Exploration of romantic partners' relational definitions as related to perceived confirmation

Connie Bullis
The University of Montana

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AN EXPLORATION OF ROMANTIC PARTNERS' RELATIONAL DEFINITIONS

AS RELATED TO PERCEIVED CONFIRMATION

By

Connie Bullis

B.A., University of Tennessee, 1973

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

1980

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The relationship between perceived confirmation and relationship definitions held by romantic dyads was explored. It was hypothesized that some relationship definitions would be more positively correlated to perceived confirmation that would others. Further specific hypotheses were: 1) Those couples who were able to define their relationships both through direct and metaperspectives would also experience greater confirmation; 2) Partners who agreed on their relationship definitions would also experience more perceived confirmation; 3) Partners who understood each other's relationship definitions would report higher levels of perceived confirmation; and 4) Perceived Agreement between partners regarding relationship definitions would correlate positively with perceived confirmation.

Twenty-six cross-sex romantic couples, most of whom were University of Montana students, participated in this study. Each person was asked to write 1) a straightforward relationship definitions as well as 2) a metaphorical relationship definition. Additionally, each was asked to provide a metaperspective for each of the two definitions. Perceived confirmation was measured by the Perceived Confirmation Scale which each participant filled out. Participants also were asked to judge their responses for understanding and perceived agreement.

In order to answer the general research question, the responses were qualitatively categorized. A regression analysis was then performed to see whether some categories were more positively correlated with perceived confirmation than others. The four specific hypotheses were tested by scoring each person as well as each couple on 1) ability to generate relational definitions and metaperspectives, 2) agreement, 3) understanding, and 4) perceived agreement. Pearson Product Moment Coefficients were then computed between each of the four measures and the perceived confirmation scores.

The hypotheses were not supported. A significant negative correlation was found between agreement and perceived confirmation. One relationship category, "Ups and Downs," was found to correlate negatively with perceived confirmation.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks to Bill Wilmot for his help throughout this project. It was he who planted the seeds which developed into the project in terms of the concepts behind it, the self confidence necessary to undertake it and the spirit of optimistic inquiry from which it grew. His active participation and encouragement in planning the study, carrying it out and completing the write-up have been much appreciated. More than that though, he has provided me with a model of a researcher, teacher and human being which will be an inspiration for the rest of my life.

Joyce Hocker-Wilmot and Ulysses Doss were also instrumental in the completion of this study. Their professional expertise as well as personal support will thankfully and warmly be remembered.

Finally, the judges who donated time and help in this study are greatly appreciated. Thanks to Carol, Char, Betsy, Jo and Mary.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

As people relate with one another, they each construct a definition of, or label for, their relationship. Some of these definitions are evident when people call themselves "friends," "lovers," "colleagues," etc. Many times, in ongoing relationships, these global definitions are not adequate to capture the full flavor, complexity and unique qualities of a particular relationship. As a result, participants may develop more precise definitions for their relationships. Often they liken their relationships to other tangible things such as "red wine" or to intangible qualities such as "security."

In all interpersonal encounters, people confirm or disconfirm each other to one degree or another. Stewart (Confirmation/disconfirmation--a lunch panel asilomar '79, p. 3) offered a definition of confirmation/disconfirmation:

Intentions, actions, and interpretations are all involved. When person B correctly notes person A's assertion of subjectivity, and when A interprets B's response as affirming or acknowledging A's subjectivity, then one set of outcomes of the communication between A and B is that A has been confirmed and B has been confirming.

Disconfirmation occurs under many circumstances, e.g., (1) when B fails to note A's assertion of subjectivity, (2) when A interprets B's response as failing to acknowledge A's subjectivity, (3) when B's response denies A's subjectivity, and so on.
Confirmation occurs, then in at least three phases: one person offers his/her definition which suggests "This is how I see myself in relation to you," the second person may affirm or deny the person and his/her definition, and the first person then subjectively experiences a degree of confirmation/disconfirmation.

In ongoing relationships, the relationship defining process and the process of confirmation/disconfirmation become complex. Both are occurring continuously and simultaneously. The present project was designed to explore the relationship between these two processes. The complexity of the relational definitions held by people in committed romantic relationships was explored. The possible associations between the existing definitions and partners' perceptions of being "confirmed" by one another was assessed. Third, the ability to report a relational definition and a perception of one's partner's definition were assessed to see if those who are able to do so are also more confirming of their partners and perceive their partners as being more confirming of them. A fourth question was whether or not couples who agree on how they define their relationship also experience each other as being more confirming than do couples who do not agree. Fifth, partners' understanding of one another's relationship definitions and whether or not understanding is correlated with perceiving greater confirmation were explored. Finally, whether or not people see themselves as agreeing with their partners about their definitions was assessed to find out whether those who see themselves as agreeing also perceive greater confirmation.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Confirmation

Confirmation Concept

The term "confirmation" was originated by the Jewish theologian Martin Buber some twenty years ago. He stated that:

In human society, at all levels, persons confirm one another in a practical way, to some extent or other, in their personal qualities and capacities, and a society may be termed human in the measure to which its members confirm one another (Buber, 1957, p. 101).

He also said:

....the basis of man's life with man is twofold, and it is one--the wish of every man to be confirmed as what he is, even as what he can become, by men; and the innate capacity in man to confirm his fellow men in this way. That this capacity lies so immeasurably fallow constitutes the real weakness and questionableness of the human race: actual humanity exists only where this capacity unfolds (Buber, 1957, p. 102).

Buber, then, considered confirmation to be essential to the very existence of humanity.

Buber (1957, p. 103) clearly established his confirmation concept as being phenomenological in nature when he said "Men need, and it is granted to them, to confirm one another in their individual being by means of genuine meetings." He also said that meaning is to be found "neither in one of the two partners, not in both together, but only in their dialogue itself, in this 'between' which they live together" (1957, p. 106). Finally, he reiterated his emphasis on this betweenness when he said that the crisis of man is "the crisis of what is between man and man" (1957, p. 108).
R. D. Laing, a British psychiatrist, (1961, 1966) also considered the concept of confirmation/disconfirmation to be important to the human experience between people. He dealt with it primarily as disconfirmation related to schizophrenia. He also specified the notion that rejection, or disagreement was a separate response from disconfirmation. He suggested that rejection implied recognition and disconfirmation did not. Laing equated disconfirmation with failure to recognize a person as agent. "The attribution of agency to human beings is one way we distinguish people from things set in motion by agents external to themselves" (Laing, 1969, p. 84). Laing's main focus was on the negative effects of the lack of this "attribution of agency to human beings." The importance of confirmation to Laing can be seen in his suggestion that its lack is related to schizophrenia.

Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson also saw confirmation as a significant aspect of communication as evidenced when they wrote;

O can accept (confirm) P's definition of self. As far as we can see, this confirmation of P's view of himself by O is probably the greatest single factor ensuring mental development and stability that has so far emerged from our study of communication (1967, p. 84).

Cissna and Sieburg (1979) suggested that interpersonal confirmation is the basic dimension of interpersonal communication. It may be the sole dimension which is consistently in existence across all situations and all transactions. Cissna and Sieburg pointed out its importance when they said that "Interpersonal Communication is that through which people do either confirm or disconfirm each other" (1979, p. 1).
John Stewart (Confirmation/Disconfirmation—A Lunch Panel Asilomar '79, p. 7) commented that confirmation "is the fundamental element, the sine qua non of human communication."

Confirmation Research

The literature on confirmation has arisen largely out of doctoral dissertations at the University of Denver. Evelyn Sieburg is credited with originating confirmation research (Cissna & Sieburg, 1979). She was the first person to seek empirical support for the confirmation construct. Following a broad literature search, she developed four elements which were consistently considered to be a part of confirmation. These were:

1. Expression of recognition of the other's existence as an acting agent
2. Acknowledgment of the other's communication by responding to it relevantly
3. Acceptance of the other's self experience
4. Suggestion of a willingness on the part of the speaker to become involved with the other person (Sieburg, 1975, p. 4).

Sieburg found indicators for these four criteria and systematized them into a paradigm of confirming responses. She then developed the interpersonal response category system which included two "functional" response categories and five "dysfunctional" categories. Her study was an attempt to validate her system in training, encounter, and therapy groups. She used a "known groups" technique, asking group leaders to identify groups with which they had experience which were "most effective" and "least effective" according to criteria from human relations organizational theory. After identifying the
groups, she taped group interaction and then randomly selected excerpts from the tapes to be rated using her system. She found that, although both effective and ineffective groups used both confirming (functional) and disconfirming (dysfunctional) responses, there were some significant differences. Significantly more functional responses and significantly less dysfunctional responses were used in the effective groups than in the ineffective groups. The effective groups used more "content functional" responses and the ineffective groups used more "impervious," "tangential" and "ambiguous" responses. One of her functional responses, "metacommunicative" and two dysfunctional responses, "projective" and "inadequate" were found to be unrelated to the effectiveness of the groups. Of the dysfunctional categories, two (imperviousness and tangentiality) occurred relatively frequently while the other three (projective, ambiguous, inadequate) were found to occur highly infrequently in groups with no known psychopathology. It was hypothesized that "projective," "ambiguous" and "inadequate" responses may be associated with communicative psychopathology (Cissna & Sieburg, 1979, Sieburg, 1969, 1975).

This study provided support for her interpersonal response system and paved the way for more empirical study of confirmation. Since Sieburg's pioneering work, Sieburg and Larson (1971), Jacobs (1973), and Waxwood (1977) have done studies to attempt to more clearly and precisely categorize hierarchically and define those responses which are more or less confirming/disconfirming.
Sieburg and Larson (1971) added further support and refinement to the Interpersonal Response System. They sought to identify "those forms of response that are significant in confirming or disconfirming the participants in any communicative transaction" (1971 p.4) and to find out whether the categories could be reduced in number, resulting in fewer basic underlying dimensions which could describe interpersonal response. They identified twenty-four categories of responses through a comprehensive literature review and through examination of live interaction sessions. These were presented through mailed questionnaires to members of the International Communication Association. Members were asked to indicate how typical each of the twenty-four behaviors were for (1) a person they most enjoyed conversing with and (2) a person they least enjoyed conversing with. Ninety-five responses were obtained.

The results of factor analysis showed that for the "most enjoyed" partners, the "appropriate-clear-positive" factor (including direct verbal acknowledgement, agreement about content, supporting, clarification of content, and expression of positive feelings) was far more typically used than the "inappropriate-unclear-impersonal" factor (impervious, interrupting, irrelevant, tangential, impersonal, unclear and incongruous). The "least enjoyed" partners used the "inappropriate-unclear-impersonal" responses far more frequently than the "appropriate-clear-positive" responses. Sieburg and Larson concluded that these response types were consistent with interpersonal confirmation literature and labeled them as confirming and disconfirming types. When
the twenty-four response categories were ranked from most to least
typical, it was found that the most preferred response is one which
"recognizes the other's communication, elicits more information from
him, or agrees with him" and the least preferred response "fails to
acknowledge the speaker even minimally, or responds to him in an im-
personal fashion" (Sieburg & Larson, 1971, p. 7). Another interesting
result of this study was that the "agreeing response" (agreement
about content) was found to be typical of "most preferred" partners
and untypical of "least preferred" partners while disagreement about
content was found to be unrelated to either most or least preferred
partners. This would appear to support notions that rejection and
disconfirmation are different responses, rejection implying that
the communication partner exists while disconfirmation implies that
he/she does not exist. (Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson, 1967).

