

A MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT PROGRAMME

**A study of the proposed contribution of a modern
Pastoral Care and Counselling model to urbanised
Xhosa Communities with special reference to the
congregants at Umtata Methodist Church, Eastern
Cape**

By

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**Under the supervision of
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DEDICATION

I sincerely dedicate this dissertation to my precious husband, Mbomisi, with whom I have been married for 30 years. His companionship, intuitive wisdom and encouragement have been a "launching pad" for this marriage enrichment programme.

Valuable family time has been stolen from our wonderful four sons, Nikita, Joy, Linda and Lundi to achieve this goal. I do believe God our Father and Mother will pay back this time in a different manner in the future. Thank you "Mazizi" for growing together with us as a family in different cultural settings. I also dedicate this piece of work to you.

To my departed parents, Elijah and Ella, my role models, thank you for your intercessory prayers.



(ii)

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, represents my own original work.

This work has not been submitted to any other university for the purpose of a high degree.

**AVIS LUMKA SIGABA
UNIVERSITY OF NATAL
PIETERMARITZBURG**

1999



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Apparently the Church seems to be bursting its seams with resources adequate to partake in the healing of the people of God in our country.

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ABSTRACT

This study was done to explore how modern Pastoral Care and Counselling models could be in dialogue with some valuable Xhosa traditional practices in the urbanised context around Umtata in the Eastern Cape. The intention is to provide a marriage enrichment programme to the congregants of the Methodist Church in this region. This has been offered in response to increase in the rate of divorce, separation and emotional distress experienced by many couples in the area.

Chapter one offers the methodological framework for the entire theoretical and practical study. The second chapter explores various concepts of the family systems theory with particular focus on Murray Bowen's systems theory. This should bring forth a clear understanding of behavioural patterns which manifest in marriage when the system loses equilibrium.

Grounded in the family systems theory is the concept of normal family processes. The third chapter looks into the understanding of normal family processes as brought across by various American authors. The chapter takes the interpretation further by looking into normal family processes in the original Xhosa cultural communities. The reason for the exercise is to bring awareness about what is normal before one can address what is abnormal. This is for widening the horizons so that what is culturally normal should not be labelled as abnormal.

The fourth chapter prepares groundwork for the establishment of intervention and counselling strategies specifically within the Xhosa communities around Umtata. This chapter is field work done through interviews so as to gain an awareness about what the people of this region presently think, feel and say about marriage and family life experiences.

The fifth chapter looks into the minister's uniqueness in marriage enrichment in comparison with his or her colleagues in medical, social work and family therapy or psychotherapy fields. A theological exploration is dealt with in the sixth chapter with a view to contend with biblical principles applicable to marriage. Chapter seven discusses a training model for a lay team of twelve members to promote the concept of the priesthood of all believers. The views of authors like Switzer, Clinebell, Collins, Herbert Otto and others are consulted and opened to dialogue with Xhosa Traditional practices offered by oral sources.

Chapter eight focuses on premarital education. Within this educative counselling, a hand-out on marriage contracts is prepared in both English and the vernacular language. Interdisciplinary work has been included through the engagement of resource personnel from the medical, financial and legal fields.

Chapter nine actually presents the Marriage Enrichment Programme in a workshop form. Within the programme, theoretical and practical work is done in contextual bible study, communication and conflict resolution exercises as well as conscientisation about valuable Xhosa traditional marriage practices. The contextual model on marriage enrichment is offered to a group of forty-four congregants.

The evaluation forms provide a positive result of this marriage enrichment model. The results express a need to address marital problems in our communities. This does give support to the Hypothesis that was tested. Modern pastoral care and counselling models can be adapted to traditional context with positive results. Lay involvement promotes maximum participation of the People of God in care giving. However, further results will be achieved with more workshops or retreats. More effectiveness will also come with the training of more lay teams. This demands large sampling in lay training, more interviewing and more involvement of the rural community elders for more information on traditional practices.



TRANSLATION

Translation of Xhosa Words used in the text, mainly in Chapters 3, 4 7 and 9.

<i>Umzi womXhosa</i>	Xhosa household consists of many huts
<i>Indlu enkulu</i>	Great house or main house – often very large round hut
<i>Indlu yasekunene</i>	Right hand house
<i>Inkundla</i>	Courtyard – open space centrally situated at household
<i>Vimba</i>	Storehouse
<i>Ubuhlanti</i>	Livestock kraal
<i>Umzi</i>	Household
<i>Imzi</i>	Households (plural for umzi)
<i>Xegokazi</i>	Grandmother – usually man's mother
<i>Abatshana</i>	Relatives, nephews and nieces
<i>Inkwenkwe</i>	Xhosa boy (before umgidi ceremony)
<i>Intombazana</i>	Xhosa girl (before intonjane ceremony)
<i>Umfana</i>	Young man after initiation ceremony
<i>Intombi</i>	Young woman after initiation ceremony
<i>Ikrwala</i>	Immediately after circumcision – state of young man
<i>Umkhwetha</i>	Used alternatively with 'Ikrwala' freshly circumcised Xhosa initiate
<i>Abakhwetha</i>	Xhosa initiates (plural for umkhwetha)
<i>Isutu</i>	Isolation place for initiates
<i>Intonjane</i>	Girl's ceremony from girlhood into full womanhood
<i>Ayikatungululi</i>	When puppy has not opened its eyes (metaphor) State of Xhosa boy under 7 years of age.
<i>Ukuphuma isisu</i>	Miscarriage
<i>Ukuyala</i>	Counselling done by elders
<i>Lobolo</i>	Dowry or bride wealth
<i>Ikhazi</i>	used alternately with lobolo. Lobolo –mainly Zulu word.

<i>Ikhazi</i>	Xhosa word meaning the same
<i>Ubulunga beast</i>	Sacred cow – breath of life of the wife cow given by father to daughter to take to new home at marriage. Bears close relationship to the health and good welfare of the bride
<i>Mazizi</i>	Family clan name
<i>Umphefumlo</i>	Soul
<i>Umtshakazi</i>	Bride
<i>Ukuhlonipha</i>	To pay reverence (verb)
<i>Intlonipho</i>	Reverence (noun)
<i>Ukuzalana</i>	To be related
<i>Uduli</i>	Bridal party
<i>Umgugo</i>	Unveiling ceremony. Bride unveils herself at bridegroom's home in the kraal. Done at beginning of wedding ceremony at bridegroom's home.
<i>Umathul'entabeni</i>	Goat or sheep slaughtered to welcome bride at bridegrooms place
<i>Iziyalo</i>	Plural for Ukuyala – many words of wisdom from elders
<i>Unozakuzaku</i>	Mediator for marriage negotiations between the families
<i>Amasi</i>	Sour milk
<i>Ukutyi'samasi</i>	Ceremony done as part of wedding ceremony at bridegroom's home to receive the bride officially and introduce to relatives. Normally done at the end of the wedding ceremony. At this ceremony the bride and bridegroom are traditionally declared husband and wife. The bride is given a piece of roast meat and sour milk to drink.
<i>Ukutholeka</i>	When there is a dispute between husband and wife – wife goes to her home. When the husband goes to fetch back his wife he brings a cow to reconcile.

<i>Abafukamisi</i>	Xhosa cultural midwives
<i>Ingcibi</i>	Xhosa traditional who performs the circumcision
<i>Imbeleko</i>	Ceremony to receive new born baby into household
<i>Iqhiya</i>	Head scarf
<i>Indoda</i>	Man
<i>Umfazi</i>	Woman
<i>Ukwaluka Kwama /</i>	
<i>Ukwenkwe</i>	Boys' circumcision



CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

The problem to be explored in this dissertation is whether the modern Christian pastoral care and counselling paradigms can be effectively used to address and enrich marriage relationships in Xhosa Communities who live in semi-urbanised areas around Umtata in the Eastern Cape. This comes as a response to the increase in divorce rates, separation and emotional strain on many family systems in this area.

As a Methodist Minister in the area of Umtata for the last three years, I have been approached by quite a number of couples who seek counselling because of strained marital relationships. This has stimulated me to look into pastoral care and counselling models in marriage preparation so that my ministry can be adequate to the needs of the congregation. Superimposed on this, is the fact that in our circuit we deal with large numbers of people. To attend to these large numbers single-handedly is almost impossible. To address this, my intention is to see if lay involvement could be facilitated so as to empower them with care-giving skills thus meeting as many of the needs of the People of God as possible. This of course would not be done without ministerial supervision.

According to an oral source, the community which forms the Methodist Church in Umtata consists of approximately 65% literate people. This community is however still linked to the traditional background in the outlying rural areas from which they had emanated. Most families still honour their traditional practices and therefore live a biased life. Whilst civilization has brought about Christian marriage to the communities, it is not all that possible to ignore or neglect the traditional roots.

Perhaps, by allowing the modern pastoral care and counselling techniques to be in dialogue with the traditional practices, the tenuous marriage relationships could be enriched rather than jeopardised.

African communities, including Xhosa communities are naturally care-giving communities. Setiloane indicates that the African extended family has long before Western discovery been the arena for a healing process. He mentions that the whole African Traditional life-style with its age, sets, rites of passage is built on the principle that "you cannot be human alone" "*Motho Ke Motho Ka Batho*". In other words humanity finds fulfilment only in community with others (1986:41). Translated into Xhosa Setiloane's statement gives rise to an every day Xhosa saying "*Umntu Ngumntu Ngabantu*".

1.2 THE NEED FOR HEALTHY FAMILY SYSTEMS

Satir postulates that the marriage relationship is the axis around which all other family relationships are formed. The "mates" are the "architects" of the family system. A pained marital relationship tends to lead to dysfunctional parenting (1983:2).

From the above conviction with which the researcher agrees, it is apparent that it is important to attend to marriage relationships if we wish to see healthy communities in our midst. The healthier the family systems are, the healthier will be our communities.

Stewart indicates that men and women in the United States of America are striving to live on equal terms. The male and female roles are in a fluid state. In traditional cultures where roles are more stable and well-developed, a man takes up the male role by simply imitating his father and the female does the same as she learns from her mother. (1970:12).

3.

However, since the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, women have been set free to take up jobs in business, industry, politics and the various professions. Consequently the man's domain has grown narrower and narrower. For the women, being a companion and helpmate to her husband has appeared to be a struggle, since the new patterns are no longer learnt from the parents. This change in sex roles has contributed to discord in marriage relationships (1970:12-13).

A similar situation has developed in South Africa especially after colonisation. Xhosa women began participating in public life as more and more of them were exposed to education. The social freedom for Xhosa women was apparently supported by Chief Poto in Western Pondoland which is part of the Eastern Cape. Chief Poto moved a motion concerning women as far back as 1938 in one of the former Transkei Territorial General Councils and said :-

I think the Pondo people may be taken as backward yet they all admitted it was right and proper that women should have a vote (Bunga, 1938:68).

The council passed the motion with two dissenters. In due course women were elected to the Transkei Legislative Assembly and one became a cabinet minister. Women became school principals, hospital matrons, trade union secretaries, church leaders, bringing them to almost the same level as men. (Bunga, 1938 : 68)

Marriage strife, divorce, separation and emotional pain have since crept into Xhosa family life. The more young men and women grew within semi-urban environments as they took up their careers, the more they seemed to lose exposure to their original cultural norms and values.

When it became necessary to visit the rural home for an initiation rite or any other cause, experiences of conflict arose.

It is these conflicts and misunderstandings that this dissertation wants to contend with. The Church is known to be a healing organism as it offers a holistic approach to its members. It is thus the desire of the researcher to develop care-giving skills to these couples in adversity as well as prepare couples intending to marry, so as to avoid hurts in relationships and breakdown in family life.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

In this study the following sources were used to collect data.

1.3.1 Interviews / Oral Sources

For information about traditional practices concerning marriage some elders within the Methodist church were approached and where permitted, a tape-recorder was used to keep the information.

1.3.2 Questionnaires

A set of interview research questions has been prepared.

A questionnaire for marriage preparation has been designed.

An evaluation form for the workshop has also been designed.

1.3.3 Verbatim Reports

A couple of verbatim reports have been included in the dissertation with the communication skill development workshop. False names have been used.

1.3.4 **Library Sources**

These include books, dictionaries, journals, periodicals and bibles.

1.3.5 **Samples**

The six couples who have come for premarital counselling are the samples for marriage preparation.

The fourteen couples who have not been married that long are also samples in the marriage enrichment programme and we hope to maintain continuity with them.

The twenty four couples who have been long married are also samples who are keen to continue to be part of the enrichment programme.

The twelve Lay-Team members are the experimental team from which other teams shall be trained and formed.

For the interviews on investigation of Xhosa marriage and family life, four homes were visited. These are interdenominational in affiliation.

1.4 **BACKGROUND TO THE METHODIST CHURCH IN UMTATA**

The research programme was conducted within the Methodist Church in Umtata. The circuit belongs to the Clarkebury District which is one of the twelve Districts within the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. Rev. Dr D.D. Dabula is the District Bishop. The circuit superintendent is the synod secretary, Rev. M.M.E. Rubuluza, assisting him are two ministers, Rev. Tony Mtiwetafa and Rev. Avis Lumka Sigaba (the researcher).

6.

The membership of the Umtata-Ncambedlana Circuit; which is the official name, is close to one thousand members. The circuit is formed of forty two societies. About one third of the societies are within the city of Umtata. These include the Ncambedlana-Urban Society, John Wesley Church which consists of three societies, Ngangelizwe Society and in the townships, Ikwezi and Jonguhlanga Societies. The Societies around the city also include three teaching colleges, one university and a hospital. The rest of the circuit consists of societies sprawled throughout the rural areas around Umtata. The three circuit ministers are engaged in a team ministry, addressing the spiritual and emotional needs of all these congregants.

Further administration of the circuit is in the hands of the circuit stewards, society stewards, class leaders and various executive committees which look after the various "Manyano" organisations. These are the young women's manyano, young men's guild, women's manyano, youth guild and Sunday schools. The executive committees work under the supervision of the three ministers.

Since 1994 the Methodist Church of Southern Africa has also embarked on a project called "The Journey to the New Land". This project seeks to establish further "tasks groups" within societies to encourage participation in education, counselling and caring programmes according to the needs of the context. The project falls under the mission department within the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.

It is the hope of the researcher that this proposed marriage enrichment programme will be able to encourage the awareness of the concept of the "priesthood of all believers" whilst healing and transformation is offered to families in our region.



CHAPTER 2

2.1 HISTORY OF FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY

It seems appropriate that before one can look at the marriage institution as a foundation for the formation of a family unit, it would be necessary to look very closely at the history of family systems theory as a starting point. This could perhaps facilitate the understanding of communication and conflict resolution skills when trouble starts within a marriage relationship. Since family systems theory has been widely explored within the field of psychotherapy, this means that an interdisciplinary approach is inevitable in this dissertation. This should enrich pastoral marital counselling to a large extent.

Goldenberg and Goldenberg cite that "nothing and nobody exists in isolation, the world is made up of systems within systems. The emotionally disturbed person is just one part of a subsystem within the family system, but the entire family system is influenced by and influences the disturbed person" (1980:84).

They further say "a family is in fact a natural social system. The way it functions - establishes roles, communicates, negotiates differences between its members, has numerous implications for the development and well-being of its individual members" (1980:27).

2.1.1 Defining a system

In defining a system, Goldenberg and Goldenberg state :

"A system is a complex of component parts that are in mutual interaction. Rather than viewing each part as isolated and simply adding the parts to make up an entity, this viewpoint stresses the relationships between the parts, the various components can be understood best as functions of the total system. To understand how something works, we must study the transaction process taking place between the components of a system, says Bertalanffy, not merely add up what each part contributes" (1980:82).

2.1.2 Some characteristics of a system

Goldenberg and Goldenberg further reflect that just as there are components in the various systems i.e. solar, electronic, ecosystems, all components of a particular system have common properties. Furthermore all systems are characterised by "wholeness" or unity and must always take into account the ongoing interaction between the parts. All systems are organised and strive to maintain some kind of balance or homeostasis. A system may reach the final state from initial conditions and in different manners ; this is the concept of equifinality. Because the family unit consists of family members who are components of the family and continuously interact and are dependent on each and strive to maintain a balance in relationship the family can therefore be referred to as a system. (1980:27).

Don Jackson (1965) in Goldenberg and Goldenberg, a psychiatrist and member of the Mental Research Institute in Palo Alto, California observed that in marriage the partners are faced with the challenge of collaboration on a wide variety of tasks, such as money making, child bearing, house keeping, love making etc. The couple interacts within the family system in repetitive sequences. To achieve homeostasis a set of rules is adhered to. According to Jackson the behaviour of the family participants is determined by these rules (1980:29).

2.1.3 A physiological analogy of the family system

Switzer on the other hand clarifies the family system from an analogical point of view. He says that to bring a clearer understanding it is useful to look at the family system as an organism. The family is made up of separate individuals but it still remains a single organism. Each person has a variety of individual organs which work together for the benefit of the individual. (1974:117).

Generally when we are functioning well these organs within our bodies work together for our benefit within our particular system. (1974:117)

When one part of a person's system malfunctions then the whole organism is affected in some way. When there is malfunctioning within the system other parts within the physiological system adjust to the change in some way to maintain a relatively stable physiochemical balance (homeostasis). This is achieved so that the person's health is not jeopardised. Something of the same holds true for families. Though families may differ from each other each family develops its own internal operations i.e. self image, characteristic ways of thinking so as to maintain homeostasis (1974:117).

I am inclined to agree with and understand Switzer's physiological analogy to clarify family systems. When conflict develops within a family or a marriage relationship not only the couple concerned is perturbed ; in-laws, friends, offspring all seem to be affected. In other words all these people are "organs" within the family system and once homeostasis is affected they are part of the dysfunction.

2.1.4 Family homeostasis

Sue Walrond-Skinner in her discussion of the concept of "homeostasis" or morphostasis states that homeostasis preceded the formal development of family systems theory. It was apparently incorporated into the systems frame of reference and remains a vital concept within the branch of systems theory known as Cybernetics. (1976 :13).

Homeostasis, she says, can be simply defined as same state and it is a quality which enables a system to remain stable and in a "steady state".

Homeostasis is made possible by the use of information coming from the external environment being incorporated into the system in the form of "feedback".

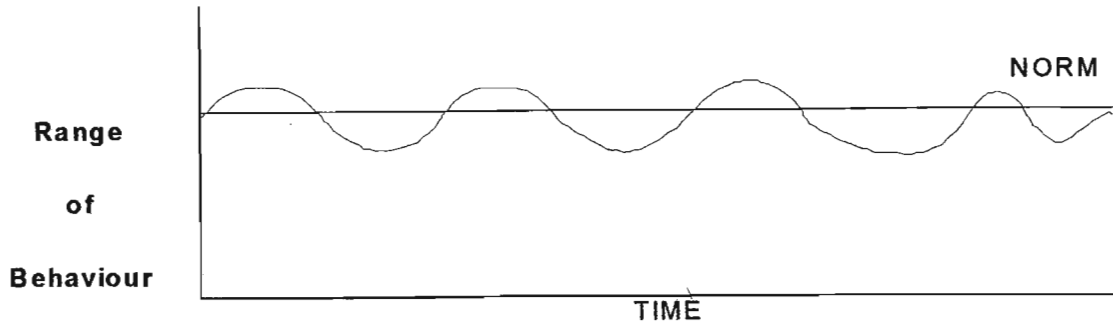
Feedback triggers the system's "regulator" which by altering the system's internal condition maintains homeostasis.

A healthy functional family system requires a measure of homeostasis in order to survive the "strings and arrows of life" and thus have stability and security within its physical and social environment. When there is no adjustment within the family towards issues which tend to shake the homeostatic stability, dysfunction is bound to manifest.

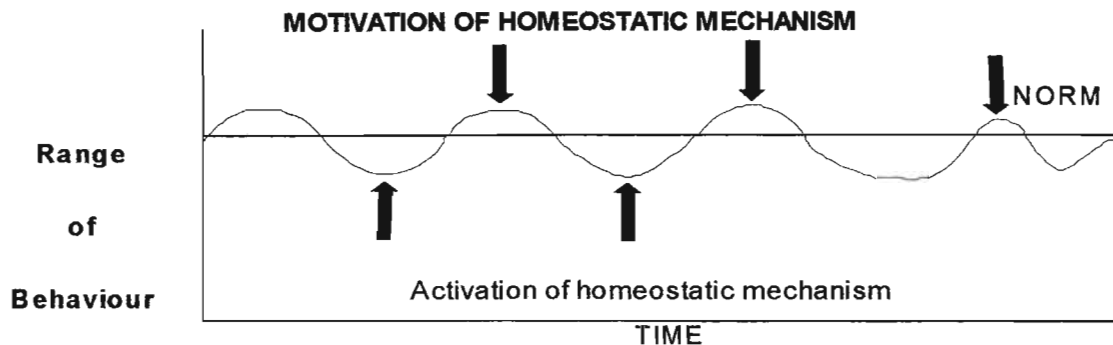
Homeostatic mechanisms are therefore required in both adequately and inadequately functioning systems and this removal brings about catastrophe in either type of circuit (1976:15).

