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**Remarried couples' affective response to a mutual problem-solving  
skills program**

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**The University of Arizona, 1988**

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REMARRIED COUPLES' AFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO  
A MUTUAL PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS PROGRAM

by

Julie Ann Phillips

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the  
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
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MASTER OF ARTS  
In the Graduate College  
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

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**ABSTRACT**

Changes in the affect of ten remarried couples during participation in a communication and problem solving skills training program was investigated. Subjects completed a questionnaire assessing 25 positive and 25 negative feelings toward the spouse every night for 56 days. No changes in specific feeling states or in overall negative affect was found. A significant linear trend indicating a progressive increase in overall positive affect was found for husbands, but not for wives. The findings provide weak support for the affective impact of the intervention program or the conflict processes model underlying it.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The present study examines the relationship between changes in affect occurring in the context of a marriage and participation in the Mutual Problem Solving program (MPS), a marital skills training program designed to improve couples' ability to resolve conflict in a constructive manner. In order to establish the importance of monitoring affect as a method of exploring program effects, relevant marital research and interpersonal theories will be reviewed. In addition, the model of conflict processes which underlies the MPS program and describes the relationship between affect and conflict management will be explained. Last, the content and rationale of the MPS program will also be explained.

Current research and theory suggests that to fully understand how participation in a skills training program affects a couple's marital relationship, changes in each spouse's affective experience must be assessed. For example, behavioral measures of affect have been found to distinguish between distressed and nondistressed couples (Gottman, 1979). In addition, large correlations (upper 80's) between positive feelings toward the spouse and global scores of marital satisfaction were found for distressed and nondistressed

couples (Broderick & O'Leary, 1986). The same study also found that positive feelings toward the spouse accounted for a significant amount of the unique variance of marital satisfaction (34% for men, 30% for women) whereas positive and negative behaviors accounted for 2% and less of the unique variance. Last, positive feelings toward the spouse have been found to predict marital therapy outcome for women (O'Leary & Turkewitz, 1981).

Theoretically, Greenberg and Johnson (1986b) argue that emotion is "fundamentally relational; it helps people define themselves in interactions and is of major significance in understanding and changing relationship dynamics" (p. 20). In addition, Greenberg and Johnson (1986a) assert that the impact of affective experience results from its saliency, its ability to override other cues. Affective experience is seen as a "framework for the creation of meaning" (p. 4). This premise is supported by Peterson's (1977) conclusion that the affect codes compared to all the other codes in his Interaction Record procedure contained most of the interpersonal meaning exchanged in marital interactions.

In addition to marital research and theories of affect, the conflict process model underlying the MPS program argues for the importance of monitoring changes in affective responses resulting from interaction with one's spouse.

### The Conflict Process Model

The MPS program is based upon a model of conflict processes in close relationships which is consistent with the work of Peterson (1983) and Berscheid (1983). Peterson defines conflict as "an interpersonal process that occurs whenever the actions of one person interfere with the actions of another" (p. 365). Berscheid's theory of the subjective experience of emotions suggests that the conflict process results in the experience of negative emotions. Specifically, Berscheid states that negative emotions result when ongoing behavior is interrupted so that a desired goal is not reached. In contrast, positive emotions occur when it is perceived that one's sense of control and mastery over a certain situation has increased.

The working model of the conflict process which underlies the mutual problem solving program expands the conceptualizations described above. The model asserts that conflict begins when partners experience a "difference," that is, an interruption of two people's ongoing interaction. The partner responds with central nervous system arousal. The subjective experience of this arousal depends upon the results of a cognitive process in which the significance of the difference is evaluated. If the subject decides the difference is not important, or not sufficiently repetitive and disruptive, the emotional response is minimal. If the

difference is found to be significant, the subject will respond with several different plans of action. To the extent that the subject is unable to restore goal-directed interaction with the partner, the emotional response will be negative and intense. To the extent that the subject can overcome disruption in interaction with the partner, the emotional response will be positive.

In summary, the conflict process model postulates that changes in a couple's conflict management style should result in changes in their subjective experience of emotions elicited by interaction with the spouse.

#### The Mutual Problem Solving Program

The Mutual Problem-Solving Skills (MPS) program consists of ten steps in which two major types of skills are presented in a progressive manner. These two types of skills, communication and problem-solving, have been found in the marital quality literature to differentiate distressed couples from nondistressed couples (Gottman, 1979; Lewis & Spanier, 1979). The MPS program is designed to train couples to recognize conflict management behaviors that are incompatible with restoring facilitative interaction and to teach constructive behaviors that can replace less effective methods. The first part of the MPS program involves teaching couples a style of communication that encourages open and uninhibited expression of thoughts and feelings. Open

communication is facilitated through training in several skills designed to decrease defensiveness. Specifically, couples are taught to take responsibility for their thoughts and feelings by using "I messages" and to recognize and avoid blaming statements expressed or implied in "You messages." Training in reflective listening is designed to decrease defensiveness by ensuring that the spouse knows that his or her message has been heard and understood. Defensiveness is also reduced by requiring that couples conceptualize their problems as relationship problems to which both partners contribute in some way.

In addition to training in skills which decrease defensiveness, uninhibited communication is facilitated by encouraging the use of "open" questions (those that widen possible disclosure), and by discouraging the use of "closed" questions (those that limit or imply responses). The latter half of the program involves training in a series of problem solving steps that insures active participation by both partners in generating, evaluating, choosing, and implementing a plan of action designed to achieve a mutually satisfying goal.

The MPS program has previously been tested and found to be effective with two samples of nondistressed, premarried couples (Ridley et al., 1981; Ridley & Nelson, 1984). In both studies participants showed significant improvement in

communication and problem solving ability at post-test and six months later relative to a contact control group. The present study is part of ongoing research on the MPS program, in which different populations are utilized to test how well MPS's effectiveness generalizes.

### The Current Project

The goal of the present MPS program is to train remarried couples in a constructive problem-solving procedure in which both partners actively participate in resolving relationship differences. It is hoped that by expanding their repertoire of conflict management behaviors, the marital satisfaction of remarried couples can be increased. Remarried couples were chosen for this project because this sample was seen as a stronger test of the MPS program's effectiveness. In a review of the literature on remarried families, Farrell and Markman (1986) concluded that the need to acquire effective communication and problem solving skills is especially important in this population due to the diversity and complexity of relationships among members of reconstituted families.

### The Present Study

The present study represents only a portion of a larger research project examining remarried couples' responses to the MPS program. The present study focuses on

data collected throughout the course of the program concerning each subject's affective reaction to his or her spouse and the marital relationship. The hypotheses generated for the present study are not directed exclusively to a remarried population, but could apply to a variety of intimate, adult relationships. Three general areas of inquiry will be explored in the present study.

The primary area of interest concerns changes in subjects' overall positive and negative affect throughout the course of the MPS program. The first hypothesis is based on the presumed initial effect of communication skills training. Specifically, hypothesis 1a states that, relative to baseline data, there will be a drop in positive affect and a rise in negative affect during the first several weeks of the MPS program in which the speaking and listening skills are presented. Practicing the speaking and listening skills requires that couples discuss examples of their partner's behavior that interferes with reaching some goal as well as their affective reaction to this behavior. The partner may have been unaware of the degree to which his behavior has a negative impact on his spouse. Consequently, the couple is more likely to identify differences in their relationship and to identify these differences as significant. However, they have not yet learned the skills to increase their ability to resolve these differences. The conflict process model states

that to the degree that a spouse is unable to overcome disruptive interaction, the emotional response will be negative. Therefore, couples may initially respond to the MPS program with increased negative affect and decreased positive affect.

Hypothesis 1b states that there will be an increase in positive affect and a decrease in negative affect by the end of the program. The conflict process model states that to the extent that a spouse is able to restore goal-directed interaction with the partner, the emotional response will be positive. Therefore, as couples master the communication and problem solving skills and begin to utilize them in a constructive manner, the initial negative impact on their affect will be reversed.

In addition to testing the above hypotheses, individual differences will be explored. This will be done by constructing profiles for each subject which describe changes in positive and negative affect over the course of the program.

The second area of inquiry concerns group changes in several specific types of affect that should be altered by training subjects in communication and problem solving skills. Hypothesis 2a predicts that successful training in the speaking and listening skills will result in a greater sense of feeling free to speak openly to one's spouse and understood by one's spouse. On the other hand, hypothesis 2b

predicts that feeling cautious about what one says and feeling misunderstood by one's spouse will decrease by the end of the MPS program. In addition, hypothesis 2c predicts that successful training in the problem solving skills should decrease feelings of powerlessness in the marital relationship.

The third and last area concerns the psychometric properties of the feeling log, the instrument implemented in this project which measures emotions experienced in the context of the marital relationship. Specifically, the extent to which the subjects find the phrases included in the feeling log to be applicable and significant will be determined. In addition, the degree to which the feeling log's subscales tap the quality of conflict management as conceptualized above will be assessed.