Jacobs (1973) tested Sieburg's hierarchy of interpersonal response
categories. It was hypothesized that confirming-disconfirming responses
are experienced as more or less confirming-disconfirming. From most
confirming to most disconfirming the hypothesized order was (1) affili-
ation, (2) disaffiliation, (3) furthering, (4) non-furthering, (5)
inhibiting, and (6) impervious. Jacobs exposed subjects to the differ-
ent levels of confirming and disconfirming conditions by conducting
interviews with them which were ostensibly for the purpose of gather-
ing information on housing conditions. The interviewers used one of
the six response types in the interviews. Following the interview,
the subjects filled out Sieburg's Perceived Confirmation Inventory
which rates feelings of being confirmed/disconfirmed. Jacobs found
that subjects did report different levels of confirmation/disconfirmation depending on different levels of confirmation/disconfirmation to which they were exposed.

Her findings further refined the hierarchy proposed by Sieburg. She discovered a hierarchy involving four conditions. Moving from most confirming to most disconfirming the categories were 1) sustaining (a combination of affiliation, furthering and inhibiting), 2) non-furthering, 3) disaffiliative, and 4) imperviousness (Cissna & Sieburg, 1979, Jacobs, 1973).

Waxwood (1977) found cross cultural support for confirmation. She looked at how members of five different cultures defined and interpreted the behaviors which constituted acceptance and rejection. She had fifteen female subjects participate in two discussions each, the first in which each subject did a problem solving task with two members of her own culture, and the second in which each did a task with two members of other cultures. The videotapes of the discussions were dubbed with pencil taps when behaviors occurred which were associated with confirmation/disconfirmation. The investigator then interviewed each subject and asked the subjects to interpret the behaviors which were marked with the pencil taps as well as any other behaviors which might be indicative of acceptance or rejection. Over half of the participants in both the intracultural and intercultural settings identified six cues as being accepting. These were 1) asking a direct question, 2) direct response to another, 3) statement of agreement, 4) statement of disagreement, 5) eye contact, and 6) laughing together. Two cues, content change and restraint of laughter,
were identified by over half the participants in both settings as cues of rejection (Waxwood, 1977). These results are indicative of the pervasiveness of confirmation/disconfirmation across cultural settings.

At approximately the same time the confirmation/disconfirmation construct was being explored, a second body of literature was developed revolving around the acceptance-rejection dimension of communication. Ross (1973) examined the communication processes associated with the outcome of accuracy. He explored specifically the supervisor-subordinate relationship. He used a measure which asked the participants to describe the extent to which fifty items were typical of their communication with their supervisor or subordinate and the other's communication with them. He found that non-accepting, rejecting and non-supportive supervisors (as characterized by themselves and their subordinates) were higher in accuracy.

Ross also examined three studies done previously which utilized the same measure he used (Ruesch, Block, and Bennett measurement device) to look for common dimensions across the four situations. The previous studies were Dodge, 1971, counselors-juvenile delinquents; Larson, 1965, spouses; Mix, 1972, fathers-sons. Ross found one factor which recurred in all four social contexts. He labeled this factor "acceptance-rejection." Dance and Larson (1976) and Cissna (1976) concluded that Ross' acceptance/rejection dimension and Sieburg's confirmation/disconfirmation dimension were identical and could be considered to be the same construct.
It must be noted that Ross' acceptance/rejection dimension which is considered to be synonymous with confirmation/disconfirmation is a separate dimension from Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson's (1967) acceptance/rejection dimension. Ross implied "an acceptance or rejection of the person as a person" (Dance & Larson, 1976, p. 75) while Watzlawick et al. (1967, p. 85-86) specified acceptance/rejection as dealing with a person's self definition rather than with the person as a person. The acceptance/rejection of a person's self definition is not considered to be identical with confirmation/disconfirmation of the person as a person.

Self report was the predominant method by which the confirmation/disconfirmation construct was specified and categorized hierarchically. Behavioral observations were employed in another series of studies to lend further support to the construct.

Sundell (1972) used Sieburg's categories when he explored the patterns of teacher verbal behaviors and of student verbal behaviors. He added a dimension to his study when he examined the sequential relationship between teacher-student confirming/disconfirming verbal behaviors. He scored ongoing classroom interaction in thirty-seven junior high classes. He found that eighty-nine percent of the teachers could be categorized as using predominantly confirming responses. Agreement about content was used heavily by these teachers. The other eleven percent of the teachers used confirming and disconfirming responses with equal frequency. Students were largely confirming also with eighty-one percent of their responses being in the confirming category. Direct acknowledgement was the response most typically
used by students. Sundell also discovered that confirming teachers tended to have confirming students and that disconfirming teachers tended to have disconfirming students (Cissna & Sieburg, 1979). Confirmation, then, was found to be a reciprocal process in ongoing relationships. Confirmation was found to be observable and scorable using Sieburg's system.

Mathews (1977) hypothesized that librarians who consistently showed confirming behavior to patrons would show a higher level of self acceptance than those who consistently showed disconfirming behaviors, and that the confirmers would rank certain values higher than the disconfirmers. Using the Sieburg system, she classified fifty librarians at twenty-five libraries. They fell into three groups: 1) confirmers, those who used only confirming behaviors during the observation period, 2) partial confirmers, those who were confirming fifty-eight to ninety-two percent of the time, and 3) disconfirmers, those who were confirming ten to fifty percent of the time. Each librarian was then given the Phillips Self Acceptance Scale and the Rokeach Value Survey. No correlation between confirming librarians and self acceptance was found, but it was found that confirming librarians tended to rank the values Equality and Broadminded high, while the disconfirmers ranked the value Pleasure high (Cissna & Sieburg, 1979).

S. Leth (1977) examined the relationships among 1) interpersonal response (confirmation, rejection, disconfirmation), 2) self-concept, 3) co-orientation (agreement, congruency, accuracy) and 4) friendship. He hypothesized that the relationship between the vari-
ables would be a function of the clarity and relevance of an interpersonal response as well as the agreement or disagreement expressed by a response. He used college students who were "best friends" in a dual design. Part A was an experimental design and used students in a basic speech communication course. Part B was a descriptive design and used members of campus fraternities. Leth explored a total of twenty-six hypotheses, nine of which were totally or partially confirmed. Cissna and Sieburg (1979) quote Leth's findings summary:

A high self-concept is a function of confirmation while a low self-concept is a function of rejection. Both confirmation and rejection were found to be associated with self concept and friendship. Coorientation, particularly congruency and accuracy, seem to be a function of confirmation of high self-concept people. The 'person-qua person' factor and 'ego-support-value' of friendship are related to confirmation while the 'utility value' of friendship is related to rejection (Cissna & Sieburg, 1979, p. 25).

Aveyard (1977) looked at the relationships between communication apprehension, self-acceptance, acceptance of others, and the FIRO-B scales of inclusion, control and affection. She also looked at the relationships between communication apprehension, self-acceptance, acceptance of others and disconfirming interpersonal responses as identified by Sieburg and Larson (1971). Ratings of interpersonal responses were made by the investigator, the subjects (trainee teachers) and by peers of the investigator. The degree of agreement among raters was somewhat low, the total number of disconfirming responses coded by each correlated at .54 (Cissna & Sieburg, 1979).
Sieburg's coding system was found to be useful in the studies conducted by Sundell, Mathews and S. Leth while Aveyard found a low inter-rater reliability. In addition to her behavioral coding system, Sieburg developed a method of measuring feelings of confirmation, or perceived confirmation.

**Perceived Confirmation Scale**

Sieburg (1975) devised the Perceived Confirmation Scale (PCS) as a means of measuring the amount of confirmation as interpreted by the receiver of behaviors. The PCS contains six items which reflect the basic dimensions of interpersonal confirmation. It is a Likert type summated scale.

Test-retest reliability for the PCS was determined by Clarke (Cissna, 1976, p. 21). He found a correlation coefficient of $r=.70$ following administering the scale to twenty subjects with a three week interval.

Cissna (1976) also determined test-retest reliability for the PCS. He administered the instrument four weeks apart to sixty-two students. He found the correlation coefficients to be $r=.79$ when the target population was a parent and $r=.55$ when the target population was a same-sex friend. He explained that the lower correlation coefficient for the same-sex friend population was most likely due to two phenomena rather than to an actual lack of reliability in the PCS: (1) At the second administration, some students were unsure of which friend they had chosen previously, and (2) It is likely that students' perceptions of their friends' behaviors and
attitudes changed during the four week interval between administra-
tions whereas perceptions of parents' behaviors and attitudes were
more likely to be stable since they had been built up over a longer
time (Cissna, 1976).

Jacobs found construct validity for the PCS. She compared re-
ported feelings of confirmation on the six dimensions for three tar-
get persons including mother, friend and professor. Correlation co-
efficients were "acceptably high" (Sieburg, 1975, p. 24) for all
three targets.

The reliability and validity of the PCS have been shown to be
acceptable.

The Perceived Confirmation Scale has been used in several
studies which were conducted for the purpose of assessing the re-
relationship between perceived confirmation and other constructs.

Clarke (1973) sought to determine which of three variables
(interpersonal confirmation, self-disclosure, and interpersonal
perception) were the best predictors of satisfaction-attraction in
different stages of marital relationships. He administered four
self report scales to measure these variables to one hundred, forty-
eight couples which were categorized into three groups, depending
on the length of their relationships. He found that perceived in-
terpersonal confirmation was the best predictor of satisfaction-
attraction across all three stages of relationships. Satisfied
people perceived their partners to be confirming. Clarke suggested
that interpersonal confirmation appears to be a communication vari-
able which is pervasive across interpersonal contexts.

Cissna (1975) explored the relationship between (1) confirmation, (2) the communication of empathy, respect, genuineness, and self-disclosure, (3) personal growth or self-actualization and (4) relationship intimacy. Thirty married couples were administered three instruments measuring (1) perceived confirmation, (2) personal growth, and (3) intimacy. A twenty minute discussion of each couple was rated, yielding scores for the four communication variables. Facilitative communication (communication of empathy, respect and genuineness) was moderately related to other's feelings of confirmation. There was no relationship between self disclosure and confirmation. However, when male and female scores were examined separately, it was found that there was a strong correlation between the facilitative communication of males and the females' feelings of being confirmed and a moderate correlation between males' self disclosure and females' feelings of being confirmed. When the relationship between female facilitative communication and male feelings of confirmation was examined, no correlation was found. No correlation was found between females' self-disclosure and males' feelings of being confirmed. (Cissna & Keating, 1979).

Keating sought to further clarify and extend the findings of Cissna. She hypothesized that female feelings of being confirmed were associated with male self-disclosure and facilitative communication while male feelings of being confirmed were more highly associated with female agreement about content.
She visited each of twenty-four couples in their homes and administered the Carkhuff scale for Facilitative Interpersonal Functioning, Sieburg's PCS, and taped a discussion between them which was later assessed for the agreement/disagreement measure. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed for the facilitative communication of each person and the feelings of perceived confirmation (PCS score) of his/her spouse. Her results were ambiguous but may suggest that male and female feelings of being confirmed may arise from different communication behaviors. Also, both males and females appeared to feel less confirmed when the spouse exhibited a high frequency of disagreement (Cissna & Keating, 1979).

P. Leth, (1977) explored the relationships between confirmation and rejection of students' self concepts as public speakers (by the critiques written of student speeches) and students' motivation to achieve, class achievement, changes in self-concept, evaluation of the teacher, and quality of student-teacher relationships (as perceived by the student). Perceived confirmation was found to be related to high self-concept, positive perceptions of the student teacher relationship, and higher student evaluations of their instructors.

