need to engage in this aspect much more fully.

2. Selection of Multi-Faith Couple Participants

Whereas the study included a range of multi-faith participants, only one couple (as Buddhists) did not identify themselves as Jewish or Christian. My original intent was to also include Islamic, Hindu, Sikh and aboriginal couples, but two Islamic couples whom I solicited declined, a Hindu and Sikh couple declined, and the aboriginal couple did not respond back in time for the study. One of the Islamic couples and the Hindu couple let me know that the female partner of each felt uncomfortable with undergoing an interview. I can only surmise that their discomfort was due to concerns regarding the level of couple intimacy I would be exploring, and/or the fact that they were to be interviewed by a sole male. My recommendation to address this concern would be to offer a male/female couple as interviewers. However, I am also aware that this might also invite some self-censoring by the couple, as the participants may scrutinize "us" as they are being interviewed. I will recommend that a further study take this into account, and not only when the focus is on other faith groups.

3. Data from Non-Therapeutic Engagement

Another limitation of the study was the relatively brief time of encounter with each couple. This was somewhat addressed by the couple working on their own together on their conjoint narrative, ensuring more depth as well as “validity”. I was able to obtain quite a degree of depth from them, but this was due to my selection of very articulate, religious leaders as couples. Most of the couples had experienced some form of therapeutic work, and most were ministering in some form of pastoral care to others.

In linking the study to the Satir model, my analysis of “transformational” change was limited, as one would generally need to be in a therapeutic encounter with clients to analyze the levels of depth in personal and contextual change. On the other hand, some of these participants were very helpful in linking their experience with the philosophical constructs found in my literature review.

4. Collaborative Inquiry with Participants

Many of my 14 participants expressed their interest in having a shared discourse regarding the formulation of “dialogical/spiritual” constructs, both psychological and philosophical (Ch. II). I was not prepared for this level of engagement but am heartened by their enthusiasm and capabilities in this regard.

Linking my “analysis” of the conjoint narratives to theoretical constructs are a part of collaborative inquiry which I undertook with my doctoral committee. In some ways, my participant couples engaged in these linkages during the interviews, but they did not have a formal role in either my analysis or these linkages. Many of them then voiced a keen interest to see the “findings” once all of the interviews were done. I took

that to mean that they were not only curious as to how I was working with their narratives, but for them to read how other couples had responded in their interviews. To address this interest, I have offered copies of the dissertation to my couple participants. I believe that a fuller study might be enhanced by more inclusion of these articulate, mature couples in a subsequent, theoretical discourse.

C. Implications For Family Therapy Practice And Training

My study offers theoretical, training and field implications for family therapy. First, this study seeks to anchor the inclusion of religious and spiritual dimensions within a formerly “secular, academic” modality. Secondly, my study offers an expanded conception of Satir’s “universal yearnings” for use in therapy. Thirdly, I designed the “couple’s mandala” along with two other diagrams for use with the Satir Model.

1. Inclusion of Spirituality and Religion in Family Therapy

As described in the Purpose of the Study, and in the Literature Review, the field of family therapy has existed between two dominant paradigms – the objectivist, “medical model” on one hand, and religious pastoral counseling, which has often been confined within a conservative-essentialist paradigm. The clinical work of Virginia Satir has been to acknowledge and utilize the spiritual dimension in therapy, although her work has not been a significant part of academic discourse. In counseling training within secular academies, religion is often been regarded, at best, as a subset of culture, and spirituality has been positioned as a subset of religion. One purpose of my study on the impact of spirituality in partnerships has been to bridge this chasm. Furthermore, my selection of multi-faith religious leaders as participants has been to offer “universal” experiences

beyond the dimensions of any particular religious paradigm. It is hoped that, through their conjoint narratives, religious and spiritual dimensions may play a broader role in development and training in marital and family therapy.

2. *Expanding Satir's Conception of "Universal Yearnings"*

Virginia Satir offered her concept of "universal yearnings," and placed it at the bottom of her metaphorical "iceberg" - as a link beyond one's personal resources and the powerful ground of spirit ("Self: I AM"). She offered several of these yearnings (e.g. Freedom, Love, Belonging) which are here extended and further illustrated by their usage in the lives of these seven couples. More particularly, these couples have indicated that it is their "conjoint" universal yearning with which they walk together through the doorway of the spiritual. They illustrated how they transformed the challenges of both their individual differences and the challenges of their contextual differences for one of greater individual and mutual harmony.

3. *Viewing Change and Transformation in the "Couple Mandala"*

The design of the Couple Mandala emerged while I was analyzing the couples' narratives. Previous to this study, I had difficulty with the Levine's (1995) conjoint narrative of their own relationship. Whereas they had well described their movement from "self" to "other" to "us", the description of the context within which they were challenged was absent. While this study focuses primarily on *religious* contexts, it is also inclusive of contextual issues such as fixed gender roles and multi-generational expectations in marriage and parenting.

Along with adding the *context* as a "fourth dimension" around the wheel of the mandala, I placed *spirituality* at its center, through the doorway of *conjoint, universal*

yearnings. I noted structural changes for the couple around the wheel of the mandala, with deeper, transformational changes occurring through the doorway to the spiritual. However, my discerning between changes and transformations was the least developed aspect in my study, as my engagement with my participants was in a non-therapeutic encounter. John Banmen, lead trainer for the Satir Institute of the Pacific, offered his approval for my couples' mandala. His one suggestion was that the direction of arrows between the personal icebergs, the couple mandala, and the "Spirit" should illustrate that the circular flow of Spirit is linked to the personal iceberg "like the blood circulating through the body" (J. Banmen, personal communication, 2005).

4. Expanding the Diagrams of the Satir Model

The Satir Model (Satir, Virginia, John Banmen, Jane Gerber and Maria Gomori, 1991) presents diagrams which illustrate aspects of both individual growth and relating with others. However, I found the diagrams meant to illustrate couples' relatedness to be far less developed. I then began to develop diagrams for couple's growth during the interview, analysis and reporting aspects of my study.

I was initially unsatisfied with the Satir model of Couple Congruence (figure 3), as it incorporated "me" "you" and "us", but left out the "context" of the relationship. This is a critical omission, as the couple's various dimensions such as parenting, economic, social and religious contexts needed to be situated. The "Context" was included in her diagram for "Congruent Self-Relatedness" (figure 2), so I added it to my couple model, expanding her drawing of three dimensions to four dimensions.