## CHAPTER 2

### METHOD

#### Subjects

Remarried couples were recruited from the Tucson area with announcements printed on flyers and in local newspapers and broadcast on local radio stations. "Remarried couple" was defined as any married couple in which at least one of the spouses had been married previously. A total of 24 couples participated in the pre-testing session. Of these 24, 14 couples dropped out of the program before the last class, and the other 10 couples completed the program including the post-testing session. Only data from these 10 couples will be included in the present study.

The sample is very heterogeneous with regard to age, income, years married, and income (see Table 1). The mean age is 40.85 and the mean annual income is \$26,900 per spouse. Couples have been married an average of 4.3 years, and have an average of 2.7 children residing at least half time in their household. There is less variation in religion: 45% are Protestant, 25% are Catholic, 5% are Jewish, 5% are "eclectic," and the remaining 20% are not affiliated with any religion. The sample on the whole is well educated: 20% have a high school diploma, 15% completed vocational

Table 1. Subject demographics.

	Range	Mean
Age of subjects	28-71	40.85
Years married	1-14	4.3
Number of children in household*	0-7	2.7
Annual income per spouse	2,200-70,00	26,900

<u>Religion</u>				
	Protestant	Catholic	Jewish	None/Other
<u>N</u> =	9	5	1	5

<u>Education</u>	
High school graduate	<u>N</u> = 4
Vocational school or some college	<u>N</u> = 3
College graduate	<u>N</u> = 6
Some graduate or master's degree	<u>N</u> = 7

school or some college, 30% are college graduates, and 35% completed some graduate or professional school or received a master's degree. None of the subjects had any advanced degrees. Ninety percent of the sample are anglo, and 10% are hispanic.

### Measures

#### Feeling Log (FL)

Since no self-report measure assessing daily occurrence of a variety of positive and negative emotions occurring within a marital context could be found in the literature (for review of assessment of affect in marital relationships, see Margolin et al., 1988), a measure was developed by the researcher. The FL is a list of phrases that represent the range of positive and negative feelings likely to occur in the context of an intimate relationship. Feeling words were derived from Russell and Mehrabian's (Plutchik, 1980) "preliminary dictionary of emotional terms" (p. 166), from the Emotion-Mood Index (Plutchik, 1980; p. 206), and from several feeling word lists supplied by several psychotherapists. The FL was given to an undergraduate class in family relations. The students provided feedback on the comprehensiveness of the FL and made suggestions about possible additional items. The final form of the FL consists of 25 positive and 25 negative statements (see Appendix A). For each day, subjects are asked to rate

the intensity of each feeling on a scale from zero to six. Feeling states not experienced while with the spouse on that day are rated zero. The feeling states which are experienced by the subject are rated in intensity from one (less than slightly) to six (extremely).

#### Areas of Change (AC)

The Areas of Change Questionnaire (Margolin et al., 1983) consists of 34 items that assess the amount of change the subject wishes from the spouse in a wide range of likely conflict areas including emotional expression, companionship, finances, recreation, sex, child management, and domestic duties (see Appendix B). The desired change in frequency at which the partner displays each behavior is rated on a seven point scale from "much less" (-3) to "no change" (0) to "much more" (+3). Weiss and his colleagues (cited in Margolin et al., 1983) obtained an internal consistency index of 0.89 for the AC. Several studies (cited in Margolin et al., 1983) have repeatedly found high correlations ( $r = -0.70$ ) between AC scores and the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale. In addition, Birchler and Webb (cited in Margolin et al., 1983) found that AC mean scores to be 6.9 for nondistressed couples and 28.0 for distressed couples.

### Problem-Solve (PS)

Problem-Solve is a subscale of the Conflict Inventory (Margolin et al., 1982). It consists of seven items which assess behaviors directed toward conflict resolution (see Appendix C). Each item is rated on a six-point scale ranging from "rarely" to "almost always" in response to the question "how often does your partner exhibit the following behavior." Margolin et al. report an internal consistency of 0.82 for PS. PS discriminates distressed from nondistressed couples and correlates with Spanier's Dyadic Adjustments Scale at 0.69 for wives and 0.36 for husbands.

### Procedure

Couples who agreed to participate in the remarriage project were scheduled to meet once a week for 10 weeks. Couples met in groups consisting of up to three couples. The first meeting was a testing session in which spouses individually completed a packet of questionnaires that included the AC and the PS. After completing all questionnaires, couples were audiotaped for 20 minutes while they attempted to solve a relationship issue that had been identified by the couple as problematic.

After the audiotaping, the tester explained the Feeling Log to the couple. Each spouse was asked to complete one FL each night for 8 weeks (1 week of baseline data and 7 weeks during the MPS program) and to return the completed

logs to the group leaders at each weekly class meeting. Training occurred from the second to the ninth meeting, with each meeting lasting approximately three hours. The tenth and eleventh meetings were the post-testing and follow-up sessions, respectively, and consisted of the same procedure as the pre-testing session. No data from the post-testing and follow-up sessions are included in the present study.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESULTS

#### Hypotheses 1a and 1b

The predicted pattern of change in positive and negative subscale scores was tested with several analyses of variance of a repeated-measure design with  $k = 8$  treatments (trials). Positive and negative subscale scores were calculated by averaging the intensity of occurring items (those rated 1 to 6) across each of the eight weeks of data collection. Missing items for incomplete feeling logs were scored as 0 (nonoccurrence of that feeling state). Weekly average scores of subjects who did not complete all feeling logs were calculated by taking the average score of those feeling logs which were completed. Due to statistical requirements, subjects missing an entire week of data were eliminated from the group analyses. Average intensity of occurring items was chosen as a dependent variable based on the conflict process model, which states that the degree to which the partner's behavior is disruptive or facilitative impacts on the hedonic sign and intensity of the spouse's affect. In other words, it is not how many different types of positive and negative feelings are experienced, but the

general strength of affective experience that is theoretically important.

Two sets of data were tested for orthogonal linear and quadratic trends: (1) average weekly intensity of occurring positive items, and (2) average weekly intensity of occurring negative items. No significant group effects were found for the negative items. However, a nonsignificant trend ( $p = .10$ ,  $n = 16$ ) was found for the positive items, indicating that the group's average intensity of occurring positive items increased through the course of the program. When husbands' and wives' positive scores were tested separately for linear or quadratic trends, a sex difference was found. No significant results were found for wives' scores, whereas a significant linear trend was found for the husbands' scores ( $p = .03$ ,  $n = 7$ ). Figure 1 shows the plot of the mean positive intensity scores for the husbands across eight weeks of data collection. The proportion of variance in husbands' positive affect accounted for by time was 29% ( $\eta^2 = .54$ ).

In summary, no support was found for the hypothesis that participants experienced an increase in negative affect toward the spouse and a decrease in positive affect toward the spouse during the initial weeks of the MPS program. Only partial support was obtained for hypothesis 1b: although there was no decrease in negative affect, there was an

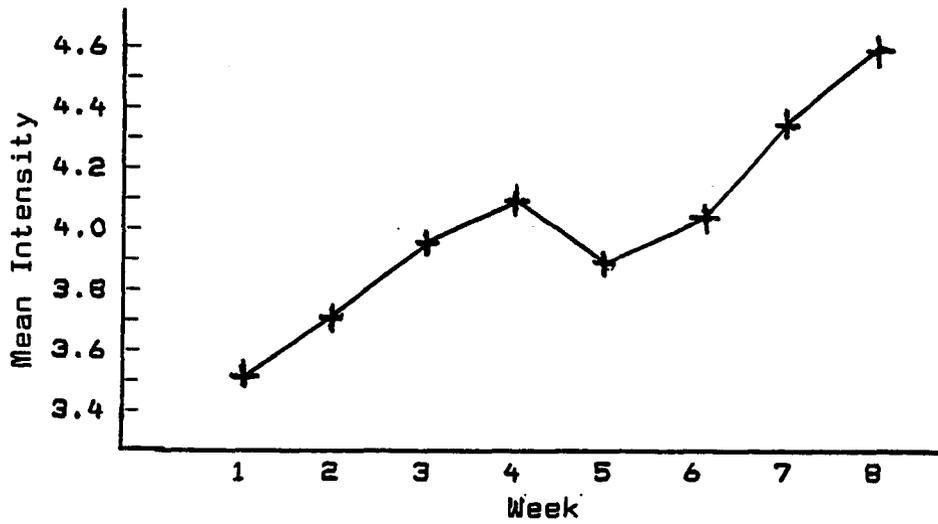


Figure 1. Weekly mean intensity of occurring positive items for husbands.

increase in positive affect by the end of the program. However, this finding held true only for husbands. It appears then that participation in the MPS program is not related to any systematic group changes in negative affect towards the spouse. In addition, participation in the program is related to improvements in husband's positive affect towards his wife, but not vice versa.