Hutchinson (1978) attempted to discriminate between students' "most preferred" and "least preferred" relationships by looking at interpersonal trust, attraction, self-disclosure, perceived confirmation and self-esteem. He found all of these concepts to be related to perceived confirmation.
Summary

Based on confirmation literature and self report data, Sieburg developed a method of measuring confirmation/disconfirmation in which behavioral observations are scored and feelings of being confirmed are measured by a scale. Her system has been found to be useful both in observing and scoring confirming/disconfirming behaviors and in measuring perceived confirmation. Confirmation/disconfirmation has been shown to be pervasive across situations as well as across cultures.

The emphasis in the present study was on feelings of being confirmed, or perceived confirmation. Cissna and Keating's finding with respect to perceived confirmation/disconfirmation and its relationship with agreement pointed to the need to clarify that relationship. It was thought that looking at agreement about the relationship rather than solely the content might prove helpful in clarifying the dimensions of the relationship between confirmation and agreement.

The Relational Approach

Out of the interactional school of human communication has come a major contribution to communication theory building, the notion of the relational level of communication. Watzlawick et al. (1967) have stated that every communication defines the relationship. Every message has both a content aspect (the information being sent) and a relational aspect (the relationship definition). Most communicative exchanges are characterized by an emphasis on the content level with
the relational level being implicit. At this implicit level, the relational definition is continually being negotiated by the participants. For example, a wife may suggest that she and her husband go out to supper since she didn't have time to fix the meal. She may relationally be saying that she wants to change the relationship to one in which she is not automatically expected to fix supper each night. Depending on her husband's response and the remainder of the encounter, the relationship will be changed in some way.

The relational level of communication notion is a significant aspect of several major theoretical frameworks. These are (1) phenomenology, (2) general systems theory, (3) the transactional approach and (4) the interpersonal perception method.

**Phenomenology**

Although phenomenology itself predates the relational notion, the relational level of messages is presupposed in the philosophy. As John Stewart (1978, p. 189) indicated, Husserl's phenomenology saw reality as existing in the encounter between the noema and noesis. The noesis was considered to be the act of perceiving, the noema was the "perceived as such." The noesis, then, was not directly related to the object-as-such but only to the object as perceived.

Through the meeting of the noesis (act of perceiving) and noema (perceived as such), reality was said to emerge. It was this meeting that was the phenomena of interest. In identifying the noesis and noema as the participants in this meeting rather than identifying
subject and object as the participants, Husserl was assuming but not naming the relational level of communication. As the participants were actively perceiving each other, they were creating the perceived-as-such. This was a subjective process which was carried out through relational level messages and perceptions of messages. The meeting and the reality which was said to unfold through it constituted the relationship between the participants.

Stewart (1978, p. 190) suggested that in order to "know" this reality, rationality, or following linear, deductive reasoning steps is not entirely adequate. He said that of interest is the direct experiencing or contact with the phenomena itself (1978, p. 191). Lofland (1971, p. 1-2) said that there is a difference between "knowing about" and "knowing." He further suggested that in "knowing about," or knowing only from a distance, oversimplifications, distortions, errors and omissions are far more likely to occur during the portrait construction. The best way to "know" is to be face to face and actually live the life of those studied. Since that is not always possible, the next best substitute is to try to understand those studied "in their own terms" (1978, p. 7). In order to best understand them in their own terms, how they create their realities, order their worlds and make the choices they do, it makes sense to simply ask them (Bruyn, 1977, p. 284).

Out of phenomenology, then, came the idea that reality is created through the meeting of or encounter between noesis and noema (the re-
It follows that to gain access to this phenomena of interest, understanding it from the participants' point of view may be the best means of approaching the status of most fully "knowing about."

General Systems Theory

General systems theory is another major theoretical framework which incorporates the relational notion.

In the middle of this century, Ludwig von Bertalanffy made a major contribution to human relationships theory when he pioneered the drawing together of systems work in various fields under the rubric General Systems Theory. He described the theory as "the formulation and derivation of those principles which are valid for 'systems' in general" (Watzlawick et al., 1967, p. 119). His work served to delineate those principles which are applicable to many different types of systems.

A system is defined as "a set of objects together with relationships between the objects and between their attributes" (Watzlawick et al., 1967, p. ). Objects, or components of systems are identified by their attributes. A key phrase in the above definition is "relationship between." This suggests that this relationship is of major importance in the conceptualization of a system.

General Systems Theory may be applied to the study of communication relationships; specifically, in this study, dyadic relationships.
The systems which were examined consisted of two people, their attributes (communication behaviors) and the relationships between the people and their attributes. Watzlawick et al. (1967, p. 120-121) say that "the objects of interactional systems are best described not as individuals but as persons-communicating-with-other-persons." They continue to specify that the aspect of the communication that is important here is the relational aspect. "Interactional systems, then, shall be two or more communicants in the process of, or at the level of, defining the nature of their relationship" (Watzlawick et al., 1967, p. 121). Interactional systems are characterized by the following properties:

1. Wholeness. A system differs from a collection of objects in that it cannot be reduced to its individual parts. The parts are so interrelated that a change in any one of them would have repercussions throughout the system, thus changing the system itself. It is assumed that the individuals in a dyadic relationship are related in such a way that all of their behaviors are dependent on and influenced by each other's behavior (Watzlawick et al., 1967).

2. Nonsummativity. If the components of a system are examined individually and then put together, the result is not the same as the system. When the elements are put together, there arises an "emergent quality" (Watzlawick et al., 1967 p. 125) from the interaction of the parts. This is a dynamic which cannot be explained through looking solely at the
parts. Exploring the interlocking behavioral and perceptual patterns, or the relationship is an entirely different project than exploring the behavior of the individuals. The individual attributes cannot be summed to yield the same findings which would result from focusing on the relationship.

3. Equifinality. Differing initial conditions may end with similar results. The organization of the ongoing process rather than the initial conditions will determine the outcome. It is assumed that "the system is then its own best explanation, and the study of its present organization an appropriate methodology" (Watzlawick et al., 1967, p. 129). The history and the future of the system are not as useful for study as is the present functioning. Present relational patterns are then the focus of concern in this study.

4. Feedback. The relationships in an open system are characterized by circularity as opposed to linearity. This concept is integrated into this framework from information theory or cybernetics which suggests that when information is transmitted from A to B, B then transmits to A information about the way B received A's message (Smith & Williamson, 1977). Since B's feedback also becomes a message, this concept necessitates leaving behind the causal, linear conceptual model with its attendant interest in cause and effect relationships. Rather, patterns become of interest when
the concept of feedback is introduced into the system.

5. Rules. Jackson (1977, p. 24) suggests that "There are certain 'redundancies,' typical and repetitive patterns of interaction which characterize relationships as 'supra-individual' entities." These are relational rules, or "superpersonal aspects of human relationships" (Watzlawick & Weakland, 1977, p. 20).

General Systems Theory, then provides a conceptual framework along with the five specific principles from which to approach the study of relationships.

**Transactional Approach**

The Transactional Approach to communication has evolved largely out of a combination of the interactional approach with general systems theory. Like general systems theory, the transactional approach stresses the relationship between components rather than the components as separate entities.

The notion of simultaneity is an essential aspect of the transactional approach. Simultaneity holds that "each person involved in a transaction is simultaneously affecting the other" (Parks & Wilmot, 1975, p. 9). Since communication is simultaneous, it is an artificial distinction whenever time order is sorted out among individuals. Both parties in a system are seen as mutual causative agents. No effect is produced by one entity in isolation.

Parks and Wilmot (1975, p. 9) applied the transactional approach to the realm of research when they said that the relationship becomes
the unit of analysis, "the variables have relationships rather than individuals as their referents." Parks and Wilmot specified three types of transactional variables. Type One transactional variables consist of a summation of individual communication behaviors. For example, individual judgments of satisfaction could be added to measure group satisfaction. Type Two transactional variables consist of "the aggregation of individual data by strict and pre-specified rules of correspondence" (1975, p. 11). Type Two transactional variables are the type which will be used in the present study. Parks and Wilmot gave Laing, Phillipson and Lee's co-orientation approach as an example of this type of variable. The variables represent specific aggregations of individual perceptions and attributions. For example, by comparing person A's perception of (X) with person B's perception of (X), the variable of agreement can be assessed. Type Three transactional variables are those variables which refer to some aspect of a relationship which is measured directly rather than by collecting individual responses. An example of a Type Three variable is the amount of silence in a conversation.

The rules by which individuals relate determine the structure of the transactional variables. Transactional variables are differentiated from individual variables because they arise from the combination of individual responses or are supraindividualistic, such as total time talked.
**Interpersonal Perception Method**

Laing, Phillipson and Lee sought to explain "how two mental apparatuses or psychic structures, each with its own constellation of internal objects, are conceived to relate to each other" (Laing, Phillipson & Lee, 1966, p. 8). They conceptualized "two persons, each a self to himself, each an other for the other, together, in relation" (Laing et al., p. 7). From this concept, they concluded that the essential elements to be included are 1) a common situation, 2) person A's behavior, 3) person A's experience, 4) person B's behavior and 5) person B's experience. They said that behavior is mediated by experience and that experience entails perception, interpretation and fantasy. A then, will make an attribution about B based not simply on B's behavior but on A's perception, interpretation and fantasy of that behavior. Laing et al. (1966, p. 29) sounded much like Husserl's phenomenology when they said that "I cannot act on the other himself directly, but I can act on my own experience of him."

Laing et al. developed the Interpersonal Perception Method (IPM) as a means of examining the interlocking perceptions of participants in a relationship and hence aspects of the relationship rather than simply of participants as individuals. The IPM assumes that in relationships, there are three sets of perspectives, each representing a different level of awareness. The direct perspectives are the perspectives each participant has of object X (A's view of X, B's view of X). The metaperspectives are the views of the partners' direct

Laing et al. suggested a method of examining the levels of perspectives. They suggested comparing them in the following ways:

(\text{DP=} \text{direct perspective, MP=} \text{metaperspective and MMP=} \text{meta-metaperspective})

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) A's DP with B's DP</td>
<td>Agreement or disagreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) A's MP with B's DP</td>
<td>Understanding or misunderstanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\quad B's MP with A's DP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) A's MMP with A's DP</td>
<td>Feelings of being understood or misunderstood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\quad B's MMP with B's DP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) A's MMP with B's MP</td>
<td>Realization or failure of realization of understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\quad B's MMP with A's MP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

They claimed that this "reciprocally matched comparison gives us direct access to the relationship itself, as well as to each person in relationship. By reciprocally matched comparison, the profile that our technique discloses is the profile of the relationship between two points of view" (Laing et al., 1966, p. 78).

The reciprocally matched comparisons can yield a variety of relational configurations. For example, there may be agreement, misunderstanding and failure of realization of understanding and feelings of being misunderstood. There may be disagreement, understanding and failure of realization of understanding and feelings of being misunderstood. One partner may understand and the other misunderstand.
Laing et al. administered a set of sixty questions in which they requested direct, meta and meta-metaperspectives on various issues to twelve disturbed and twelve non-disturbed married couples. They found that the non-disturbed couples had significantly higher scores on all of the various levels of comparisons (Laing et al., 1966, p. 93-94).

Since its inception, the Interpersonal Perception Method has not been further developed nor extensively researched. Other than the initial twenty-four couple sample, it has not been used to distinguish between types of relationships.

The IPM perspectives provided a fruitful means of gaining access to a dyadic system. The present study did not utilize Laing et al.'s original set of questions but addressed the question of relational definitions through the structure of their "reciprocally matched comparison" profile.