As my intent is to learn the spiritual impact of the relationship, I returned to Satir's iceberg metaphor (figure 1), which indicates how spirituality emerges through

one's universal yearnings, and may transform all the other dimensions of the personality. With a harmonious couple, I hypothesized that their universal yearnings would be similar. My research sought to discover in what way their universal yearnings were conjointly held, and how this has impacted their relationship.

In response to this query, and after analyzing the narratives of several couples in the study, I was able to design the "Couple Mandala" (figures 4 and 5). I placed the "universal yearnings" in the center of the circle, to demonstrate that it can impact any of the other four dimensions; "self", "other", "us" and "context." It was also then possible to record how the universal yearnings impacted the couple in a more transformational way than any structural changes that may occur between any of their other dimensions.

I will again attempt to clarify the term "transformational" here, as when it was used during the analysis of the findings. Generally, *transformational* refers to an individual's experience of accelerated growth in either a therapeutic sense or a spiritual sense, using the term as it is used in the Satir Model (Satir, et. al 1991). Generally, there is movement from an enmeshed or dissociated emotional state to one that is more conscious, autonomous, and fluid. All aspects of one's personal iceberg, behaviors, feelings, beliefs, and expectations are affected by a transformational experience.

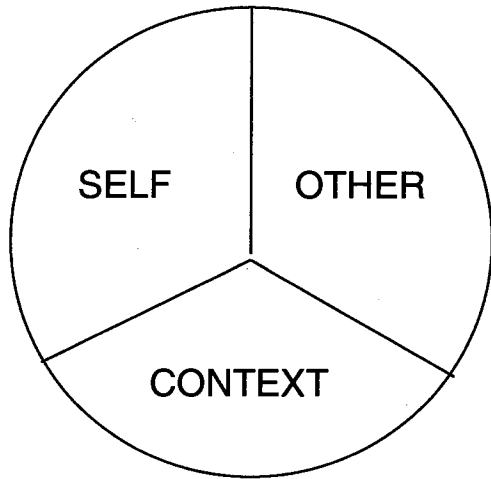
In diagramming the couple encounter, Satir-trained practitioners will place the two individual icebergs together (figure 6), in order to illustrate how the feelings, expectations, etc. of one partner is affecting the other. It serves to help locate the places of "stuck-ness" in the relationship, and helps to direct the couple through any unconscious places of "stuck-ness." I modified this diagram by placing my "couple mandala" below both individual icebergs to indicate how changes for each individual

effects their four dimensions as a couple, and likewise how changes to their mandala effects each one's personal iceberg.

I do not believe I can include the most ephemeral dimension, spirituality, in any one place. However, I have placed it just beneath the universal yearnings on the mandala, as the yearnings are a doorway to the spirit. John Banmen, the main trainer for the Satir Institute of the Pacific, approved the diagram, saying that arrows must show movement to and from the spirit "like the blood circulating through the body" (J. Banmen, personal communication, 2005).

Finally, I developed "Stages of Change on the Couple Mandala" (figures 7, 8 and 9), to help me with working notes during the analysis. However, I leave this for further development when my involvement with couples is for a therapeutic encounter.

DIAGRAMS OF COUPLE CONGRUENCE



Fig, 2 SATIR'S MODEL OF CONGRUENT SELF-RELATEDNESS

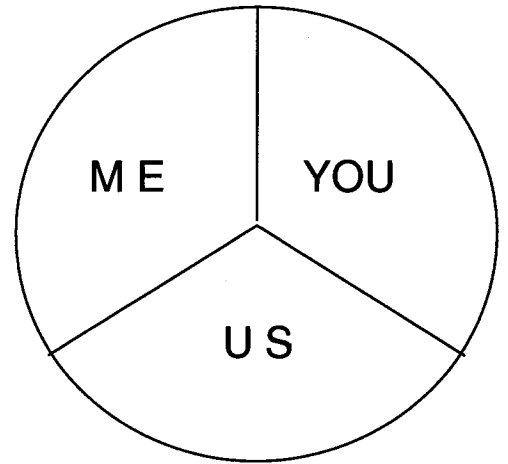


Fig. 3 SATIR'S MODEL OF COUPLE CONGRUENCE

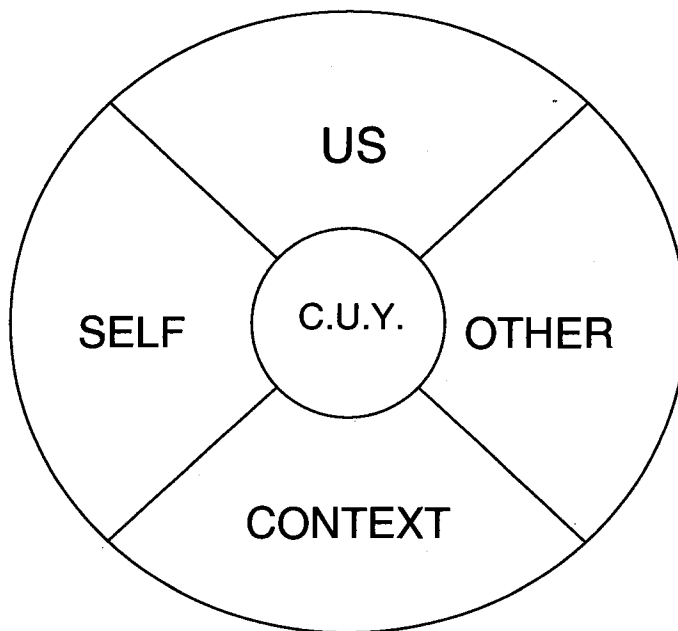
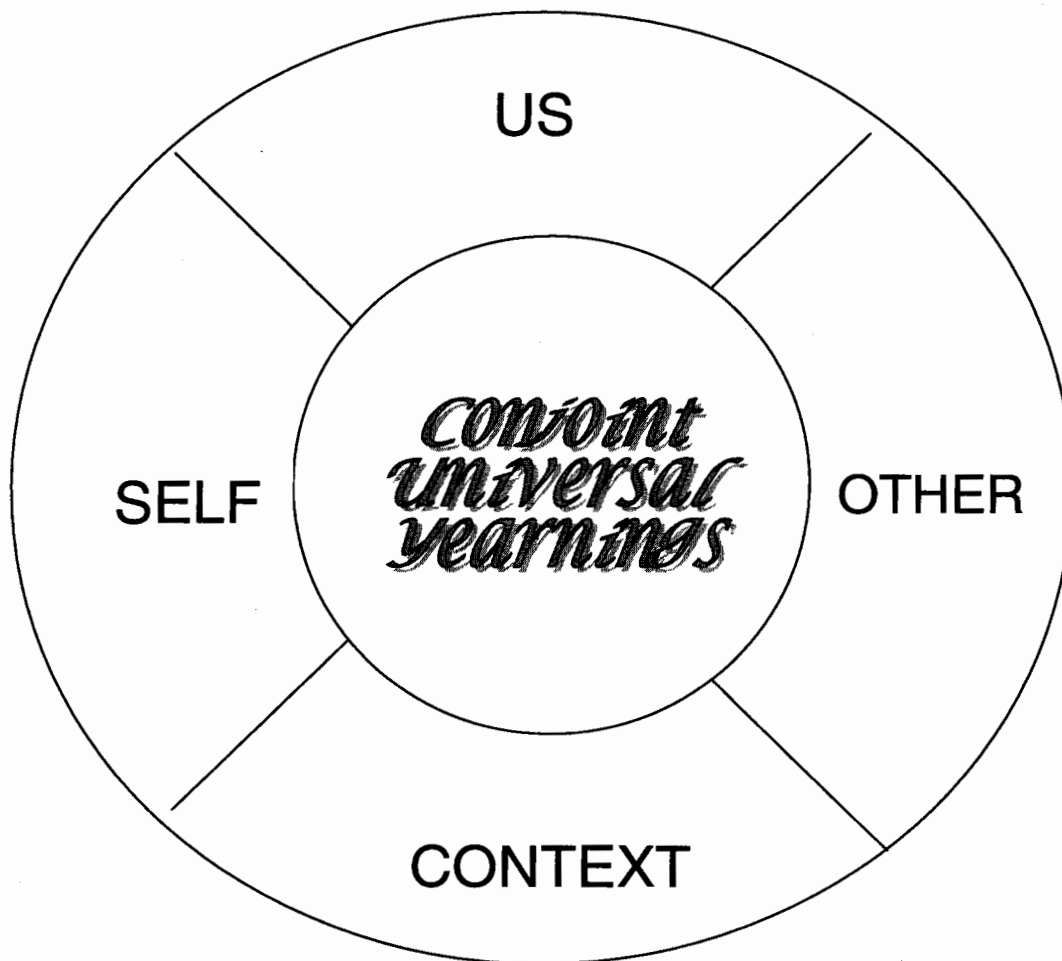