#### Descriptive Data

In addition to testing the first set of hypotheses, descriptive profiles were compiled for each subject so that possible individual differences could be diagramed visually. Profiles were drawn for each subject across each of the 56 days of the program (7 days of baseline data plus 49 days during the intervention). Each profile consists of two plotted lines: (1) average intensity of occurring positive items, and (2) average intensity of occurring negative items. The resulting profiles are presented in Figures 2 through 11. Inspection of the profiles most obviously reveals the large amount of individual difference across subjects. Individual profiles differ along five different characteristics. The first two are the average mean intensity of positive and negative feeling states, the second two are the amount of variability in positive and negative scores, and the last is the daily positions of the positive and negative scores relative to each other. As all of these characteristics may

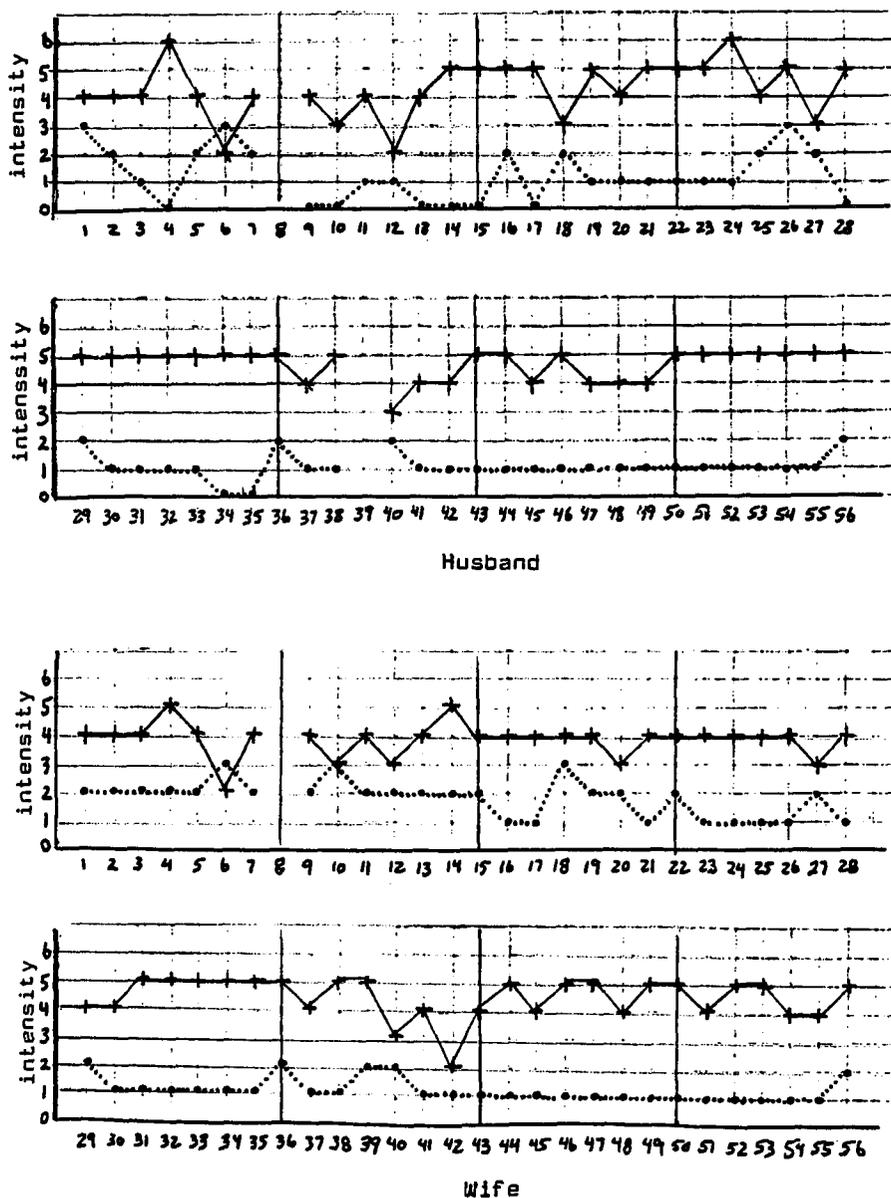


Figure 2. Daily intensity of occurring items for couple 1. -- Solid lines represent positive feeling states and dotted lines represent negative feeling states. Average intensity was rounded to the nearest whole number.

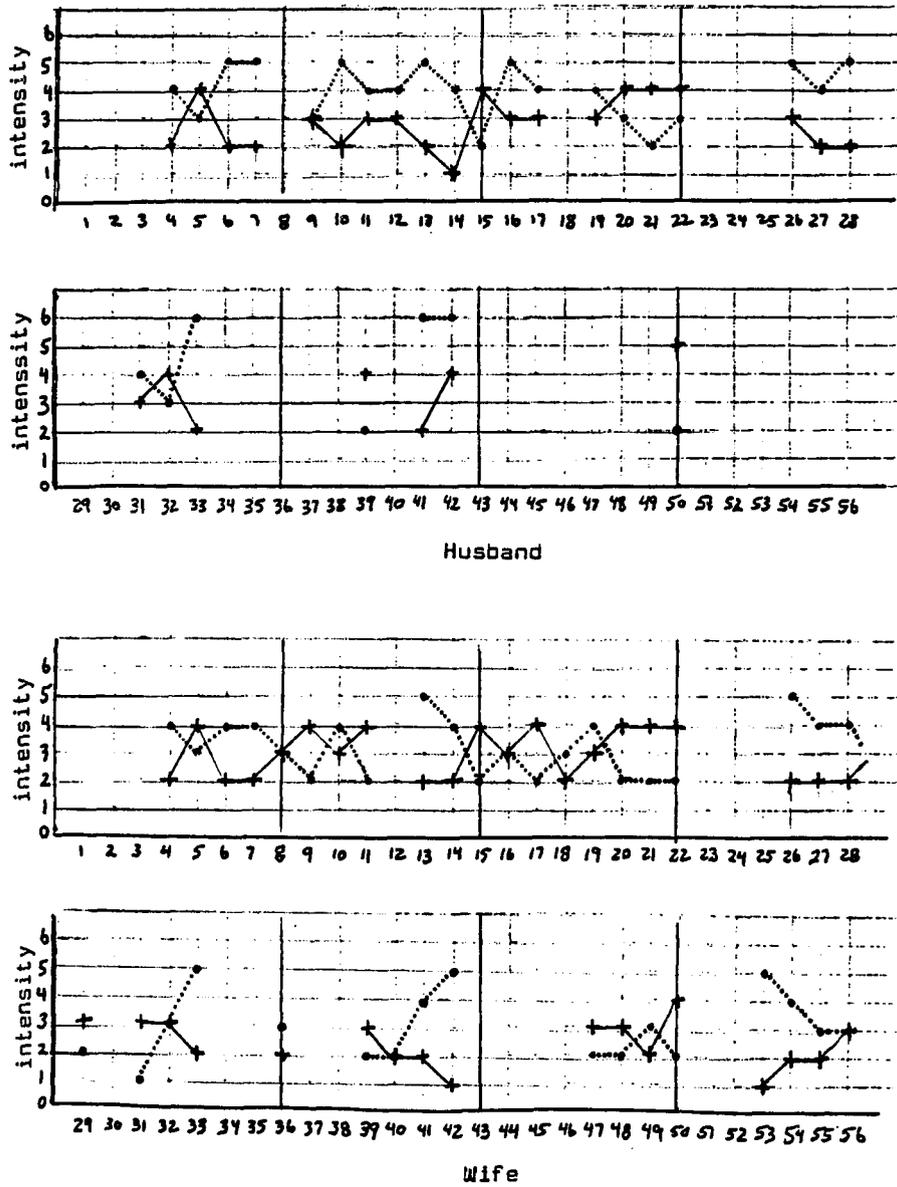


Figure 3. Daily intensity of occurring items for couple 2. -- Solid lines represent positive feeling states and dotted lines represent negative feeling states. Average intensity was rounded to the nearest whole number.