The relational definition offered by each participant (direct perspective) was compared with the relational definition offered by his or her partner in order to arrive at an assessment of agreement/disagreement. Each person's metaperspective was compared with the partner's direct perspective in order to assess understanding/misunderstanding. Unlike Laing et al.'s system, the third comparison in this study was between each individual's direct perspective and his/her own metaperspective. This was done to assess perceived agreement/perceived disagreement. The meta-metaperspectives were not dealt with.
Statement of Hypotheses

This study examined the relationship definitions of the participants from a phenomenological, qualitative perspective. The dyadic relationships were considered to be ongoing open systems whose processes were suspended for the purpose of examination. The transactional approach suggested the processual, systemic nature of communication relationships as well as relational units of analysis. Laing et al.'s Interpersonal Perception Method provided a method of gaining access to the system, or relationship, from the perspectives of the interlocking perceptions of the participants.

The relational defining process produces a relational definition, as well as metaperspectives of that definition. (Each partner has a definition of his/her own as well as a concept of his/her partner's definition.) Perceived confirmation/disconfirmation is also considered to be a dimension or outcome of a relational event, the relationship defining process. This study proposed to explore the relationship between perceived confirmation/disconfirmation and relationship definitions.

This study explored the following basic question: Are the relationship definitions held by some people more correlated to Perceived Confirmation than those held by others? Four secondary, specific hypotheses were:

(1) The ability to generate relational definitions and metaperspectives are positively correlated with perceived confirmation.
(2) Agreement about relational definition is positively correlated with Perceived Confirmation.

(3) Understanding of partners' relational definition is positively correlated with Perceived Confirmation.

(4) Perceived Agreement regarding relational definition is positively correlated with Perceived Confirmation.
Participants

Participants included twenty-six cross-sex romantic couples. All couples defined themselves as being "in a committed relationship." The couples were married, engaged, living together or in any exclusive committed relationship. No couples participated who did not report themselves to be in a committed, exclusive, romantic relationship.

Couples were recruited from various sources. Door to door solicitation was undertaken in the University family housing projects. An attempt was made to recruit some participants from the community at large. This was accomplished through some informal contacts of the researcher and included a school teacher and spouse, a Forest Service employee and spouse and a county employee and spouse. Introductory departmental courses were also used to solicit students and their partners.

Potential participants were approached personally by the researcher, told about the study, what their role would consist of should they choose to participate, and asked if they would like to participate. A more complete explanation of this procedure can be found in Appendix A. A personal approach was important to this study since personal involvement and cooperation of participants was not only preferable, but necessary in securing the sensitive personal data sought.
Materials

A university classroom was used. Desks were available for participants. A pencil, confidentiality form (Appendix C), demographic data form (Appendix D), questionnaire (Appendix E) and a perceived confirmation scale form (Appendix F) were provided for each participant. Two hundred eight blank 4 x 6 cards were also provided. They were in sets of eight which were pre-marked with the numbers 1-26 denoting couple numbers. The sets of eight cards were subdivided into subsets of four and numbered 1-4 sequentially. Each subset of cards was for one person. Female subsets were yellow while male subsets were white.

Procedures

Data Collection

Participants were greeted as they entered the room and seated at desks. Each person was seated in such a position that he/she could not see his/her partner. When all participants had arrived, the confidentiality forms, demographic data forms, perceived confirmation scale forms, questionnaires and blank 4 x 6 cards were distributed and verbal instructions were given (Appendix B). Before answering the questionnaire, participants filled out the confidentiality form and demographic data form. They then responded to
the questionnaire.

The questionnaire asked the participants for their definitions of their relationship in two ways. The first portion (questions number 1 and 2) asked the participants to simply define their relationships. Question number 1 asked for a simple definition from the participants' perspectives (direct perspective). Question number 2 asked for metaperspectives on their simple relationship definitions. (They were asked what they thought their partners gave as relational definitions.) The second portion asked the participants to select a television show, movie, novel, song or fairy tale which reminded them of their relationships. In question number 4 they were asked for a metaperspective. (They were asked what they thought their partners answered for question number 3.)

Participants wrote their responses to the questions on individual 4 x 6 cards. The cards were marked by couple numbers. Each person received four cards each of which was marked with his/her couple number and numbered 1-4. On card number 1, each person wrote his/her answer to the first question. On card number 2 the metaperspective (answer to question number 2) was placed. The answer to the third question was written on card number three. Card number 4 was for the answer to the fourth question.

After answering the four questions, individuals were asked to compare their simple definitions (responses to question number 1) with their own metaperspectives (responses to question number
2). (See Appendix B for verbal instructions.) Card number 1 was compared with card number 2. If the individual considered the two to be in agreement about the relational definition he or she wrote an A on the back of card number 1. If the individual saw the two as not being in agreement, he or she wrote an N. If he or she could not assess whether the definitions were in agreement, or simply was not certain which to choose, he or she wrote a 0. It should be noted that participants were discouraged from choosing a 0 unless they truly could not make a choice. The direct and metaperspectives for the metaphorical definition were compared by comparing cards 3 and 4. If cards 3 and 4 were considered to be in agreement, the participant wrote an A on the back of card 3. If they were not in agreement he/she wrote an N. When he/she could not make a judgment, he/she wrote a 0.

Individuals were next asked to compare their partner's metaperspectives with their own direct perspectives. Couples exchanged cards 2 and 4. Each person read his/her partner's metaperspective on card 2 and compared it with his/her direct perspective on card 1. A U was placed on the back of his/her partner's card number 2 if the participant considered the metaperspective to exhibit an understanding. If he/she saw the metaperspective as lacking understanding he/she wrote an M on the back of his/her partner's card 2. A 0 was written when the participant was uncertain of whether to write a U or an M. Each participant then compared his/her partner's card 4 with his/her own card 3.
Card 4 was marked with a U if it exhibited understanding, with an M if it lacked understanding in the participant's perspective, and with a 0 if the participant was unsure.

When participants had completed the comparisons, they filled out the Perceived Confirmation Scale.

As participants completed the procedure, they handed the cards and confirmation scale to the researcher. The researcher thanked them for their participation and offered to make an appointment for another meeting with them. It was explained that since people sometimes communicate about their relationships in new ways following the questions which were asked about their relationships, they might generate some questions about their relationships or about the study or their communication. The researcher gave each person her phone number (even though all said they did not wish to meet again) and told them that she would be happy to meet with them should they talk about the study and decide that they would like to meet again.

Data Analysis

The participants' responses to each of the four questions regarding relational definitions were qualitatively assessed. They were categorized independently by outside judges and by the researcher.

After the data was collected, there were two hundred eight cards. Since four questions were asked, there were four separate
groups of relational definitions: (1) 52 cards containing participants' simple relational definitions, (2) 52 cards containing participants' metaperspectives of relational definitions, (3) 52 cards containing participants' metaphorical relational definitions and (4) 52 cards containing participants' metaperspectives of metaphorical relational definitions. The responses obtained in each of these four groups were subdivided into four subgroups, yielding sixteen subgroups. These subgroups were recombined into four new groups so that each of the new groups was composed of 25% of the responses from original group 1 (relational definitions), 25% of the responses from original group 2 (metaperspectives of relational definitions), 25% of the responses from original group 3 (metaphorical relational definitions) and 25% of the responses from original group 4 (metaperspectives of metaphorical relational definitions). Each of these four new groups were submitted to one of four judges for categorization. The judges were graduate students in the Interpersonal Communication department who were familiar with qualitative methodology and communication relationships.

Each judge was asked to independently generate categories that accurately reflected emergent patterns of role relationships, general themes and affect of the responses in his/her group. The researcher then independently generated categories based on the role relationships, general themes and affect expressed in the responses. Her categories were based on all of the two hundred eight responses.
The categories generated by the judges and the researcher were then compared. They were merged into a single set of categories based on similarities of categories.

This categorization procedure introduced rigor into the qualitative assessment by having five people separately generate categories, providing five sets to compare. The original categories are reported in the results chapter of this thesis as well as the bases on which they were merged.

Following the final category delineation, each of the four judges were given two groups of 50 responses each to sort into categories. These groups of responses were composed of the same four groups which were given to the judges during the category generation portion but each judge was given different groups from the group he/she had to work with previously. Each response was categorized by two judges. The researcher independently sorted all 208 responses into the categories. A response remained in a category if at least two of the three judges put it there. Those responses which were placed in three separate categories by the three judges were placed into a new separate category.

Cohen's Kappa coefficient was used to compute judges' inter-rater reliability (Cohen, 1960).

This categorization procedure yielded a set of categories into which each of the two hundred eight responses had been placed.

The Perceived Confirmation Scale was scored by summing the scores on the six questions after reversing the scores on questions 2, 4 and 5.
In order to answer the research question (Are the relationship definitions held by some people more correlated to perceived confirmation than those held by others?), each category of relational definitions was assigned a number. For each participant, A, the number of the category into which A's simple relational definition was placed was correlated with A's perceived confirmation score. Partner B's perceived confirmation score was also correlated with A's category of simple relational definition. Kerlinger and Pedhazur (1975, p. 186) suggested that multiple regression was the appropriate way to accomplish this correlation. The categories were viewed as independent variables and the perceived confirmation scores were viewed as the dependent variable. Dummy coding was used so that each category could be correlated individually with the perceived confirmation score.

This procedure addressed the research question in two ways: (1) It was to have revealed whether or not people who feel confirmed by their partners hold similar definitions of their relationships and (2) it was to show whether or not people whose partners feel confirmed by them hold similar definitions of their relationships.

The procedure described above was repeated with the metaphorical definitions categories. Table 1 below clarifies the correlations which were performed.
Table I

Correlations Pertaining to the Research Question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure (for each individual)</th>
<th>Correlated With</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple definition category</td>
<td>Own PCS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partner's PCS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphorical definition category</td>
<td>Own PCS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partner's PCS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PCS - Perceived Confirmation Scale Score

The four hypotheses were addressed as follows:

(1) The ability to generate relational definitions and metaperspectives is positively correlated with perceived confirmation.

Ability to generate relational definitions and metaperspectives was measured by whether or not the questions asking for them were answered. The scoring procedure is explained in Table 2.

Table II

Scoring Procedure for Hypothesis #1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>If yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did participant answer simple relational definition question?</td>
<td>1 pt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did participant answer simple metaperspective question?</td>
<td>1 pt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did participant answer metaphorical definition question?</td>
<td>1 pt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did participant answer metaphorical metaperspective question?</td>
<td>1 pt.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL ability to generate relational definitions and metaperspectives score
Scores were computed for each portion as follows: A score of 0 was assigned to those individuals who did not generate a relational definition nor a metaperspective (as evidenced by blank cards). A score of 1 was given to those who were able to generate either a relational definition or a metaperspective and a score of 2 was assigned to those who generated both a relational definition and a metaperspective. The scores from each portion (1) simple relational definition and metaperspective and (2) metaphorical definition and metaperspective, were added together to make up the ability to generate relational definitions and metaperspectives score. The possible scores ranged from 0-4.

The ability to generate relational definitions and metaperspectives score for each individual was correlated with his/her perceived confirmation score and with his/her partner's perceived confirmation score. A positive correlation between perceived confirmation scores and the ability to generate relational definition and metaperspective scores would have supported the hypothesis.

(2) Agreement about relational definition is positively correlated with perceived confirmation.

Agreement between partners was assessed for the two separate relational definition questions (Question 1: simple relational
definition and Question 3: metaphorical relational definition).

Table III depicts the procedure which was used for scoring agreement and relating the agreement score to perceived confirmation.