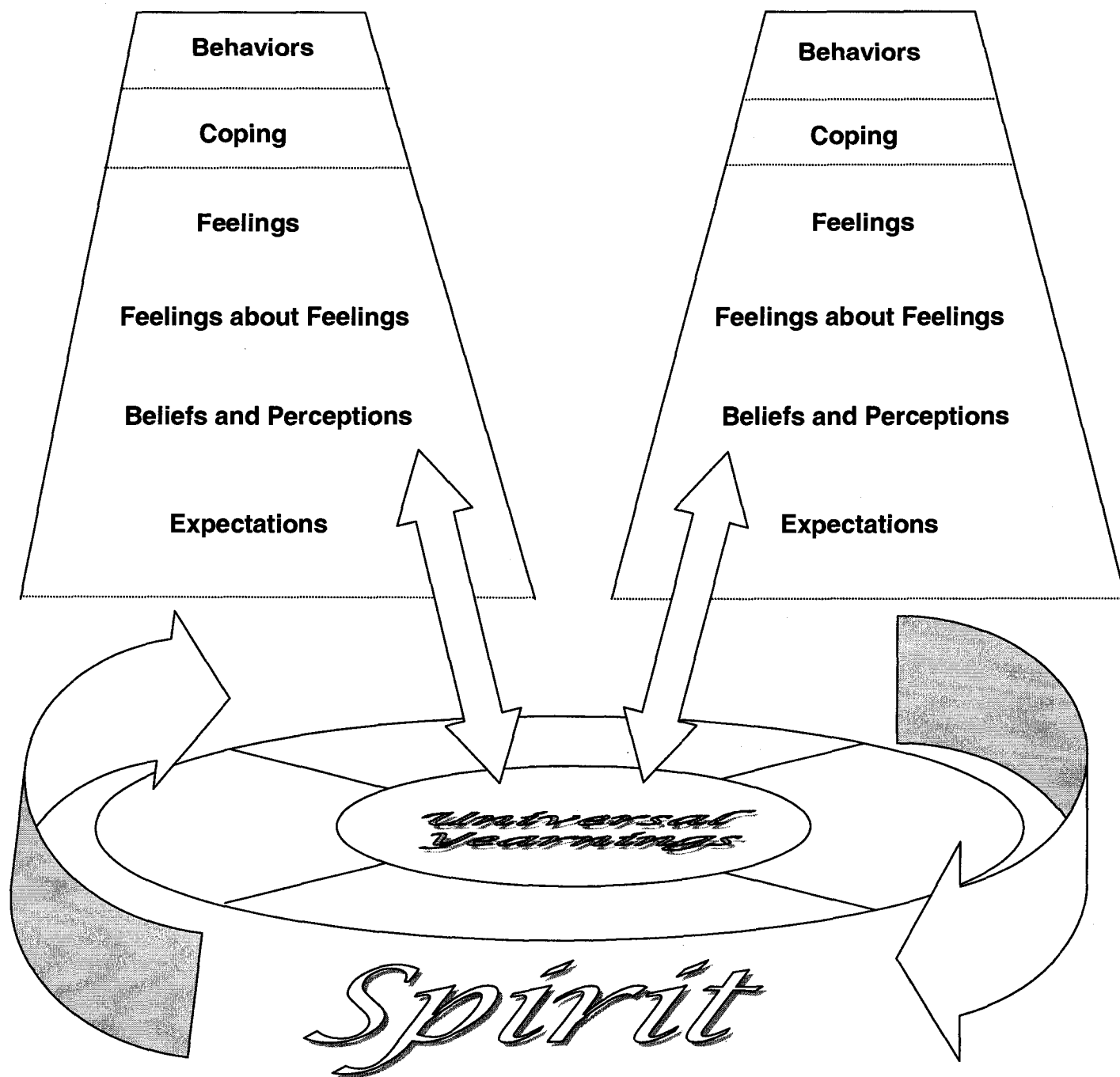
Fig. 4 THE COUPLE MANDALA
C.U.Y. = conjoint universal yearnings

Fig 5 CONJOINT UNIVERSAL YEARNINGS
IN THE COUPLE MANDALA



1. Four dimensions of the congruent couple are situated around the circle as "Self", "Other" "Us" and "Context."
2. The Conjoint Universal Yearning impacts both members of the couple relationship. It is in the center, as a doorway to the Spiritual.
3. Virginia Satir offers examples of Universal Yearnings as "Love", "Trust", "Peace" "Freedom", etc.
4. The Conjoint Universal Yearnings, invoking the couple's spirituality, may transform any or all of the four couple dimensions.