Jackson (1965) in Goldenberg and Goldenberg reminds us that during a courting period couples may engage in endless behavioural plays with each other. Upon marriage or after a long term relationship most of these are excluded from the interactional repertoire and are used no more. A private cue develops. Each one learns to cue the other homeostatically perhaps with a glance or gesture (actually saying "I'm hurt by what you have just said and want you to reassure me that you do not mean it and you still love me.") (mine). This communicates to the other the disequilibrium that has just been created and is an expression of a correction reaction so as to recapture the balance status. These homeostatic mechanisms help maintain an ongoing relationship between two people (1980:32).

A.



B.



This figure demonstrates the operation of homeostatic mechanism in the family. As in a home heating system when the temperature deviates from the present norm the deviation is registered by the thermostat system. Families use similar cues to achieve balance and equilibrium in relationship. (From "The Study of the Family" by B.D. Jackson, Family Process, 1965, 4:1-20).

2.1.5 Explaining the diagrams

Diagram A

In diagram A the up and down swings reflect that there are periods of pleasant as well as unpleasant relationships between two people. Physical, emotional and environmental issues bring about or influence these "swings".

Diagram B

In diagram B the "up-swing" and "down swing" are marked by an arrow at the centre. The arrows express that as the couple identify a problem or unpleasantness in their relationship one of them takes up the responsibility to bring back the situation to normality (homeostasis). "Cueing" methods like gesture, glance or others are learnt and used to bring about equilibrium in the relationship. The respondent recognizes the methods and learns to respond adequately.

An analogy of the heating system is used here to explain the process. The cueing" methods are like a thermostat which is normally in-built in the heating systems and controls the heat of the appliance by switching off when the temperature gets high and on when it gets too cold.

2.1.6 Family systems theoretical development

Various investigations have looked into the family system and have produced theories to interpret the family system. These family therapists have however different views in both theory and practise.

Walrond - Skinner (1976) declares that the 1970 report of the Group of Advancement of Psychiatry listed twenty one most influential family therapists in the United States. These figures include theorists like Nathan Ackermann, Virginia Satir, Salvador Minuchin, Don Jackson, Walter Kempler and Murray Bowen (1976:10). This dissertation will however focus on Murray Bowen's contribution on the interpretation of family systems.

The reason for this is that the researcher feels that Murray Bowen's thinking seems to be more communal as he looks at patients through the multigenerational approach. This approach becomes more relevant for the African context within which this dissertation is written. On most occasions African thinking is communally based. Although Bowen's culture or context is western and individualistic, he leaves room for communal thinking.

2.2 MURRAY BOWEN'S FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY - BACKGROUND

According to Kerr and Bowen, Murray Bowen's professional interest in the family began when he was a psychiatrist at the Menninger Clinic in the U.S. in the late 1940's. Kerr and Bowen mention that at the Menninger Clinic Bowen treated a wide variety of problems in both out-patient and in-patient settings. The disorders involved were schizophrenia, alcoholism and mental depression. Unlike many of his colleagues, Bowen had considerable contact with the families of his patients. (Ref. Kerr & Bowen 1988 :10)

The above authors observed that interaction between patient and family especially between a patient and his / her mother manifested a tremendous emotional impact. The patient and his / her mother and to some extent other relatives appeared to be emotionally connected in powerful ways. This relationship between a schizophrenic person and his / her mother was described as "symbiotic" in nature. Bowen, who was influenced by his studies of natural sciences attempted to explain symbiosis in a specific way. (1988:11).

2.2.1 Symbiotic relationship – mother and patient

Bowen further indicates that the mother – child patient symbiosis observed in schizophrenia was based on a deep biological process as well as a psychological process.

A mother's intimate involvement with a child during the child's early years was a characteristic of mammals and in most instances the young mammal gradually grew away from the mother to become an independent adult. In human schizophrenia however, the mother - child involvement was much more intense than average and was prolonged well into adult life. (1988:3)

The implication of Bowen's thinking about symbiosis was that the human was significantly governed by the same natural sources that influence other forms of life. While still at Menninger's Clinic, Bowen concluded that human behaviour could become an accepted science and that to do so it has to be anchored in the biological evolutionary theory and other knowledge about nature's processes. (1988:4).

In 1954 Bowen left the Menninger's Clinic and moved his professional activities to the National Institute of Mental Health referred to as N.I.M.H. At N.I.M.H he initiated a project of hospitalising entire families that contained a schizophrenic member. The project was to have a tremendous impact on his theoretical thinking about families. (1988:5)

The N.I.M.H. project ran for five years and involved having entire nuclear families that had a schizophrenic member living on an inpatient research unit for periods ranging from a few months to more than a year. The main purpose was to monitor the interaction between the mother and the schizophrenic patient. (1988:6)

Two important observations were made from the project. Firstly, mother and adult schizophrenic "child" were so involved with one another that it was difficult to think of them as two separate people. The second observation which could even be more important than the first one was that this intense

mother - patient relationship was not particularly different from the emotional intensity of relationships throughout the nuclear family. The process involved the entire family. The father and the patients' siblings also played a part in fostering and perpetrating a problem that was initially thought to exist just between the mother and the patient. (1988:7)

This made it difficult to think of the family as separate individuals or entities. The emotional functioning of the individual members was so interdependent that the family could be more accurately conceptualised as an emotional unit. The N.I.M.H. project ended in 1959 and Bowen moved to Georgetown University where his focus was on out-patients and his attention was now on less severe problems than schizophrenics. This is when the concept of the emotional system was further explored (1988:7).

At this stage, the researcher feels there is a need to respond to Bowen's findings about the symbiotic link between mother and child. Within Xhosa original family life, it is customarily to have the man's parent or parents living within the same kraal. Very often when the man's mother loses her husband, she moves in to stay with her son (Oral source). This communal living often brings about conflict between the daughter-in-law and the mother-in-law. This is often the cause of communication breakdown between husband and wife where the mother-in-law lives within the same household. The involvement of mother and son and often the rest of the extended family is similar to Bowen's findings in the mother-patient emotional condition in his N.I.M.H. project.

2.2.2 Family as an emotional system

Kerr and Bowen declare that the emotional system is one of the most important concepts to understand in the family systems theory. This concept gives a new understanding to the human family and enhances knowledge about the evolutionary process of the natural world.

It also provides a basis for establishing a behavioural link between the human and other animals. There is need to understand that the behaviour of all forms of life is driven and regulated by the same fundamental "life forces". The understanding of the emotional system concept makes us as human beings have the ability to look beyond the individual we see in front of us into his / her relationship system. This is very important because marriage is not only an emotional system, it is also a relationship system. (1988:27).

Kerr and Bowen strengthen their argument when discussing the patterns of emotional functioning by saying that the pattern of emotional functioning that predominates in a particular family may change over time. Early in a marriage relationship for example the predominant pattern may be of one spouse adapting more than the other to preserve marital harmony. During these early years, in periods of high anxiety the more adaptive spouse may begin to develop symptoms. Later in the marriage the pattern may shift to one of marital conflict. For the most part, harmony disappears and husband and wife behave as if they are allergic to one another. While periods of higher chronic anxiety are marked by increased marital conflict neither spouse becomes symptomatic. The anxiety that was absorbed previously by the dysfunction of one spouse is now externalised into the marital relationship. Symptoms begin to manifest. (1988:57).

Following the onset of symptoms there could be an increase in over functioning of one spouse whilst the other under functions. The wife may depend increasingly on her husband and other family members to accompany her to do things. Her ability to function becomes constrained because of her symptoms and the willingness of her children to do things for her. As the "healthy" ones function for the "sick" family member stability is created but with a chronic symptom in the midst (1988:58).

One good example of this interplay between emotional and relational patterns was noted where a wife had rheumatoid arthritis. Later the husband developed tender joints in his knees and hands. After six months the husband had to move temporarily to another city because of work circumstances, three weeks after his departure he was much better. The husband confessed he was a calmer person in the absence of his wife. He was so orientated to reacting to the look on her face that he did not feel he had adequate "space" in her presence. Reciprocity and interplay between internal processes and the relationship system are important manifestations of the emotional system. (1988:58).

2.2.3 Individuality and togetherness

Kerr and Bowen continue their argument on the family systems theory. They state that it is important before one can describe a series of actions and reactions, to understand that the emotional system is governed by individuality and togetherness "life forces". These are influential in symptom development. (1988:59).

According to Kerr and Bowen, the way a person thinks in most couples is influenced by the feeling and emotional process between them. If a wife for example, notices that her husband has withdrawn from her and rather remains at a distance she is likely not only to observe this withdrawal intellectually but feels threatened by it. She develops an emotionally driven urge to pursue her partner. If the wife could think objectively, she could be in a position to observe that her spouse's withdrawal and her desire for more contact, constantly feed each other. She may not realise that her husband's withdrawal is always due to her constant desire to be in contact with him (1988:60)

In other words, certain details are blown out of proportion. An anxious family will focus on a facet of a problem and make it the course of the problem. In the example given above the husband's response could be "I would not withdraw if you were not so needy and dependent".

This way of thinking expresses that the husband feels that his behaviour is influenced by his wife and his wife's behaviour does not necessarily have a cause. In other words the husband fails to realise that the wife's behaviour is a mirror image of his actions. (1988:61).

Kerr and Bowen postulate that the above discussed emotion process is regulated by the interplay of a force that inclines people to follow their own directions (individuality) and a force that inclines them to respond to directives from others (Togetherness) (1988:64).

The above authors further explain individuality as a biologically rooted life force which makes an entity follow its own directives making the person, feel think and act for oneself. There is a certain amount of lack of concern for the feelings of others (1988:64).

My feelings as the researcher, is that learning could help people with individualistic tendencies. This is where premarital counselling should be useful.

According to Kerr and Bowen togetherness on the other hand propels the organisms to follow the directions of others, to be dependant, connected and indistinct as an entity. Human beings have various biological and psychological systems that incline them to function as part of a group and to follow the groups feelings. The internal systems not only encourage the person to be aware of the directions of the group but also send out signals that channel others to self.

The person involved strives to act, feel and think like the other as well as have others act, feel and think like self. While the togetherness force is rooted in biological processes its effect on impact is heavily influenced by learning. The learning can range from the adaptation of emotional and feeling responses to the acquisition of values and beliefs. (1988:65).

In response to Kerr and Bowen's convictions about the togetherness life force one could say this in the predominant communal element often manifested in African communities. For every rite of passage celebrated in Xhosa communities, birth, initiation, marriage, funeral togetherness concept plays a very vital role. How things are done, is guided by the values and beliefs of the wider society.

Bowen continues to discuss important interlocking theoretical concepts which I feel are important to grasp when dealing with marriage counselling. Amongst them are concepts of differentiation of self, nuclear family emotional system and triangles (1978:423).

2.2.4 **Differentiation of self**

Bowen postulates that differentiation of self deals with the assessment of the basic level of "self" in an individual. The basic self is illustrated by stances like "my convictions, my beliefs, I like this, I do not like that". Very often the convictions are not negotiable in the relationship system. In a way this concept seems to have connotations of the already discussed individuality life force (1978:474).

According to Bowen the convictions are used to enhance one's position in relationship to others. In differentiation of self some people are on a high scale and some are on a low scale. Those on a low scale live within the "feeling" controlled premises more than reasoning.

Decisions are made upon "feeling". Life is always around love, happiness, comfort, security and understanding. Much energy is spent on seeking love and approval and even attacking the partner for not providing these virtues (1978:474).

Strengthening his convictions, Bowen indicates that the high scale people operate clearly on reasoning things out. They "lose" themselves easily into a close relationship and do not find it hard to react to criticism or praise. On the other hand people on low scale avoid relationships, lest they lend into an uncomfortable union. However, many life experiences affect the functioning levels of self but few change the basic level of differentiation that existed premaritally. (1978:474).

Differentiation of self brings out the uniqueness of an individual. The researcher feels that this concept is essential in humanity. For instance even if a couple has come into oneness through matrimony, the individual partners still need to be able to express their individual feelings in a situation. There is often a tendency to discourage this opportunity within Xhosa family life with the result of lack of homeostasis. (own feelings).

2.2.5 Nuclear family emotional system

Continuing his discussion Bowen further postulates that the nuclear family emotional system developmental concept deals with emotional patterns at the premarital stage and through the marriage. Adjustment to relationships with families of origin are influenced by the differential self scale level of the individual.

The nuclear family often displays "fusion" or "stuck-togetherness". Marital conflict occurs when neither of the spouses will "give in" to the other. Even when one has initially given in he or she later fails to continue adapting to the "fusion". (1978:475).

Very often the one who dominates is usually the man with most couples. He in most cases fails to recognise the problems of his mate as she contends submissively with the "fusion".

The feeling of the researcher is that the nuclear emotional system is pronounced in Xhosa communities. As the woman marries the man, she is made aware of the fact that she is marrying "the family", and not just the husband (oral source). The woman has to wrestle with the "fusion" and sometimes fails to survive, especially in these modern times.

2.2.6 **Triangles**

Continuing with his theoretical concepts, Bowen further explains the concept of triangles (1978:478).

Counsellors, therapists or family members can use or apply the knowledge of triangles as they work out the problems in the functioning of an emotional system. A two-person emotional system often acquires instability as stressful situations develop. This calls for a third person who contributes in some form to help relieve the tension. The third person in the triangle is often "roped" in by the most uncomfortable person in the two-person system. What usually happens is that the outsider tends to pair up with the one person in the triangle. The pairing up can keep on changing from one member to the other over long periods. The "outsider" could be a police, lawyer, doctor, parent, minister or therapist. The family tension could subside whilst the outsider is connected to the couple.

It is important however for the "outsider" to work his or her way out of the triangle to allow the couple to grow and move into higher levels of differentiation and grow in reason rather than in feelings (1978:480).

Within Xhosa communities, family elders were formally brought in to settle a dispute. The result was that when wisely handled, disharmony would be eliminated. Nowadays however, bringing in a professional person to address a conflict needs to be done with care within Xhosa communities. Xhosa men, the researcher feels, are not all that comfortable with outsiders. This is why ministerial supervision is important in pastoral counselling. The minister should be in a position to be sensitive to the preferences of his or her congregation and handle them with care. This all comes with suitable education about the need for a third person in times of distress.

Having wrestled with the dynamics of concepts involved in family systems theory, the writer feels that this has brought about some clarity to behaviour patterns often manifested by couples who experience disharmony in their marriage relationship. It is thus proper at this stage to look into the various issues which often contribute to the brining about of marital discord in couples.

2.3 **MARITAL PROBLEM AREAS**

Wicks and Parsons declare that while couples come into conflict for a host of reasons, the elements of their conflict tend to have common patterns and are often in common areas. The elements develop in similar areas and make couples lack clarity about beginnings and ends. (1993:315).

Stewart also indicates that the common problems which couples experience often commence in the courting period and if not primarily addressed grow into causes of marriage disharmony within the relationship. Once the couple declares their intention to marry their relationship ceases to be a two-person affair, their families and the larger community come into the picture (1961:24).

Various authors cite problems like communication, physical abuse infidelity, financial problems, recreational preferences, housekeeping, sexual disharmony, issues about child upbringing, cultural differences and others as causes of conflict in marriage.

For the purpose of this paper the researcher will not dwell on all the problems. The main focus will be on one issue which seems to influence all the other problems; that is, the issue of communication.

Problems in infidelity, housekeeping, child upbringing, adjustments to in-laws, finance, physical abuse and others are apparently basically caused by lack of communication or lack of transparency in these areas.

Goldenberg and Goldenberg offer a survey result conducted by Beck and Jones (1973) in case loads of 266 families in the United States. Apparently nine out of ten couples complained mainly of difficulties in communicating with each other (1980:49). The couples which have approached the researcher for marriage counselling almost all have communication as the main cause of their conflict, hence the decision to focus on this issue.

The diagram on marital problem areas.

Communication	86.6%	
Children	45.7%	
Sex	43.7%	
Money	37.0%	
Leisure	32.6%	
Relatives	28.4%	
Infidelity	25.6%	
Housekeeping	25.6%	
Physical Abuse	15.6%	
Other Problems	8.0%	

10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 %

Ranking of marital problems reported in the case loads of 266 US family counselling agencies who participated in this survey almost nine out of ten couples complained of difficulties communicating with each other. Communication problems are twice as common as the next highest set of family problems involving relationships with children. (Reprinted from Progress on Family Problems by Dorothy Fahs Back and Mary Ann Jones, Copyright 1973 by Family Service Association of America, New York) (1980:48-50).

2.3.1 **Communication – key marital problem**

"What do we mean by communication?"

Virginia Satir poses the above question and in turn offers the following response :

"The word 'communicate' is generally understood to refer to non-verbal as well as verbal behaviour within a social context, thus communication can mean "interaction" or transaction". 'Communication' also includes all those symbols and clues used by persons in giving and receiving meaning. Taken in this sense the communication techniques which people use can be seen as reliable indicators of interpersonal functioning." (1983:79).

From Satir's above explanation it is evident that communication involves many levels e.g. gestures, body language, tone of voice, posture all expressed in non-verbal or verbal interaction.

Sue Walrond-Skinner declares that from the point of view of General Systems Theory a family that comes into treatment has suffered some form of breakdown in the functioning of its feedback processes - either in terms of its internal transactions between family members or in terms of its external transactions with the outside world (extended family, neighbours, community) - or in both. At the risk of over-simplifying the situation, we can reduce dysfunctional communication patterns to three types : Communication can be either blocked, displaced or damaged. With blockage transactions between family members or between the family and the outside world may have become reduced to the extremes of prolonged silence, withdrawal, isolation or to the bizarre written communication which may be the sole link between members of the same household for years on end. Feedback mechanisms are blocked off. Silence and withdrawal are a form of communication but when variety is reduced to this one type communication channels have become severely blocked. (1976:18).

Displacement occurs through the eruption of symptomatology - the selection of the symptoms and the symptom bearer becoming highly significant means of communication between family members. The symptom becomes a displaced means of communicating an important truth about the family group. A family therapist will therefore be interested as to which symptom has been selected and who has chosen or been chosen to be the scapegoat. For example a family consisting of husband, wife and two adopted teenagers come for help because the boy keeps exposing himself in public. Later on seeing his probation officer for some time it becomes understandable that it is displaced communication when it is discovered that the father is in fact impotent. (1976:19).

Wrestling further with faulty communication as the key problem in marital discord, Collins indicates that communication problems often erupt because individuals are often self-centred and have not actually learnt to communicate clearly and effectively with their partners. Explaining a common faulty communication manifestation called the "double bind" Collins offers a verbatim example which could be put across in the following manner:

SIPHO : I am going to Johannesburg to a conference and I am not sure when I shall be back at home. (looks excited)

NOMSA : I do not mind you going on your business trip. (resigned tone of voice, no eye contact).

SIPHO : I love you, Nomsa and I actually like to stay at home, but I am always busy.

Sipho is never at home. Nomsa is a housewife and spends most of her time alone at home. Sipho likes to spend his time with his friends. When he declares that he is going to a conference he says this with excitement. His second statement indicates that he loves his wife and wants to be with her. This is a "double bind" form of communication because his non-verbal excitement came through and reflects his desire to be away from home. Nomsa also communicates falsely because she says that she does not mind her husband's absence, yet her voice betrays her (1988:410). Maybe the lack of eye contact could be a cultural value. In Xhosa culture women try to avoid eye contact with husbands as a form of respect (oral source].

(The names used by Collins in his book are in English and have been replaced by Xhosa names for the purpose of this research).

Wynn further postulates that double-binding is a confusing communication strategy which is typical in problem couples. Husbands and wives keep each other confused and defensive through double binds. They use false messages to play nasty games and ferment conflicts over long periods. This affects their trust for each other to a large extent. In fact in some couples this faulty mode of communication is used by some couples as a homeostatic mechanism. (1982:40).

Collins is convinced that communication is a learned interaction. Even when it does not seem good, people can always learn and improve their modes of communication (1988:410).

Learning comes with exposure to various programmes like premarital counselling and marriage enrichment. In any given situation it is the conviction of the researcher that tuition always brings about a certain degree of enlightenment. Facts bring about the ability to use reason and as this develops clarity about values and beliefs is achieved.

2.4 SUMMARY

In this chapter, an attempt has been made in some detail to examine the family systems theory with particular focus on aspects in Murray Bowen's Theory. Of the various interrelated concepts in Bowen's Theory, those relevant to marriage counselling have been discussed.

These include the characteristics of a system, family as an emotional systems, concepts of individuality, togetherness, differentiation of self, nuclear family emotional system and triangles.

An explanation has been given on the major causes of marital discords. Having remarked about the common problems, often manifested almost cross culturally, the main focus of the writer is on communication. The reason is that of all the problems, communication seems to be the basic cause of conflict in most marriage relationships. Forms of faulty modes of communication have been reflected in the chapter as a way of preparing ground for addressing crisis in marriage and family life.



CHAPTER 3

3. NORMAL FAMILY PROCESSES

This chapter intends to discuss issues involved in normal family processes. The previous chapter, chapter two, has mainly discussed family systems theory focussing on investigations performed by authors like Murray Bowen and to a lesser extent Kerr, Goldenberg and Goldenberg, Walrond-Skinner and others. The purpose of the study, as has been clarified was to facilitate the understanding of the various interrelated behavioural concepts involved in interpersonal responses within a family system.

Walsh indicates that normal family process takes this inquiry further. Whilst grounded on family systems development, family process looks into those processes which characterise normal family functioning. An examination of structural and socio-cultural variables in normal family functioning needs to be understood by counsellors, clinicians, researchers and therapists. The normal family perspective offers a valid framework necessary for assessment and intervention. It offers an understanding of patterns that characterise normal families as well as important preventative measures to families confronting normal transitional challenges (1985:xvi).