Table III

Scoring Procedure for Hypothesis #2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Compared With</th>
<th>If Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A's simple definition category</td>
<td>B's simple definition</td>
<td>1 pt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A's metaphorical definition category</td>
<td>B's metaphorical</td>
<td>1 pt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>definition category</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL Agreement Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Correlated With</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Agreement Score</td>
<td>A's PCS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B's PCS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relational PCS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Partners' agreement scores for the simple relational definition portion and the metaphorical definition portion were added together. The partners' final agreement score was a 0 if the couple disagreed on both portions, a 1 if they agreed on one portion but not the other and a 2 if they agreed on both portions.

The agreement score for each couple was correlated with partner A's perceived confirmation score and with partner B's perceived confirmation score. A's and B's perceived confirmation scores were
then summed to create a relational perceived confirmation score. The agreement score was then correlated with the relational perceived confirmation score. It was expected that couples who agreed on their relational definition would report higher feelings of confirmation.

(3) Understanding of partners' relational definitions is positively correlated with perceived confirmation.

There were four separate understanding scores for each person as listed in Table IV.

Table IV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Compared With</th>
<th>If Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple definition metaperspective category</td>
<td>Partner's simple definition category</td>
<td>1 pt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphorical definition metaperspective category</td>
<td>Partner's metaphorical definition category</td>
<td>1 pt.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL Judges' Understanding Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Compared With</th>
<th>If Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partner's assessment of understanding on simple definition</td>
<td>(no comparison)</td>
<td>2 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner's assessment of understanding on metaphorical definition</td>
<td>(no comparison)</td>
<td>2 pts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL Participants' Understanding Score
Two of the four scores were derived from the simple relational definition portion and two were derived from the metaphorical definition. The judgments that each person's partner gave served as two of the understanding scores. The other understanding scores were derived from the judges' categories. If partner A's definition of the relationship and partner B's metaperspective were in the same category, partner B was considered to understand partner A. Partner B was assigned one point for understanding if the simple definition metaperspective was placed in the same category as A's simple definition and one point if the metaphorical definition metaperspective was placed in the same category as A's metaphorical definition. The possible scores on the judges' understanding score ranged from 0 to 2.

The participants' understanding score ranged from 0-4. If A considered B's metaperspective to exhibit understanding, B was assigned 2 points. If A did not know whether or not B's response was an understanding one, B received 1 point. If A considered B's
response to be a non-understanding one, B received 0 points. Both
the simple definition and metaphorical definition were scored this
way.

The judges' understanding scores for partner A and B were
summed to yield the judges' relational understanding score. This
was then correlated with the relational perceived confirmation score.
The participants' understanding scores were summed to create the
participants relational understanding score which was correlated
with the relational perceived confirmation score.

It was anticipated that participants who understood their
partners' relational definitions would also feel more confirmed by
their partners and be perceived as being more confirming by their
partners.

(4) Perceived agreement regarding relational definition is posi-
tively correlated with perceived confirmation.

Like understanding, perceived agreement was assessed in two
separate ways for each of the portions of the questionnaire (the
simple definition portion and the metaphorical definition portion).
This resulted in four perceived agreement scores. Table V clari-
fies these scores and the scoring procedure.
Table V

Scoring Procedure for Hypothesis #4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Compared With</th>
<th>If Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple definition meta-perspective category</td>
<td>Own simple definition category</td>
<td>1 pt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphorical definition metaperspective category</td>
<td>Own metaphorical definition category</td>
<td>1 pt.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL Judges' Perceived Agreement Score**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Correlated With</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Judges' Perceived Agreement Score</td>
<td>Own PCS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partner's PCS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants' Perceived Agreement Score</td>
<td>Own PCS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partner's PCS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judges' Relational Perceived Agreement Score</td>
<td>Relational PCS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants' Relational Perceived Agreement Score</td>
<td>Relational PCS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One assessment of perceived agreement came from participant responses. The second assessment came from the judges' categories.
If the person's relational definition and metaperspective were placed in the same category, the person was considered to perceive agreement between his/her own relational definition and his/her partner's.

This was assessed for both the simple and metaphorical definitions. One point was possible for each type of definition, yielding a possible score of 2.

The participants' perceived agreement score was computed by allowing 2 pts. if the participant assessed his/her direct and metaperspective to be in agreement, one point if he/she could not assess agreement and 0 pts. if disagreement was perceived. This scoring procedure was applied to both the simple and metaphorical definitions, creating a range of possible scores from 0 to 4.

Judges' relational perceived agreement scores and participants' relational perceived agreement scores were created by summing the partners' scores. Each participant's perceived agreement scores were correlated with his/her own perceived confirmation score and with his/her partner's perceived confirmation score. The relational scores were correlated with the relational perceived confirmation score. Support for the hypothesis would have been found if (a) people who perceived themselves as agreeing with their partners about relational definitions also perceived their partners as more confirming and (b) people who perceived themselves as agreeing with their partners also had partners who perceived them as being more confirming.

The overall plan for the correlations which were performed
in order to answer the research question and hypotheses is depicted in Table VI.
Table VI

Overall Correlations Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Correlated With</th>
<th>Expected Finding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>Simple relational definition category</td>
<td>Own PCS Partner's PCS</td>
<td>Some categories correlate positively with PCS scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis #1</td>
<td>Total ability to generate relational definitions and metaperspectives score</td>
<td>Own PCS Partner's PCS</td>
<td>Positive correlations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis #2</td>
<td>Total couple agreement score</td>
<td>A's PCS B's PCS Relational PCS</td>
<td>Positive correlations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis #3</td>
<td>Judges' Understanding Score Participants' Understanding Score Judges' Relational Understanding Participants' Relational &quot;</td>
<td>Own PCS Partner's PCS Relational PCS</td>
<td>Positive correlations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis #4</td>
<td>Judges' Perceived Agreement Score Participants' Perceived Agreement Judges' Relational Perceived Agreement Score</td>
<td>Own PCS Partner's PCS Relational PCS</td>
<td>Positive Correlations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter contains the results of the data collected from the 52 participants. Participants provided two different definitions of their relationships as well as two different metaperspectives of definitions of their relationships. They assessed whether or not they perceived agreement between themselves and their partners and whether or not they considered their partners' metaperspectives to exhibit understanding. They also answered the items on the Perceived Confirmation Scale which measured the amount of confirmation each participant felt from his/her partner.

The Participants

The 52 participants were mainly University of Montana students and their romantic partners. They ranged in age from 16 to 32 years. The mean age was 22.4.

They were asked what type of commitment they considered their relationship to be and given the choices (1) Married, (2) Engaged, (3) Going Steady, (4) Living Together and (5) other. Of the 52 respondents, 16 were married, 2 engaged, 25 going steady, 7 living together and 2 other.

Participants were also asked to report how long they had been in a committed relationship. The length of commitment ranged from 1 month to 48 months with a mean length of commitment 21.7 months.

Couples rated their level of commitment on a scale of 1-5. Six participants considered themselves to have an average commit-
ment. Fourteen reported that they were quite committed and thirty ranked themselves as very committed, the highest level of commitment. Two participants did not respond to the question of commitment level and none reported lower levels of commitment. The mean commitment level out of the possible range of 1-5 was 4.48 with marrieds averaging 4.81 and those who were going steady 4.25.

The couples who participated in the study were between 16 and 32 years old. Most were either married or going steady. They had been in committed relationships between 1 and 48 months with an average of a little less than 2 years. In general, the participants saw themselves as being quite or very committed to each other.

**General Research Question**

The participants' responses to each of the 4 questions regarding relational definitions were qualitatively assessed. They were categorized independently by outside judges and by the researcher.

After the data was collected, there were two hundred eight cards. Since four questions were asked, there were four separate groups of relational definitions: (1) 52 cards containing participants' relational definitions, (2) 52 cards containing participants' metaperspectives of relational definitions, (3) 52 cards containing participants' metaphorical relational definitions and (4) 52 cards containing participants' metaperspectives of metaphorical relational definitions. The responses obtained in each of these four groups were subdivided into four subgroups, yielding
sixteen subgroups. These subgroups were recombined into four new groups so that each of the new groups was composed of 25% of the responses from original group 1 (relational definitions), 25% of the responses from original group 2 (metaperspectives of relational definitions), 25% of the responses from original group 3 (metaphorical relational definitions) and 25% of the responses from original group 4 (metaperspectives of metaphorical relational definitions). Each of these four new groups was submitted to one of four judges for categorization. The judges were graduate students in the Interpersonal Communication department who were familiar with qualitative methodology and communication relationships.

Each judge was asked to independently generate approximately 3-8 categories that would accurately reflect emergent patterns of role relationships, general themes and affect of the responses in her group. The researcher then independently generated categories based on the role relationships, general themes and affect expressed in the responses. Her categories were based on all of the two hundred eight responses.

The categories generated by the judges and the researcher were then compared. They were merged by the researcher, into a single set of categories based on similarities of categories.

Each of the four judges as well as the researcher found that the "role relationships" concept was not a useful criterion on which to base categories. This was true because most of the responses did not include roles. They described the relationship rather than
the roles the individuals take in their relationships. The affect expressed in most of the answers was a general, positive one. Therefore, affect, with some exceptions, did not serve to differentiate between the relationships. Theme of the relationships, then, became the main criterion by which the relationship categories were generated. The categories of the four judges and the researcher were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Judge A</th>
<th>Judge B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supportive/Sharing</td>
<td>Closeness Yet Allowances for Individuality/Autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Differences</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Building</td>
<td>Sharing of Activities/Emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working It Through</td>
<td>Us Against the World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty</td>
<td>Interdependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable</td>
<td>Friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Struggle</td>
<td>Romantic Fantasy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness</td>
<td>Uncertainty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Judge C</th>
<th>Judge E (Researcher)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supportive/Open</td>
<td>True Love—Idealistic flavor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complementary (fulfilling</td>
<td>Independence/dependence (differences mentioned)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>each others needs)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership (equal parts</td>
<td>Growing (future oriented, forever)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>working for the whole)</td>
<td>Ups &amp; Downs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committed (working for the</td>
<td>Overcoming Problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relationship)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Struggling (ups &amp; downs,</td>
<td>Friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contradictions, conflicts,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confusion, but still working</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for the relationship)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinderella Complex (overly</td>
<td>Future Decision Pending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>idealistic)</td>
<td>Stable qualities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Judge D

Love Conquers All—Frustration evident, but is overcome in some way so that the relationship survives.

Fairy Tale, Romantic Love -- In many cases the woman is somehow dependent on the man. Love seen as beautiful, soft, fragile, delicate somehow. Real mushy types.

This & That -- Frustration is more evident here--some sense of opposites attracting--basically a "good" relationship that continues to survive. Something of the fairy tale gone awry.

Comfort, Support, Warmth -- honest, open committed, "You & me against the world), Relationships described in terms of behaviors and feelings, also some cognitions.

These categories were collapsed into the final categories.

Judge D's Fairy Tale, Romantic Love, C's Cinderella Complex, A's Perfect, B's Romantic Fantasy and E's True Love were collapsed into the same category, "Heavenly Bliss", since they all represented an idealistic love relationship. Some of the definitions which are in this category are "The Perfect Couple", "Sleeping Beauty", "Love Story", "Romeo and Juliet (without the feuding)." These responses indicated love relationships which were problem-free and perfectly blissful. The majority of the responses placed in this category were responses to questions three and four, the questions which asked for metaphorical definitions.