Fig. 6 SPIRITUALITY AND THE COUPLE ENCOUNTER



STAGES OF CHANGE ON THE COUPLE MANDALA

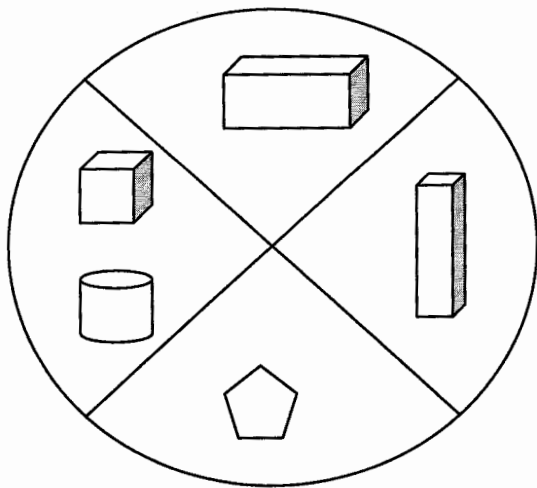


Fig. 7

1. IDENTIFYING BLOCKS AND STUCK SPACES

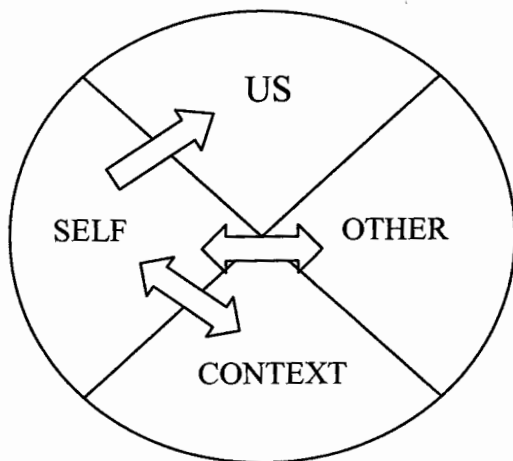


Fig. 8

2. WORKING ON CHANGE (SATIR LEVEL ONE)

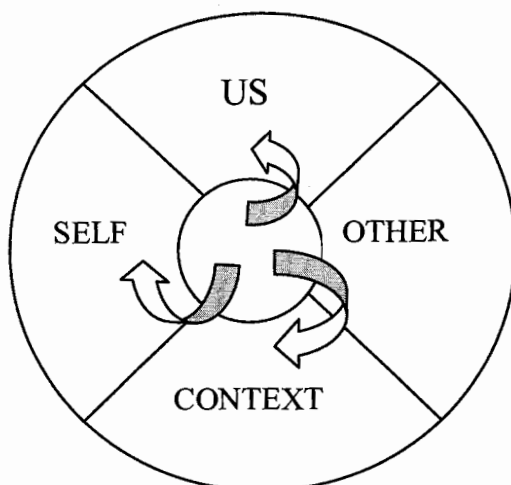


Fig. 9

3. TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGES TO SELF, OTHER AND CONTEXT (SATIR LEVEL TWO)

D. Implications For Academic Discourse On Spirituality

1. The Phenomenon of "Us-ness" and the "Essential We"

I discerned six of the seven couples in this study to have demonstrated a significant awareness of the spiritual impact of "*Us*"-ness in their relationship. Thus, this study does support the phenomenon of an "essential We". Through this inquiry, I have found reconciliation for seemingly contrasting views of self-in-relationship by the philosopher Martin Buber and the psychologist Frederick Perls (in Chapter II, Review of the Literature). Buber posits that our spiritual essence is a part of interrelationship, stating that "the Divine on earth is fulfilled not within man but between man and man... it is consummated only in the life of true community" (Buber, 1967, p.113). He underscores this with an admonition that "moments of private religious experience only impede our genuine relation to the divine" (Silberstein, 1989, p.211). In seeming contrast, Perls asserts that "The *We* doesn't exist, but consists out of I *and* You, [and] is an everlasting boundary where two people meet" (Perls, p.7). However, Perls is not stating that ego boundaries are fixed, and in fact he posits just the opposite, warning that "once you have a character, you have developed a rigid system". Not only is Perls against individuals being subsumed by an "other" or a "we," but speaks against maintaining a concrete sense of self; thus indeed calling for "self," "other" and "we"-ness (or Satir's "us"-ness), but in a fluid and supportive relationship. In this way, the differing concerns of Buber and Perls do meet.

2. *Hierarchy of Religions vs. Religious Evolution*

In my literature review, I contrasted Ken Wilber's use of a hierarchical formulation of religions against the works of the philosopher Donald Rothberg (1986) and the ethicist Carol Gilligan (1982). I then demonstrated *change within* a conservative, religious paradigm when it must interact with the needs of its diverse members, or unexpected outside situations. My purpose there was to underscore the necessity of dialogue within a religious context by those who are seeking change.

This perspective for *change within*, or *evolutionary change* is consistent with the spiritual vision of Virginia Satir (1985, Satir, et al, 1991) and the development of her "Growth Model." Through this study, I hope to expand her model to illustrate how individuals may contribute to change within religious organizations. All of my participant couples (except the Tiger's) remained within their religion-of-birth, and when dissatisfied, worked for change within their religious context. The Tiger's, while adopting Tibetan Buddhism, are working to change Buddhist meditation practice to include the family unit.

Contemporary discourse in this regard includes the philosophers Luce Irigaray (2002) and Jurgen Habermas (2003) who argue for a dialogical rather than a monological discourse in philosophy and theology.

E. Summary Of The Study

This qualitative inquiry of couple congruence and spirituality was developed in response to my practice and training of students in the Satir Model and was undertaken within the fields of family therapy, educational psychology and curriculum instruction. The research design, a hermeneutic analysis of conjointly written narratives, was chosen

to incorporate findings on the phenomenon of spirituality in the couple relationship. The inquiry also sought to situate spirituality in both the training and practice of family therapists from a non-pastoral orientation.

Seven mature, articulate couples (fourteen participants) serving in roles of religious leadership were interviewed. The seven couples identified themselves as Roman Catholic, Jewish, United Church, Christian Science, and “North American” Tibetan Buddhist. The interviews led to co-constructed conjoint narratives on the impact of spirituality in their relationship. In analyzing the data, I ascertained major challenges for the couple, their “conjoint universal yearnings,” and their subsequent changes to self, other and context. During the course of the interview process, I designed a “Couple Mandala” to augment designs of individual growth already in use in the Satir Model.