Responding to Walsh's conviction with which the writer fully agrees, this chapter will initially look into the theoretical understanding of normal family processes from the Western perspective. This will be followed by a theoretical investigation into what was normal family processes in the golden age period in Xhosa communities. This will include rituals related to the various life stages.

3.1 Theoretical understanding of normal family processes - western perspective.

3.1.1 Process and processes

Luthmann and Kirchenbaun postulate that to understand family process, one has first to understand and accept that the human organism is an energy system which connects with energy systems of other people. An energy system is stable and healthy only when it is connected to growth, change and constant expansion. (1974:27). This concept has been discussed in detail in chapter two.

Taking further their line of thought the above authors indicate that around interaction, humanity develops ways of thinking, looking and behaving when confronted with various issues in life. In the process, stability, security and growth manifests. This is followed by change in life. From birth humanity is geared towards security and stability. If this does not happen, fear and ignorance develops. Consequently stagnation occurs. Following this, symptomatology erupts (1974:27).

Luthmann and Kirchenbaun strengthen their argument by saying that it is important for members of a family system to be in constant interaction. Sometimes it so happens that an individual member within the family unit is living in the past and is locked up in the past. If this member continues to live in the past, this in some form interferes with the present and future of the whole family system. A blockage in one family member's life causes disharmony within the family system (1974:28).

Whilst process is the dynamic energy flow within the individual with another individual, processes are the way individual members operate, look at things and behave within the family system. In other words, processes occur within family systems (1974:28).

An example of family processes which occurred within a family system where a member of the system lived in the past is offered below as an illustration :

3.1.2 **Dlamini family – a case study**

Frank and Constance have been married for twenty years. They met in Cape Town where they were both working. After the marriage Frank encouraged his wife to go and work as a nurse in a village close to his rural home. Frank came down from Cape Town when on holiday. The couple have two children, Mbu a son, and Ndo a girl. The children grew up with their mother at the rural village.

It so happened that whilst in Cape Town, five years after their marriage, Frank came to know that his wife's 'younger' brother is actually a child Constance conceived from another man whilst a young girl. Constance had never divulged the information to her husband. Frank was disappointed that he had unawares married a girl who was not a virgin. This in Xhosa culture is avoided. At least a man's pride is that he marries a woman without children conceived out of wedlock.

Frank is disappointed but does not confront his wife about the issue. However, his behaviour changes. He is withdrawn, and does not come back that often from Cape Town.

Constance learns that her husband has discovered the truth. The couple remains in what could be called an unofficial or illegalised separation.

Mbu needs to go for initiation at his rural home where the grandparents live. The preparations need to be discussed with the grandparents and the parents as well as the rest of the extended family. Frank comes to the meeting. Constance is also at the family meeting.

Frank bursts into anger and is not prepared to respond to his wife's input. It is difficult to make decisions. Decisions are finally handled by the grandparents. The whole ceremony is unpleasant. Frank finally explodes and accuses Constance in front of the whole family at the end of the ceremony. The grandparents try to intervene. Frank will not forgive Constance. Frank is living in the past and is not prepared to live in the present and face the future with his family.

Symptomatology manifested itself in anger, bitterness, unforgiveness and lack of co-operation. Later Frank gets sick. He is diagnosed as having cancer. He refuses to be nursed by Constance who is a retired nurse. Constance loses her self-worth and also gets ill. The children give their attention to their mother. Frank has lost all trust and feels betrayed.

The daughter is also affected by the feud between her parents. She openly declares that she will not marry lest she fall into a similar predicament where she marries an unforgiving man. Mbu, the son is also a withdrawn young man. After some time Frank dies from cancer.

3.1.3 **Family processes observed**

Various processes are involved as this family tries to survive their plightful situation. The four members of this nuclear family unit have all developed symptomatology.

If circumstances were normal, counselling offered, perhaps much could have been avoided. This particular family system is unhealthy, closed and cannot grow. Counselling can only happen when a proper or careful assessment of the dysfunction and symptoms has been done, looking at what is normal and then establishing goals of counselling and therapy.

3.2 FAMILY NORMALITY

3.2.1 Defining family normality

So as to be able to establish what is abnormal within family processes it is going to be useful to contend with what is normal. According to Walsh, the concept of normality may be different within different frames of reference. The term may mean one thing to a clinician and another to a researcher. It is ones personal experience, professional knowledge and even motives and expectations that influence the interpretation of normal family process and processes. (1982:3).

The word 'normal' comes from the Latin word 'normalis' meaning conforming to the carpenter's square. In other words something 'normal' is something free from mental or physical disorder. Collins English Dictionary translates the word 'normal' as something conforming to certain standards. Other terms that are in line with the word 'normal' are 'typical,' 'healthy' and 'adequate'.

Erickson in Walsh sees normal personality development as something which happens within a lifelong process. This process involves the marking of life stage tasks which occur sequentially. The tasks include biological, psychological, social and cultural tasks.

In an effort to define family normality, Walsh offers four categories which could be useful for family assessment. These are asymptomatic functioning, optimal functioning, average functioning and transactional functioning. (1982:4).

3.2.2 **Asymptomatic family functioning**

Walsh indicates that from a clinical perspective family is normal if there are no recent signs or symptoms of dysfunction in any family member. Absence of symptoms is equivalent to health. The study of asymptomatic family functioning has been apparently used by researchers and clinicians with a purpose to be able to discover through comparison those who are troubled families and families who do not really need counselling or therapy. (1982:5).

3.2.3 **Optimal family functioning**

This type of family is at the top of the list in normal family functioning. In this category, Walsh postulates that this family is healthy, successful and ideal. The criteria used to bring forth these qualities is based on accomplishments of family tasks especially by the offspring. These could include education, work situation or even the children's own marriage or family relationships.

In other words family competence is optimal (1982:5).

3.2.4 **Average family functioning**

According to Walsh, a family is seen to be average when compared to other families within the same context. This concept is mostly used by sociologists in their statistical assessments. The family is normal when it falls within the normal range. Beyond this range the family is abnormal. What is typical, healthy and prevalent in most families depends on various issues e.g. culture, education, economy and context. However, an average family is not necessarily free from symptoms. There may be occasional problems (1982:5-6).

3.2.5 **Transactional family processes**

From the transactional family processes point of view, Walsh further explains that normal processes are characterised by universal processes in which the family unit has no problem with interactions amongst all the individual members. The family unit is able to maintain its standards of living materially, emotionally and spiritually. There is evidence of healthy growth in the individual members even in relation to the wider society. All demands which need to be met within the family life cycle, for instance education, marriage, old age and others are all adequately addressed. Even external adaptations within the community are met, for instance involvement in the local church as well as being part of the community programmes (own interpretation). (1982:6).

With the Dlamini Case Study offered in page thirty one it is apparent that this family unit does not fall into the four categories. It is a symptomatic family, which cannot be said to be optimal as family tasks are not met. The Dlamini family which cannot be said to be average in its functioning because the problems are not occasional, one problem leads to another. This family has also not been able to integrate within itself and externally. As a result it has not been able to grow as a family unit.

Being able to assess the family processes of a particular family makes it possible for the counsellor or therapist to devise goals of therapy adequately. Assessment of the Dlamini family would commence in looking at the relationship of Frank and Constance as a couple. The counsellor or therapist would look into the way Frank and Constance behave towards each other, how they think and look at things as individuals and as a couple. This would then include the children with the counsellor assessing family processes within this family system. The interaction with the kinship would also be assessed. Only after the family processes have been established would it be possible to design a form of intervention. In other words an assessment and intervention framework in counselling is designed from family processes within the family system.

3.3 **Normal family developmental processes**

According to Walsh, leading family theorists offer various models useful for clinicians and researchers to understand functional family systems better and to treat families in distress better. The various models reflect emphasis on different aspects e.g. communication, structural patterns and relationship dynamics. (1982:9).

Whilst Bowen's relationship model has been widely discussed in Chapter two of this thesis, it is worthwhile to mention that Meisner focuses on a multi-generational model in his emphasis on marriage. Meisner indicates that

"The goal of a normal family is to promote the development of well-differentiated and individuated identity in offspring. The parents, in their marital relationship are the determinants of either a healthy or pathological family functioning and development of individual members within their unit. It is therefore assumed that the capacity of an individual to function as a spouse and parent is largely a result of childhood relationship in the family of origin" (1982:18).

Paul and Paul in Walsh further emphasise that dysfunctional families are distinguished by a degree of unconscious unresolved conflict or loss that interferes with current family interaction. Various symptoms unconsciously manifest a desire to externalise concepts, family myths or neglected family structural patterns or rituals of the family of origin (1982:19).

The case study on the Dlamini family within this chapter, used to illustrate 'process and processes', reflects a family which developed symptoms manifesting a desire to externalise a problem with family structural patterns.

Because of the above mentioned conviction the researcher wishes to look into the original normal family processes within Xhosa communities. As has been explained by Bowen in Chapter 2, the concept of intergenerational 'connectedness', 'fusion' or 'stuck togetherness' seems to prevail in Xhosa communities as it apparently does in Western culture. (own observation).

According to Hoffman, Bowen's historically orientated approach in family therapy encourages family members to go back to their families of origin so as to achieve individuality and autonomy. Many followers have apparently found Bowen's approach useful in the relief of symptoms and problems. Bowenian family therapy is made to identify patterns originating in the past that have an impact on people living in the present and helping them unlock themselves. Searching for clues from living members of the extended family, especially the older generation helps to trace a pattern and if necessary, alter it to suit the present time. Bowen's theory resembles Freud's dictum which states that:

"Where id was, there ego shall be" (1981:243).

According to Hoffman what Freud's dictum means is that

"Substituting the darkly primitive condition of 'fusion' or what Bowen refers to as symbioses and sees as ruled by emotions (id) with the condition of differentiation (ego) where one is detached though connected to own family, is often difficult" (1981:243).

3.4 **Normal family processes in socio-cultural context**

Looking at normal family processes within different frameworks, John Schwartman in Walsh recommends looking at family normality within its cultural context. This author argues that this can offer quite a number of solutions to universal problems which individuals experience within their relationships, as family systems within social systems of which they are part (1982:383). Apparently, many therapists have often ignored tracing family normality from a cultural perspective. (1982:390).

In response to Schwartman's conviction the writer feels it relevant within this dissertation to discuss the role of culture in Xhosa family variations. This should be able to provide solutions to a number of abstract problems that confront the families of this region at various times.

3.4.1 **Defining Culture**

Clifford Geertz in Shorter defines culture as :

"A system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which human beings (sic) communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about, and their attitude towards, life" (1988:5).

Other definitions take the same approach, for example :

"Culture is a set of symbols, stories, myths and norms for conduct that orient society or group cognitively, affectively and behaviourally to the world in which it lives." (1988:5).

From the above definitions it is apparent that culture is thus a pattern of meanings embodied in symbols which are capable of bringing about change and growth and actually belongs to humanity. It thus follows that if for instance religion is to be a phenomenon at the disposal of humanity it cannot avoid being influenced by culture (1988:5). The situation is consequently the same with regard to family processes. Family processes cannot occur outside of culture.

According to Walsh, culture can even help determine whether a symptom is a problem at all or a cultural manifestation. For example, American Indians have no word for 'stuttering' because it is not a known phenomenon in their ethnic group (1982:402). In the same vein, it is a known fact that a Xhosa boy who wets his bed before initiation, immediately stops after his ceremony (*umgidi*). He suddenly is able to control himself. For this reason a Xhosa boy cannot be given medical attention for bedwetting. An oral source declares that the cure lies within the cultural event.

3.4.2 Cultural change

Shorter cites that all cultures throughout history have undergone a form of regular change. The world in which we live is experiencing a rapid growth in scientific and technological knowledge. This has resulted in quite an extensive transformation globally.

This transformation has profoundly affected values, relationships and institutions within humanity including marriage and family. In the process of change there has also been cross-cultural interchanges. Consequently the role of men and women have been drastically affected by social transformation. (1988:45).

3.5 **Theoretical understanding of the original normal family processes Xhosa ethnic perspective**

Social transformation as has been explained above has influenced Xhosa communities as well. This has caused many families and couples to ignore 'ethnic values' and strive to become 'westernised'. However, there is a general desire lately to reclaim ethnic identity which was sacrificed in the previous generation. This is often displayed by the use of Xhosa traditional attire in wedding ceremonies and other traditional ceremonies, for example "*umgidi*" (initiation) or girls ceremony "*intonjane*."

This paper at this stage is consequently presenting the original normal family processes in Xhosa communities.

From the perspective of African society, Phillips declares that traditional African society including Xhosa communities like all societies does have rules concerning obligation of spouses, parents and children towards each other. To be able to measure the effect of modern changes and understand why they have often caused conflict, it is necessary to present these traditional or cultural norms and values. Furthermore, the study should be able to make it possible to recognise those features which often come into conflict with values from the Western world leading to disharmony (1953:1).

Hareven in Walsh also indicates that perceptions of American family life today are governed by myths about American family life in the past. These myths maintain that there was once no divorce or problems in family life. This was in the time when three generations lived together happily in the same household. From this conviction, Hareven feels that in order to come to grips with the problems of the present, it is necessary to look at the changes in family life over the past two centuries (1982:447).

According to oral sources Xhosa communities have also had a golden age in family life. This period has apparently been when three generations lived together in one household. The original Xhosa household and family processes which occurred within the household are subsequently offered below:

3.5.1 **The original Xhosa household – Umzi Womxhosa (Appendix A)**

(Meaning of Xhosa words in [vii])

Soga in his book 'The AmaXosa : Life and Customs' offers an illustration of the Xhosa Kraal or "*Umzi Wom Xhosa*". He further offers family processes that occur within a typical original Xhosa household. (1947:83).

3.5.2 **Description of the "umzi"**

The great house "*indlu enkulu*" according to Soga is centrally situated towards the gate. On the right hand is the right hand house "*indlu yase kunene*". On the right hand side of the great house are also huts where normally relatives and boys sleep. On the left hand side of the great house is a hut where nephews and nieces stay. Moving further behind on the right is a storage hut where mealies and foodstuff is kept.

On the left side is a hut where the mother of the owner of the household stays. In the grandparent's abode, little boys and girls spend most of their time listening to myths and stories from the grandparent. These stories and myths often consist of quite useful wisdom for the growing children. Centrally situated behind the courtyard or "*inkundla*" is the kraal where the livestock, goats, cattle and sheep are kept. The "*inkundla*" or courtyard is an open space. It is in this "*inkundla*" where the men gather to discuss laws and customs, this is like an open court of justice. The strangers are entertained in the "*inkundla*". If a girl or boy is to be married, the news is broken in the "*inkundla*". When the ceremonies take place, that is marriage or initiation ceremony the boy or girl has to walk across the "*inkundla*". The assembly for "*iziyalo*" or devotions is always at the "*inkundla*" (1947:82).

3.5.3 Description of the great house – "*indlu enkulu*"

Soga further offers the explanation about the outlay of the great house which is the main house of the household.

As one enters the great house, the right side is reserved for the husband and the left-hand side belongs to the wife. The girls sit with the mother whilst the boys sit with the father on the right-hand side.

In the centre of the hut is the fireplace often surrounded by the younger children. It is common knowledge that the girls are taught by their mother at the various stages of life. The boys are automatically taught by their father about ways of life. The grandmother or "*Xegokazi*" is the oral source of the customs, norms and values of the household and even the community around. The stories and myths that are shared at bedtime are often loaded with constructive wisdom.

The stories are not told during the day. The myth pertaining to that is that the child who listens to stories during daytime would 'grow horns' and look like an animal. Basically this was to discourage young people from lazing around and not attend to their daily chores. Perhaps these are what Luthmann and Kirchenbaun refer to as Family Survival Myths (1974:157). Apparently a survival myth has to do with the impression shared by family members in their efforts to maintain their way of doing thing in order to survive psychologically (1974:167).

It should be useful at this stage to look into the social responsibilities of the family members of the original Xhosa household, if we are to understand more of the Xhosa family processes.

3.5.4 **Social status of the male-child**

According to Soga, a Xhosa from birth to seven years is likened to a pup which 'has not opened its eyes yet'. He is likened to a puppy and said to be "*ayikatungululi*" (a term used for a puppy whose eyes are still closed). If the boy acts irresponsibly and burns the veld, he is not punished because "*ayikatungululi*" (1947:2) There is no child abuse through corporal punishment at this stage. (own comment).

The boy begins to gain status at the cattle-herding stage of about ten years to initiation. At this stage he is given light jobs at the "*umzi*", helps milk the cows, cultivate the lands. The boys is at this stage called "*inkwenkwe*". At this stage he is punished for committing wrong things. He cannot be married at this stage, never before initiation. The initiation is the ritual transition from boyhood to manhood. (1947:2).

During boyhood the boy knows that it is not correct to be involved in sexual relations. If he does, he is warned that he will be sexually unproductive in his own homestead and might not have children. (1947:2).

According to Soga as long as the boy lives in the "*umzi*" of his father, he is under the control and guardianship of his father and to the lesser extent also influenced by the senior male members of the father's "*umzi*". At this stage the older women of the "*umzi*" including his mother also control and influence him (1947:2).

3.5.5 Initiation stage

Soga declares that this stage gives the boy the status of a man. He becomes an "*indoda*" man. His eyes are now wide open and needs to act responsibly. (1947:3).

During the seclusion period the initiates, "*abakhwetha*" are treated like wild animals. They are not given food for about seven days and wear minimal covering. The exposure is meant to create a strong man who can take 'rough patches' in life as a man. When the young man comes out of the "*isutu*", a ceremony is enacted at the "*inkundla*". This is the period of rejoicing, gifts are given to the new young men by relatives and community. Responsible elders talk to the young man, giving him advice about things in life.(1947:3).

3.5.6 Code of behaviour of marriageable youth

According to Soga once a Xhosa boy has undergone initiation he has entered a marriageable stage. All marriageable youth need to observe a certain code of behaviour. They need to guard how they talk in the presence of the opposite sex, vulgar language is not allowed, free talk about sexual matters is not tolerated. At the "isutu" (seclusion) the young man has been taught everything about sex. In fact sex education for the Xhosa young man is at initiation. The young man knows that he may not have intercourse with a virgin. It is considered a serious misdeed. A girlfriend is there to accompany to feasts, dances and ceremonies. If by mistake the young man is tempted to have intercourse, he does not have full intercourse. If he deflowers the girl, there is a case against him, he is expected to pay a fine because he has depreciated the girl's marriage value. The young men are in constant supervision by their fathers until marriage. (1947:19).

3.5.7 Marriage of the young man – an essential part of family processes in Xhosa household

Oral sources at interviews indicate that the Xhosa father influenced his son to get married when he deemed that the young man is ready. The usual procedure is that when the young man has seen the girl, he would bring this to the notice of the mother who will directly or indirectly bring the matter to the notice of her husband as well as the men folk. The question of marriage is then discussed in the family courts "*izinkundla*" of the young man and young woman respectively. The young man is expected to marry a girl of a certain reputation. The girl should also have respectable and known parents in the society. Negotiations are executed by known men who are called "*unozakuzaku*". (oral source).

The deliberations between the two families take anything from six to even twelve months before marriage. During that period the young people in both houses undergo formal counselling or "*ukuyala*" sessions with relevant known family elders. At this stage the young man ceases to have affairs with other young women. (oral source).

3.5.8 Social status of the female child

Soga postulates that from the time of birth to the time of marriage a daughter is under guardianship and control of her father and mother. The mother trains the girl in household chores. (1947:5).

Puberty is marked off by "*intonjane*" ceremony. At "*intonjane*" the girl gains a higher status. The "*intonjane*" is a kind of initiation ceremony similar in object to that of males. At the "*intonjane*" ritual, during seclusion, sex education is offered to the girls. If a girl marries without undergoing the ceremony, she is not allowed to do it later. It is a known Xhosa myth that if a girl does not undergo "*intonjane*" she would experience mishaps like miscarriage "*ukuphuma kwesisu*" or any other form of constant ill-health. (1947:5).

3.5.9 Code of behaviour of marriageable Xhosa young woman

Soga further declares that supervision of girls is stricter than boys. After the "*intonjane*" ceremony the young women are in close control from their mothers and older girls within the family and community. After every dance, ceremony or feast the young women of the "*umzi*" are examined by the

grandparents or experienced women to see if they still maintain their virginity. It was known that if a girl had been deflowered this would affect the value of the "*lobolo*" or "*ikhazi*" (1947:18).

A marriageable young girl could have a lover, usually one lover. Making love would be very carefully indulged in by the young man who himself knows the consequences of pregnancy. The young man is aware of the heavy fine that he needs to meet if he 'goes all the way'.

3.6 **Marriage of the young woman, an essential part of family process in Xhosa household**

Oral sources indicate that marriage and the formation of the family unit is the essence of Xhosa social life. A marriageable young woman is expected to marry and procreate. Getting married changes the status of the young woman. She is now respected and has greater authority and say among other women in the affairs of the family. She has now some domestic rights and privileges. She is even given a piece of land to cultivate. Until marriage she is under the guardianship of her father. As soon as she marries the husband takes over the guardianship. As an important gift of marriage she is given what is called "*ubulunga*" cow. This beast is the property of the young woman. It is this cow that stands in close relations to the health and good fortune of the woman and is often referred to as the life or breath "*umphefumlo*" of the woman. When she gets ill, hairs are plucked from its tail and a necklace is made for her to wear around the neck. This sacred cow remains the property of the wife, and the husband has no claim over it.