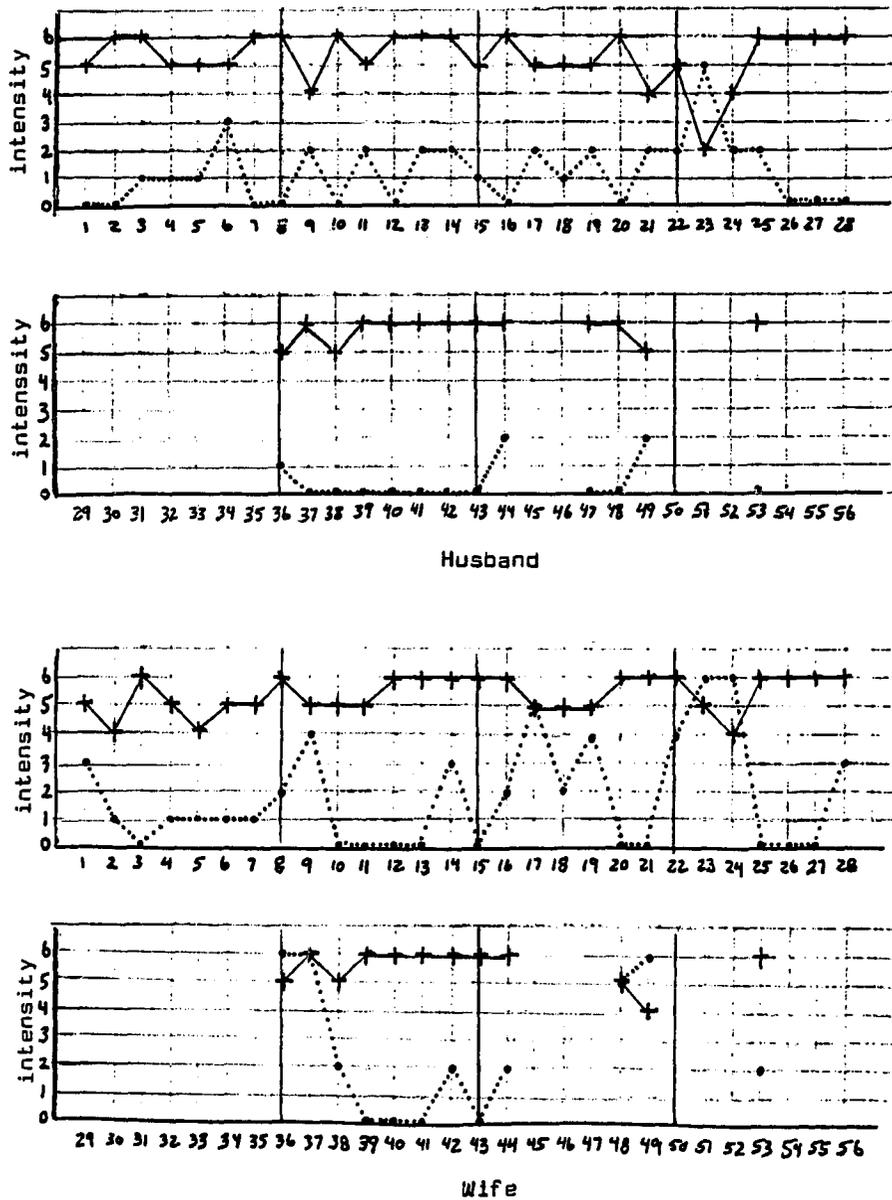


Figure 4. Daily intensity of occurring items for couple 3. -- Solid lines represent positive feeling states and dotted lines represent negative feeling states. Average intensity was rounded to the nearest whole number.

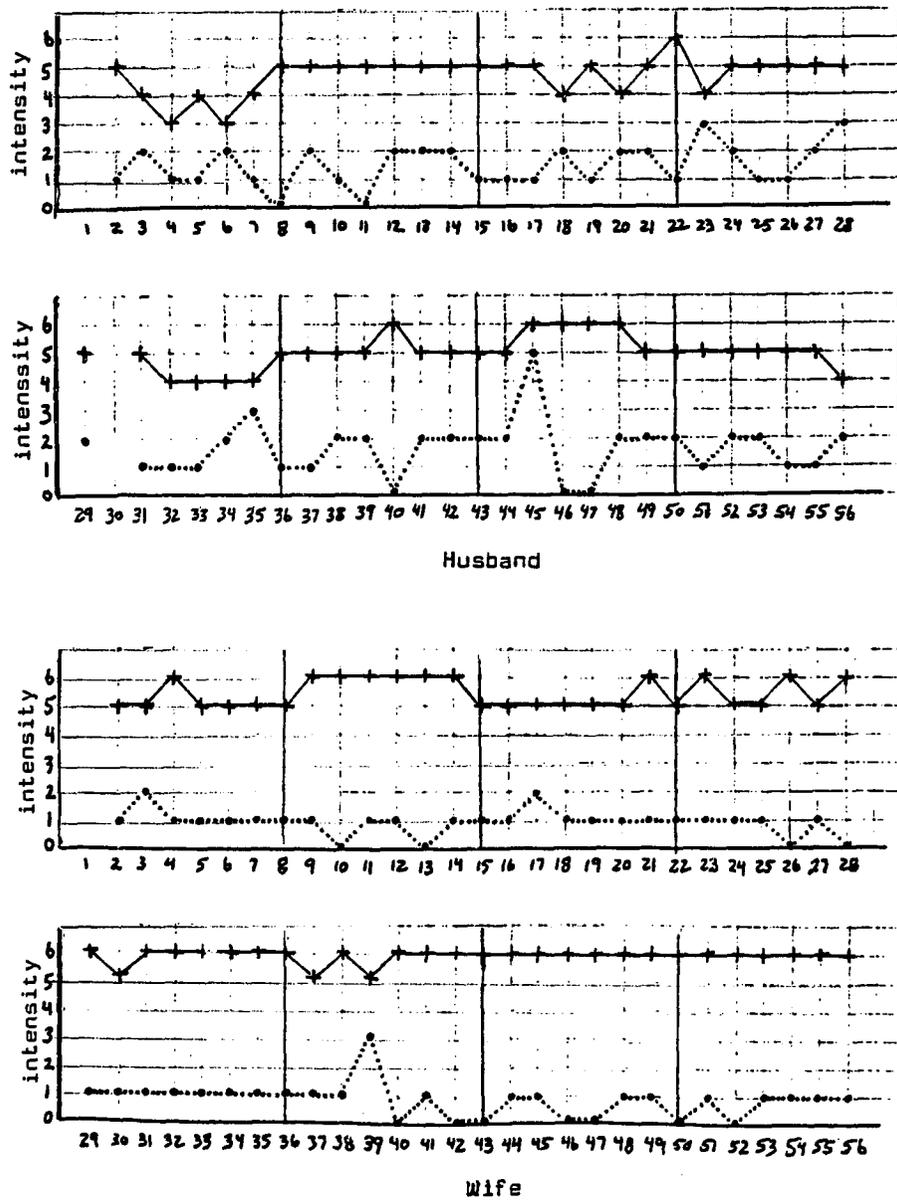


Figure 5. Daily intensity of occurring items for couple 4. -- Solid lines represent positive feeling states and dotted lines represent negative feeling states. Average intensity was rounded to the nearest whole number.

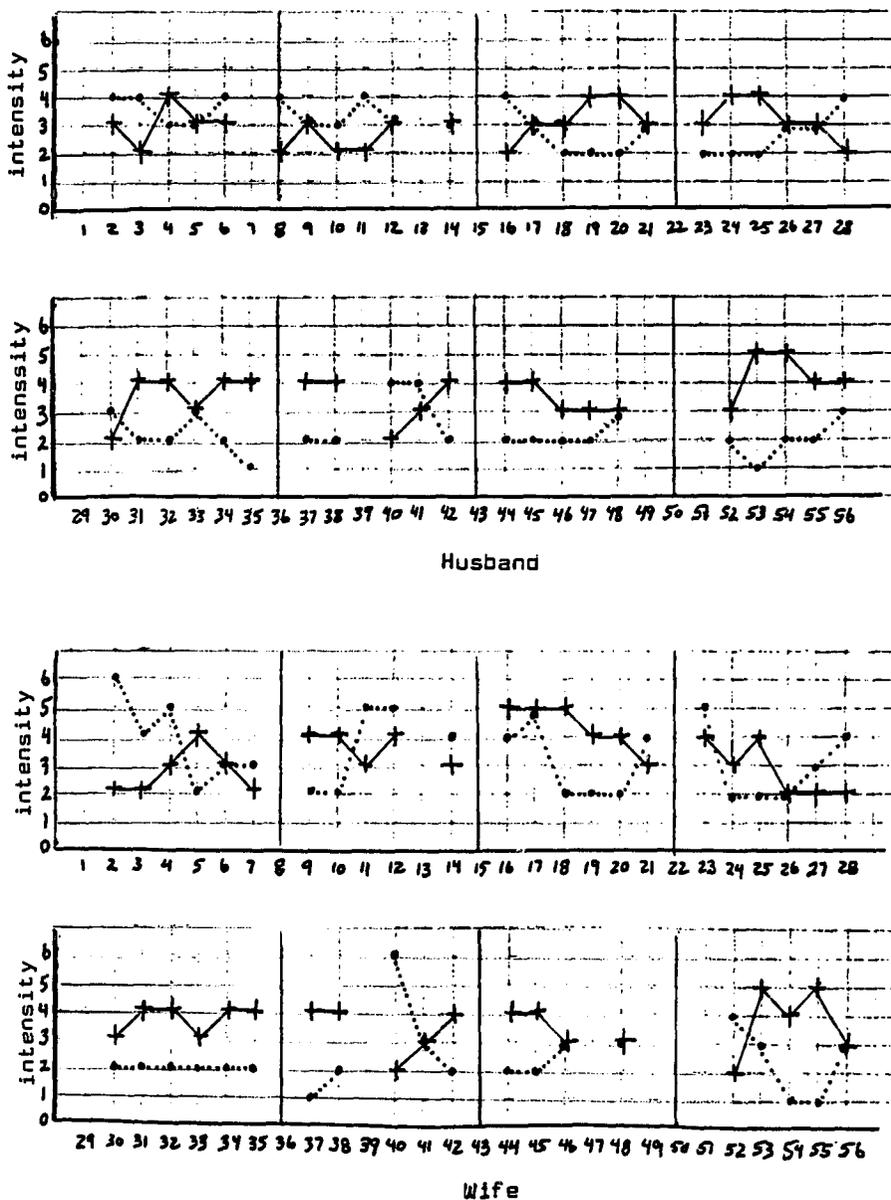


Figure 6. Daily intensity of occurring items for couple 5. -- Solid lines represent positive feeling states and dotted lines represent negative feeling states. Average intensity was rounded to the nearest whole number.