Findings from the study indicated that the fourteen participants had experienced change or transformation as a couple, with three couples making active changes to their religious context. I expanded Satir’s concept of universal yearnings and her diagrams to encompass the couple’s “conjoint universal yearnings” and this proved to be an adequate metaphor to relay the couple’s shared journey across diverse religious contexts.

The findings from my participant couples offer implications for a meta-discourse involving the relationship of family relations, religion and spirituality. This serves to extend academic discourse on the dialogical/spiritual process. This would include the perspectives of Martin Buber and Virginia Satir on the phenomenon of “us-ness” and the “essential We.” It can also serve to either bridge or expand the differences in constructs between the therapist Virginia Satir and the philosopher, Ken Wilber.

F. Situating My Values In The Study

In the Purpose of the Study, I offered my “location” to the study in three distinct areas (Ch. I, B). I located my first position as a family therapist, my second as a university instructor and my third as a person involved in pluralistic, religious frameworks. I offered that my religious frameworks were somewhat “fluid” in that I valued spiritual experience regardless of any particular religious frameworks. This has been a central value throughout my study, and one which I hope offers a positive positioning in which to bridge perspectives among the various faith traditions and the secular academy. Another strong value that is apparent from my chosen inquiry is the significance of couple relationships. The third value is that of authentic learning –has my inquiry followed my passion?

I now ask myself, have there been any changes to my values through undertaking this inquiry? In regard to my value of “universal spirituality”- this has not changed. I do, however, feel stronger in offering my location within Judaism and yoga psychology, from which I have received the most training. In addition, my readings of Buber and Gilligan have drawn me further into the “dialogical” aspect of the spiritual encounter.

In terms of couple relations, I find that I value this even more than at the beginning of the study. I am more aware of how I had not listened to the needs of my partners in former relationships, and how I failed to articulate my needs and values. This change has assisted me greatly in my personal life.

Finally, I want to “situate” the value of authentic learning. The inquiry went through unexpected bumps – both through supervisory changes due to my changing focus and when only one partner of a prospective couple participant wished to be interviewed.

However, while the inquiry has been limited in its number of participants and contextual religious frameworks, the participants generally responded from an open, experiential space. They have said that they are now keenly interested in reading the “analysis,” “findings” and “discussion” of this study, and I look forward to sharing this with them.

G. Recommendations For Further Study

My recommendations for further study include the participation of religious couples from non-Judeo-Christian backgrounds (e.g , Islamic, Sikh, Hindu, Chinese, North American aboriginal, etc.). I would also recommend that the engagement for interviews be constructed with particular care for traditionally conservative participants. Another significant participant group would be couples that have directly experienced Satir-based therapeutic intervention. Finally, future studies could involve mature participants more directly in the analysis and the theoretical implications of the inquiry.

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Appendix A:

Ayshes Chayal (Proverbs 31: 10-31)

An accomplished woman, who can find? Far beyond pearls is her value.
 Her husband's heart relies on her, and he shall lack no fortune.
 She bestows goodness upon him, never evil, all the days of her life.
 She seeks wool and flax; and her hands work willingly.
 She is like a merchant's ships; from afar she brings her sustenance.
 She arises while it is yet night,
 and gives food to her household and a portion to her maidens.
 She envisions a field and buys it,
 from the fruit of her handiwork, she plants a vineyard.
 With strength she girds her loins, and invigorates her arms.
 She discerns that her enterprise is good; her lamp is not snuffed out by night.
 She stretches out her hands to the distaff,
 And her palms support the spindle.
 She spreads out her palm to the poor, and extends her hand to the destitute.
 She fears not snow for her household,
 For all her household is clothed in scarlet wool.
 She made for herself luxurious bedspreads;
 Linen and purple wool are her clothing.
 Her husband is distinctive in the councils,
 When he sits with the elders of the land.
 She makes a cloak and sells [it], and delivers a belt to the peddler.
 Strength and majesty are her raiment, and she joyfully awaits the last day.
 She opens her mouth with wisdom,
 And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.
 She anticipates the ways of her household,
 And does not eat the bread of laziness.
 Her children have risen and praised her; her husband, and he extolled her.
 "Many women have amassed achievement, but you surpassed them all"
 Grace is false, and beauty vain;
 A woman who fears *Hashem* [God]; she should be praised.
 Give her the fruits of her hands;
 And let her be praised in the gates by her very own deeds.

- as translated in *Tanach, the Stone edition*; (2000) ed. Rabbi Nosson Scherman, Brooklyn, New York: Mesorah Publications, Ltd.

Appendix B: The “Diamonds” Interview

S: How do each of you see spirituality as distinct from your religious backgrounds, as you’ve had separate backgrounds?

J: There is a real distinction between the two. I think it’s a yearning for wholeness and in my life I’ve felt it needed to be expressed in action, but in my development, there was always room for contemplation. I went to a Catholic school, but I went to my “sacred space” in a small empty church on my way home from school. Emptiness has a particular fullness. Although I’ve come away from a formal practice, there is always that.

S: You came from a big family.

J: A huge extended family, although I was the only child in mine. My mother was strict, everything was very scheduled . Is that how you see me, P.?

P: You’re very active! I was a solitary child, too. My parents didn’t practice religion, we weren’t church people. My dad said he was agnostic. When I was courting J., she challenged me about being tolerant. I wanted to be a good boyfriend, so I said “sure” (laughter). But later I realized that this would be an important part of our lives together, so I went to see a priest. A lot of things didn’t make sense to me. For example, if God knows our future, we’re predetermined, so where is our free will in this? He said, “We’ll talk about it next time”, but he never did! (laughter).

We got married, and had six children in eight years. Went to church every Sunday. I felt resentful at times. In the church was a glassed-off section for families, the priest seemed intolerant of children disrupting the service. But I did my own reading, and Teilhard de Chardin seemed congruent with my own thinking, like my longing for wholeness.

J: You did social action, too.

P: Yes, we met with others about that. The label of spirituality becomes fuzzier and fuzzier to me, but I feel the universe is alive - there's meaning a purpose in it, and one of my purposes is to understand what I can do to be congruent with that. The Peace Movement was that, and the environmental movement. Delving into cosmology has been a part of it, but organized religion has been very small part of it.

S: You each developed uniquely in your spiritual growth. When you were raising your children, was spirituality invoked?

J: Giving birth is the most awe-inspiring thing you can imagine. I felt good about homemaking things, and all the children [learned homemaking skills] before they left home. Ours was the house the other children came to, so it was like a day-care. After work, P. taught guitar.