Soga indicates that the period of marriage negotiation is very important for the young woman. This is the time when some experienced women elders teach her about valuable issues in married life.

She is taught about certain rules and restrictions. For instance, she may not go into the kraal "*ubuhlanti*" of her husband while an "*umtshakazi*". She may not walk through the "*inkundla*", she may walk close to the "*izindlu*". She must "*hlonipha*", pay reverence to her husband, father-in-law and all the male members related to her husband in the patrilineal line. It is time that the young man also has to "*hlonipha*" revere his mother-in-law (1947:8).

3.7 **The "*lobolo*" process**

While discussing processes involved in the original Xhosa marriage preparation, the researcher feels it would be adequate at this stage to comment about the "*lobolo*" process. Although there are changing ideas about the meaning and function of "*lobolo*" in the urban areas, the process itself does not seem to have been discarded in all Xhosa communities, rural and urban.

3.7.1 **The meaning and function of the "*lobolo*"**

Soga in Shropshire indicates that "*lobolo*" has been perhaps been misunderstood by missionaries during South African Colonialisation as the buying of a wife. This understanding seems to have carried a lot of prejudice against the "*lobolo*" process for decades. (1946:77).

While "*lobolo*" went along with gifts, services and promotion of 'relationship' "*ukuzalana*" between the two kin systems, it should have been valuable to take note of the fact that this was not one-sided.

After the "*lobolo*" had been paid, the bride's kin used most of the money accompanying the "*lobolo*" to buy the bride's needs as well as gifts for the bridegroom and all his relatives. Therefore, basically within the "*lobolo*" process there is an interchange of gifts between the families.

It is worthwhile to comment on the understanding of "*lobolo*" by Soga in Shropshire. Soga indicates that there is no fixed number of cattle for "*lobolo*" and also no time limit to its payment. "*Lobolo*" is a friendly contract – a mutual guarantee for the fulfilment of a two-party agreement. The fact that the "*lobolo*" is a continuous understanding pertains that the relationship between the two families is expected to be over a lifetime. The exchange of gifts does not end at the marriage ceremony but continues between the members of the two families. This indicates that the two families enter into a relationship of economic support for each other (1946:89). Thus we glimpse into the extended family process.

It cannot be denied that there has been abuse of the "*lobolo*" system. This according to Soga comes with the fixing of a definite amount before the consent for marriage is granted by the parents to the daughter. When the prospective bridegroom fails to produce the amount this often resulted in elopement and consequently cohabitation which is not desirable in both family parties (1946:88).

Having done a thorough research on the "*lobolo*" system Krige in Shropshire argues that the case with which wives are abandoned in both urban and rural areas demands reconsideration of the purpose, meaning and function of the "*lobolo*" system. "*Lobolo*" is a bond between two families and the couple. From her conviction, Krige concludes that :

- *lobolo* is a friendly contract with no finality
- *lobolo* involves many relatives in giving and receiving

- it secures to the husband the legal right to the children
- it protects the woman and through her the life of the family and even tribe (1946:90)

The researcher totally agrees with Krige about reconsidering and re-confirming the "*lobolo*" system. From the interviews on the value of "*lobolo*", most interviewees agree that "*lobolo*" is a valuable practise that needs to be clarified and encouraged in marriages. Very few, if any, Xhosa young men do not know or understand the "*lobolo*" system. What is necessary is more education about its purpose meaning and function. Basically "*lobolo*" is seen as not only as an economic and social bond between two families and individuals. It is also a spiritual symbol of unity and relatedness.

3.7.2 **Processes within the original Xhosa marriage ceremony**

Phillips indicates that there are three ways of contracting a marriage in African communities and this of course includes Xhosa communities. Marriage can be in African custom, civil rite or in a Christian ceremony. There has always been an overlap of the three modes of contracting a marriage for various reasons concerning the couple and families involved. A Christian marriage is seen to be incomplete without the customary measures. Marriage by civil rights has at some stage to be followed by a Christian ceremony. A customary union also ends with a Christian ceremony (1953:39). Xhosa communities normally commence in the Church for a Christian ceremony and end at their traditional home for customary conclusions.

Since this chapter wants to establish what was normal in the original marriage in Xhosa communities the focus will be on the process involved in customary marriage union.

Soga cites that when all arrangements for the wedding "*umtshato*" had been completed the bride's family chose the "*uduli*" or bridal party. This "*uduli*" consisted of men, women, some young men and young women. By Xhosa custom, the parents of the bride do not go with the "*uduli*". (1947:54).

The above author further indicates that "*uduli*" are accompanied by the "*ubulunga*" cow. When the bridal party arrives, a hospitality goat or sheep "*umathul entabeni*" is slaughtered for the party. This symbolises the welcoming of the bride in her new home. The following morning involves the "unveiling ceremony". The bride and her aids walk to the kraal or "*ubuhlanti*". The bride carries an assegai and sticks it to the entrance of the kraal. They would then walk into the centre of the kraal and unveil themselves. This is called "*umguqo*" or "unveiling ceremony". The bridegroom and his party sit and watch and a lot of "*ululation*" shakes the community. The bride leaves some money under the mat in the kraal as an offering lest she offends the ancestral spirits by entering the kraal "*ubuhlanti*". The "*umguqo*" ceremony is followed by feasting and dancing. The bride and bridegroom walk across the "*inkundla*" in two different attires. After this, the family and community assemble at the family court or "*inkundla*". The "*iziyalo*" take place. Various elderly men and women talk to the couple about marriage life wishing them well and passing gifts to them. The bridal party passes gifts to the bridegroom's family in the midst of feasting and dancing (1947:56).

3.7.3 *Ukutyisamasi*

This ceremony concludes the marriage ceremony in Xhosa traditional marriage celebration. According to Soga this takes place only at the home of the bridegroom. A goat is slaughtered and the bride is offered a piece of roasted meat and a cup of sour milk "*amasi*" from the cows of her new home. This is called "*ukutyis'amasi*." (1947:57).

Following the ceremony the bride is formally introduced to the family circle of the husband. She is now formally the wife of her husband. The marriage ceremony is complete and the bride is a member of her husband's family. The "*uduli*" or bridal party can now take leave of the bridegroom's place (1947:56). The performance of the "*ukutyis'amasi*" ceremony is the final stage in the essential requirements of a legally binding Xhosa marriage (1947:77). After this ceremony full sexual intercourse which is the privilege of married people only is permitted.

3.7.4 **The social duties of the wife**

Soga stipulates that the duties of the wife in Xhosa married life falls into three categories, namely marital, domestic and social responsibilities. In a case where a woman neglects any of the three she has to discuss the matter with her husband, following which the husband's family is brought into the matter if the couple cannot resolve it. This of course is normally the last resort. The couple are expected to sort out their differences privately. (1947:97).

The main duty of the Xhosa woman to her husband is being faithful to him and never to commit adultery. In a situation where the wife became unfaithful she is sent home and her husband would fetch her when he felt necessary. Under these circumstances the marriage is not dissolved as such but gives time to the couple to forgive each other and carry on again. If the adulterer is known to her husband the husband lays a claim against him (1947:97).

There are however instances where the husband cannot be given his conjugal rights by the wife. This is when she is breastfeeding a baby. In fact this is one of the natural Xhosa contraception measures. At the same time abstaining from sex for a while is believed to spare the baby from some illnesses.

During pregnancy, the woman abstains from sex as well to prevent any ill-effects on the baby. Illness of the mother also causes abstinence from sexual relations (1947:98).

The most important marital duty of the wife is to care for the husband by preparing food for him and keep him clean.

The domestic duties include care of the children and teaching the children various domestic duties. In Xhosa communities the daughter-in-law has to care for her parents-in-law (1947:99).

Socially the wife has to carry herself around with dignity. She has to preserve harmony and dignity within the "*umzi*" (household) and within the "*imizi*" (households). She has to keep to the "*hlonipha*" rules. The wife should not walk through the "*inkundla*" when she is an "*umtshakazi*". (newly wed).

She avoids the "*inkundla*" and the "*ubuhlanti*". She must also "*hlonipha*" or pay reverence to her husband's father and all his male relatives. In fact, as a "*mtshakazi*", the writer was not allowed to shake the hands of the male folk relatives when greeting them. If there is a need to pass food to them this is done by the young family girls. Some names which consist the root names of the father-in-law are not uttered. (Oral source). For instance if father-in-law's name is "*langa*" which means "sun", the daughter-in-law avoids to talk about the "*langa*" or gives it another name.

Arising from "*ukuhlonipha*" custom during pregnancy, the researcher was not allowed to drink milk because this would have an ill-effect upon the cattle and the rest of the "*umzi*".

When pregnant the woman is expected to stay at her husband's "*umzi*" until birth.

Further interviews indicate that when the wife is wronged by her husband, she could go to her own home. The husband was then expected to fetch her and pay a fine. This payment of a fine is called "*ukutholeka*". This normally came in the form of a cow. The marriage ties were not broken. Before the woman is released a meeting would be held where the couple is helped to resolve their problems by elders from both families. If a husband incurred bodily harm to his wife, the matter was handled by the Local Chief. The man was expected to pay a penalty. Even at this stage the marriage would not be dissolved. The couple would be encouraged to resolve their differences and live in peace. This way of handling conflict promoted the couple's tolerance. (1947:100).

The above ways of dealing with a marital conflict show that triangles were originally used in normalising family process within Xhosa communities.

3.7.5 The social duties of the husband

Soga postulates that the husband as the head of the family needs to conduct himself with dignity. The duties of the man included his duties to his wife, towards his children and his own duties which included providing household necessities and preserving law and order in his "*umzi*". (1947:106).

It is the husband's duty in Xhosa communities to provide a home for his family. Clothing food, medicine have all to be provided by the man. The costs of the women who help give birth to the child "*abafukamisi*" and the "*ingcibi*" for the initiation ceremony should be paid by the man (1947:106).

The husband also has to "*hlonipha*" his mother-in-law and her female progenitors. However, if the husband neglects "*ukuhlonipha*" custom there is no action against him; only a warning or a reminder (1947:106).

The husband's duty goes further into being responsible for the upbringing, protection and welfare of his children. He has to pay particular attention to the boys, teaching them good behaviour and obedience. When the time comes for their initiation ceremony he has to organise the event. It is also his responsibility to put his daughters through the "*intonjane*" ceremony. When the children marry, their father provides household necessities and cattle. When the son pays his "*lobolo*", the father is expected to help him.

As head of the "*umzi*" he has to preserve law and order by settling disputes within the family (1947:107).

The names of children especially of boys are given by the father. This is an important right preserved for the man in the Xhosa community (1947:109).

3.8 Critical reflection on the original normal family processes in Xhosa ethnic perspective

Having gone through the rituals, myths, codes of behaviour and social responsibilities involved in the original Xhosa ethnic family system, it should be useful at this stage to do a critical reflection of the input. This should be helpful in picking out what could be valuable and offer some enlightenment to Xhosa modern families who are struggling with transitional family life challenges.

The communal abode as has been illustrated by Soga shows the inclusiveness of the Xhosa cultural home. As has been explained the components of the family consist of the nuclear family, nieces, nephews as well as the grandparents. In other words the household consists of a three generational family. This is a useful arrangement for a valuable support-system. In such a situation there is no need for helpers and maids who look after the children. The young children receive care from their immediate next of kin and this is a valuable emotional resource. The availability of a grandparent makes it possible to have an oral source which can constantly offer the family input on the various customs and values of Xhosa family life. As has been explained, the stories that are shared with the growing children in the evenings are embedded with important family survival myths.

In the above explained arrangement, the couple who are owners of this household could not be said to be deprived of their individuality as a couple.

The arrangement within the great house or "*indlu enkulu*" gives them their unique status as father and mother within togetherness or communality.

Looking at the social status and responsibilities of both female and male child. One sees a reciprocal responsibility of the father and mother to both children although there is an overlap in certain issues. As much as strictness is emphasised on sex education within girls, so it is with boys. Nowadays one notices some one sidedness. The boys seem to be free in comparison with girls. It is noticeable however that one does not see much of the "*intonjane*" girls ceremony where most of sex education is done with the girls. The Xhosa girls just seem to survive through their close relationship with their mothers.

The boy's initiation ceremony persists in urban and in rural areas within Xhosa communities. Social transformation has not been able to affect the existence of this ritual. However, with the increase in HIV / Aids and other diseases the traditional approach has had to be a bit adjusted. This has not affected the period of education that the boys are exposed to during their seclusion. Again, the communal effect of the ritual offers the individual boy a valuable support system in life.

It is common knowledge that the code of behaviour in both boys and girls has changed a lot, due to social transformation. For instance the examination of girls by the grandmother is now seen as old fashioned. It cannot be denied that it did prevent sexual promiscuity to an extent. However, what was useful in the original period in Xhosa family life is worth knowing.

The processes involved in marriage preparation and the ceremony itself in the original Xhosa family system involved a lot of valuable issues.

The emphasis on the friendly contract of the "*lobolo*" which binds not only the couple but the two families as well, is worth maintaining. Again the continual receiving and giving makes the "*lobolo*" system a uniting, supporting and protecting practise. This is necessary for the couples' security and stability.

In the marriage ceremony which is the key issue of this dissertation one discovers valuable counselling practices ("*ukuyala*"). The elders on both sides share "*ukuhlonipha*" or respect practices which are very important for the peaceful and tolerant relationship needed to promote normal family processes. The responsibilities of husband and wife complement each other and though the husband is the head there is no apparent domination of the wife. As the husband is allowed to take his place as the head of the household, the wife also takes her position as the mother and life-giver of the home.

The impact of industrialisation cannot be overemphasised in Xhosa family life. Social transformation has pushed the Xhosa family household from the rural context into the urban context, where there is diverse cultural exposure. This has immensely affected task and work responsibilities of the Xhosa family members to a large extent. However, there is a prevailing attempt in most families to sustain ties with the original cultural background.

Walsh supports the need to understand the original family background. He states that this helps to create a constructive family policy which takes into consideration the re-establishment of support networking among family members (1982:483).

Issues theoretically dealt with by Soga may not be all that acceptable to the present generation. However, the information can always be adjusted subject to the discretion of the particular family in distress.

As has been mentioned in this paper whilst dealing with what is abnormal, it is useful to be aware of what is taken as "normal" in a specific social and context.

3.9 **Conclusion**

This chapter has wrestled with issues involved in normal family processes, particularly into the light of marriage. Theoretical input has been presented to bring about understanding of normal family processes from the western perspective. A detailed theoretical investigation has also been presented specifically looking into the normal family processes within the original Xhosa family household. This should be able to provide a valid framework for assessment and intervention in an enrichment and counselling programme in these communities.



CHAPTER 4

4. INVESTIGATION OF PRESENT FAMILY AND MARRIED LIFE IN URBANISED XHOSA COMMUNITIES (FIELD WORK)

The couple have been married for fifty two years. The second home had a couple between sixty and sixty nine years of age and have been married for forty years. The third home had a couple married for thirty years is in the range of fifty nine years and sixty five years. The fourth and last home had a couple, younger than the three are between thirty five and forty five years of age. The four families live within the Ncambedlana urban area.

4.3 Interview methodology

The researcher conducted the interviews at the home of the families per appointment. This was done orally because of the time factor. The language mainly used was the vernacular. Eight questions have been prepared in a separate paper. [Appendix C]. The interviewer took her own notes as the respondents answered the questions. The different answers have been put together under relevant questions.

4.4 Interview data collection

4.4.1 What is the state of the family and married life in Xhosa communities at the present age?

Most of the respondents stated that family and married life in Xhosa communities seems to be unstable, full of conflicts and lacks the warm original Xhosa family life of peace and love.

The reasons cited for this state of affairs is the fact that the father and mother are both learned, are bread winners and find it hard to have enough time with each other and with the children. Because both parents work the whole day, the children grow up without their parental love.

The consequences are that most marriages are under stress, some end in separation or divorce. Couples which still maintain their traditional links are much more stable than those who do not have them anymore. Marriages in the rural areas are much more stable. If the grandparents still exist they contribute to the welfare and harmony of their offspring's relationship in various ways.

One of the male respondents indicated that the reasons for family and marriage distress could be the apparent lack of identity. This has come with exposure to various cultures which now live around the Umtata area. Cross-cultural exposure has also been precipitated by the opening up of multi-racial schools and even the media. This has contributed to confusion about the ideal Xhosa family life.

4.4.2 What do you think are the main causes of marriage disharmony in Xhosa communities?

The male respondents note lack of submission by the wives as the main cause of discord in Xhosa families nowadays. The younger female respondents feel that there is confusion about who should submit to whom. Men also needed to submit, they feel.

Lack of patience with each other and intolerance bring a lack of communication are also seen as contributory factors to disharmony in most homes. One male respondent declared that it is a matter of 'two bulls living in one kraal'. Therefore, one cannot expect peace in such a situation.

The fact that no one depended on the other financially also encouraged a feeling of over self-sufficiency. This seemed to make it easy to divorce or separate. Alcohol abuse has been seen by the respondents to accelerate disharmony. This incidentally leads to extramarital affairs and later on disputes. In many homes couples even sleep in different bedrooms. All the respondents feel that the oneness which is the main purpose of matrimony is slowly disappearing from urbanised Xhosa communities.

The female interviewees pointed out lack of spiritual commitment in most men folk. Most Xhosa men go to Church occasionally. It seemed life with those men who do attend Church is better. There seems to be peace and love in the home. There is also less use of alcohol. In such a home even the children grow spiritually involved. Home devotions also make a positive difference.

The respondents all felt that from the above contributory factors the result was often decrease in communication between the partners.

Furthermore there is not enough about education in marital and family life, the respondents unanimously declared.

4.4.3 Do you feel that Christianity and western culture have had a positive effect on marriage and family life in Xhosa communities?

If either yes or no. Expatiate.

Three of the couples felt that Christianity and Western culture have had a positive effect on marriage and family life. Westernisation came with education which brought enlightenment in many ways of life. The feeling was that the focus of worship was on ancestors and this form of worship had no reliable references. This often results in controversies. Christianity had the Bible as reference and properly defined leadership which causes worship to be consistent. Christianity also helped in eradicating witchcraft and magic.

Issues like polygamy were also successfully stamped out by Christianity. Having many wives often led to envy, jealousies and a lot of conflict. One male respondent indicated that if polygamy had not been abolished it could have been a useful concept for addressing the problem of HIV Aids. One man would be able to concentrate only on his wives without having to expose himself and his wives to HIV Aids.

The elderly couple, who has been married for fifty two years felt a bit differently. Whilst they were aware of the change of times, they felt that Christianity should not have abolished some of the Xhosa cultural practices. Their concern was the disappearance of respect on '*intlonipho*' which was very important in family life. The introduction of civil marriages disturbed the valuable processes involved in Xhosa customary marriage. Young people now rush to Magistrate Courts to get things over and done with and miss out on counselling "*iziyalo*" by elderly people about married and family life. Many Xhosa cultural issues need to be revisited to revive good family life, they felt.

4.4.4 **Did Xhosa communities offer counselling to families and couples before Christianity came to South Africa?**

All the respondents stated that couples and families were offered some form of counselling before Christianity came to South Africa, through family customs.

The elderly couples offered quite a lot of information about this topic. They indicated that premarital counselling came in the form of helping the boys and girls, as to what kind of partner they had to look for. It was stressed that beauty was not the main quality. The main qualities were good conduct, good temper, respect, good home background, a home not involved in witchcraft or sorcery. The newly married young men spent time with the marriageable young men preparing them for their future lives the same applied to the newly married young women. No young person entered marriage without good preparation. The ritual ceremonies, "*intonjane*" for girls and "*ukwaluka*" for boys were traditional schools for a healthy way of life. A lot of "*iziyalo*" counselling was offered in these occasions. The community and the chief were involved in these occasions.

When a young man or very rarely a young woman performed something unacceptable within the community, e.g. impregnating a girl, the issue was not handled by the family alone, the Chief or headman offered warning and a final say upon the issue. This involvement made everybody aware of what was wrong and avoided the issue as much as possible.

Grandparents were known to possess very valuable words of wisdom. They were often approached to counsel or "*yala*" in traditional ceremonies and even bless the youth concerned as they enter a new stage in life.

4.4.5 Do you think that Xhosa traditional family practices came into conflict with Christian values in stabilising and enriching marriage and family life?

The feeling of the respondents was that whenever two cultures came together there was bound to be conflict. The usual tendency is that one culture tends to overcome and eliminate the other. This was what resulted when Western Culture came. Christian values came embedded in Western Culture and the result was the negligence of valuable traditional family practices. The end result has been instability in marriage and family life. This was the general feeling.

4.5.6 Does your church offer pastoral care and counselling to families?

One of the couples came from the Anglican church. It came to the understanding of the researcher that pastoral care and counselling is extensively offered in the Anglican church. It was also interesting to note that marriage within the Anglican Church is still taken as one of the sacramental services. The couple explained how the couple is made to be involved in preparing the Holy Communion in their wedding ceremony. The couple felt that these are some of the positive Christian values which help to stabilise the marriage relationship. Young people in the Anglican church are encouraged to have a Christian marriage rather than a civil one.