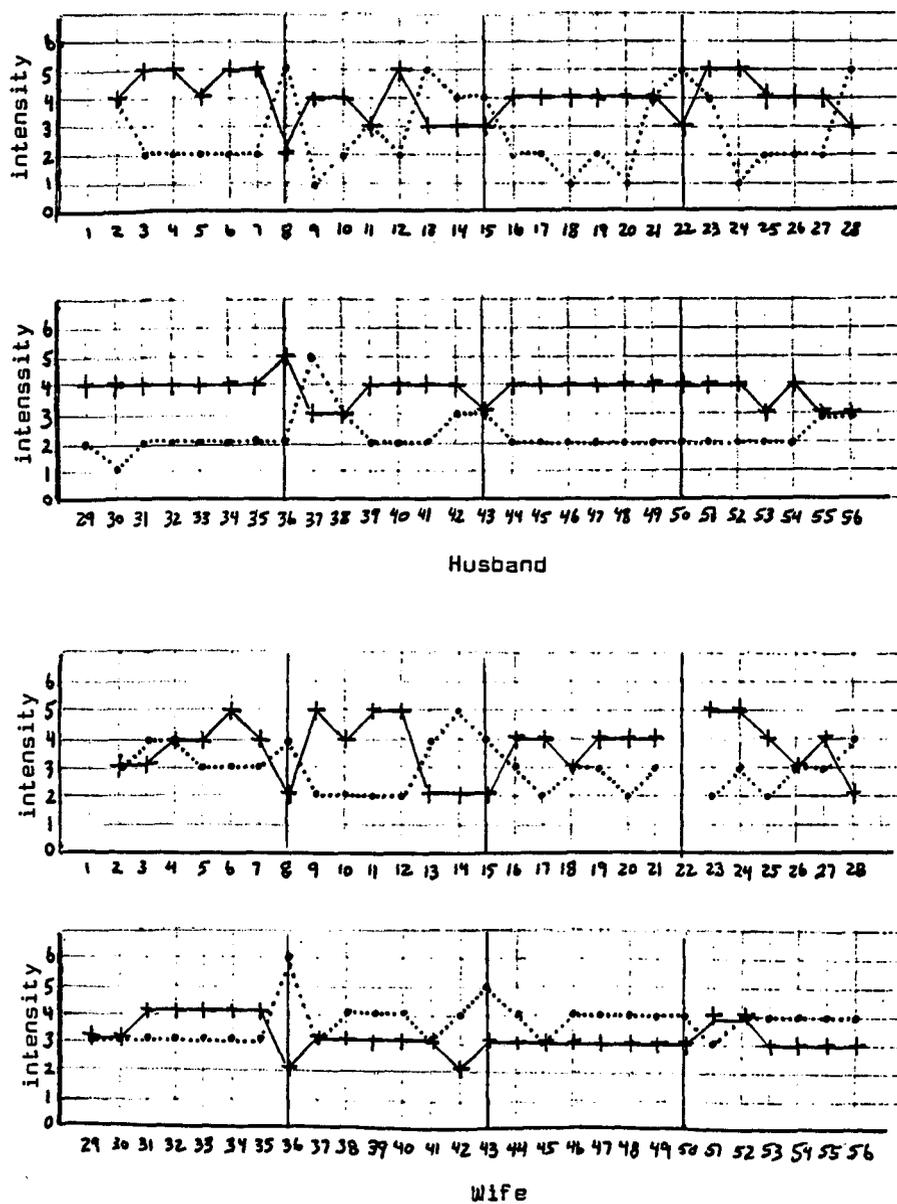


Figure 7. Daily intensity of occurring items for couple 6. -- Solid lines represent positive feeling states and dotted lines represent negative feeling states. Average intensity was rounded to the nearest whole number.

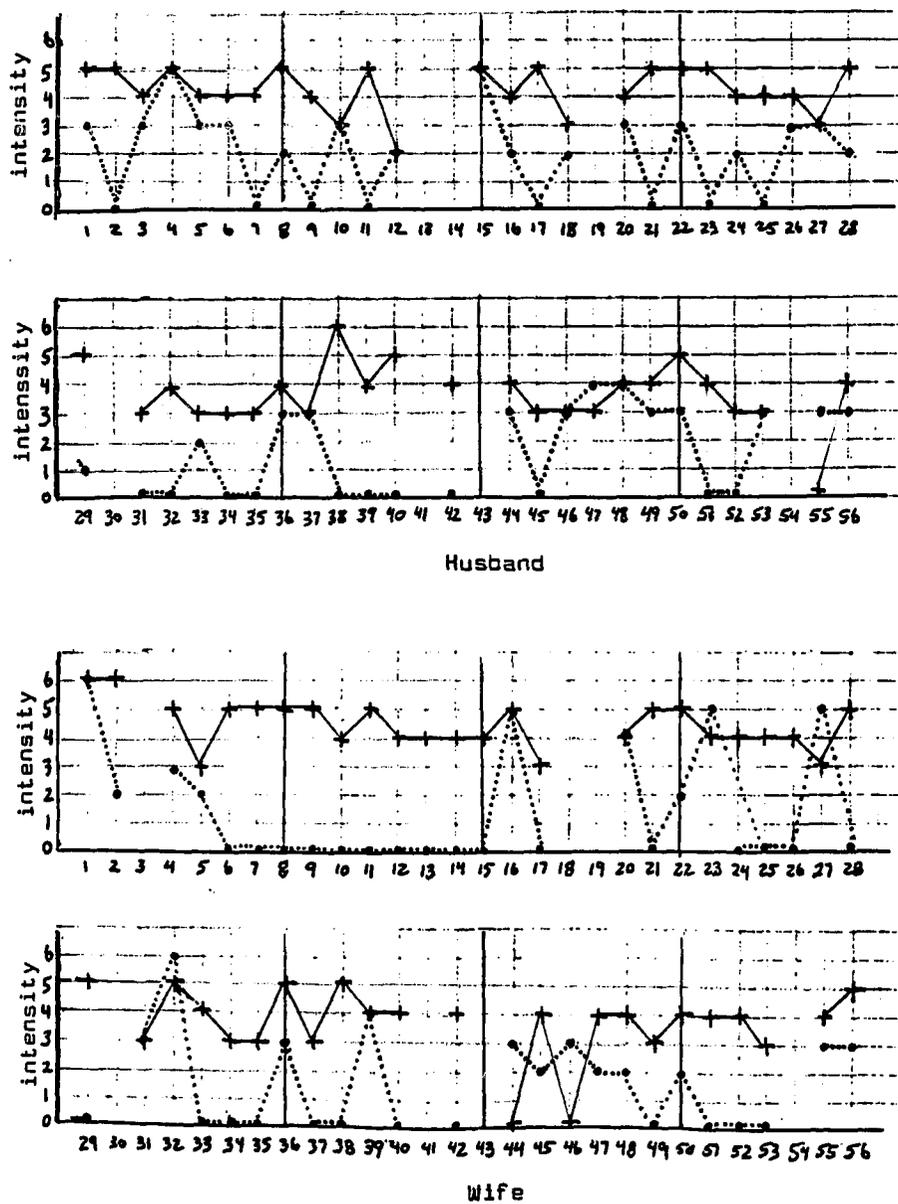


Figure 8. Daily intensity of occurring items for couple 7. -- Solid lines represent positive feeling states and dotted lines represent negative feeling states. Average intensity was rounded to the nearest whole number.