Another theme that was expressed in the categories of all five judges was that of frustration, uncertainty and/or struggle. In delineating the final categories, the researcher defined two separate categories based on two different dimensions expressed in the definitions. The first category, "Ups and Downs" is that of good and bad times as an ongoing aspect of the relationship. The relationships in this category are seen as constant with the struggle or frustration occurring within the relationship. Some des-
criptions of these relationships were "love-hate", "vastillating quality", "strongly romantic-strong disagreements", "like a spring . . . as a spring goes up and down so does our relationship."

Other responses were "Like an airplane ride it has some ups and downs", "a stand off over stubbornness and at times it will run in harmony", and "like an elevator."

The second of these categories "What will Tomorrow Bring?", is the one in which the relationship itself is struggling or uncertain. "What will Tomorrow Bring?" is the very real question which is permeating these relationship definitions. These definitions indicate that the future of the relationship is uncertain. Judge A's Uncertainty, B's Uncertainty, and E's Future Decision Pending were collapsed into this category. Participants described these relationships as "in limbo", "fragile", "Born Again but tread lightly", "Russian Roulette", and "there are some problems between us that stand in the way of our relationship and we may not go any farther if we don't straighten them out."

Another category which emerged clearly was that of a non-responsive answer. This category was for those definitions which were a refusal to define the relationships. It was named "No Label." This is a very small category in terms of how many responses fit into it (6) but is nonetheless distinct from other categories. Examples of definitions in the "No Label" category are "don't know", "?", "I don't think she thinks our relationship is like any tale I know of", and "No label."
In looking for other dimensions upon which to base categories, the problem of category overlap became evident. While the categories mentioned by the various judges had similarities, it was impossible to collapse them into mutually exclusive categories. The definitions given by the respondents in most cases fit into at least two of the categories generated by the judges. Most responses indicated similar overall themes and affect of "good" relationships. Many characterized their relationships as friendships as well as romances, and as satisfying, comfortable, close, committed and understanding relationships. Many times, open honest communication was mentioned as being important to the relationships. Over fifty percent of the responses included some or all of these comments.

As the remaining categories were considered, the responses were examined closely in search of dimensions which would differentiate the "good" definitions. Those dimensions which went beyond the general descriptions were then designated as sub-categories to the general category which was labeled "Good Love." These categories described qualities of the relationships which were more specific than the general category.

Three of the judges had specified categories which were indicative of individuality within the relationship. These were A's Individual Differences, B's Closeness Yet Allowances for Individuality/Autonomy, E's Independence/Dependence. Individuality became a sub-category entitled "You, Me and We." The definitions in this cate-
category referred to the relationship as having the qualities of the "Good Love" relationship but additionally mentioned the theme of the individuals within the relationship being separate people. Some descriptions of relationships within this category are "opposites attract", "The Odd Couple--I'm very talkative and he is quiet and reserved", "a team as well as individuals", and "we love each other enough to let each other be free."

Another theme which was separate from the general "Good" category was that of function. Some of the categories indicated functions that the people in the relationship serve for each other. These were primarily described as helping, supporting functions. The categories which were then combined into this sub-category, "Helping one Another" were Judge A's Supportive/Sharing, B's Interdependence, C's Supportive, Open and Complementary, and D's Comfort, Support, Warmth category. These responses described various functions the people in the relationships perform for one another such as "I need her for help and she needs me", "I depend on him... I know that he is always willing to help in whatever way he can", "we do things for each other", "we feel a need for each other", "You've Got a Friend." Depending on one another for various needs was mentioned most frequently in these responses.

Working through problems was another theme which came up in several of the categories of different judges. These categories were A's Working it Through, B's Us Against the World, D's Love
Conquers All, and E's Overcoming Problems. Generally problems are acknowledged as part of the relationship in this category and working them out is described as an element of the relationship. As opposed to the "What Will Tomorrow Bring" category, this category does not involve an indication of a future decision but rather simply a theme of working through problems as an aspect of the relationship. As opposed to the "Ups and Downs" category, this category includes the general "Good" tone of the main category and a positive sounding end to the problems. Responses frequently indicated the theme of working through problems as a process which served to strengthen the relationship. "Ups and Downs", on the other hand, includes a more matter-of-fact tone about the ongoing struggle. Some responses were "No matter how hard times have been, we've pulled and stayed together, and our love does not diminish", "close in time of struggle", and "they always had those little quarrels but in the end love prevailed". A common metaphorical definition which described this category was "Eight is Enough." Many participants described the relationship where problems were dealt with and resulted in a closer relationship.

The final dimension which emerged when the "good" category was further explored and which two of the five judges specified was the theme of relationship building. Judge A delineated a category named "Relationship Building" and Judge E specified a category of "Growing". Both were described in similar terms, the
theme being one of a positive, growthful view of the future of the relationship. This category, "Onward & Upward", includes those definitions which, in addition to being described as "good" are described in future terms. They indicate a development or movement in the relationship which stretches into the future. Examples of comments which are descriptive of these definitions are "growing", "forever", "becoming closer", "a combined effort for the future", and "we are building a very strong and lasting relationship." One respondent said "It will be nurtured and taken conscious care of so it will last and grow as we want it to."

The final categories, as described above were:

1) Heavenly Bliss
2) Ups and Downs
3) What Will Tomorrow Bring?
4) Good Love
   5a) You, Me and We
   5b) Helping One Another
   5c) We Can Work it Out
   5d) Onward & Upward
5) Good Love
6) No Label

Following the final category delineation, the judges sorted the responses into the categories. Table VII shows the number of definitions which were sorted into the various categories for each of the four questions as well as the total.
Table VII
Category Sorting Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Q1</th>
<th>Q2</th>
<th>Q3</th>
<th>Q4</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heavenly Bliss</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ups and Downs</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Will Tomorrow Bring?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Love</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You, Me &amp; We</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping One Another</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We Can Work it Out</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onward and Upward</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Label</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Categorized</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following the sorting into categories, inter-judge reliability was computed using Cohen's Kappa Coefficient and found to be .74.

The Perceived Confirmation Scale Scores were summed yielding the following scores: (Possible scores ranging from 0-42)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean score was 38.9.

Following the sorting procedure and the Perceived Confirmation scoring, the correlations were run. All correlations were done with SPSS as described by Norman H. Nie, et al. (1975).
The scores on the Perceived Confirmation Scale (PCS) were correlated with the categories into which the relationship definitions were placed. The correlations were handled with an SPSS dummy coding procedure. The categories were coded so that for each category, those responses which were sorted into it were coded as 1's while those which were sorted into other categories were coded as 0's. A regression analysis then was run on the computer which produced a correlation coefficient for each category and its relationship to the PCS scores. The results are presented in Table VIII.

Table VIII

Relationship Definitions Category - PCS Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simple Definition Category</th>
<th>PCS</th>
<th>Partner's PCS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heavenly Bliss</td>
<td>.14917</td>
<td>.14917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Love</td>
<td>.11794</td>
<td>-.05124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping One Another</td>
<td>-.04315</td>
<td>.06121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You, Me and We</td>
<td>-.01456</td>
<td>.27848*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We Can Work it Out</td>
<td>-.02956</td>
<td>-.02956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onward and Upward</td>
<td>.06978</td>
<td>.03850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Will Tomorrow Bring?</td>
<td>.00722</td>
<td>.03850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ups and Downs</td>
<td>-.44420*</td>
<td>-.58557*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metaphorical Def. Category</th>
<th>PCS</th>
<th>Partner's PCS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heavenly Bliss</td>
<td>.06419</td>
<td>.00350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Love</td>
<td>.15581</td>
<td>.23744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping One Another</td>
<td>.06570</td>
<td>.09297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You, Me and We</td>
<td>.09297</td>
<td>.14952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We Can Work it Out</td>
<td>-.05719</td>
<td>.06419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onward and Upward</td>
<td>.18080</td>
<td>-.20992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Will Tomorrow Bring?</td>
<td>.01144</td>
<td>-.01059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ups and Downs</td>
<td>-.56491*</td>
<td>-.53882*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A correlation of .2732 was needed for significance at the .05 level. The simple definition category "You, Me and We" correlated significantly in a positive way with Partner's PCS while "Ups and Downs" correlated significantly with both the PCS and Partner's PCS. The Metaphorical Definition category "Ups and Downs" was negatively correlated with both the PCS and Partner's PCS to a significant degree.

A post hoc analysis was completed after further combining the categories. "Heavenly Bliss", "Good Love", "Onward and Upward" and "Helping One Another" were combined into one category. "Ups and Downs", "You, Me and We" and "We Can Work it Out" were then combined into a second category. "What Will Tomorrow Bring?" was left intact as a third category and the fourth category was made up of the "No Label" category and the category into which those definitions the judges did not agree on were placed. It was thought that the broader categories might yield significant results but the Pearson Correlation which was computed did not yield significant results with the broader categories.

The analysis of the general research question, then, yielded a significant negative correlation between the "Ups and Downs" category and the PCS (as measured for both partners in a relationship) on both the simple definition and metaphorical definition. Additionally, the "You, Me and We" category and the Partner's PCS score were significantly correlated in a positive direction on the simple definition question. The other correlations per-
formed between the PCS and the relational definitions were not significant.

Hypothesis 1

In order to test for the correlation between the ability to generate relational definitions and metaperspectives (AbGen) and perceived confirmation (PCS), a Pearson Correlation was run correlating the AbGen score with the PCS score and the Partner's PCS score. (Refer to methods section for explanation of AbGen scoring procedure.) A strong positive correlation would indicate that people who understand their concept of their relationship also perceive their partners and are perceived by their partners as being more confirming than those who do not. The results are tabled in Table IX.

Table IX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Correlated With</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AbGen</td>
<td>PCS</td>
<td>.0767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abgen</td>
<td>Partner's PCS</td>
<td>-.1210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational Abgen</td>
<td>Relational PCS</td>
<td>.0767</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A correlation of .2732 would have been significant at the .05 level. The ability to generate relational definitions and metaperspectives did not differentiate between individuals or couples. With a possible range from 0-4 on the AbGen variable, 49 of the 52
participants scored 4, with 1 scoring 3, one scoring 2 and 1 a 1.

The relational level analysis, where the partners' scores were added together and then correlated, also proved to produce an insignificant correlation coefficient.

**Hypothesis 2**

The relationship between agreement and perceived confirmation was tested by scoring the agreement between partners on their simple relationship definition categories and on their metaphorical relationship definition categories, and then correlating their agreement scores with their perceived confirmation scores. On the agreement scores, the possible range was 0-2. 36 of the 52 participants (or 18 of the 26 couples) scored a 0 while 16 participants (8 couples) scored a 1. These were then correlated with the perceived confirmation scores using a Person Correlation. The relational level correlation was also computed. The results of this procedure are shown in Table X.

### Table X

**Hypothesis 2 Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Correlated With</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agreement PC</td>
<td>PCS</td>
<td>-.2903*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement PC</td>
<td>Partner's PCS</td>
<td>-.2903*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement PC</td>
<td>Relational PCS</td>
<td>-.2903*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These results were significant at the .018 level. This suggests that couples who had lower agreement scores perceive more confirmation than do those with higher agreement scores.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis three was tested by computing the judges' portion of the understanding scores, the participants' portion of the understanding score, and then correlating each of these with the PCS and with the Partners' PCS. The judges' understanding score could range from 0-2 points. The results were 31 participants with 0 points, 6 with a score of 1 and 15 with a score of 2, as indicated in Table XI. The scoring for the participants' understanding score allowed for 0-4 points. Three participants had scores of 0, 2 scores of 1, 10 scores of 2, 16 scores of 3 and 19 scores of 4.