A couple from the Assemblies of God had something different to offer. Within this denomination, as soon as the boy and girl fall in love, they inform the pastor who informs the congregation.

The relationship is blessed and in most cases it ends up in an engagement and later marriage.

The respondents from the Methodist Church indicated that minimal premarital counselling occurred in their church. The minister saw the couple a few days before the wedding ceremony. Much of what the minister said in Church service was drowned by the '*ululating*' noises so popular in the African traditional celebrating mood.

None of the respondents was definite about a follow up pastoral care and counselling after the marriage ceremony. Even when children were there and families had some problems, the most popular thing to do was to go to a social worker or psychologist. Counselling programmes do not seem to be available yet within the African or Xhosa communities from the Church perspective.

4.4.7 What suggestions do you offer in an attempt to recapture stable, healthy and normal family and marital relationships in your Xhosa locality?

Suggestions on attempts to recapture normality and stability in marriage and family life as contributed by the four couples can be summarised as follows :-

- Re-establish links with cultural backgrounds.
- Establish elderly teams to act as resource of those who have no traditional links.
- Encourage young people to strive "to get back to their roots".

- Encourage young people and young couples to be involved in Church and join relevant Bible Study groups.
- Establish couples' fellowship groups
- Invite experts to come and address communities on marriage and family life.
- Freely avail literature on family life and marriage
- Encourage Church leadership to provide premarital education to all young people.
- As much as possible encourage marriage in church rather than in a Magistrates' Court.
- Refer distressed families to relevant disciplines.
- Ministers' sermons should include texts on family life and marriage. These seem to be heard only on a wedding day. Even adults need to hear these teachings.

4.5 Summary of findings and observation

From this field of work, it is evident to the researcher that there is general awareness from the communities of research that marriage and family life need attention. Having been chosen from different denominations, the respondents' responses show that the concern is not just denominational. It is a communally Christian concern.

It is also noticeable that the respondents unanimously see stability in families and marriages which maintain their traditional links. The respondents are aware of positive cultural processes that could be used to stabilise and bring harmony to family relationships.

The suggestions include a request for sermons on marriage and family life. This shows that the need is not only for young people but for the adults as well.

The respondents are aware of the fact that social transformation cannot be avoided. Cross cultural interaction can also not be avoided. What is necessary is establishing or developing processes that could help the community retain its identity as well as stability in the midst of other cultures.

The issue of male domination seems to prevail in the male respondents. Inputs keep mentioning lack of woman submission that has caused disputes in marriage. This portrays that Xhosa men folk need education on equality.

The respondents have clearly shown in the data analysis that some Xhosa traditional practices could be used in conjunction with modern pastoral care and counselling models to help address distressed families.

4.6 **Conclusion**

This investigation was mainly done so as to observe what the people in the Ncambedlana Urban context have to say about the situation of marriage and family life in their community. This should be helpful in going ahead with the development of strategies for intervention and counselling within this community from the perspective of the church.



CHAPTER 5

5. THE MINISTER AS KEY PERSON IN MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT AND MARITAL CRISIS COUNSELLING

5.1 Minister's uniqueness in marriage enrichment

Stewart in his book "The Minister as Marriage Counsellor" declares that traditionally the minister, priest and rabbi have married the majority of people within their congregations. In cases where individuals have been married by a civil officer and later have had to divorce, one of them will usually come to the church for the second attempt in establishing a new relationship hoping that as the minister blesses the marriage there will be stability (1961:17).

Although the above conviction comes from the American context, I am convinced that the situation is similar in our South African communities as well. In fact, within Xhosa communities couples who for some reason have had to go to the Magistrate's Court to sign a marriage contract, later come to the minister's study for the blessing of the rings and subsequently a blessing of the marriage relationship.

It is apparent therefore that there is a general awareness that the minister does have something unique to offer as a marriage counsellor. We will later explore the role of the minister as a symbol of power.

Switzer claims that in fact the ministers themselves put a high value on the importance of their role as pastors and the helping relationship they offer to the people of God. So as to clearly understand the value of the minister as a crisis counsellor it could be useful and enlightening to contend with what the concepts "pastoral care" and "pastoral counselling" involves (1974:11).

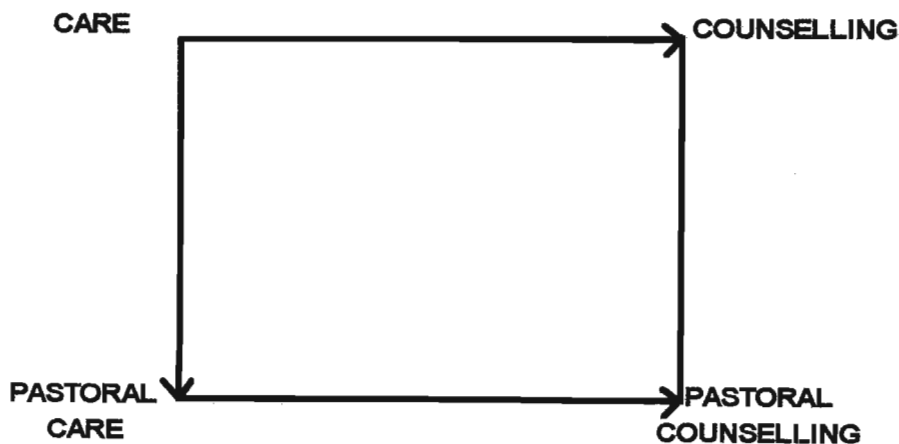
5.2 Definitions

Clinebell gives distinct definitions of both pastoral care and pastoral counselling (1984:46).

"Pastoral Care is a response to the need that everyone has for warmth, nurture, support and caring. This need is heightened during times of personal stress and social chaos." (1984:46).

"Pastoral counselling is a reparative expression of pastoral care, seeking to bring healing to those who are suffering from crisis-induced dysfunction and brokenness." (1984:46).

Paul Tillich in Switzer offers the following diagram to make more clarity upon the above two terms :-



The diagram shows that caring is an ongoing process in every moment of human existence. The caring is transformed into pastoral care because of the motive and the fact that it happens within the context of the church. The action of love became the vehicle of God's grace to human kind through Jesus Christ who became the first care-giver. Caring thus happens within the community of faith, hence "pastoral".

The interaction of the lines in the diagram indicate that ministers operate care and counselling from the premise of "pastoral care" and "pastoral counselling". (1974:12).

However, Clinebell does indicate that the pastor's assistance may not always emanate from the context of the congregation or caring community. There are people who are alienated by society because of various social issues. (1984:47).

These include HIV / Aids victims in our society, alcoholics, displaced and homeless children. The position thus is constantly involved in in-reaching and out-reaching programmes.

Switzer further declares that the process of counselling involves emotional and intellectual elements. As the counsellors perform their work they put their time into the life of the counsellee and need to become a mirror for the other person feeling as she or he feels and becoming immersed into the life of the other person. (1974:14).

This is what in counselling is referred to as empathy. This is a very important element in crisis counselling (1974:14).

Clinebell emphasizes the need for empathetic listening in therapeutic counselling. He postulates that the art of reflective empathetic listening is essential in all caring and counselling. There are sometimes feelings in between the words spoken which are too painful to express through the words. Now and again the counsellor has to respond to these non-verbal feelings through empathy (1984:75).

Worthington in his journal article on "an empathy-humility-commitment model of forgiveness applied within family dyads" further stresses that at the core of any conflict resolution model is, empathy.

"Empathy mediates forgiveness." Worthington says without empathy it is not easy to facilitate forgiveness. (1988 : Vol 20 p63).

According to Switzer, through empathy, a personal relationship between the counsellor and counselee is established and actually brings about change in both. The counsellor gains new insights, learning from the experience whilst the participant counselee undergoes transformation (1974:14).

From the above exploration of the meaning of pastoral care and pastoral counselling it is evident that the minister stands out uniquely when addressing crisis in comparison to psychologists, social workers and psychotherapists.

Clinebell also strengthens this conviction by offering Wayne E Oates' quote

"The pastor moves from one crisis to another with those whom he (sic) Shepherds Two thousand years of Christian ministry have conditioned Christians to expect their pastors to be with them at these times of crisis. Therefore, the Christian pastor comes to his task in the strength of a great heritage.

Even though he feels a sense of awe in the presence of the mysterious and tremendous crisis in life, he also feels a sense of security in the fact that his people both want and expect him to be present at their times of testing." (1974:183)

The quotation clearly expresses that through the centuries ministers or pastors have always given care, support and guidance during crises and losses experienced by the congregants.

Switzer indicates various reasons why the uniqueness of ministers has survived through the centuries :-

5.3 Qualities which make minister unique in marriage enrichment and marital crisis counselling

5.3.1 The symbol power of the minister

Switzer argues that one of the sources of peculiar strength in the minister's pastoral relationship apart from the power of personal presence is his or her power as symbol (1974:15).

Perhaps to be able to understand what symbolism in ministry entails one needs to give a precise definition of "Symbol".

5.3.1.1 Symbol – a definition

The word symbol comes from a Greek word "sumbolon" which means a sign or figure that represents quantity, operation and function (Collins English Dictionary).

Paul Tillich in Switzer lists a number of characteristics of symbols in the context of his declaration that "ultimate concern must be expressed symbolically, because symbol alone is able to express the ultimate." (1974:15).

The first characteristic of the symbol as Tillich states, is that a symbol points beyond itself to something else (1974:15).

This means an ordained minister points beyond himself or herself as a symbol. An ordained minister within the Methodist Church for instance is placed in a new relationship both with Christ, the church and the community of faith. Under Christ she or he is to lead and teach the congregation demonstrating in the ministers' own life the headship of Christ over themselves and over the Church. This gives the ordained minister the authority to give pastoral oversight to the People of God (1994 : M.C.S.A.: Minutes of Conference).

Whilst the ordained ministers execute their work as symbols they point past themselves to the Church and to Christ who is the Head of the Church. In fact, the ordained ministers do their counselling work under the submission of Christ (Ephesians 6 verse 23) (King James Version Bible)

The above position is not available to disciplines like psychotherapy, social work and the medical profession and this makes the ordained minister a unique crisis counsellor.

The second characteristic of a symbol as we follow Tillich's conviction is that it participates in what it points to. (1974:15).

Participating involves being committed to the church and having a personal relationship with Christ Jesus. The love of God needs to be reflected through the minister as a symbol so that she or he is able to impart the love to the distressed person. As the minister or pastor enters the distressed person's emotional world through God's love in him or her, transformation is bound to happen.

The third characteristic of a symbol according to Tillich is that it has ability to open up levels of reality which seem to be shut-off or unreachable in normal life. (1974:15).

The spiritual reality seems unreachable through ordinary human thinking. However, when the minister uses his experience and theological expertise to make scriptures address certain situations, the Word of God is allowed to be incarnated into a stressful situation with positive results.

To clarify the above argument further one could bring in Gary Collins interpretation of Genesis 2:24 in his book on "Christian Counselling". The verse states that "a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and they will become one flesh". Collins explains that the word "be united" in Hebrew is a word which means to stick or to be "glued" together. Expanding on this explanation Collins uses an analogy. He declares that if one tries to separate two pieces of paper which are glued together, both papers are bruised. Consequently if one tries to separate husband and wife who cleave together, both are bound to be bruised (1998:409).

Through theological expertise and use of classical language to interpret scripture the Word of God clearly puts across a reality that could not be understood under normal circumstances.

This theological expertise is not available in the fields of psychotherapy and other disciplines and thus again makes ministers stand out unique in their work as crisis pastoral counsellors.

Clinebell further expands on the above characteristic and states that the role of pastors is to awaken meaning and realistic hope. He points out that as the minister symbolises the dimensions of ultimate meanings he depends on a very rich spiritual tradition.

In crisis and loss the people often confront their spiritual thirst and hunger, the emptiness in their lives, and the poverty of their relationships and values. The minister then becomes a spiritual growth enabler and helps crisis-stricken people discover the ultimate meaningfulness of life lived in commitment to God whose love is unconditional even in the worst tragedy. (1984:184).

The fourth and last characteristic of a symbol as cited by Paul Tillich is that of unloading dimensions and elements of our inner being that correspond to the elements of reality (1971:16).

What the above characteristic means is that the very presence of the minister even before he or she speaks stimulates internal images which could perhaps have been learnt in childhood at Sunday School. These could be images of God the Father who could be depended upon, Christ the Friend who died on the cross or the Shepherd who cares for and nurtures His flock. This is elicited because ordained ministers are physical representatives of tradition, community of faith, dynamic powers of faith and in fact in awe even of God. This awareness on its own brings about healing and strength to the person undergoing crisis. (1971:16)

The exploration of minister as symbol makes it evident that the pastor, minister or clergy in his / her capacity as pastoral counsellor carries more power as a symbol than who he or she is as a mere human.

Switzer adds other aspects which give the minister further uniqueness in counselling.

5.3.2 **The pastoral initiative**

According to Switzer the minister has an opportunity to create pre-counselling relationships as he or she takes an initiative to go where people are. Ministers take the initiative and visit the sick in their homes and hospitals, to prisoners in prison, to the homeless in informal settlements and even into the streets to street children. This is a valuable opportunity for the minister as he or she grows to know the people and the people grow in knowing the minister. The minister thus is able to have some entrée. With this entrée into homes, hospitals, prisons, workplaces, informal settlements and other places the minister indulges in sensitive questioning and responsive listening.

While this happens there is ability to discover problems, at the early stages thus preventing the development of serious problems (1974:17).

Clinebell also mentions that the entrée to many family systems increases the trust that most people have in minister's. In the eyes of many who are experiencing crises and loss, the minister's image and identity have supportive and nurturing meaning.

Our Christian faith is surrounded by rituals which pertain to birth, growth, living and dying. The minister's presence in these celebrations further increase his or her rapport with the community (1984:183).

Xhosa communities perform various initiation rites. These stretch anything from receiving the new born into the family "*imbeleko*", circumcision rite, celebration "*umgidi*", recognising the coming of age of young girls "*intonjane*", weddings and funerals. In all these occasions the local minister is frequently expected to avail herself or himself and impart a blessing by handling the devotional aspect.

As the minister participates in these, he or she is in touch with various kinship and ethnic groups. This again is a pre-counselling opportunity. Depth and quality of relationship also grows thus increasing confidence, sincerity, real friendship and further trust may be established.

5.3.3 The community of faith

Switzer explores an obvious and vital source which makes the minister unique as a crisis counsellor. This is the availability of the congregation or community of faith. The psychotherapy and psychology disciplines do not have the opportunity to preach from the pulpit on Sunday thus indirectly having an opportunity to invite the congregation for counselling. Hence the distinctiveness of the minister in this field (1974:19).

Having opened the doors of the minister's study, the People of God have a constant support system to fall back to. This system continues to offer strength to the person in distress (1974:19).

A further advantage of the community of faith is the small group arrangement within the congregation. Clinebell comments on the small group paradigm and declares that "small groups are a natural and time-tested methodology in the Church. Church historians have noted that the small group factor has always brought about vitality within the Church." (1984:349). Christianity grew through the spread of a small group from the period of Christ and his disciples. This paradigm is well known for its personal empowerment and transformation. For effective caring ministry small groups are essential (1984:349).

The Methodist Church puts emphasis on what is called "the class system".

In his article entitled "the Methodist Tradition". Dr D.G.L. Cragg (1966), points out that John Wesley, whilst a fellow of Lincoln College in the University of Oxford, became a leader of a small group which was known vicariously as the "Holy Club", the "Bible Moths" and the "Methodists". This small group shared the Word of God, pledged themselves to private devotions and had weekly communion. Methodism sparked out of this small group foundation. Small groups well known as classes still form the basis of Methodism. It is with this class system that people are given opportunity to grow in their spirituality. Mutual accountability is offered to the people so that they can grow in loving and caring for each other. (1996:125).

"The Laws and Disciplines Book of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa" mentions the importance of the class leader who gives pastoral care under the supervision of the minister. The class is not expected to exceed twelve members so that every member can be able to receive personal attention when necessary. (1997:20.3.14).

Paul writes to the Ephesians in the New Testament equipping the ministers as follows :

Ephesians chapter 4 v 11 "And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.

v12 "For the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ.

v13 "till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."
(King James Version).

As the above function gets fulfilled in Church maximum participation in the work of God is encouraged (1984 : 394:5).

The Methodist Discipline further has organisations ("Manyano") for men, women and young people. Again all these have executive committees who are the overseers of the small groups. It is common practise amongst these groups to have workshops in various areas of education.

As has been explored, the small groups phenomenon within the community of faith is an additional resource of strength to the members of the congregation and even to those who are outside the Church. As the well-trained minister offers biblical interpretation and Christian ethics, the families and persons are helped to understand issues that affect their lives and relationships (1974:20).

5.3.4 Rediscovery of the priesthood of believers

Clinebell cites that lay renaissance is based on the New Testament approach of the church concerning the body of Christ, people of God in which every member has a ministerial gift.

The clergy or ministers function as leaders, trainers and equippers and their role is redefined as they empower the laity. Ephesians 4:11-13 states that the minister is to equip God's people. (King James Version) As this function gets fulfilled in church, maximum participation in the work of God is encouraged (1984:394-5).

To expand on the issue of the importance of lay training, I wish to comment about the contribution of the co-ordinator of the "New Land Journey" project within the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, Rev Ross Olivier (1994). In his book "The Next Step in the continuing story of the Church moving to the New Land", Olivier argues that there is need to give instruction on the full meaning of discipleship.

He cites that passages like 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and Romans chapter 12 should be used to remind the congregation that all Christians have been called into discipleship. God gives the Holy Spirit to equip and empower all Christians for service (1994:49).

Olivier further argues that the people of God should be encouraged to realise that no gift is too small and unimportant in God's work. The function of leadership is to provide and encourage an environment in which people can be affirmed in their gifts. To these, skills are added and as the minister equips and empowers God's people, they are helped to grow in their discipleship. (1994:49).

This growth in discipleship and lay training programmes can only happen in the premise of the Church and not in the other secular counselling disciplines. The minister thus continues to be unique in the field of counselling.

5.3.5 **A tilt toward reconciliation**

Wynn in his book: "Family Therapy – Pastoral Ministry" observes that ministers who are involved in family pastoral counselling will always reveal a stronger commitment to reconciliation than their colleagues in therapeutic professions. In the pulpit the central theme of the pastor comes from 2 Corinthians 5 verse 19 "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." (King James Version) Thus, Christian ministers cannot afford to be silent or neutral where marriage shows signs of brokenness. When a split is imminent the minister will always explore the possibility of reconciliation. Husband and wife could however not be pressed into a hopelessly hostile relationship.

However the minister can always attempt to rebuild lost ties. Reconciliation is an integral part of the minister's duties hence his or her uniqueness as a pastoral counsellor (1982:152).

5.3.6 **Ministerial model for counselling**

Wynn further observes that because psychiatrists are physicians their counselling model has been mainly a medical model. This model has apparently been adopted by social workers, marriage counsellors and personnel officers.

These disciplines have mimicked the techniques of examination, diagnosis, prescription and treatment using medical terms. White coats, diagnostic procedures and medical ways of dealing with things have small place in the church (1982:153).

The ministerial model according to Wynn is different from the medical model. It is theologically on Christian convictions : about the value of the people of God reconciled to Him through the work of the Cross at Calvary. The pastoral model of counselling has to reflect the grace of forgiveness grounded in that God has already taken the initiative in the forgiving process. The theological approach which has a concern for the cure of souls with emphasis on healing and wholeness makes the ministerial model distinct. The minister who comes to the therapy situation as a "wounded healer" is willing to suffer with the counselee and becomes unique in his approach. (1982:153-4).

5.3.7 The minister and preparation for marriage

Stewart lists a few advantages of the minister in pastoral counselling concerning marriage. Amongst the advantages the key one is that ministers have always prepared couples for marriage more than social workers or psychotherapists.

Premarital counselling is taken seriously in most denominations. Most of the churches publish and circulate manuals to guide the pastor in this phase of counselling. With the increase in interest in marriage preparation this has increased the opportunities for post marital counselling including marriage enrichment. (1970:17).

Within Xhosa communities oral sources declare that when Banns were pronounced (before this was abolished by the State), the bride and bridegroom in their respective homes spent less time out of doors until the day of the wedding. During the three week period, the elders in both homes were given the task of sitting with the couple in their different homes and show them important issues about what is involved in marriage. These elders on both sides were chosen according to their experiences. (Oral information from interviews). (Above brackets mine)

The above explained traditional practise, the researcher feels, could be re-fashioned by the minister and be included as part of the marriage preparation programme. The minister from his or her theological experience could sift and use what he or she finds useful for the stability of the couple in their new relationship. Members of the congregation are bound to know which elders are experienced in matters concerning marriage relationships in the various ethnic groups.

With so much tendency to be unique on the part of the minister, the first pothole would be that of piousness. It could be great temptation to preach to couple in trouble reflecting a measure of condemnation or judgementalism. As ministries we should not be as Dietrich Bonhoeffer once noted "more religious than God." (1982:155).

5.4 Critical comments on the relevance of the minister in marital counselling

Irrespective of the uniqueness of ministers as therapists and the distinctiveness of the pastoral model Wynn feels that there are potholes of difficulty when dealing with families in distress. (182:154).