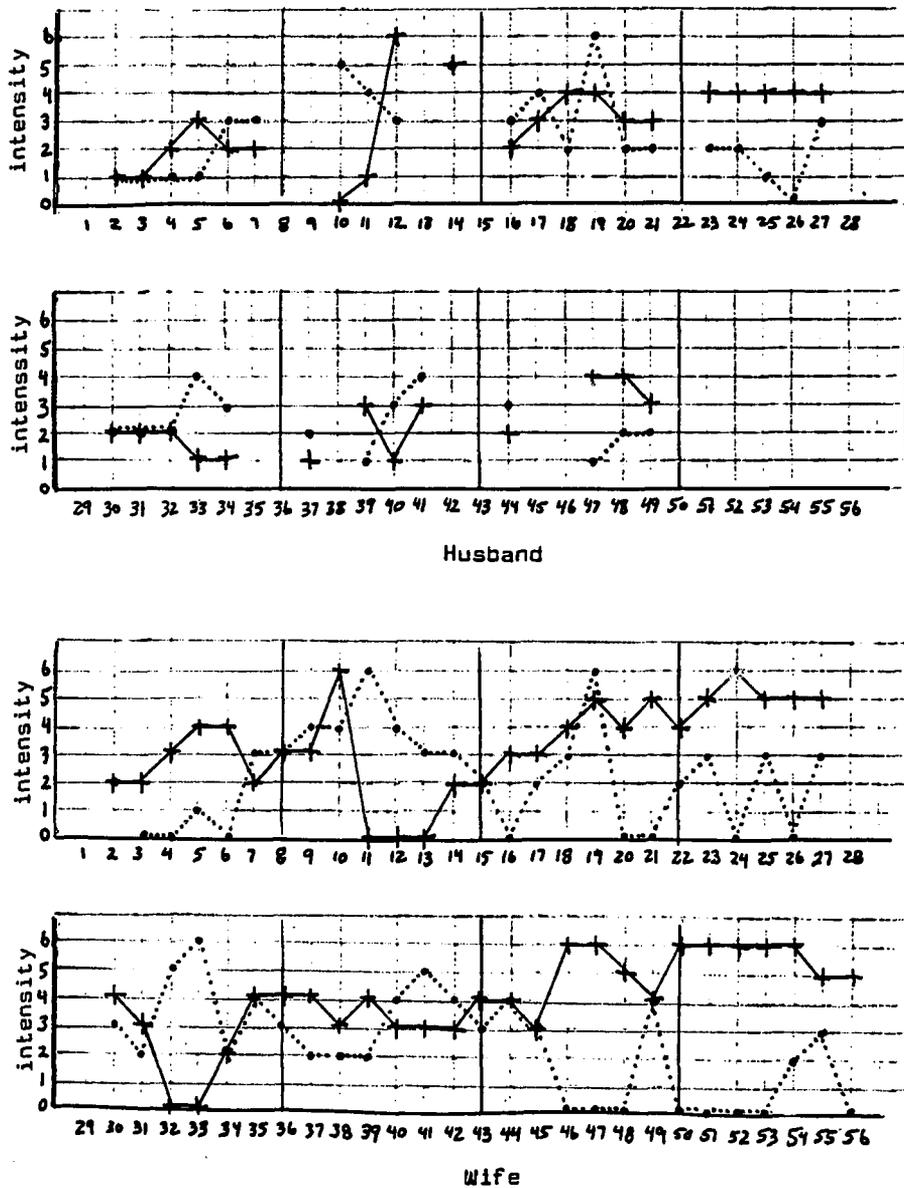


Figure 9. Daily intensity of occurring items for couple 8. -- Solid lines represent positive feeling states and dotted lines represent negative feeling states. Average intensity was rounded to the nearest whole number.

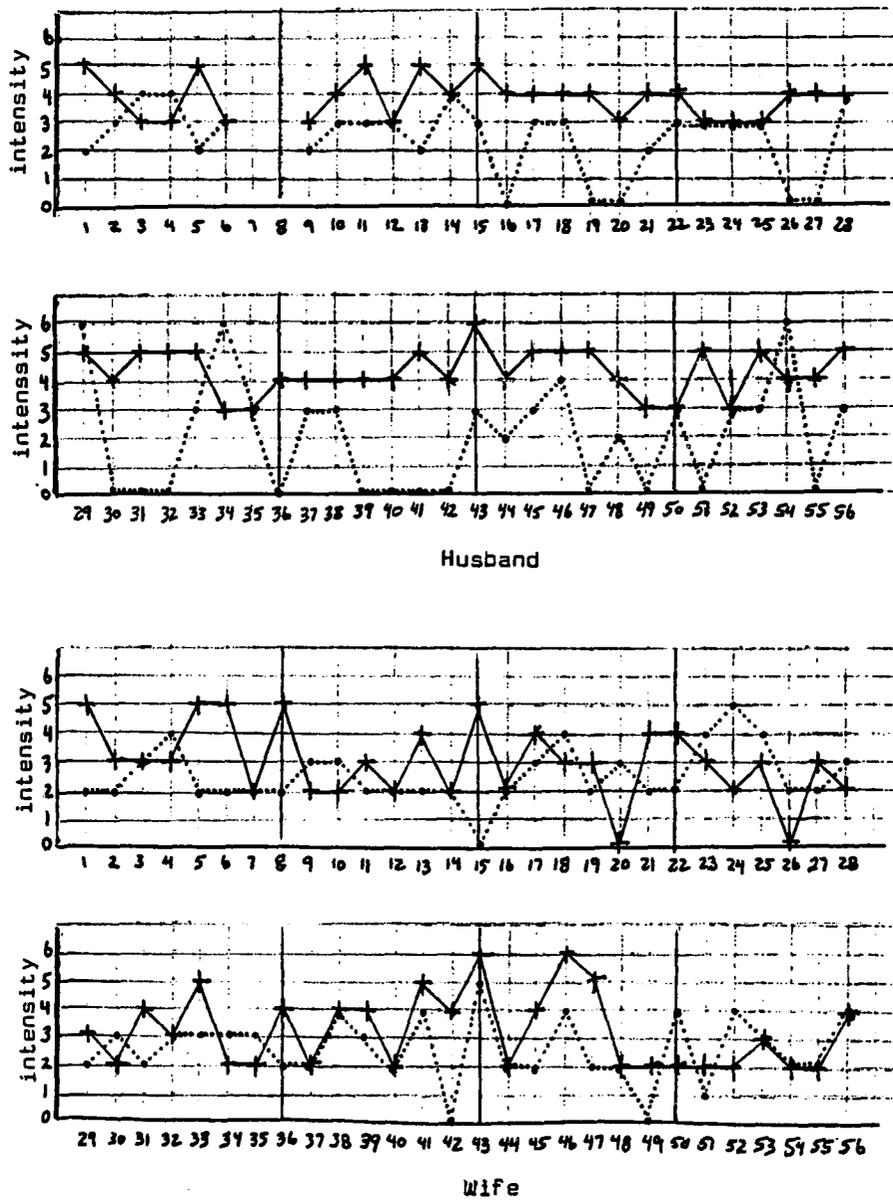


Figure 10. Daily intensity of occurring items for couple 9. -- Solid lines represent positive feeling states and dotted lines represent negative feeling states. Average intensity was rounded to the nearest whole number.

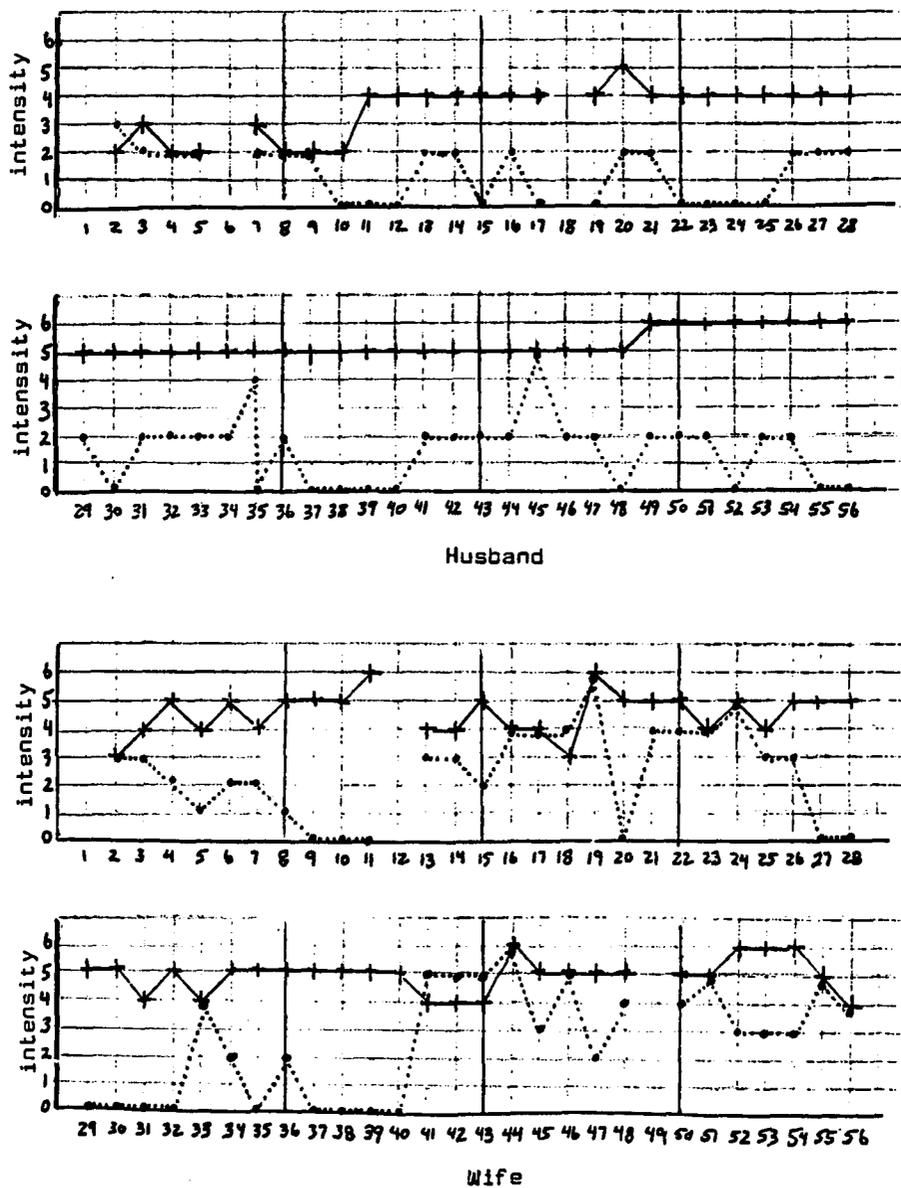


Figure 11. Daily intensity of occurring items for couple 10. -- Solid lines represent positive feeling states and dotted lines represent negative feeling states. Average intensity was rounded to the nearest whole number.

have implications regarding how subjects' marital affect may change during participation in the MPS program, a score which represents all five was obtained for each subject. This score, which shall be called "negative cross-over," represents the percentage of days in which negative affect was rated more intensely than positive affect. The percentage of negative cross-overs is presented in Table 2. Subjects were divided into two groups: those who reported less than 15% negative cross-overs and those who reported more than 20% negative cross-overs. It is interesting to note that 58% subjects in the low percentage group are men compared to only 25% in the high percentage group.