S: I didn't know you were a musician!

J: The only ones who associated with us then were parents with lots of children. In my home, my parents took in orphaned cousins, and widowed cousins, to live with us.

S: But you each respected you needed some solitary time?

J & P: Oh, yes.

S: Do you ever have conflict with each other?

J: (laughs) We even fought about going out in nature. P. wanted to drain the pool of water to see what was under it.

P: I wouldn't do that now. (laughter).

J: It's not an irritant now, it's amusing. But when we did get into serious conflict, it was after all the children came! We were involved in social action, too. It was crazy!

P: It was quite stressful having so many kids at one time. I also found it difficult having so many people over. I felt disjointed, I couldn't do my work very well. I took [meds] for my stress. Then, we heard people speak from Cold Mountain [Institute]. We went there, and did some very hard work over my issues and our differences. We learned how to listen to each other, and not get into a debate. J, you get very articulate when we get mad, and I go the other way. So, I felt I couldn't get anywhere. So we learned how to express our anger.

J: But even then, neither of us wanted the other to capitulate. It wasn't that we wanted to change the other person. We did a lot of work together, sex identity, body-oriented work that was totally new to me. A lot of areas that needed opening up. A lot of our friends were terrified, because they don't want to hear about it. It would be a destruction of a world. For us, we knew we were de-constructing some stuff.. we were going to re-create something new, or do it with someone else. It was frightening.

S: A mid-life crises?

P: Yes, we don't know where it's going to go. It's scary.

J: It was hard for the children. They were mystified with what was going on. And I'm sure troubled by it. We didn't go behind closed doors. They knew we were always their parents.

S: How old were they?

J: The youngest would have been ten, the oldest was eighteen.

S: Oh my goodness, all those teen years!! (laughter). So, they were aware.

P&J: Yes.

S: So did you feel in part, a responsibility to stay together for them, or for each other?

J: We didn't consider staying together for that (the children). We weren't going to live a pretend life.

P: Yes. We wanted a relationship together, but how the hell were we going to do it? So, we took the risk, but there was no guarantee of where it would go...

J: That's where the spirituality comes in, we had a sense we had to be true to who we were, but it was wonderful we were given the opportunity to understand what our origins were and what we had brought unconsciously, and we had to make that conscious.

P: For myself, I had not blossomed spiritually, it came later. I'd been frozen. I didn't know who I was.. I was struggling with identity. Our marriage became more binding, because we could find things we wanted to do, and those we don't. We have our friends today, some from before and some not.

J: We each had male and female friends.

S: It's interesting that you said your married friends were frightened about you going through this. Were you aware of why they were frightened?

J & P: Oh yeah! It was a reflection of themselves.

S: Are they afraid that separation might cause a chain reaction?

J: Oh yes.

S: Perhaps women would say more than the men, but maybe they're just as afraid.

J: Oh, of course.

P: Some of our friends, very wisely, did not connect with us at that time.

J: We didn't get into this, "some people are on my side".

S: Was the church a factor – in supporting marriage?

J: The church was going through a changing time , too. After Vatican II, it excited us with its openness. Some young priests, some very wise older priests...they were very present with us, just assuring us with god's love. Morality was not preached.

S: After, the [healing] experience, did you feel yourselves more as individuals or as a couple or both?

J: Both.

P: Both. I felt more as an individual, much more defined, but also closer to J.

J: I had more awareness of openness and other areas, and grateful for that pain and suffering.

P: J., you've always had a sense of that [spiritual presence], even though I had felt a solitary. J. was always a strong person, an intelligent person, better educated. I began to feel second fiddle – or less in terms of her intelligence, spirituality, friends. I was the breadwinner, but felt very diminished in self-worth. It was this crisis that has me wake up as to who I am, and to manifest these new activities.

J: At the beginning of our marriage you asked me not to read... he wasn't an intellectual and I was an avid reader, he was terrified. Then he got into it, and that went.

P: I felt threatened, in lots of ways.

J: He took on leadership positions after that, even in the Christian Family Movement.

Always a study of social movements. You are very imaginative... We're not people who need grants before we can do things!

S: I hear you!

J: He 's wondering "What I am I doing here?"- as he sits on committees with people with lots of degrees, and so on. Things are made possible because of the way he approaches things, like his willingness to listen, and respect everyone's position.

S: A spiritual position.

J: He finds a third way. He's very patient.

* * *

S: When you did the encounter work, did you have a way to say these things to each other?

J& P Yes.

J: But at first, it was so difficult, at the Cold Mountain Institute, they had to put a counselor behind each of us, and we would answer each other and they would say to the other person what we really meant.. That's how bad it was. (laughter).

S: You really weren't congruent with what you were feeling , thinking and saying.

J: Instead of talking right away, they suggested we just make noises and delay a bit.

S: So you could first feel what you were saying.

P: It's a fearful thing to do. It takes your breath away.

J: Of course, when the other person would say it, the tears would come to our eyes. It was right on.

We have a picture of ourselves on our 25st [wedding] anniversary. An incredible party! P. was looking at me and has the biggest puzzled look on his face. It was so characteristic of us then! (laughter).

S: A picture's worth a thousand words!

J: We'll never tire of each other!

P: We're still a mystery to each other.

S: There's a lot of parts of J you don't know?

P: Yes.

S: And you feel the same, J?

J: Yes. But it isn't threatening anymore. I think, "I just haven't got it, yet". Maybe I never will.

S: At the encounter, did you look at the expectations you had of each other?

J: That was on a more technical level.

P: Later on, but first we did the more gut level things. When I first got married, I thought what the male was supposed to be, and I didn't feel right. I felt diminished.

J: Even though I insisted you take on the banking. He was doing all the [authoritative] type of things.

P: But I actually knew the strongest person in the relationship was you.

S: And you got to a place where you could find your strengths here?

P: It emerged after we got into some heavy stuff. When you free up inside, you can look inside yourself and move out, and discover new things. It's rewarding. "Yeah, I can do that!"

S: Where that belief came about your defined role - where did that come from?

P: A lot from my parents, but even more from the church. Even the Christian Family Movement. Dad was traditional in the family.

J: And your mother would instruct him if he didn't live up to it.. "You're the man! It's your job!"

P: That's true about mom and dad. But with the church thing it was stronger still. It came with the moral responsibility. I struggled with that. I hadn't found who I was yet... but I was married to a strong woman!

S: In the church, the priests aren't couples, so was this from the teaching, not from seeing it?

J: You always thought the whole patriarchal thing was wrong.

P: Well, it didn't take long to see the church culture did not sit comfortable with me.