Wynn also observes that pastors could be tempted to do their counselling within presumptions of normative Christian family. There may be a perfectionist attitude involved in one way or another. It is important to remember that the Church lived in and through the home for ages before theologians began theorising about family. In other words no marriage relationship will be totally perfect. (1982:160).

Stewart further emphasises that although ministers could be seen to be unique in their counselling profession the opposite could also be true. The ministers could in their prophetic role create a certain moral image and cause congregants to refrain from coming to them for fear of being judged or being "preached at". Also if the ministers are known to be good men or women, the congregants could be hesitant to come and shower the minister with misdeeds or forms of bad behaviour. It is very easy for ministers to enact the role of "father or mother" with the congregants. (1970:19).

Stewart also cites that ministers in this field should take a close look at themselves and in fact their own marriages as well. It is important to examine the motivation for wanting to be involved in this field. The following questions could be a useful guideline to ministers keen on marriage counselling :-

Is it curiosity about other people's sex lives ?

Is it prudish desire to manipulate people ?

Is it wanting to work out one's problems by counselling ?

(1970:20).

It is better not to counsel than to harm others. This is a very important axiom of counselling. It becomes necessary that when ministers are engaged in marriage counselling they should allow themselves to be supervised by other counsellors, ministers or teachers. For the ministry to be competent it needs to rise to this professional level (1970:20).

Both Wynn and Stewarts' convictions bear some weight and are worth consideration. However, the feeling of the writer is that what is important is proper training and supervision. We all are, as Henri Nouwen says in Clinebell "wounded healers". (1984:28). What is important is to help the people of God to find meaning in their lives and develop skills to cope with a crisis. I feel the ministers will always be unique in their pastoral counselling in comparison with their colleagues in the fields of marriage counselling.

5.5 SUMMARY

The discussion in this chapter has focussed on elements which make the minister or clergy rather unique in their contribution in marriage enrichment and marital crisis counselling.

A number of authors have offered convincing reasons why ministers or clergy stand out unique in the midst of their colleagues in fields like psychotherapy, social work and the medical field whilst addressing the same crisis.

Apparently the major cause of the uniqueness in ministers is the fact that they work from the perspective of the church hence terms like "pastoral care" and "pastoral counselling".

The premise of the church further offers the minister precounselling opportunities, small group participation, involvement of laity within the Christian Concept of the priesthood of all believers as well as the availability of the Christian message of reconciliation. Superimposed upon all the above reasons is the symbolic nature of the minister, priest or clergypersons which makes them work from the standpoint of power.

Moreover, most psychiatrists and psychotherapists are medical doctors and this gives them a language which is mainly medical, prescriptive and diagnostic. The pastoral model on the other hand only uses the language of God's grace.

Finally, the chapter offers some critical comments about the relevance of the minister in marital counselling. These include tendencies to be judgemental to counselees. Lack of training and supervision could also be detrimental to the effectiveness of the ministry. The comments are there to help the minister strive for competency in the field of marriage counselling.



CHAPTER 6

6. THE THEOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Having wrestled with issues involved, in marriage which make it necessary and inevitable for a minister or clergyperson to play a vital role in marriage enrichment and pastoral counselling, it seems adequate at this point to explore the theology of Christian marriage.

6.1 Reasons for a theological exploration in marriage

Stewart in his book "The Minister as Marriage Counsellor", observes quite a valid reason for the need to do marriage counselling within a sound theological framework. He stipulates that one's life in society and in history often comes across questions whose answers are disclosed in the Gospel. From one generation to another the interpretation of scripture needs to be continually sought anew in the life of the Church (1970 : 203).

The example which Stewart uses to support the above conviction, is when the Reformers wrote of marriage and the family against a background of breaking from the medieval church and the celibate priesthood. What the Reformers did in this case, was to go back to the truth discovered in the Gospel and seek the intention, rather than the literal world of Scripture. Marriage was then seen by the Reformers to be an order of creation, with celibacy and virginity secondary and not primary in religious life. Vocation or "Call of God" meant to be called as a husband, wife or parent as well as to be called into religious orders (1970 : 203).

Stewart also feels, the minister must seek to correlate the questions raised by society about marriage and the family in the light of fresh understanding of scripture. The minister has to be alert to the new insights and questions which the church, sociologists and psychologists raise in family life seminars and then furnish a relevant theology. This could perhaps make theology cease to be irrelevantly angelic and ivory towered. Instead, theology is made to be in touch with God's people as they seek maturity and fulfilment in their relationships in God's universe (1970 : 204).

West suggests a useful way of making theology cease to be abstract. He postulates that the process of Contextual Bible study does bring about a constructive dialogue between the text and the needs of the people of God within their community or context. Through various modes of reading the text, the minister is able to encourage the ordinary reader to grow in critical reading. As the reader grows in this skill, he or she is made aware about issues which shape us. These elements include race, culture, gender and class. Awareness about these issues make the reader grow in commitment to individual and social transformation. As the reader becomes aware of the patriarchal Graeco – Roman World within which scripture was written, the potential liberatory effect of the inclusive, egalitarian Jesus movement is recognised. Hopes and convictions are subsequently created that even today's male domination should be able to be exploded by Jesus Christ's liberatory theology (1993:12).

Wessels supports the need to make the text speak to the people in their day as he embarks on some exegetical work on Ephesians 5:21-23 (RSV). In his exploration of the text "wives, be subject to your husbands..." He states that this text creates a dilemma in marriage institution.

Reading it as it appears in scripture reflects a mandate to the male dominated society in which the leader lives. On the other hand, when hermeneutical tools are properly used, the roles of husband and wife are defined by the role model of Jesus Christ.

Grammatical and symbolical reasons make verse 21 determine the text. Verse 21 which reads : "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ". (RSV) makes the periscope a Christ event. The Christological motivation changes the content and context of the instruction to both husband and wife. Submission becomes a mutual effect in both sexes (JNL of Theology for SA Vol. 69 pg 67 75).

Skills in exegesis and contextual bible study should encourage scripture which was written in the Graeco-Roman Communities, address Xhosa Communities positively as well. For efficient development in care and helping skills, a good foundation can be laid through this exercise.

6.1.1 **A Theological definition of marriage**

Defining marriage theologically, Stewart declares that "marriage is an interpersonal union between a man and a woman who have made commitments, each to the other, to live together, which are then recognised by the society as lifetime bonds." (1970 : 204).

From the above definition one is brought to a realisation that marriage is apparently both biological and sociological. Subsequently, these concepts will be explored in the theological context of the Old Testament, New Testament, Early Church and the present Church Age.

6.1.2 Old Testament theological understanding of marriage (Biblical references from RSV)

Hastings postulates that marriage from the beginning is outlined in the book of Genesis. Genesis 2 v 24 states that "a man shall leave his father and mother and join himself to his wife, and they become one body."

Right from the beginning the purpose of marriage has been procreation as stated in Genesis 1 v 28. "Be fruitful and multiply." Moreover from the beginning as outlined in the book of Genesis, the unity of man and woman is institutionalised as they become "one flesh", "one body" or "one person." (1973:63).

According to Stewart (1970) marriage begins in the "one-flesh" union which is established in a sexual relationship. Marriage then has its biological roots in our creation as men and women. "One Flesh" or henosis is seen by Derrick Bailey in Stewart

"as the essential informing principle of marriage, as well as the interior ontological aspect of sexual union." Both maleness, the generational sex, and femaleness, the birthing and nurturing sex, are essential to parenthood. However, false henosis does happen in fornication and adultery because in these instances there is no personal communion in marriage between the sexes. The radical character of henosis involves those entering the relationship in making a personal and social commitment to one another. Marriage therefore is founded on biological roles and to an extent the henosis is influenced by social values". (1970 : 204 - 5).

The Old Testament "union" concept of marriage is seen by Hastings as a great challenge to African societies, including Xhosa communities.

His challenge manifests from the point of view that in the aforesaid communities the husband - wife relationship has continued to take second place to that of the man and his lineage group. (1973 : 63-4).

P. Whooley in the book "Church and Marriage in Modern Africa" edited by TA Verryn, in his study of marriage in the Ciskei at "Lumko". observes that for a man to leave his father and mother and become "One flesh" with his wife could not be all that straightforward within Xhosa communities. Around the "union" of the couple there are set relationships, rights, obligations and patterns of behaviour incorporating the "union" into the family and clan system from both sides. The marriage within a Xhosa Community becomes a complex set of relationships. Somehow this shows, that the marriage relationship in these communities has to be seen in the light of scripture as well as social or cultural origins in its existence (1976 : 249).

Expounding further on the importance of the second Chapter of the book of Genesis in the Old Testament as a resource for the foundation of the biological roles in marriage, Walrond - Skinner also observes also that the family unit stands at the climax of the created order. The family unit in which husband and wife are the foundation traditionally, shows that the original form of humanity is not individuals-in-relationships, living together in some kind of family structure. The original form of the human species is co-humanity. Human beings are created to be "one flesh" - both their unity and their individuality being equally necessary and receiving equal emphasis (1988 : 160).

It is apparent from the comments of the various above authors that the Old Testament understanding of marriage mainly emphasises "one-flesh" union of husband and wife.

The end result of this union as has been explained is procreation. However, total "union" in Xhosa family life seems to be a controversial issue. The reason is that of the communal living of these communities. Union involves the family and clan systems of both partners. However, relevant hermetical tools, as West suggests make scripture address these cultural issues to bring about a suitable interpretation.

6.1.3 New Testament Theological understanding of marriage (Biblical Reference from RSV)

Kasper in his book "Theology of Christian Marriage" sees marriage as the "grammar" that God uses to express His love and faithfulness. The covenant between God and humanity as seen by Kasper is realised very clearly in Jesus Christ who is in person God's covenant with human beings. Jesus Christ is the "bridegroom" of God's people of the new covenant (Mark 2 v 19). It is through Him that humanity is invited to share the "wedding feast" in the Kingdom of God (Matt 22 v 2ff).

Jesus' attitude towards marriage is expressed clearly in Mark 10 v 12-9 where in His controversy with the Pharisees Jesus raises marriage to the original order of God's creation as He says "what God has joined together, let no man put asunder." (1980 : 27-8).

Hastings also emphasizes the covenant understanding of marriage as expressed in the New Covenant. The New Testament teaching on marriage stresses reciprocity required within a covenant relationship of human beings between whom there is no difference (Galatians 3 v 28). This was of course done within a society that lacked the spirit of reciprocity.

Whilst contemporary society did not admit that a husband could commit adultery against his wife, the gospel makes no difference between the two. Their rights and obligations are the same (Mark 10 v 1-12). A husband must give his wife her full due, she should also do the same. The wife cannot claim her body as her own, it is her husband's, so is the husband's body his wife's' (1 Cor 7 v 3-4). The thrust therefore within Christian marriage in the New Testament understanding is towards recognising equality in right and duty towards reciprocity and towards mutual service : "Be subject to one another" (Eph 5 v 21) (1973 : 64).

Hastings further observes that Pauline theology on the other hand admits some structural inequality between husband and wife built upon the theology of Christ and the Church (Eph 5 v 23 -4). This of course clearly reflected the standard of contemporary society and the lower status of woman. This then shows that the wives must be subject to their husbands in everything. (Eph 5 v 24) needs to be judged as a temporary conformity to the standards of that age, rather than as part of the enduring gospel of marriage. Jesus Christ in his proclamation of a higher law was making it clear that in the moral field, custom is by no means sufficient justification.

For Christian believers the enduring love and fidelity and covenant of marriage should take profound significance more than contemporary and customary issues (1973 : 65).

Commenting on the issues of structural equality within Xhosa communities, Whooley cites that equality in Xhosa communities has a lot to do with roles. In his focus on Xhosa communities at "Lumko" he is convinced that the well-known statement "African Society knows no equals", (Van Warmel, N.J. Kinship Terminology of S.A. Bantu, 1931 - Govt. Printers, Pretoria), is untrue and a bit exaggerated (1976 : 218).

In Xhosa communities, Whooley states that there are parallel groupings for male and female as well within the groups themselves. Within the female groups, attire plays quite a role to identify the age-group of the woman. A recently married woman is often to this day identified by a head-gear - "*iqhiya*" and long skirts and in the early stages of marriage she wears a shoulder shawl or "*ixakatho*". (1976:267).

Soga further indicates that marriage changes the status of women both socially and legally. She is now more respected and has greater authority and say among women in the affairs of the family. She has some domestic rights and privileges. She has a say in the affairs of the "*umzi*" or household and her word is not ignored. (1947:6)

Marriageable young men according to Soga are always men who have undergone the initiation ceremony (*ukwaluka kwamakhwenkwe*). On initiation the young man acquires the status of man. His eyes are now open and is now accepted as a new (*indoda*) ready for marriage.

Marriage gives the initiated male the full status of a member of the household or *umzi* and even tribe or clan. He now can enter into any contractual obligation and is responsible for his actions (1947:5).

Whooley argues then that although there are age group categories, this could not necessarily mean that women fall into lower levels than the men folk in a parallel grouping. One could rather speak of roles which complement each other when focussing on husband – wife relationships (1976:267).

Contending further with a concept of equality between husband and wife in Xhosa communities, Whooley cites the following questions :

"Is an African woman's lot on marriage desirable, or do they get a fair deal? Is their burden too heavy, especially in view of changed conditions? Since modern girls are educated and have different expectations from life, is this or that form of marriage acceptable to them? These and many other questions must be answered. (1976:282).

Well, to respond to Whooley's questions the researcher feels that for the modern educated Xhosa woman there are different expectations in married life. Educated, urbanised Xhosa women do not necessarily adhere to attire used by married women when they are within the urban area. Most of them do not mind adjusting when they go to their rural homes (interview information). Their expectations for married life can be negotiated with their husbands. This is where transparency with each other becomes vital.

Whooley feels that as Christian's we all need to bring Christian insight to address the situation and comment and contend with the culture in the light of the concerned community's understanding. (1976:282).

Whooley is convinced that asking if there is equality in marriage in most Xhosa communities would be like asking if there is equality between doctors, plumbers or teachers in African Society. If one is speaking of the roles within the family, the analogy of the doctor and the nurse is very close indeed. A society has a right to be understood in terms of its own concepts which comprise an intelligible whole. (1976 : 282).

Comparing the convictions of the various authors referred to above, it seems evident that the New Testaments understanding towards equality, mutual service and reciprocity in marriage, does not become irrelevant to most communities including Xhosa communities. What is important is not to ignore cultural preferences but to allow them to have a dialogue with scripture.

6.1.4 **Early Church Theological Understanding of Marriage**

Kasper; in his book "Theology of Christian Marriage" begins to deal with the issue of marriage in the early church at various by consulting Thomas Aquinas's great synthesis. Thomas Aquinas attempted to look at various human values including those of marriage. In his attempt Thomas Aquinas's aim was to integrate marriage into a total Christian understanding of humanity and the world. (1980 : 7).

Further observations from Kasper indicates that in response to the question as to whether marriage is natural, Thomas Aquinas had quite a number of comments to make with regard to marriage as a whole. According to Kasper, Thomas Aquinas maintained that human nature is not unchangeable.

His conclusion is that marriage can only exist in historical forms and it is the nature of marriage therefore to be historical. "The task of the Christian revelation in history," according to Aquinas, "is to help people who are inclined to error and are weakened by sin, to know the meaning of human nature at a deeper level and make it a practical reality". (1980:8)

The ability to gain this knowledge comes with going to Augustines' doctrine of the three goods or values (bona) of marriage :descendants, mutual love and faithfulness, and the sacramental sign. Aquinas used these values to express the human dignity of marriage (1980 : 8).

Unfolding Aquinas's observation, Kasper also declares that human sexuality was placed at the service of humankind within marriage for procreation. Sexuality was incorporated into personal love and self-surrender by the mutual love and faithfulness of the two spouses, guaranteeing that a woman was not valued not simply as a sexual being but as a partner. Human faithfulness manifests God's faithfulness to the covenant in Jesus Christ. It was incorporated into humanity's orientation towards the creator as the ultimate ground and objective of its existence by the sacramental sign of marriage. This teaching by Thomas Aquinas has a deep influence on the Western culture and continued through the Middle Ages. (1980 : 7-8).

Just to comment on the teaching of Thomas Aquinas. One notes that Thomas Aquinas tends to put the two spouses on the same level of equality. He puts the woman on a valuable position of partnership with the husband for the purpose of love for each other and consequently procreation. (own feeling).

6.1.5 The development of marriage as a sacrament in the tradition of the church

According to Kasper (1980) it was not until the 12th Century that marriage was declared to be a sacrament. Before this, there had been long debates within the Gregorian Reform of the Church and marriage was seen as a secular reality. The conscious appreciation of marriage as a sacrament presupposed its desacralisation and its recognition as a reality of creation. In each sacrament an element of the world becomes an effective sign of salvation (water, bread, wine). Among baptised Christians marriage becomes a reality of creation and a sacrament of Christ. (1980 : 32).

The connection between the order of creation and the order of redemption in Christian marriage, Kasper declares, is of importance in our assessment of the controversy between Catholicism and Protestantism about the sacramental nature of marriage. Luther saw marriage as "a worldly affair". In other words he was stressing that marriage is of the order of creation more than of redemption. This controversy was quite pronounced when marriages between Catholics and Protestants started increasing.

Many people felt and still feel that calling marriage a sacrament is giving it a false value. While this poses as a problem it also creates a problem when marriage is given a lower value (1980 : 33-4).

Taking further the issue of the sacramentality of marriage Kasper highlights that the canonists of the Middle Ages felt that the fragmentation of human existence caused by sin was partially healed as the integration of sex and eroticism was addressed within the religious structure. The beginning of a new creation was believed to be made by the sacrament of marriage.

Marriage and family life was in a special sense the Church in miniature. Vatican II spoke of the family as the "domestic church". Married couples seem to have a special charisma i.e. a distinctive call, gift and form of service, within the Church (1 Corinth 7 v 14 RSV). The inner connection between marriage and the Church is most clearly expressed in the solemnisation of a marriage by the Priest or Minister (1980 : 37-8).

Hastings, further observes that what made marriage sacramental was its indissolubility. This was inherited from the symbolism of the union of Christ and the Church which is an indissoluble reality (1973 : 85).

However, by the sixteenth century Hastings declares that all the Reformers rejected the absolute indissolubility of Christian marriage on the basis of Matthew 19 v 9 where Christ states that "whoever divorces his wife except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery, and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery." (1980 : 83-4).

Hasting's final conviction is that what seems important is not to deny the sacramentality and indissolubility of marriage, but to understand these concepts because they are packed with meaning. He claims that many Christian marriages do become absolutely indissoluble and are indeed reflective sacraments of the indissoluble union and love of Christ and His church. This comes about as a moral fact through the unbreakable loving fidelity with God's grace at work binding the husband and wife and making them truly accept their marital vocation in the spirit of Christ. (1973 : 86-7).

The different denominations in the present day hold different views about the issues of sacramentality and indissolubility of marriage. Whilst the Roman Catholic Church is more inclined to adhere to these concepts, the Protestant churches are much more liberal over these issues.

The Methodist Church Service book includes in its ceremony for marriage a service specifically suitable for blessing a marriage previously solemnised. This entails that indissolubility within the Methodist church is not strictly adhered to.

6.1.6 Understanding marriage as an eschatological sign

In almost all communities weddings have a festive mood. This mood is actually pronounced in African communities and is prolonged for quite a number of days with a lot of eating and drinking and the exchange of gifts.

Whooley observes in a Xhosa community in "Lumko" in the Ciskei that Christians do not get married in Church without the traditional rituals and feasts. A Christian couple is kept apart till they have slaughtered the "*Umtshato*" ox at the groom's stead. (1976 : 306).

Kasper interprets the festive mood in the wedding as a symbol of the fulfilment of human hopes that will be present at the end of time (Matthew 22 v 1- 14). Marriage, he says seems to belong to the form of a transient world. In giving marriage an eschatological relativisation, it is given a new content and meaning. The eschatological glorification of God is the final humanisation of humanity. This eschatological reservation regarding marriage in fact seems to bind both partners to God and prevents them becoming enslaved to each other (1980 : 43).

6.1.7 **The present state of Christian Marriage in African communities (Xhosa communities included)**

Hastings observes that the general picture of marriage today is that it has tensions, challenges and however some opportunities. It is clear that marriage in Church has become more acceptable to African communities more than civil marriages. Where customary marriage is celebrated it has always been preceded or followed by the solemnisation of the marriage in church (1973 : 71).

Father Dwane, an Anglican theologian in the edited book "Church and Marriage in Modern Africa" declares that one of the most controversial issues concerning marriage within the Church in African communities has been the question of polygamy. In the past the tendency of the Church has been to dismiss polygamy as a pagan custom which deserves condemnation. In the 19th Century Canon Galloway apparently wrote to say "polygamy works nothing but evil and inability to press forward on the road of progress and elevation of character". Mission authorities like Arthur Phillips have unanimously condemned polygamy as being fundamentally inconsistent with the teachings of Christianity. This has since persisted from around the 19th century into the 20th Century (1976 : 224).

If marriage is to sustain its permanence, peace and mutual understanding, it could progress better if it is kept within monogamous boundaries. Polygamous marriages, the writer imagines, should bring further jealousies, envies, quarrels and endless tensions. However, formal education and economic pressures have also contributed in eliminating polygamy in Xhosa communities.

6.2 Marital breakdown and remarriage

The researcher feels it could be useful and informative as marriage counsellor not to ignore what the teaching of the Church is concerning marital breakdowns and remarriage. Now and again ministers are approached to perform remarriages.