Table XI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Judges' Understanding Score</th>
<th>Participants' Understanding Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Score</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The partners' individual scores were summed to create relational scores which were then correlated with the relational PCS score.
Table XII depicts the correlation coefficients obtained by computing the Pearson Correlation.

### Table XII

**Hypothesis 3 Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Correlated With</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Judges Understanding</td>
<td>PCS</td>
<td>-.1399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partner's PCS</td>
<td>-.0743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants' Understanding</td>
<td>PCS</td>
<td>.1342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partner's PCS</td>
<td>.1499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational Judges' Understanding</td>
<td>Relational PCS</td>
<td>-.1399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational Participants'</td>
<td>Relational PCS</td>
<td>.1252</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A correlation coefficient of .2732 would have been significant at the .05 level. All of the correlations were insignificant. Understanding, as measured in this study, did not correlate significantly with perceived confirmation.

**Hypothesis 4**

In order to test hypothesis four, the judges' portion of the perceived agreement score and the participants' portion of the perceived agreement score were computed separately. Following those computations, the judges' portion and participants' portion were each correlated independently with both the PCS and the Partner's PCS scores. The perceived agreement score had a possible range from 0-2 for the judges' portion and from 0-4 for the participants'
portion. Table XIII depicts the scores for perceived agreement.

Table XIII
Perceived Agreement Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Judges' Perceived Agreement</th>
<th>Participants' Perceived Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Score</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The judges' perceived agreement score as well as the participants' perceived agreement score were then correlated with both the perceived confirmation score and the partner's perceived confirmation score. The judges' perceived agreement scores were summed for each couple and correlated with the relational perceived confirmation score. The participants' perceived agreement scores were also summed and correlated with the relational perceived confirmation score. The correlation coefficients which resulted from the Pearson Correlation test are reported in Table XIV.

Table XIV
Hypothesis 4 Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Correlated With</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Judges' Perceived Agreement</td>
<td>PCS</td>
<td>-.1688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partner's PCS</td>
<td>-.0034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants' Perceived Agreement</td>
<td>PCS</td>
<td>.1100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partner's PCS</td>
<td>.2271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judges' Relational Perceived Agreement</td>
<td>Relational PCS</td>
<td>-.0115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants' Perceived Agreement</td>
<td>Relational PCS</td>
<td>.1100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A correlation coefficient of .2732 would have been significant at the .05 level. None of the correlations proved to be significant. Perceived agreement did not prove to be significantly related to perceived confirmation. The participants' assessment of perceived agreement did prove to be positively correlated with PCS (although nonsignificantly) while the judges' assessment of perceived agreement was negatively correlated with PCS.

Post Hoc Analyses

Post hoc analyses were performed to determine whether there were systematic differences in responses based on either (1) sex or (2) type of commitment. T-tests were run on the computer. Sex proved to be unrelated to the responses.

There were, however, some differences based on type of commitment. When the participants assessed their perceived agreement on the simple relational definition question, the married people perceived significantly less agreement than did the people who were going steady. The mean perceived agreement score for the married people was 1.0625 while it was 1.4000 for the single people. This difference was significant at the .049 level. A similar result occurred on the perception of understanding on the simple definition. Married people had a mean score of 1.200 for perceived understanding while single people had a mean score of 1.6800. The difference was significant at the .033 level.
The married couples also scored significantly higher than did the single couples on both length and level of commitment. While marrieds reported a length of commitment which averaged 39 months, singles averaged 10 months. Marrieds' level of commitment averaged 4.812 while singles averaged 4.2500.

There were, then, several differences based on type of commitment. Married people reported higher levels of commitment as well as longer commitments than did singles. Married couples also assessed themselves to have less agreement and understanding about their relationship definitions than did single couples.

**Summary**

None of the hypotheses were supported in this study. The analyses performed, however, did bring out some interesting findings. One result was that people did in fact define their relationships. Secondly, there were regularities in the ways people defined their romantic relationships. Additionally, people presented their relationships in very positive ways, both through the relationship definitions and metaperspectives and through the Perceived Confirmation Scale. One category of relationships definitions, "Ups and Downs", was found to correlate significantly negatively with perceived confirmation.

There were differences in the assessments of understanding and perceived agreement based on whether the assessment was made by a participant or an outside judge. Participants judged themselves to have far greater agreement and understanding in their relation-
ships than did outside judges. Married people also saw themselves as having less agreement and understanding than did single people.

Hypothesis 2, "Agreement about relational definition is positively correlated with Perceived Confirmation" was not only not supported, but a negative correlation was found between agreement and perceived confirmation.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the results and their implications. The general research question will first be discussed followed by a discussion of the four specific hypotheses. Finally, implications for future research will be addressed.

General Research Question

The basic research question was: Are the relationship definitions held by some people more correlated to Perceived Confirmation than are those held by others? The results of this project did not clearly support the notion that some relationship definitions are more closely correlated to Perceived Confirmation than are others. The question remains unanswered, but nevertheless one which is ripe for exploration.

There was, however, one category, "Ups and Downs", which did correlate negatively with Perceived Confirmation. This suggests that participants who described their relationships as constant and certain but with struggles within that relationship reported less perceived confirmation than participants who described their relationship in other ways. One possible explanation of this difference is that the frustration evident in this category is coupled with a hopelessness. The struggles and differences which occur in these relationships are not ones which will be resolved but rather accepted. This acceptance, or hopelessness, is in contrast to the hope of resolution evident in the "What Will Tomorrow Bring?" and
the "We Can Work It Out" categories. The frustrations experienced by participants in the "What Will Tomorrow Bring?" category are considered to be struggles or questions which must be answered. Their commitment to dissolving the relationship if the struggles are not resolved denoted their non-accepting attitudes toward the problems. The definitions which comprised the "We Can Work It Out" category evidenced a determination to work through whatever problems might arise.

Perhaps those people who reported an acceptance of struggles as part of the relationship are also placing some blame on their partners for the problems and therefore showing less confirmation to their partners and feeling less confirmed by their partners.

The other significant correlation (the "You, Me and We" simple definition category with the Partner's PCS) may suggest that those people who defined their relationships as including some autonomy were perceived as more confirming by their partners than those who did not.

In addition to the negative correlation between "Ups and Downs" and perceived confirmation, two other findings were of interest. The scores on the Perceived Confirmation Scale were surprisingly high. This suggests that people in committed romantic relationships report that they feel confirmed by their partners. Perhaps the most useful finding of this study was in the qualitative category generation section. The categories did not prove to be representative of mutually exclusive types of relationships into which separate relationship definitions could be reliably sorted. However, the
facts that the five separate judges generated such similar categories and that the sorters categorized the definitions with a reliability of .74 may be indicative of some regularities in the dimensions from which people view their romantic relationships.

The high PCS scores were somewhat problematic in this study. Since the range of scores was so high, there was not enough difference in scores for the correlations to be meaningful. It is doubtful that this high range is a realistic portrayal of the perceived confirmation which actually exists in romantic relationships. The high scores could have resulted from several factors in this study.

One factor which could have been instrumental in producing the high scores was the sampling procedure. When the study was explained to potential participants and volunteers were solicited, the researcher explained that participants would be answering questions about their relationships. It is possible that those people who were experiencing a high amount of perceived confirmation were more likely to volunteer to answer relational questions than those who were experiencing lesser degrees of confirmation. Those people who might be involved in less confirming or in disconfirming relationships may have been far less willing to participate in a study which would possibly be threatening to them. This suggests that the high scores may not be representative of the general population.
A second possible source of the high scores lay in the research procedure. Couples were told that they would be exchanging their answers to two of the questions. Although the answers which were to be exchanged were specified before they answered any questions, they may have presented their relationships in artificially positive lights throughout the study because of the knowledge that their partners would have access to some of their responses.

Another possibility is that there is a general implicit rule among romantics which impels them to present their relationships positively to the world around them and possibly also to themselves. The participants in this study may have been following this rule as they filled out the perceived confirmation scale. Further support for this speculation came from the relationship definitions offered by the participants. Although some relationship problems were mentioned in the definitions, most definitions included highly positive affect.

Although the categories of relationship dimensions are likely representative of actual regularities in the way people conceptualize their relationships, they did not, in this study, prove to represent a firm typology of romantic relationship definitions. This may be partially attributable to the method of seeking the relationship definitions.

The questions which elicited the relationship definitions may have generated some difficulties. The simple definition question and the metaphorical definition question, although purportedly ask-
ing for the same information, generally did not elicit similar relationship definitions as evidenced by the fact that 33 participants' definitions were placed in different categories. This suggests that participants did not respond with information which allowed the researcher and judges to tap the essence of the relationships in two separate ways. It is more likely that both questions elicited information about the relationships but that the information given did not consist of definitions which clearly defined the relationships, but rather of partial information which tapped one or several of many dimensions of the relationships. For example, one definition given was "I think our relationship is a very strong, personal one. We are both healthily dependent on each other but I don't feel too dependent. My partner is also my best friend and the source of much of my happiness. He makes me laugh and helps me in times of stress and through a lot of problems I've had. We've had our problems too. Arguments, jealousy and differences of opinion but I think our relationship is stronger because of it. My partner has shown me a lot of emotions on his part, much of which I didn't expect at first. Both of us are extremely sensitive, a quality we've had to work on but helps our relationship reach more personal levels as I have labeled it." This definition brought to light the helping one another dimension. It then brought out the "we can work it out" dimension and the relational building dimension. This same respondent chose the song "We'll sing in the sunshine, we'll laugh everyday. We'll sing in the sunshine, then I'll be on my way" as a metaphorical definition.
It should be noted that many of the participants remarked that the metaphorical definition questions were difficult because they were unable to think of TV shows, movies, novels, or fairy tales. Their responses were limited by the nature of the question to those titles which came to mind. The responses, then, may have consisted of those titles which they could think of rather than of those which truly reminded them of their relationships.

Although participants did not mention the difficulty of simple definitions, there may have been a desire to "be good subjects" operating as the definitions were generated. As a result, the definitions may have consisted of the more positive or socially acceptable relationship dimensions.

The definitions may also have been biased by the knowledge that some of the definitions were to be shared between partners. Each participant could have given definitions which he or she felt comfortable in sharing both with his/her partner and with the researcher.

**Summary**

The correlation between the "Ups and Downs" category and perceived confirmation is possibly due to the hopelessness with which these definitions view the strife in their relationships.

Some problems which may have caused the high PCS scores were (1) sampling procedure, (2) research procedure, and (3) desire to represent their relationships in a positive manner. In answering the relational definition questions, the respondents may have also
been attempting to represent their relationships in a positive way. They may have done this either so that (1) their partners would see only the positive aspects of their definitions, (2) so that the researcher would be presented with only the acceptable aspects, or (3) so that they themselves would bring to the surface only pleasant or acceptable aspects. The metaphorical definition questions may have biased the types of responses toward those metaphors the participants happened to be able to articulate.

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis stated that "The ability to generate relational definitions and metaperspectives will be positively correlated with perceived confirmation."

The research did not support Hypothesis 1. The ability to generate relational definitions and metaperspectives scores were very high. The high scores may have stemmed from the sampling procedure. It may be that, just as people who were experiencing a high degree of confirmation were more likely to volunteer to be in the study, people who were able to talk about their relationships were also more likely to volunteer for the study.

There is some evidence to contradict the above speculation. Of those persons who were approached and asked to participate in the study and declined, one of the main reasons cited to explain their refusal was that they did not want to provide personal information about their relationships to anyone. This might suggest
that in general, people do in fact hold articulatable relationship definitions and metaperspectives but have them categorized as private information.