#### Hypotheses 2a, 2b, and 2c

Analyses of variance using a repeated-measure design were performed on the average weekly intensity ratings of the items "understood by my spouse," "free to express myself openly," "misunderstood by my spouse," "cautious about what I said," and "like I have little impact on what happens in our relationship." No significant results were found.

#### Psychometric Data

Finally, several different procedures were employed to assess the psychometric properties of the feeling log.

Data on all 50 items of the feeling log were factor analyzed. Data from all 20 subjects across the 56 days of

Table 2. Percentage of days in which negative affect was rated more intensely than positive affect (negative crossovers).

Low Percentage Group		High Percentage Group	
Husband 1	2%	Husband 2	69%
Wife 1	2%	Wife 2	50%
Husband 3	2%	Husband 5	25%
Wife 3	10%	Wife 5	30%
Husband 4	0%	Wife 6	41%
Wife 4	0%	Husband 8	35%
Husband 6	13%	Wife 8	23%
Husband 7	4%	Wife 9	25%
Wife 7	10%		
Husband 9	9%		
Husband 10	2%		
Wife 10	6%		

data collection were included in the factor analysis. A minimum criteria of a 1.0 eigenvalue was required for the inclusion of a factor. Items were delineated and these were rotated by the varimax technique to simple structural criteria. Two orthogonal factors were found. All 25 positive items loaded on the first factor, and all 25 negative items loaded on the second. All loadings were greater than 0.56.

To determine whether each of the phrases chosen for the feeling log are salient to the participants in terms of both how often and how strongly they tend to be experienced, the mean frequency of occurrence and standard deviation of each item were calculated across the baseline period. In addition, the mean intensity and standard deviation of intensity were also calculated for each item. Since not all of the subjects completed feeling logs for the entire baseline period of seven days, only data from the four feeling logs preceding the first class meeting were used so that the baseline period is consistent across subjects. Table 3 presents the frequency and intensity data for positive items and Table 4 presents similar data for the negative items. It appears that subjects report positive feelings towards the spouse more frequently and with more intensity than negative feelings. In addition, the standard deviation is fairly consistent across items--only two

Table 3. Means and standard deviations of the frequency and intensity of positive feeling log items.

Item	Frequency		Intensity	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
1	3.8	0.4	4.0	1.3
3	3.6	0.6	4.0	1.3
5	3.3	1.2	3.9	1.4
7	3.8	0.4	4.1	1.1
9	3.4	1.0	3.9	1.2
11	3.6	0.8	3.8	1.4
13	3.5	0.8	3.7	1.5
15	3.6	0.9	4.0	1.5
17	3.2	1.0	4.1	1.0
19	3.5	0.8	3.9	1.2
21	2.7	1.4	3.4	1.0
23	3.1	1.3	3.3	1.2
25	3.1	1.2	3.3	1.4
27	2.5	1.4	3.3	1.2
29	3.9	0.4	3.9	1.1
31	3.6	0.8	3.8	1.1
33	3.3	1.0	3.8	1.0
35	2.8	1.5	3.8	1.2
37	3.6	0.8	3.9	1.2
39	3.2	1.3	3.4	1.2

Table 3--Continued

Item	<u>Frequency</u>		<u>Intensity</u>	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
41	3.4	1.0	3.6	1.3
43	2.9	1.1	3.5	1.1
45	3.2	1.1	3.5	1.2
47	3.4	0.9	3.6	1.1
49	3.2	1.2	3.9	1.3

Table 4. Means and standard deviations of the frequency and intensity of negative feeling log items.

Item	Frequency		Intensity	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
2	1.8	1.4	2.3	1.2
4	1.4	1.5	2.8	1.3
6	1.0	1.4	3.0	1.5
8	1.1	1.3	2.8	1.4
10	1.1	1.4	3.3	1.5
12	2.2	1.4	2.6	1.3
14	2.0	1.3	2.5	1.3
16	1.0	1.5	2.7	2.1
18	1.3	1.5	2.0	0.9
20	1.0	1.4	3.0	1.5
22	1.6	1.7	2.5	0.8
24	1.5	1.7	2.4	1.3
26	1.3	1.7	2.8	1.3
28	1.0	1.3	2.5	1.2
30	1.1	1.4	2.2	1.4
32	1.4	1.5	2.6	1.5
34	0.9	1.2	2.6	1.4
36	1.7	1.4	2.5	1.5
38	0.9	1.3	2.3	1.5
40	1.5	1.4	2.7	1.5

Table 4--Continued

Item	<u>Frequency</u>		<u>Intensity</u>	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
42	2.2	1.4	2.7	1.4
44	1.0	1.4	2.6	1.4
46	1.5	1.4	2.4	1.5
48	1.1	1.4	2.6	1.1
50	1.2	1.5	4.0	1.3

negative items and no positive items had a standard deviation less than 1.0 or greater than 1.5.

In order to support the concurrent validity of the negative FL subscale, the baseline negative scores were correlated with the AC total score. The baseline negative subscale scores were calculated by taking the average intensity rating of occurring negative items across the four-day period. The AC total score is calculated by taking the sum of the absolute values of all of the items. It is presumed that the greater the disruption in couples' interaction, the larger the amount of change will be desired from the spouse. In addition, the greater the disruption, the greater the negative affect experienced by the spouse. Consequently, the amount of correlation between the FL subscale scores and the AC scores should give some indication as to the degree to which the FL subscales are tapping emotional reactions to continued disrupted interaction. However, the negative subscale and the AC scores were not significantly correlated.

To test the concurrent validity of the positive FL subscale, the baseline positive subscale scores were correlated with the PS scores. The positive FL score was calculated by taking the average intensity rating of occurring positive items across the baseline period. The PS scores are obtained by summing the ratings of each PS item.

The conflict model predicts that positive emotions result when interaction with the spouse is seen to enhance the subject's ability to reach a desired goal. Simple lack of interpersonal disruption, as measured by the AC, is insufficient to elicit positive affect. Therefore, since the PS scale assesses spouse behaviors which can be considered cooperative and goal-directed, the PS scores should correlate with the positive FL scores. The conflict process model presented above states that the greater the amount of spouse behavior which is directed toward conflict resolution, the greater should be the positive affective response to the spouse. However, a nonsignificant correlation of .35 ( $p = .06$ ) was found between positive FL scores and PS scores.

## CHAPTER 4

## DISCUSSION

The failure to support the validity of the feeling log makes results obtained from its use speculative. However, the frequency data on each of the items suggest that the terms are salient to spouses: all but two of the negative items were experienced at least once on the average over a four day period and all but two of the positive items were experienced at least three times. It is possible that the areas of change questionnaire is not an appropriate measure to assess spousal interference, because categories of spousal behavior important to individual couples important are not included. In addition, the problem solve scale may not adequately assess spousal facilitation, since spousal behaviors other than constructive problem solving are likely to be facilitative. The lack of findings regarding changes in individual feeling log items may also reflect poor measurement. Individual items may simply be unreliable.

The results of the present study suggest that participation in the MPS program is related to a progressive increase in husbands' positive affect towards their spouse, but not for wives. It is possible that this sex difference is related to a previous finding that, relative to men,

women are more emotionally expressive (Burke et al., 1976; Hendrick, 1981; Kelley et al., 1978; Margolin & Wampold, 1981; Notarius & Johnson, 1982) and more negative (Kelley et al., 1978; Margolin & Wampold, 1981; Notarius & Johnson, 1982). It may be that as husbands learn an effective way to communicate their feelings, they experience an increase in positive affect toward their wives. On the other hand, it may be that as wives learn how to express themselves in a more positive fashion and how to listen to their husbands, their husbands experience more positive affect.