J: You have to act with your integrity, otherwise you get sick. (laughter). You're persistent.

S: I like the word "integrity".

J: That's central to our spirituality. We consider each other teachers to each other. I started out thinking I was the teacher, but he's my teacher.

P: We teach each other.

S: Did the issue of gender role model come up during the encounter?

J: It wasn't just one event.. We did bio-energetics, a whole variety of things. A 48-hour sitting, a sexual intimacy group. We did some separate and some together. We married in the late fifties, and did this in the seventies. We'd been married by then for over twenty years. The wonderful thing was that this didn't divide our community.

S: This is great. The spiritual dimension was what kept your friends connected?

J: Oh yes, because they'd had fears. And we didn't bad mouth each other at all.

S: After this, did your coupled friends say it helped them as well?

J: They said they admired us, but not that they could do this themselves.

S: They saw you come through the other side!

P: I'm really glad we came through the pain. It was so important to us.

J: Four years ago, P. was in an accident, and almost died. Before that, we did some work with a Buddhist nun on holotropic breathing, and we both had experiences.

P: Words can't explain it adequately. It's like the intelligence behind the stars that keeps things alive. I felt I could let my life go, but then I wouldn't mind sticking around either. It took me out of my grief. The hardest thing was to think I'd be leaving J. and the family. That was a few days before the operation....

J: And then we had a ceremony, and there was an acceptance....

P: J's right. Depressions don't arise anymore.

S: In your closeness, do you a sense of "us-ness", like two separate people, or like two people speaking with one voice. Has the relationship been such that the boundaries of identity get thinner or stay distinct and blessedly so. I'll just throw that out to you.

J: Hard to say.

P: I feel distinct. But sometimes we're reading each other's minds. It's a paradox. I don't feel we're melded into one. But we're in tune.

J: We're both. We spend a lot of time in silence with each other. Just walking and looking at the lake.

S: I think people who are single find this so rich, that people are so blessed that way. There are more than two individuals, they're coming into something much grander. Any last words?

J: I think we can get into trouble with other's terms of spirituality. I'm fascinated by theology. Like art, you might prefer different forms. But our values are very congruent.

Appendix C: The “Lily’s” Interview

S: How long have the two of you been together?

M: We married in 1979, after studying together at the same seminary.

S: What drew you into the seminary?

J: My parents were both seminarians. My mom was the fifth female chaplain ever to be ordained. My vocation emerged while I was a student under Gordon Harland, who had also been a teacher of both my parents. It wasn't from any feeling of lack from the intellectual issues, where I had previously felt competent, but I needed to feel I could reach the piety to sustain a ministry.

While Gordon was teaching us the history of the church, I became convinced of the depth of character of our faith. I discovered a Yale edition of a Jonathon Edwards tract, *The Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*. I'd describe Harland as spiritually congruent; and he had the greatest mind I have known – sometimes arrogant- he didn't tolerate fools! I needed this because the University did not offer a prayer community.

S: I thought you'd say it was his passion.

J: He was older by that time, but had been my parents' teacher.

M: I attended an Episcopalian church, and was also active in a youth group at a Dutch Reformed church. The pastor was very young and attracted a youth group. I appreciated the Liturgy in the Episcopal Church, especially later in life, but my life changed or shifted from the experience in the youth group at the other church. We took the “Jesus Christ, Superstar” album, and put visuals to it, and presented a religious service to the church. Some didn't like the message because the story ends with the death and not the

resurrection, as the story ends on Good Friday. The minister upheld our position when the audience got critical. I was aware of the audience stumbling over the fact of the Cross. I learned that, while a core Christian belief, the Cross is a stumbling block for people. I did think of being a counselor, but because of that youth pastor, I chose another way.

J: I had less practice of prayer, so I went to fellowship, and I became comfortable in prayer and opposed to intellectual theology.

S: What were you each doing when you met?

J: Although I grew up just over the American border, I was considered an international student.

M: An alien! (laughter)

J: And "M" was helping with the international students.

S: And you struggled with his language? (joking)

M: Actually, I was proposed to by a Pakistani. That was for a marriage of convenience. [we laugh] Anyhow, "J" and I went from friendship to courtship. We married just after graduation.

S: Did you talk about having a joint ministry?

J: No, but we were involved together in the services, and talked about the details.

She was a beautiful woman; strong, assertive, emotionally intelligent, and aware of what was happening around her. One of the things we were involved with at seminary was looking at the school's investments. We investigated a major fund company, [to see] if they had holdings in [apartheid] South Africa.

S: I hear a joint interest in social justice.

M: We both shared a moral compass. Dating as metaphor, in “guy asks girl for a date” did not readily fit with my self concept. I like to think I’m “in relationship”.

S: You’re waxing intellectual here (laughter).

M: Did we think about serving as clergy together? I was unclear as how I would serve, as women were not hired, nor ordained, as readily.

S: So the seminary first looks at the job market, and ordains by those numbers?!?

M: Yes, exactly! But [that’s OK because] the community is what we’re about. So, with “J” we would talk about what our life could be about. What I saw in “J” came as a single experience. I had an apartment off-campus. I felt, ‘this is the right person to be married to’. [I discovered that we shared] a core commonality of beliefs and values. Money wasn’t as important. I like someone intelligent.

S: You truly felt in relationship, rather than seeing him as an “object” on campus.

M: Exactly right!

S: Not like some guy driving a Porsche...

M: Actually, it was a Fiat. Oh, there was also a Porsche...(laughter)

S: A blessing that you found in each other the interior side of life.

M: (thinking aloud) Does it come unbidden?

S: [In regard to courtship] - What would Jonathon Edwards say about predestination?

J: Predestination is a backward look. It is a static. Jonathon Edwards would be more concerned with *discerning graces*. He is interested to help people discern God’s gracious presence in their living. His treatise is 12 signs that don’t indicate “gracious affections” of the will, and 12 signs that could indicate “gracious affections”. It took a real risk for “M” to [join me] at my Prairie parish. At the time, I thought, ‘You’re nuts! To have gone

through the seminary for three years and NOT be a minister?' I think her church was wrong to ordain an older woman and not a younger, capable women like "M".

S: That sounds like a protective feeling for her.

J: I was committed to seeing her as a minister, for her own self. She's gifted for the vocation. I knew she was, out of all in our class in seminary.

M: Six of us were to graduate, and they were only going to select three. It really tested our Christian charity, all being in that situation.

S: You have children?

M: We have three children together.

S: Perhaps I can risk this question... piety and sexuality – do they converge in some way?