An article by Hugh Montefiore in the book "Marriage, Divorce and the Church" mentions that according to Jewish law in the Old Testament the Deuteronomic legislation allowed the husband to give his wife a bill of dismissal for divorce to take effect. The woman was further protected in that if her husband had committed an offence against her before he married her, he could not divorce her and such a marriage was indissoluble (Deut 22 13 ff, 28 ff). (RSV).

According to Deut 22.22 (RSV Bible), the penalty for adultery is death when the parties are found (*in flagrante delicto*) in the very act. According to Jewish law only a wife could commit adultery and a man could be found guilty if he committed an offence with a married woman (1971 : 80).

Montefiore further explains that it is evident that in the time of Jesus Christ, Christ did not focus on the possibility of divorce. In Mark 10:2-12 where the Pharisees ask him about the issue of divorce he responds by redirecting them to the Mosaic law which permitted divorce, by means of the get or bill of divorce. Moreover Christ stressed that God's intention was for marriage to be permanent. "What God has joined together, let no man (sic) put asunder" Mark 10 v A RSV (1971 : 93).

Hastings suggests the following points could be taken by the Church upon the issue of divorce and remarriage.

- (a) "Christians must always enter marriage with the intention of a lifelong union, not to do so, would indeed nullify the marriage."
- (b) "There is no single ground whatsoever justifying the breaking of such a union, if the union be otherwise maintainable. One or the other party can never rightly decide to set about "dissolving" it. Adultery is not adequate grounds for divorce. The proper Christian approach is always of forgiveness, forbearance and renewed love."
- (c) "The duty of the Church is to do all it can to help Christians understand the lifelong character of marriage and to provide pastoral service to assist marriages which are at risk. "
- (d) "If a marriage has broken down, the Church's first duty is to see whether the bond can be restored, especially if there are children. However it has also to recognise that separation can be a lesser evil than some others, even for the children marital stability is not the only quality of marriage, and there are limits beyond which living together can no longer be urged."
- (e) "If a marriage has so completely broken down that there is no hope left for its restoration, procedures, civil and religious can be followed for bringing it to a legal end."

- (f) "Following such procedures, it should be open to a church member, who has seriously pondered Christian teaching and his or her past experience, and is undertaking all the responsibilities surviving from the first marriage, to enter upon a new one which can be blessed by the Church."

- (g) "The public blessing on a second marriage should be given only when the local Christian community is satisfied that this is right." (1973 : 87 - 8).

6.3 SUMMARY

This chapter has wrestled with the theological understanding of Christian marriage in the Old Testament, New Testament and the Early Church. The various sources of reference stipulate that peoples' lives in Society and in history often come across questions which only the Gospel clearly explain. It becomes imperative, therefore to interpret scripture anew to address personal and social needs of the people of God.

The Old Testament understanding of marriage is based on the biological roots of creation in which men and women come into "one-flesh" union or henosis for the purpose of procreation. Whilst the partners enter the relationship in their individuality; interdependence and intimacy through their togetherness cause them to establish a family unit.

In the New Testament the marriage relationship is portrayed as a covenant relationship. Within this kind of relationship, reciprocity and mutual service is stressed.

The structural lack of inequality reflected in Pauline theology through the fundamental marriage text in Eph 5 v 23-24 (RSV) manifests the standards of that age in the Graeco-Roman World. The Christological approach makes the same text stress mutual love and submission as skills in contextual bible study and exegesis are applied by the theologian or minister.

The teaching of a scholastic theologian, Thomas Aquinas has been cited in the early church understanding of marriage. Thomas Aquinas' teaching apparently had a deep influence on Western Culture right through the Middle Ages. In this teaching the woman has been put in a valuable position of partnership with the spouse for the sole purpose of intimacy and love and subsequently procreation.

The chapter also offers a brief theological approach to divorce and remarriage. The authors quoted stipulate some useful guidelines to address these issues. However, the various denominations should be able to make decisions according to their doctrine and teachings.

The theological framework explored in this chapter should be able to offer a good foundation in marriage counselling. At the same time humanity is made aware that marriage is of God.



CHAPTER 7

7. PRESENTATION OF MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT AND COUNSELLING PROGRAMME TO UMTATA METHODIST CHURCH

7.1 Setting up the marriage enrichment programme

The researcher gave a detailed explanation about the need for a marriage enrichment and counselling programme. This was offered to the staff members in the first meeting in 1998 at the Umtata Methodist Church. To motivate the need for the programme, the writer made the members aware of the increase in breakdown in many marriages within the Church, drastic changes in sex roles due to education and the need to promote lay involvement to produce an effective care-giving ministry.

7.1.2 Selection and Recruitment

The lay team has since been recruited from the Ncambeland-Urban Society where the writer is based. The reason for this is that amongst other programmes this particular society is engaged in a Bible Study programme and the congregants show signs of spiritual deepening which other societies seem to lack. Moreover it is a society which is made up of mature people, professional people as well as people who have an evidence of a sound relationship with Jesus Christ, the Saviour.

Further criteria to select the team comes from Clinebell (1984). A letter was written to men and women who seem to enjoy caring for others, individuals who display personal warmth, love of people, dynamic faith, capacity for empathetic understanding and evidence of growth from own painful experiences and loss (1984:403)

The lay team recruited consists of the following people : Mr and Mrs Dladla who are between the age of 60 and 70 years. The couple has been chosen because of their longstanding commitment in the Methodist Church as class leaders.

Mr Dladla has also been a Xhosa language lecturer at Fort Hare University and hopefully could be a valuable resource for Xhosa marriage values and customs. His wife Mrs Dladla is a housewife whose daughters have gone through trying times in their own marriage relationships.

Mrs Soni is a 65 year old retired nurse whose late husband was a minister in the Methodist Church. Her contributions may be profound from her experiences as a minister's wife as well as being a nurse in large institutions.

Mr and Mrs Muso are also in the leadership at Ncambedlema-Urban Society. Mr Muso is a recovering alcoholic and has a strong commitment to the Church. The couple have kept together despite their plights and difficulties and have retired from professional work. They are always available in Bible Study Sessions.

Mrs Zihle is a pharmacist who has had problems with her husband. Mrs Zihle has forever welcomed him back and has always managed to survive stressful times in her marriage relationship.

Mrs Vezi was a second wife in her first marriage to her late husband and has grown well out of this experience.

Mr & Mrs Mehlo are both middle aged and are in the leadership of the church. Their marriage seems to be on the average, calm.

Mr & Mrs Goniwe are also in the leadership in the church and have survived stressful periods in their financial position.

On invitation to the meeting they all responded positively. Having declared the purpose of the invitation this was welcomed with great excitement. Most of the team members felt such an effort was long overdue in our community. Having been allowed to contribute their views about how the training would be conducted, it was finalised that the team would have three retreat weekends leaving on Friday for a centre at the coast.

It was agreed that the team would come back home on Sunday evening. One member suggested that in our initial session we could perhaps include a psychologist ; her neighbour as a co-trainer. Everybody welcomed this and it was useful to note that the group was willing and aware of the need for referral resources. Mrs Msengi the psychologist had no problems spending the session with us.

The lay out of the programme was decided upon and was offered in three sessions i.e. in March, April and in May 1998.

7.1.3 Lay-Out

7.1.3.1 Training Programme I - March (20 – 21st)

The first session after supper on Friday was conducted by Mrs Msengi. She focused on the importance of lay helping skills development in our communities because of lack of professional people. Her contribution was on the importance of addressing our own needs as "wounded healers," the importance of knowing each other and building up trust within the team.

She also emphasised that she was always available as a resource person when things do not seem to improve. She suggested that for any given situation there is no need to offer counselling for more than five times to an individual or couple. Her contribution was quite useful. She concluded her presentation by stressing the need for confidentiality within counselling.

On Saturday after breakfast, the writer took over. Our ice breaking involved formal, introductions each member, not just giving us his / her name but giving us his / her ethnic group name. This is very important within Black Culture because the surname may be different and yet the two people could share the same ethnic group name. Furthermore this ethnic consciousness is important because by custom if a couple has the same ethnic group surname or "*isiduko*" they may not marry.

If they do this it is seen as incest. There are also ethnic expectations which if manifested could also help to stabilise the marriage relationship and help preserve the cultural identity of the sibling.

When people know their ethnic background there is room for growth in their support system. After this session when the team had made valuable discoveries about their backgrounds the group was asked to split into pairs. Husbands and wives pairing together and reflecting on their understanding of the marriage institution using the Christian resource i.e. Bible. In this session rapport amongst the participants was established.

7.1.3.2 Reflection on Marriage Institution

Very interesting contributions were shared. A lot of time was spent on Genesis 2 v 24 "Therefore a man should leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and they shall become one flesh".

The Old Testament understanding of the marriage institution was discussed at length. Scriptures like Ephesians 5 v 22 - 33, Malachi 2 v 16 were discussed intensely and at the end it was decided that as a foundation in our helping skills the Bible would be used as a spiritual resource. All questions about implications involved in a marriage relationship were answered and discussed at length and a simple explanation about family systems theory was given.

This spiritual exercise led the group into a time of prayer and meditation. Thereafter this led to a period of opening up to each other and praying for each other. This was important because having given each person an opportunity to share his / her own need, a healing process would commence in their lives as well. To enable healing, we must be vulnerable enough to face and accept our own continuing need for healing.

7.1.3.3 Developing Listening Skills

The Saturday afternoon shifted focus to skills building. After a brief comment on the centrality of listening skills in all caring for people who are in pain, the word empathy was examined very closely. It is important to understand this because the context of healing is "empathy". A prepared hand-out was given to the participants and as we went along questions were answered or addressed.

Marriage enrichment programme

Hand-out 1 on listening skills

Empathetic Listening :

Clinebell emphasises the need to grow in empathetic listening. This involves active listening demanding an emotional investment in the other and relative openness to one's own feelings.

Counsellors who cannot feel their own feelings (particularly anger and grief) because of inner blocks are seriously handicapped. They are limited in their ability to experience "resonance", the responsive chord between two persons that makes possible relating in depth, including therapeutic relating (1984:78).

Listening Skills

Collins in his book on Christian Counselling suggests that it is important to set aside our own conflicts and become aware of the seekers or counsellees needs and communicate both understanding and willingness to help. The following are important as we develop our listening skills. (1988:42)

1. **Attending** : The helper or counsellor must try and give individual attention to the counsellee. This is done through
 - (a) **Eye Contact** : Looking without staring as a way to convey concern and understanding.
 - (b) **Posture** : This should be relaxed rather than tense and should involve leaning toward the counsellee.
 - (c) **Gestures** : That involve natural but not excessive and distracting. The counsellor should be courteous, kind and strongly motivated to understand. It is important to recognise that our fatigue, impatience, preoccupation with own needs, daydreaming and restlessness can prevent one from giving careful attention to the counsellee.

2. Listening : This involves more than giving passive or half-hearted notice to the words that come from another person. Effective listening is an active process and involves the following :

- "Being able to set aside our own conflicts, biases and preoccupation's so one can concentrate on what the counsellee is communicating."
- "Avoiding subtle verbal or non-verbal expressions of disapproval or judgement about what is being said, even when the content is offensive."
- "Using both eyes and ears to detect messages that come from the tone of voice, posture, facial expressions and other non-verbal clues."
- "Hearing not only what the counsellee says, but noticing what gets left out."
- "Waiting through period of silence or tears as the counsellee summons enough courage to share something painful or pauses to collect his / her thoughts and regain composure."
- "Looking at the counsellee as he or she speaks but without either staring or letting your eyes wander around the room."

- "Realising that one can accept the counsellee even though one may not condone his or her actions, values, or beliefs. Jesus accepted the woman caught in the act of adultery even though he did not approve of her behaviour. It could be good to imagine ones' self in the counsellee's position and attempt to see things from his or her point of view." (1988:42-3).

3. **Responding** : The counsellor listens and responds through specific verbal responses. (Jesus was a good listener he was responding to two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Luke chapter 24 v 13-25 RSV)

Responding is a skill by which the counsellor gently directs the conversation. "What happened next ?" "Tell me what you mean by ?" Are brief questions that can lead the discussion in directions that will give useful information.

4. **Reflecting** : Is a way that a counsellor knows that "we are with them" or going along with them as they journey through their experiences e.g. "I bet that was frustrating". This is done without repeating the words of the person. The counsellor may summarise the words of the person. The counsellor may also summarise feelings "that must have hurt you !".
5. **Questioning** : If done skilfully, can bring forth a great deal of useful information.

he best questions are those that require a short answer e.g. "Tell me about your marriage" or "what sort of things are making you unhappy?" Too much questioning stifles communication. "Why", is often avoided because why seems to sound judgmental (1988:42-3).

An example given in a counselling session when a dominant feeling is listened for.

Esther : This divorce has hit me very hard. We had our differences, he threatened to divorce me but when it happened I could not believe it. I felt so empty as if something left me.

Listener : You felt crushed and empty - something important in your life left you !

Esther : Yes, I miss my children (voice saddens - tears come from eyes). I cannot imagine how my boys manage without me.

It is useful to listen for the dominant feeling (loneliness, guilt) and then address it e.g. i.e. Esther expressed loneliness one could ask about her own sisters and brothers, or her spiritual involvement in her local community.

BIBLIOGRAPHY : Collins, GR. 1988 Christian counselling : a comprehensive guide Dallas. Texas :

The practical part before the end of the session involved breaking up into pairs again and just learning to actively listen to each other. This ended the Training Programme No. 1. Most participants expressed that they enjoyed having to listen intently to someone else and said they would continue the exercise with their spouses and children.

In this programme, briefing on the marriage institution, symptom development, communication levels, listening skills and awareness of the Bible as a valuable spiritual resource for helping skills was established. We all went home rejoicing as something had been achieved.

7.1.3.4 Training Programme II - April (24 - 25th)

Programme II just after Easter was embarked on.

On Friday evening all the members were present and in fact there was an additional member Mrs Mato who is a recovering alcoholic and who was interested to be with the group. We could not refuse her, so she made our twelfth member. Her own marriage was in crisis due to her problem with alcohol. She is a University graduate, and a very capable person.

The evening was spent evaluating our March experiences. The members shared how they continued with listening skills even more within their class meetings as well as in their homes. We spent an hour on Bible sharing and prayer and for a while ministered to each other in pairs.

The following session involved training the lay-team on the use of the "A-B-C-D Method" of Crisis helping. According to Clinebell and Switzer this method was developed by psychiatrist Warren Jones for training the lay staff of a community crisis centre in Pasadena, California (1984:205). The researcher adapted the model and added some insights from the Xhosa communities so as to make it relevant to them. The presentation was offered to the team in a mini-lecture form.

Each stage of this paradigm was thoroughly discussed giving enough time for questions and suggestions.

7.3.1.5 The A-B-C-D Training Method (as was adapted to the lay team)

a) Achieving a relationship (of trust and caring)

The place or interview room needs to be private, comfortable and relaxed. If possible there should be no disturbances from children, telephones or cell phones. So as to promote an empathetic relationship, two chairs spaced at a reasonable distance from each other make a suitable arrangement.

Within Xhosa Communities offering a cup of tea or something to drink is almost like a ritual or custom. Over the cup of tea enough time is given to listen to the general health of the immediate and wider families. In the conversation there is normally comments about those who are sick, those who have passed away and sometimes even the state of the weather.

A sensitive care-giver as he or she maintains eye-contact can detect elements of depression, restlessness or pain as the welfare of the family is shared.

After the cup of tea, the care-giver should inquire about the purpose of the visit whilst listening non-judgementally to the in-put. The counsellor needs to offer authentic empathetic responses making sure that he or she understands when the individual is saying. It is important at this stage to give enough time to establish what the crisis is, how it started, when it started, how it developed and how the person feels at the moment.

The first session is usually accompanied with catharsis. Clinebell declares that catharsis is a kind of emotional ventilation in which the thoughts and attitudes which surround the problem are expressed. These can range from fear, anger, bitterness or guilt (1984:84). In most cases these expressions are accompanied with tears in which case the care-giver should always keep a box of tissues at hand and offer it when needed.

The care-giver should then assure the person of the willingness to work with him or her to improve the situation. The individual should be encouraged to draw on his or her own resources so as to be able to cope with the crisis and should be made aware of the fact that he or she will grow from the experience. Confidentiality should also be ascertained as most people are often concerned about the "leakage" of their problems.

The group members were paired again and given an opportunity to practise means and ways of precipitating a good relationship with each other.

b) **Boil down the problem (to its major parts)**

This stage focuses on the present situation, what is threatening the individual right now. The counsellor needs to help the person identify and isolate the factors which make him or her unhappy. At the same time it is necessary to identify what precipitates the sequence of events.

The care-giver needs to help the person separate the problems that he or she can tackle from those he or she cannot cope with. In the process the individual can keep on moving to past experiences perhaps even childhood experiences.

The past often influences the present. The care-giver should however try and help the person to focus on the present experience and focus on how he or she feels at the present moment.

An example of an individual who came into the researchers study recently was given. She phoned to make an appointment to see the writer.

As Lindiwe came in, the researcher noticed that her right leg was shorter than the other one and she wore a raised shoe to compensate for the shorter leg. Having gone through Stage A inquiring about her health and that of the immediate family, the purpose of Lindiwe's visit was established. The purpose, Lindiwe indicated, was to get a copy of her Baptismal certificate in preparation for a forthcoming Confirmation service in the Anglican Church. Lindiwe had married her husband who is Anglican ten years ago. By custom in Xhosa communities the wife has to change her denomination to that of her husband and somehow she had delayed Confirmation.

On mentioning her husband in the conversation, Lindiwe became silent for a while and then started weeping. Through empathetic listening, Lindiwe was able to share that her marriage was unhappy. Her husband physically abused her despite her physical disability, he is an alcoholic although he owns a taxi, he hardly contributed financially to the running of the home.

Inquiring if Lindiwe had gone for assistance anywhere, her response was that her mother-in-law had told her that her husband had taken after his father and the only remedy in the situation was to join "women's manyano" and pray. Her mother-in-law had survived a similar situation through prayer.

At this juncture Lindiwe was commended for her silent suffering and prayer as a coping skill. It became evident that Lindiwe's main problem was marital discord which was precipitated by alcohol abuse. Lindiwe's purpose of visit or problem was thus not just to get a Baptismal Certificate but distress in her relationship. She was not aware that she needed to have the problem addressed through counselling. Lindiwe has since been encouraged to come with her husband to a marriage enrichment programme.

Through empathetic listening the client was helped to focus on her major problem.

c) **Challenge the individual to take constructive action.**

It was explained to the team that this stage was to enable the client to look for new coping methods.

Having established the problems this was the stage to explore availability of all resources available ; family, friends, prayer meetings, "Manyano" church groups, Bible study, local support groups e.g. alcoholic anonymous, lawyers, doctors, Lifeline Agencies and others. In other words the care-giver and client together do what Switzer refers to as "making an inventory of problem-solving resources (1992:79). Sometimes the client fails to identify these. Just like Lindiwe her only resources were prayer and of course her mother-in-law. She was not aware of any other resource.

The client has to be assured of the availability of the care-giver at all times and should be encouraged to take initiatives towards improving the situation. For instance, Lindiwe's initiative towards an attempt to improve her situation was to go to her husband and encourage him to come with her to a marriage enrichment programme. It is only the client that can take this initiative, not the care giver.

Improving communication skills would perhaps even help Lindiwe's husband's alcoholic problem. The "culture of silence" often used by most Xhosa women as a way of survival would be replaced as Lindiwe and her husband availed themselves to the marriage enrichment programme.

d) **Developing ongoing growth – an action plan**

The forth and final step involves challenging and confronting the client to be involved in a conflict resolution plan, taking it step by step.

It is important to identify inner strengths which the person may have lost sight of e.g. strength of faith, assertiveness or having a good self-esteem. Lindiwe could easily have a low self-esteem because of her physical disability. The writer needed to constantly remind her that every person is unique and often our weaknesses are our strengths and challenge us not to give up in life.

At this stage, the team was introduced to the Intentional Relationship Method as one of the most useful communication models that can be used to decrease frustration and conflict.

This method has been adapted and interpreted to suit Xhosa communities, the paradigm was taken from Clinebell's book on "Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counselling" According to Clinebell what marriage conflict entails is nothing else other than a conflict of two need systems (1984:257).

The team members were divided into two's and three's. Two's working in dyads and three's working in triads. The third person in a triad took notes.

7.1.3.6 **Going through the intentional relationship method**

STEP ONE

This involves identifying and affirming each other's strengths. This step increases the couples' awareness of assets and strengths in the marriage relationship. The strengths are written down on a piece of paper and kept safely so that they can always be referred to in the future.

The affirmation can be written down in the following manner.
Examples :

"I appreciate in you that you married me despite my physical disability"

"I appreciate in you that you care for me and our children by providing good food and doing our laundry"

"I appreciate in you that you do not go to bed angry after an argument with me."

"I appreciate your love for my parents".

Mr and Mrs Muso are part of the team. Mr Muso is a recovering alcoholic and has a strong commitment to our church. The writer worked as a scribe for them in this conflict-resolution model.

Mr Muso's list was as follows:

"I am thankful for your support in my weakness with alcohol."