Those who volunteered may have felt obligated to answer the questions. This feeling of obligation, however, could not account for the ability to answer. It was anticipated that some people would simply not be able to generate relationship definitions and metaperspectives. Since only three of the 52 participants failed to answer all four questions, it can be concluded that people are in fact aware of their relationship definitions as well as of their metaperspectives.

Hypothesis 2

The negative correlation between agreement and perceived confirmation directly contradicts the hypothesis. It is possible that the negative correlation stems from a combination of the concentration of the PCS scores at the high end of the scale with the concentration of agreement scores at the low end of the scale. With these scores, it would be highly speculative to conclude that those couples with lower agreement about their relationship definitions also experience greater confirmation than their counterparts.

It is regrettable that agreement was not assessed from the participants' perspectives as well as from the judges'. This would have provided a cross check. One might speculate, based on the comparisons of participants' and judges' differences in scoring understanding and perceived agreement, that participants might have found
a greater degree of agreement than did the judges. If the negative relationship was also evident from the correlation of the participants' agreement scores with the PCS, it would be more appropriate to conclude that agreement is negatively related to perceived confirmation.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 postulated that understanding of partners' relational definitions would be positively correlated with perceived confirmation.

Of interest in the results is the fact that the judges' understanding scores and participants' understanding scores were reversals of one another. The judges' scores were suggestive of very little understanding while the participants' scores reflected a high amount of understanding. This difference brings to light the problem of measuring understanding which will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Another possibility is that participants may be acting out a subtle rule which dictates that they consider themselves to understand one another and to be understood by the other. A third explanation for their high understanding scores could be that people simply need to be understood and they were wanting to be understood so they rated the definitions to reflect the understanding.

It is also conceivable that the judges' categories did not tap the relationship definitions. There may have been some idio-
syncratic similarities in the partners' definitions which were simply not evident to outsiders.

**Hypothesis 4**

Perceived agreement regarding relational definition was hypothesized to correlate positively with perceived confirmation. Those participants who perceived themselves as being in agreement with their partners regarding their relational definitions were hypothesized to also score higher on the Perceived Confirmation Scale than those who did not.

The hypothesis was not supported by the results. A result of interest here was the difference between the judges' and participants' perceived agreement scores. Like the understanding scores, the participants scored themselves far higher on perceived agreement than did the judges. This again suggests the effect of the difference between insider and outsider perspectives.

**Post Hoc Analyses**

Several differences were found between married couples and single couples. The fact that married people reported a higher level of commitment may be tied to the longer commitments they reported. One might speculate that as they invest more and more time in a relationship, they perceive a higher and higher level of commitment.

Married people also perceived less agreement and understanding
between themselves on their simple relationship definitions. It may be that the difference is suggestive of married people being more aware of differences that exist than are single people who have spent less time in their committed relationships. Single people may be more likely to be making assumptions about how their partners view their relationships whereas married people are more likely to have experienced situations and problems in which their assumptions clashed so that their awareness of their lack of agreement and understanding is heightened. A second possible explanation is that the married people have experienced more disillusionment with their relationships overall and although they were unwilling to report this on the Perceived Confirmation Scale, it came out in their lowered perceptions of agreement and understanding.

**Summary**

Hypotheses 1, 3 and 4 were clearly not supported in this study. It was discovered that when the relationship definitions were assessed from participant and outside judges' perspectives, participants reported high understanding and perceived agreement while judges reported low understanding and perceived agreement.

Hypothesis 2 was contradicted by the results of this study. This result must, however, be interpreted speculatively since the agreement scores were low and the perceived confirmation scores were high. It is likely that from the participants' perspectives, the agreement scores would not have been as low. The negative correlation would likely have been refuted.
Implications for Future Research

The questions "How do people define their relationships?" and "What do those definitions denote in terms of differences within different relationship?" are fascinating. The development of a typology of relationship definitions could be helpful to explaining the behavior dynamics which take place in a variety of relationships.

Several dimensions of romantic relationships were found in this study. These could be explored in further studies.

Perhaps the salience of the various dimensions in various relationships could be studied. It appeared that in some of the relationships, several of the dimensions were present. It would follow that types of relationships might be identified by exploring which of the dimensions and in what order of salience the dimensions are present in relationships. For example, helping each other, maintaining individual autonomy and relationship building may be dimensions which are present in each of several relationships. The relationship in which relationship building is the primary focus may be a very different type of relationship than the relationship in which maintaining individual autonomy is the foremost concern.

Comparison groups also need to be studied. There may be regularities in relationship types based on marital status, age, length of relationship, level of education, socio-economic status, type of occupation, religion, number of children or other factors. The communication behaviors associated with perceived confirmation
might also prove fruitful in distinguishing among types of relationships.

Relationship questions could be designed to explore preset, specific dimensions of the relationship rather than the general relationship definitions. For example, the dimension of independence/dependence could be tapped through more specific questions.

One finding of this study was that people presented their relationships in positive ways. The more negative dimensions of relationships need to also be explored.

One way to examine relationship definitions might be through projective techniques. People could be asked how they think other people view romantic relationships. They could also be given general scenarios depicting relationship situations and asked to complete or interpret the scenarios. This might prove less threatening than revealing actual negative dimensions of their own relationships.

Secondly, questions could be asked which simply ask for negative information. For example, one might ask "What about your relationship do you not like?" or "What are some things in your relationship that you would like to change?"

People could be questioned more privately. If they were interviewed individually rather than answering questions on paper which were to be exchanged with their partners, they might focus on entirely different aspects of their relationships.
Another finding was that insider and outsider views of the understanding and perceived agreement in the relationships were in direct opposition to each other. It is difficult to surmise how the discrepancy between the judges' and participants' understanding and perceived agreement scores might best be explained but, it is important to examine understanding and perceived agreement from both the insider and outsider perspectives. It may be that judges' and participants' scores referred to two separate entities or two separate kinds of understanding and perceived agreement. Understanding and perceived agreement between people in a relationship may be entirely different from understanding and perceived agreement from an outside perspective.

The use of meta-metaperspectives might be helpful. Another means of measuring understanding and perceived agreement might be to ask participants more focused questions so that the subjectivity of their assessment of understanding and perceived agreement would be reduced. A third suggestion is to ask participants to judge understanding and perceived agreement as was done in this study but to additionally request that they explain what leads them to their judgment.

The quest for an understanding of the relationship between agreement and perceived confirmation was further confused in this study. It appears possible that there is a negative relationship. Studying agreement from an insider perspective as well as outsider perspective might be helpful in exploring this relationship.
REFERENCES


Confirmation/disconfirmation--A lunch panel Asilomar '79: Human communication from the interactional view.


Parks, M. & Wilmot, W. Three research models of communication: Action, interaction and transaction.


Participant Recruitment Interview

Hello, I'm Connie Bullis, a graduate student in the Interpersonal Communication department. I'd like to ask for five to ten minutes of your time to talk with you about a study I'm doing.

(If person agrees)

I am studying the relationships that romantic couples build. To do that, I am looking for some people who would be willing to spend about 45 minutes with me, answering some questions about their relationships. I will have them look at their relationships in several different ways, and compare their views with their partners'. Does that sound like something you might want to participate in? (If so) Could I ask you a couple of questions now?

1. I need to know whether or not you consider yourselves to be in a committed relationship?

2. Could you meet with me (date) __________ at (time) __________ at (place) __________?

3. Name and phone number

Thank you for your time and help. I'll see you __________.
APPENDIX B

Verbal Instructions Given During Data Collection Procedures

Everyone is here so let's get started. I'd like you to first sign the confidentiality form. You will see that I have signed the form. My signature insures that your responses will be kept both anonymous and confidential. Your signature insures that you chose to work with me on this project.

Next, please fill out the demogr data form. It asks for several bits of information but you'll notice it doesn't ask for your name. This is so that your answers can be kept confidential. Any questions so far?

Next, let's look at the questionnaires and 4 x 6 cards. As I talked with each of you individually, I mentioned that I am interested in relationships. I want to find out more about how people who are in relationships see those relationships. These questionnaires ask a few questions which should help me to get a picture of how you see yourselves and your relationships with each other.

These questions will take some thought. I would like you to be sure to answer the parts which ask for descriptions of your choices since those descriptions will make your relationship more clear to me.
Please place your answer to question #1 on the card marked #1, the answer to question #2 on the card marked #2 and so on with questions 3 and 4. You will have twenty minutes to answer the questions. I'll be right here to answer any questions you may need to ask about this part.

(After 20 minutes)

If everyone is finished, let's go on to the next part. I would like to have you do some of the comparing of definitions I mentioned to you when we first talked about this study. First I would like you to compare the way you see your relationship with the way you think your partner sees it. Please look at the definitions you wrote on cards 1 and 2. I am interested in finding out whether or not you think these two definitions are in agreement. If you see them as being in agreement, please write an A on the back of card 1. If they do not agree, please write an N on the back of card 1.

Next, look at cards 3 and 4 together. If you think they agree, please write an A on the back of card 3. If not, please write an N. (After a few minutes when people quit writing)

Next I would like for you to take cards 2 and 4 and switch them with your partner. Now, please compare your partner's card 2 with your own card 1. Does it seem to you that your partner understood your definition of your relationship? If it looks to you like the definition your partner thought you would write is similar to what you wrote, please write a U on the back of your partner's card 2. If not, write an M.
(When people quit writing)

Next, I'd like you to compare your partner's card 4 with your card 3. If your partner's card 4 shows a similar definition to your card 3, write a U on your partner's card 4. If your partner's card 4 and your card 3 are not similar, write an M.

Is everyone finished? Now, please turn to the last paper in your pile. Read the instructions at the top and answer the six questions.
APPENDIX C

Confidentiality Form

I hereby agree to act as a participant in this study. I understand that the information I give in response to questions asked of me will be used for research purposes only. I further understand that at no time will my name be directly attached to the responses I give but that they will be identified by a code number only for the maintenance of my anonymity.

__________________________
Date

__________________________
Participant's Signature

__________________________
Researcher's Signature
APPENDIX D

Demographic Data Form

Couple number

Age __________

Sex __________

Type of Commitment: _______ a) married

________ b) engaged

________ c) "going steady"

________ d) living together

________ e) other (please describe)

How long ago did your relationship become a committed, exclusive one?

____________________

Level of commitment 1 2 3 4 5

Not committed Very Strong

Commitment
APPENDIX E

Questionnaire

1. I would like to know how you define your relationship. If you had to put a label on it (or a nametag), what would the label say? Please describe what it is about your relationship that led you to pick the label you did. In what ways is your relationship like the label?

2. Next I would like you to think about your partner and how he or she sees the relationship. How would you guess your partner would label your relationship? In what ways would your partner say this label (or nametag) is like your relationship?

3. In this next question, I would like to look at your relationship in another way. Choose a story, television show, movie, novel or fairy tale which reminds you of your relationship. Which one did you choose? What is it about that particular choice that reminds you of your relationship?

4. Now I would like you to take a guess at which story, television show, novel, movie or fairy tale your partner chose. Which choice would you guess he or she made? What similarities between the choice and your relationship might have led to this choice?
APPENDIX F

INSTRUCTIONS: Circle the number on each scale that most accurately reflects your attitude toward the associated statement as it relates to your partner.

1. He/she is aware of me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>7</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very strongly</td>
<td>strongly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. He/she isn't at all interested in what I say.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>7</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
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<td>strongly</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3. He/she accepts me.

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4. He/she has no respect for me at all.

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5. He/she dislikes me.

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6. He/she trusts me.

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