J: Perhaps I'm repressed, but if I was writing about it, yes. But not overmuch, I'd say.

Piety for me is prayer and core practices with God. In this sense, I'm somewhat biblical.

Too close an association [of prayer and sensuality] can be corrosive of both.

Other Near Eastern religions saw them as close. I saw my relationship with "M" as a gift of God. But let's not have too much Holy Water on what we [humanly] like. Spirituality- in the secular culture- finds it hard to turn off the hose. There's too much potential for idolatry there.

M: I don't have a difference of definition. I'd use the word "discipline".

J: There are other legitimate choices others could make.

M: Making a distinction there, but not that they're ever distinct. Sexuality is about who we are, there is also an aspect of transcendence in our sexuality. I think it's also possible in our intellectual, married life to be united in piety. It's often more enduring than

attraction, but both provide a window into the other. When Catholic clergy try to talk about discipline in practice, it's easy to misinterpret them saying that sexuality is bad.

J: It's a painful defining cleavage in the Catholic church - and for our son.

S: Your son is choosing to be Catholic? Do the three of you dialogue about that?

M: All the time!

J: He says Augustine makes more sense than the contract theory [of secular philosophy].

That's ethics without metaphysics. He found that difficult from a moral point of view.

But now we're post-holocaust.

S: Could you explain?

J: When you have people whom don't want you to exist - *what* social contract [is there]?

You have to look at the metaphysics. It's a challenge to secular philosophy even more than to theology. Our son recognized the issues of the metaphysical.

M: Earlier on, it was seeing his curiosity peak, and his own religious affection. He admires his parents. When he committed to becoming a member of the Roman Catholic church, it was like a wedding service. His network is now there. A child needs to grow from home and parents- it's natural- but there's two streams. It's hard to be a committed Christian -we have that in common. But the hard belief system of the Catholic church is the other stream. 'Where does it say an infallible Pope?' [we ask him]. [I think] he'll be somewhere else, later. He's 21 now.

J: It's been good for him, too. His sister told him because he was not part of our household, he couldn't just come here and expect everything to be the same as before he moved out. He was annoyed!

S: Some sibling rivalry here?

J and M: Oh yes! (laughter).

S: Do you counsel others together, or separate?

J: Separate.

M: But we have an understanding that we don't have secrets from each other, and we tell them.

S: Do you know if this was the relationship of Martin Luther and his wife?

J: She was his wife, not his cohort.

M: That's an interesting question about Luther. [We need] models of partners who are also religious. I've fought hard to have the term "wife" or "spouse", instead of the more vague term "partner".

J: The idea of a single [unmarried] minister is suspect. There is a role for the minister's wife. Even our single parishioners like that we're married.

M: I think that we're male and female ministers.

S: There's a warm hearth for single people to be in the home of a couple.

J: When "M" chose to come out to the Prairies, I knew it was what she [really] wanted to do. Our relationship, marriage, and vocation makes sense here. I don't know if it would have made sense [somewhere else]. But being here gave us certain roles and connections. It's a secular, anti-religious neighborhood, and a different dynamic [from a rural, prairie ministry]. We're the least offensive church for most. We straddle a certain boundary – "M" makes us acceptable. [Now speaking to M...] Hard to conceive if I was a milkman and you were a doctor, what this life would look like.

M: When I reflect on our married life and that of others, I see transitions. Like my work in hospice. My brother died at sixteen of an aneurysm. Even jobs – you could go through

seven [different] jobs, and change partners, too. What can be most abiding is our spiritual beliefs. As that practice continues, though, it's not a panacea. A grounded personality and a relationship that transcends the momentary despair...

J: The piety of forgiveness, rather than an ideology.

M: [Speaking of a world with ever-changing ideals] It's peace one decade, ecology the next... Now it's Barney [the children's purple dinosaur on television] teaching kids not to trust strangers – that sounds scary.

J: This is the life we have! Generalized things just don't have the flexibility. Biblical heroes are fallen. Ideology is right or wrong. It's not about ideological values, because that's too static.

S: That's where I find Martin Buber. He also rejected ideology in favor of dialogue. But I won't call him an existentialist, because that's too big an umbrella, trying to cover everyone from Nietzsche to Kierkegaard to Sartre. I'm working on what I'm calling the "new" essentialists.

J: I think Buber was the greatest philosopher of the twentieth century.

M: The Trinity is all *about* relationship.

J: From a Virginia Satir point of view, I'd ask, 'What's the dialogue?' It's the conversation at the Cross. [It's Jesus speaking to the one next to him:] 'You'll be with me this day in Paradise'. The Cross is the word – the dialogical moment in which the "Thou" disclosed a heart of love, forgiveness and destiny.

Appendix D: Human Research Ethics Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Dear Participant:

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled “Impact of Spirituality on Congruence in Couple Relations” that is being conducted by myself, Steven Bentheim, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Graduate Studies at the University of Victoria. You may contact me if you have further questions by telephone at 250-598-9621. I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a graduate degree in Interdisciplinary Studies. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Jordan Paper (250-598-5265) and Dr. Honore’ France (250-721-7858), whom you may contact.

The purpose of my research project is to discover the significance of spirituality in the participants’ experience as a couple. Research of this type is important because it seeks further understanding in the experience of couple relations, and includes the dimension of spirituality into the broader field of family studies. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are mature, highly articulate individuals in long-term, couple relationships, with a high degree of interest in this topic.

If you agree to participate in this research, your participation is completely voluntarily, and you may withdraw at any time. It is anticipated that your participation in this study should only be an inconvenience for the time of our meeting, about two hours, and for you to read over and amend your comments, which might take another two hours. With your permission, I will be audio-taping the interview, or I can transcribe by hand, as per your preference. Any potential risk should be minimal, and not outside the normal

emotional experience of your daily relationship. I will offer a list of local counseling services, should any upset proceed from your participation in this study.

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include the deepening of understanding of the couple relationship, and making a significant contribution to the field of couple and family therapy.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. Furthermore, if you do withdraw from the study, your data will not be used in the analysis.

In terms of protecting your anonymity, you will be given a pseudonym for all purposes of the study. Data from this study will be preserved for a period of five years, and then I will be erasing the audio-tapes and shredding the transcripts. Planned uses of this research data may include future publication or scholarly meetings. It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: to my dissertation committee, through presentations at scholarly meetings and possibly through articles or books on this topic.

In addition to your being able to contact myself and my supervisors at the above phone numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria at 250-472-4362.

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have any of your questions answered by myself as the researcher. I will take one signed copy and leave a copy of this consent form with you.

I am very grateful for your consent to participate in this research project.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date