The results suggest that the MPS program does not have an effect on wives' affective response to their spouse. Data from the subjects profiles of daily affective ratings suggest one reason why this may be. Several studies have found that relative to satisfied married couples, distressed married couples emit more negative and less positive behavior (Billings, 1979; Birchler et al., 1975; Cousins & Vincent, 1983; Gottman et al., 1977; Koren et al., 1980). Consequently, the group of subjects reporting a high percentage of negative cross-overs may be maritally distressed. If this is the case, the lack of findings may be confounded by the greater occurrence of marital distress in women. Perhaps the MPS does not have an impact on feelings toward the spouse for couples who are experiencing a significant amount of marital distress, rather than not impact wives per se.

The lack of changes in negative affect may be due to several reasons. First, the small N size may have limited the ability to reach significant results. However, the significant change in husbands' positive affect suggests the N size is not so small as to preclude significant results. Second, the lack of results may be due to problems in measurement. Both the data in table 4 and the profiles of daily affect ratings suggest that for many of the subjects, a floor effect may be preventing variation in negative scores. In addition, it may be that the feeling log did not adequately tap negative affect. On the other hand, it may be that the instructions for completing the feeling log were inappropriate. Perhaps the couples should have been told to rate their feelings toward the spouse following a problem solving interaction rather than before bed each night. Third, it may be that the model of conflict processes underlying the MPS program is faulty. Negative affective response to the spouse may not be systematically related to the spouse's interference in goal-directed behavior, or other variables are more salient than spousal interference. Fourth, it may be that the MPS program does not significantly affect conflict behavior between spouses, that this effect is delayed, or that the program has differential effectiveness for each couple.

The profiles of subjects' daily affect suggest that individual differences account for most of the variance in affect. Some of the subjects' profiles seem to be similar to that of their spouse. Others seem to display a pattern that is quite different from the spouse. Some subjects show great variability in affect, others show little. Differences across profiles have implications for the conceptualization in the experience of affect in intimate relationships as well as for marital intervention. Such variation suggests that people experience emotion in the context of their marriage in a wide variety of ways, and further research is needed to link different patterns to interaction patterns between spouses.

APPENDIX A

FEELING LOG

didn't occur	did occur: strength					
0	1	2	3	4	5	6
did not experience		slightly		moderately		extremely

Today while I was with my spouse, I felt:

- |  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 1__ affectionate towards my spouse                                 | 26__ dominated by my spouse     |
| 2__ withdrawn from my spouse                                       | 27__ sexy                       |
| 3__ tender towards my spouse                                       | 28__ boxed-in by my spouse      |
| 4__ misunderstood by my spouse                                     | 29__ warm towards my spouse     |
| 5__ trusting towards my spouse                                     | 30__ picked on by my spouse     |
| 6__ manipulated by my spouse                                       | 31__ liked by my spouse         |
| 7__ close to my spouse   | 32__ blamed by my spouse        |
| 8__ disappointed in my spouse                                      | 33__ needed by my spouse        |
| 9__ free to express myself openly                                  | 34__ offended by my spouse      |
| 10__ burdened by my spouse   | 35__ trusted by my spouse       |
| 11__ satisfied with our relationship                               | 36__ tense when with my spouse  |
| 12__ cautious about what I said                                    | 37__ at ease with my spouse     |
| 13__ content with our relationship                                 | 38__ resentful toward my spouse |
| 14__ irritated by my spouse  | 39__ valued by my spouse        |
| 15__ secure with our relationship                                  | 40__ angry at my spouse         |
| 16__ like my spouse doesn't trust me                               | 41__ supported by my spouse     |
| 17__ like I am an important person                                 | 42__ distant from my spouse     |
| 18__ insecure in our relationship                                  | 43__ comforted by my spouse     |
| 19__ I understood my spouse's feelings                             | 44__ hurt by my spouse          |
| 20__ distrustful of my spouse                                      | 45__ like a lovable person      |
| 21__ amused (felt like laughing)                                   | 46__ criticized by my spouse    |
| 22__ like I have little impact on what happens in our relationship | 47__ accepted by my spouse      |
| 23__ encouraged that our relationship is getting better            | 48__ rejected by my spouse      |
| 24__ discouraged with the future of our relationship               | 49__ proud of my spouse         |
| 25__ understood by my spouse                                       | 50__ bored by my spouse         |
|  | 51__ other: _____               |

APPENDIX B

AREAS OF CHANGE QUESTIONNAIRE

### Areas Of Change Questionnaire

In your marriage, your partner does some things just about as often as you would like. On the other hand, you might like your partner to do other things more often or less often than he/she does. We would like for you to indicate for each activity listed below, whether you want your partner to increase, decrease, or not change the rate of each activity.

Circle the appropriate number for each question.

1. I want my partner to participate in decisions about spending money.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

2. I want my partner to spend time keeping the house clean.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

3. I want my partner to have meals ready on time.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

4. I want my partner to pay attention to his/her appearance.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

5. I want my partner to hit me.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

6. I want my partner to get together with my friends.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

7. I want my partner to pay bills on time.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

8. I want my partner to prepare interesting meals.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much	less	somewhat		somewhat	more	much
less		less		more		more

9. I want my partner to start interesting conversations with me.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much	less	somewhat		somewhat	more	much
less		less		more		more

10. I want my partner to go out with me.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much	less	somewhat		somewhat	more	much
less		less		more		more

11. I want my partner to show appreciation for things I do well.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much	less	somewhat		somewhat	more	much
less		less		more		more

12. I want my partner to get together with my relatives.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much	less	somewhat		somewhat	more	much
less		less		more		more

13. I want my partner to have sexual relations with me.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much	less	somewhat		somewhat	more	much
less		less		more		more

14. I want my partner to drink.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much	less	somewhat		somewhat	more	much
less		less		more		more

15. I want my partner to work late.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much	less	somewhat		somewhat	more	much
less		less		more		more

16. I want my partner to get together with his/her friends.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much	less	somewhat		somewhat	more	much
less		less		more		more

17. I want my partner to help with housework when asked.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much	less	somewhat		somewhat	more	much
less		less		more		more

18. I want my partner to argue with me.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much	less	somewhat		somewhat	more	much
less		less		more		more

19. I want my partner to discipline children.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much	less	somewhat		somewhat	more	much
less		less		more		more

20. I want my partner to engage in extra-marital relationships.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much	less	somewhat		somewhat	more	much
less		less		more		more

21. I want my partner to spend time with his/her relatives.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much	less	somewhat		somewhat	more	much
less		less		more		more

22. I want my partner to pay attention to my sexual needs.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much	less	somewhat		somewhat	more	much
less		less		more		more

23. I want my partner to spend time with children.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much	less	somewhat		somewhat	more	much
less		less		more		more

24. I want my partner to give me attention when I need it.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much	less	somewhat		somewhat	more	much
less		less		more		more

25. I want my partner to assume responsibility for finances.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much	less	somewhat		somewhat	more	much
less		less		more		more

26. I want my partner to leave me time to myself.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

27. I want my partner to agree to do things I like when we go out together.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

28. I want my partner to accept praise.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

29. I want my partner to accomplish his/her responsibilities promptly.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

30. I want my partner to help in planning our free time.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

31. I want my partner to express his/her emotions clearly.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

32. I want my partner to have nonsexual relationships with men/women.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

33. I want my partner to spend time with me.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

34. I want my partner to come to meals on time.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

APPENDIX C

PROBLEM SOLVE QUESTIONNAIRE

**Problem Solve Questionnaire**

When you and your partner have a difference of opinion how often does your partner exhibit the following behavior?

1. Initiate a discussion to air your different points of view.

never (0%)	rarely (10%)	some- times (10-30%)	less often than not (30%-50%)	more often than not (50%-70%)	frequently (70%-90%)	almost always (90%)
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2. Listen attentively to what you are saying.

never (0%)	rarely (10%)	some- times (10-30%)	less often than not (30%-50%)	more often than not (50%-70%)	frequently (70%-90%)	almost always (90%)
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3. State his/her position clearly.

never (0%)	rarely (10%)	some- times (10-30%)	less often than not (30%-50%)	more often than not (50%-70%)	frequently (70%-90%)	almost always (90%)
---------------	-----------------	----------------------------	-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------	-------------------------	---------------------------

4. Repeat himself/herself to make sure his/her point was understood.

never (0%)	rarely (10%)	some- times (10-30%)	less often than not (30%-50%)	more often than not (50%-70%)	frequently (70%-90%)	almost always (90%)
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5. Feel closer to you at the end of a discussion than when it began.

never (0%)	rarely (10%)	some- times (10-30%)	less often than not (30%-50%)	more often than not (50%-70%)	frequently (70%-90%)	almost always (90%)
---------------	-----------------	----------------------------	-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------	-------------------------	---------------------------

6. Admit his/her faults or his/her responsibility for the problem.

never (0%)	rarely (10%)	some- times (10-30%)	less often than not (30%-50%)	more often than not (50%-70%)	frequently (70%-90%)	almost always (90%)
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7. Come up with helpful ideas or suggestions.

never (0%)	rarely (10%)	some- times (10-30%)	less often than not (30%-50%)	more often than not (50%-70%)	frequently (70%-90%)	almost always (90%)
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