"I appreciate your persistence that I should go to church every Sunday"

"I even appreciate that you did not take me to Alcoholic Anonymous"

It was touching to be involved with a couple where a husband openly praised his wife for her tolerance of weakness with alcohol. Within Xhosa communities a man's excessive drinking habit is not socially seen as peculiar or abnormal. The communication exercise however showed that Mr Muso was aware of the need to adjust his drinking practices.

STEP TWO

This step involved identifying unmet or impartially met needs. This can also be fashioned thus :-

"I could be happy if you came back home early from work so that the children could have time with you."

"I am not happy about the friends you associate with."

"I would be happy if you could sit down with me every month end so that we could do our budget together".

This step gives an opportunity to ventilate those unmet needs which could be the precipitation of the marriage conflict. Lack of transparency is often the cause of discord in many marriages. In this step this is addressed as the couples note down the unmet needs.

STEP THREE

At this stage the plan of action is continued. The couples need to work within a time schedule and sit down to negotiate and prioritise each other's unmet needs. Together they are made to identify the needs they each need to start addressing.

STEP FOUR

The last stage in this conflict-resolution still is the implementation, affirming each other's strengths and actually entering into a covenant renewal in marriage.

7.1.3.7 Xhosa traditional practices (Saturday 25 April)

This part of the programme involved sharing about Xhosa traditional practices. Mr Dladla, the former Xhosa language lecturer took over this session and gave a useful well-prepared input. The issue Mr Dladla contended with were "*lobolo*" (Bride wealth), the process of "*ukuyala*" (counselling by elders) and "*ukuhlonipha*" (respect or reverence).

Mr Dladla's input – summarised

7.1.3.7.1 The "Lobolo" system

- "*Lobolo*" has not yet lost its meaning and function even in urban areas. What has changed is that in the urban areas it is delivered in money form rather than live-stock because the municipality does not allow kraals in the villages.
- The "*lobolo*" is expected to be delivered before the marriage ceremony.
- The "*lobolo*" is believed to create the new status of the married women and plays a social and psychological role in the marriage of an African person.
- The "*lobolo*" was always given for the sustenance of the wife and her children. In other words the woman was to be well-cared for in her new home and should not go hungry.
- Some convictions stipulate that the "*lobolo*" is a form of compensation to the bride's father for the loss of a daughter. Others say that "*lobolo*" is produced for the severing of ties with the wife's family and the creation of a new relationship with the family of the husband.
- The main reason why value has always been attached to "*lobolo*" is that a girl whose "*lobolo*" has been paid seems to have a stable marriage and is well-respected in the community.

- It has also been noted that the "*lobolo*" binds the two families and make them blood relatives – what is called "*ukuzalana*" "*ngobukhozi*".
- Discussions from the team about the function and meaning of "*lobolo*" were mainly towards the fact that it is a valid custom which seems to maintain stability in a marriage relationship. The two families who were brought together offered a valuable support-system to the couple and their children.

7.1.3.7.2 "*Ukuyala*" – counselling by elders

Further by Mr Dladla input was on the importance of "*ukuyala*". Following the wedding ceremony most Xhosa homesteads had a ceremony called "*ukutyis' amasi*". In this ceremony the bride is formally introduced to the family of the bride groom. In the olden days the couple only had sexual intercourse after this ceremony. It was only at this ceremony that the couple was declared husband and wife. (oral source).

The relevant elders were chosen by both parties to "*yala*" or counsel the couple at the "*inkundla*" or centre of the household yard (courtyard). This courtyard was where everyone gathered for festival occasions. Here, customs were discussed, a girl knelt at the "*inkundla*" for blessings, the bride must walk across the "*inkundla*" when she arrives in the new home and the "*abakhwetha*" gather in the *inkundla* to receive "*iziyalo*" and gifts from the well-wishers. "*Inkundla*" is a place of family blessings. (oral source)

The elders from the bridegroom's side spend time making him aware that he now is a man and was expected to care for his wife, children, parents from both sides and relatives from both sides. He had to give names to his children especially the sons. Physical abuse was not be tolerated from him. He was expected to have children and take care of them as well as offer them education in all ways of life.

"*Ukuyala*" also comes from the elders of the bride's side. The bride is told squarely that she must conduct herself with dignity, preserve peace and harmony in the "*umzi*" (household) as well as between the "*umzi*" and other "*imizi*" in the community. Her duties are domestic, social and marital. Maritally she was to care for her husband, children and parents-in-law especially her mother-in-law and relatives. Only her husband had rights to her body. Her social responsibilities involved availing herself with other women in occasions like funerals weddings and "*imigidi*".

7.1.3.7.3. "**Ukuhlonipha**" or respect issues

According to Mr Dladla a woman has a solemn duty to "*hlonipha*" or give reverence to her husband's male relatives. In many households the newly wedded woman may not shake hands with her father-in-law and his male next-of-kin or immediate kinsmen. Neither is the newly wed woman expected to mention the names of the kinsmen or any word that has a similar root word.

The man is also expected to "*hlonipha*" his wife's parents and take care of them. The man is not expected to talk to his in-laws without a coat on or in a pair of shorts.

He has to be dressed decently. The woman's attire is also changed. She has to wear longer shirts, have head-covering "*iqhiya*" and a scarf around her hips "*ixakatho*".

After Mr Dladla's input valuable discussions came forth from the team. It was agreed that Xhosa communities had valuable values that could still be used to enrich marriage relationships. All that was necessary was to adapt them according to different homes and Christian values. Most of the "*ukuhlonipha*" practices were done to encourage good moral behaviour.

Having shared this reality with the team they felt that the team should invite elders from the rural churches on the day of the first workshop so that they can share about expectations for newly-weds in the various clan-groups to bring back traditional awareness to our people.

7.2 **Summary**

This chapter has attempted to put together a three session training programme in basic helping skills with particular focus on the marriage relationship. This has involved the recruitment of the lay team, brief reflection on the understanding of the marriage as an institution, development of listening and communication skills and brainstorming on Xhosa marriage traditional practices. The programme is to be presented by the local Methodist Church to its Congregants and hopefully that session should help people or couples who need further counselling to come forth. The programme will lead us into the following chapter.



CHAPTER 8

8. PREMARITAL COUNSELLING

8.1 Reasons for offering premarital guidance

Having gone through some theoretical and practical issues concerning marriages and the problems involved, the researcher saw it necessary to spend time looking into material that would be useful in preparing young couples for marriage. Before addressing their marital problems one needed to make them familiar with expectations in marriage.

Various authors share strong convictions for the need to offer premarital guidance to couples. Collins cites that the church has a tendency to leave premarital counselling solely to the hands of the minister. The relatives and many church members are usually professional people who are satisfied to remain uninvolved observers. These people come to the ceremony with gifts and cards just hoping that the marriage will last. They need to be involved with educating the couple with the minister before the ceremony and offer some input to the couple (1988:392).

According to Collin's, premarital guidance is primarily a preventative measure. Some happy couples acknowledge their gratefulness to good preparation for their marriage. On the other hand, some unhappy couples who missed out on premarital counselling may have instead spent their time and money on luxurious wedding ceremonies only to be followed by years of misery and little happiness (1988:393).

Stewart also points out that premarital counselling is not actually counselling as such, it is education about marriage. The couple comes to the minister focussing on an event in their lives, not a problem. The couple may have collected some understanding about marriage on their own from various sources including their parents. However, they remain ignorant about many issues which face their relationship. For instance, the daughter of a doctor may have some understanding about the sexual organs which she might have seen in her father's books on Obstetrics, but the "doctor" father may have been reluctant to teach his daughter about their reproductive function. The daughter needs someone to explore and explain the diagrams to her in preparation for marriage (1970:52-3).

The above convictions make it imperative to offer educative counselling to couples in preparation for marriage. Mr Dladla, the Xhosa language lecturer who is also a member of the lay-team, pointed out that some form of traditional premarital education used to be done by Xhosa elders in the olden days. Before the Proclamation of Banns in church was abolished by the State, the families elders in the houses of both the bride and bridegroom spent time talking to the couple about marriage in their respective homes. (oral source).

Whilst guidelines were to be taken from modern counselling literature, the lay-team was to include relevant traditional issues in the education of couples in marriage. For practical work, professional people within the church were invited to give some input. These people included a doctor, an accountant, a lawyer and the minister. (researcher)

Robert and Judson Cornwall's Foundations for marriage were used as a guideline to a premarital course. The course was adapted to suite Xhosa tradition.

8.2 Foundations for premarital guidance

8.2.1 Foundation one

8.2.1.1 Open communication

Mr and Mrs Muso who are part of the lay-team handled this foundation. In open communication, lines of communication are encouraged. The couple is helped to understand the importance of learning to listen and talk to each other. The value of spontaneous honest and sensitive communication is facilitated.

In this exercise Mr and Mrs Muso played the participant – observer role. Another couple was chosen within the team to role-play or "act-out" the position of a young couple preparing for marriage. The minister supervised the exercise.

The couple, Sisa and Sindie belong to Mr and Mrs Muso's class in the local Methodist Church respectively. They have made an appointment with Mr and Mrs Muso in preparation for their marriage. They are now at Mr and Mrs Muso's residence.

For reference, the writer has called Mr Muso (1), Mrs Muso (2), Sisa (3), Sindie (4).

1. Mr Muso : Good evening Sisa, Good evening Sindie, please come in and sit down.
2. Mrs Muso : Good evening Mr and Mrs Muso, thank you for letting us come in.
1. Mr Muso : How are you both, you look very happy.
2. Mrs Muso : Sindie and I are quite well, Mrs Muso yes we are so happy.

1. Mr Muso : Well, share the excitement with us.
2. Mrs Muso : Well, we have made the appointment to come and share with you our great news.
1. Mr Muso : Please share the news with us (leaning forward).
2. Mrs Muso : Let us hear the news over a cup of tea or coffee. What would you like to have? (Mrs Muso goes to the kitchen).
3. Sisa : Ask Sindie, I seem to be doing the talking all the time (Sisa's voice loses a bit of the excitement)
4. Sindie : (keeping her eyes down) We shall drink whatever you offer us, thank you. (Sindie is not as talkative as Sisa)
1. Mr Muso : Sindie, is there anything worrying you, you do not talk much.
4. Sindie : No Mr Muso, by custom the man has to do the talking, my mother told me.
2. Mrs Muso : (coming with tea). Gone are those days, Sindie, you have to look up and be involved in the conversation, otherwise people will think you are not well or perhaps you are not happy to marry Sisa.
3. Sisa : I am happy you are making Sindie aware of that Mrs Muso, Sindie is too quiet for my liking
4. Sindie : I am afraid to talk too much, people will say I am too forward.
1. Mr Muso : You are not being forward when you talk and participate in a dialogue, Sindie, you have to learn to express your feelings.
4. Sindie : Well, there is nothing to talk about.

2. Mrs Muso : Come on Sindie, talk about Sisa, talk about how smart he looks, talk about the beautiful flowers outside. There is so much to talk about and raise you head up and walk tall, Sindie. Tell us the news.
3. Sisa : What must we do Mr and Mrs Muso? We need a way forward; Sindie and I are getting married, how can we prepare for the great day. How can we see the minister? What should we do?
1. Mr Muso : Congratulations both of you ! You did a right thing by coming to your class leaders first. We need to pray with you so that God blesses your marriage. It is no problem to see the minister. What is important now for you, I feel at this stage is to come and see us again and we continue encouraging you to talk to each other.
3. Sisa : Thank you so much Mr Muso. I have been worried about Sindie's silence. I wish she could come out of her "shell" for once.
4. Sindie : (looking up) We girls have been told by our mothers not to talk much especially when we are in the company of adults (Sindie's voice is now a bit raised)
2. Mrs Muso : Sindie, we admire your respect but learn to take your place as a woman. You are also created in the image of God so that you can complement your partner.
4. Sindie : Well, I want to learn more about all that Mrs Muso in our next appointment. I feel more relaxed from what you and Mr Muso have said to us today.

3. Sisa : There is so much we need to learn before we take our marriage vows.

1. Mr Muso : Well, we are going to prepare all that for you with our minister. By the time the great day comes you will be clear about many things.

3.4. Sindie &

Sisa : Thank you for having us, it is time to go home. Thank you for the tea.

1.2 Mr &

Mrs Muso : You are welcome. Come and see us again for a chat after church on Sunday and we can continue to talk about things.

2. Mrs Muso : Sindie, keep in mind the things we talked about. Talk and listen to Sisa and get used to looking him straight in the eye! (The couple depart laughing happily).

4. Sindie : I shall try my best, Mrs Muso. Goodnight.

Sisa and Sindie were made aware of the importance of interacting with each other.

8.2.2 Foundation two

8.2.2.1 Basic spiritual unity (references from RSV)

The same couple was taken as sample : Sindie and Sisa. They had two sessions with Mr and Mrs Muso on encouragement about open communication and transparency. Mr and Mrs Muso sent the couple to the minister for further management.

The minister's main focus (the researcher) at this appointment was to look at Christian Values and principles which are relevant to marriage. The minister conducted the interview with the sample couple in another session in the presence of the rest of the team.

The session involved asking the couple questions about their commitment in their relationship with Jesus Christ, how involved they were in the local church : were they part of the "*manyano*" groups? Were they part of a bible study group? What efforts did they do to build their faith on their own? One of the members took notes of the responses so that the couples' responses should be kept on record.

The rest of this session involved the discussion of the biblical view of marriage : its origins (Genesis 2:18-24), its purposes (such as companionships, sexual union, child rearing), its permanence in (Matt 19:3-9) and God's relationship with the church in (Ephesians 5:23-24).

Without making this a lecture, the observations, questions and discomforts of the couple were encouraged (references from RSV Bible).

Within Xhosa communities, it is common that menfolk delay in committing themselves to the local church. Premarital counselling would help alleviate this one-sidedness. This should come with sensitising the man to the importance of mutual belief in Christian faith. Soga postulates that the man in the Xhosa household is the head of the "*umzi*" or household. The future and welfare of his "*umzi*" depends upon the way he conducts himself and the affairs of the "*umzi*". (1947:106). This should include the spiritual welfare as well.

Finally, spiritual unity requires that the partners need to be both confirmed before they enter matrimony. This is vital in the Methodist Church.

8.2.3 Foundation three

8.2.3.1 Family background interaction

Robert and Judson Cornwall observe that in modern communities it is common courtship assertion to say "I am marrying you, not your family." Each person is a product of a specific family unit. The genetic background, family background, culture, customs and habit patterns are ingrained in us before birth. This understanding needs to be clarified to the couple before marriage. (1997:80).

This conviction is strengthened by Mbithi when he indicates that husband and wife are the smallest nucleus of the human family. In African societies the family circle extends to cover not only parents and children, but grandparents and a host of other relatives.

This family togetherness though pressurised by factors like urbanisation, economic considerations and educational differences, it does not seem to phase out in African tradition (1973:107).

This session was conducted by Mr and Mrs Dladla. Being aware of the convictions of the above writers Mr and Mrs Dladla interviewed the couple as follows :-

Mr Dladla : Sisa and Sindie- we are all so happy that you are getting married. Sisa, could you tell us what your clan surname is ?

Sisa : I am a "Dlamini"

Mr Dladla : What about you Sindie?

Sindie : I belong to the "Maduna" clan

Mr Dladla " Tell us more about your grandparents. What clan names do they have? Take your time?

Sindie and Sisa shared all they knew about their backgrounds. After the interview, Mr Dladla was satisfied that the couple were not related to each other.

Mr Dladla indicated that in Xhosa tradition the couple had to make sure that they do not share the same "isiduko" (clan name). In urban areas it was possible not to do a thorough investigation about this. Couples who unknowingly married each other and later discovered that they were related to each other, were taken as people committing incest. In Xhosa tradition this is unacceptable.

The couple was encouraged to share what they felt was expected of them in their respective new homes.

Sisa made it clear the Sindie, had to get used to adapting her attire when they visited his parents. In other words, Sindie could not wear pants or go bare-headed to his parents' home after they got married. The norms at his home were that a married woman had to dress like a "*mtshakazi*". The stipulations were to come from her mother-in-law. Sisa was also expected to send some mediators "*oonozakuzaku*" to Sindie's home and pay "*ilobolo*".

The details of the "*lobolo*" would be offered to the mediators. This involved money, some cattle, goats and sheep. The process involved exchange of gifts between the two families. The mediators had to complete the "*lobolo*" transaction before the marriage ceremony.

8.2.4 Foundation four

8.2.4.1 Sexual compatibility

An article by Jurg Willi in the Family Process Journal discusses love as the basis for marriage.

The writer stresses that the difference between singles and married couples is with regard to being in love. With a married couple, the couple is in love "with the greatest love of one's life". The person's individualistic world of the partner loosens up into a new intense relatedness with the partner. The partners are constantly engaged in voiced and voiceless dialogue which later fuses them into a stable feeling of belonging to each other. (1997: Vol 36 :181).

It is important for the couple to understand what it involves to be in love in marriage before the couple is helped to look at their love in relation to sexual life. Spending time on looking into the meaning of love makes the couple relaxed and uninhibited to continue the conversation on sex.

However, the minister feeling not all that comfortable to talk about sex, handed over this session to a medical doctor who is a Methodist Church member. The doctor helped answer questions about male and female reproductive organs, their function, use of contraceptives and the threat of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV and AIDS. The doctor made use of diagrams to give clarity on these issues.

The elderly members of the lay-team briefly pointed out the advantages of refraining from sexual relations before marriage as was done in the older days. They indicated that this was a form of traditional contraception. During these days, children born before marriage were seen to be illegitimate children. The couple preparing for marriage in these modern times needed to use their discretion to detect what was suitable for them. However, some traditional practices would be worth implementing especially abstaining from sex before marriage.

8.2.5 Foundation five

8.2.5.1 Financial responsibility

An accountant was invited to come and address the couple on financial responsibility. Sindie and Sisa continued to be the couple preparing for marriage.

The accountant explained that the changed roles of husband and wife demand a close concentration on monetary affairs.

The husband is no longer the sole bread-winner in the family. Husband and wife earn the family income.

The accountant stressed that husband and wife must learn to budget and be accountable. As the couple later give pocket money to their children, they were to educate them in faithful stewardship to funds. While openness on finance is good, the couple does however need individual privacy about use of money in what they are entitled to.

When dealing with financial institutions in the process of buying a car or entering mortgage bonds, the couple needs to do these together.

Some lay team members indicated that in Xhosa tradition, one of the most important duties of the husband was to provide the household necessities for his wife and children. The argument was that, this happened because the husband then was the sole breadwinner and the wife stayed at home to look after the children. Again the change in roles and economic differences has made the woman able to provide the needs of the home together with her husband.

8.2.6 Foundation six

8.2.6.1 Family responsibility

The minister gave a brief input on the responsibility of husband and wife when the children came round.

Traditionally the tendency was for the husband to focus on the boys, with the wife paying more attention to the girls.

Nowadays the responsibility of education, discipline and general welfare of the children is their parents' mutual responsibility.

However, the initiation ceremony of the boys still remains mainly in the hands of the menfolk. The wife plays a remote role in such traditional celebrations. Her involvement falls mainly within the area of preparation for the feast and buying the relevant attire for the initiate or "*umkhwetha*."

8.3 **Marriage contracts**

The understanding of legal implications involving marriages in South Africa is often lacking in our communities. What happens is that couples get to know what their marriage contracts entail, only when it is time to part ways through divorce or separation.

A lawyer helped the writer to prepare a hand-out on marriage contracts using Hablo's book on South African Law of Husband and Wife as reference. The presentation has been prepared in both English and Xhosa so that everybody can easily grasp the contents.

8.3.1 The Hand-Out

The Methodist Church of Southern Africa Umtata-Ncambedlana Circuit

Marriage Contracts

Summarised and simplified from Marriage Contract Chapters in Hahlo's book (1985) on South African Law of Husband and Wife as well as Volume I of "The Law of Marriage" by Sinclair and Heaton.

8.3.1 Marriage in Community of Property

If the couple marries without interfering with the "Standard Marital Property System" they will be married in Community of Property. They will not sign a contract, but will appear before the marriage officer who will perform the marriage ceremony and give them a marriage certificate. They are then married in Community of Property and share a joint estate. The share of profit and loss is the same. When the marriage ends everything is divided equally between them.

A spouse cannot without the written consent of the other, mortgage or confer any immovable property forming part of the joint estate. Further more a spouse cannot cede, pledge any stock, shares, insurance policies, fixed deposits or any investments in a financial institution without the written consent of the other spouse. Neither spouse can bind himself or herself as surety without written consent from the other spouse. In other words this is co-ownership of all assets and liabilities.

Advantages of Marriage in Community of Property

- ◆ Responsibility of both parties is strengthened.
- ◆ Prosperities are mutually shared.

Disadvantages of Marriage in Community of Property

- ◆ Spouses cannot deal freely with their assets because permission should be attained all the time.
- ◆ Permission has to be in writing and sometimes spouses are not in the same vicinity during transactions.
- ◆ Risky when car accident happens due to negligence – loss of entire estate leaves both parties penniless. Insurance companies are not prepared to compensate where negligence has been the cause of the car accident.

8.3.1.2 Marriage Out of Community / Ante Nuptial Contract

The spouses retain ownership and control over those assets which they have and those which they will acquire. There is no community of profit and loss and therefore no co-ownership. Sometimes a third person who could be the bride's father becomes part of the contract.

The Matrimonial Act of 1984 brought changes to the Ante nuptial Contract. It is no longer necessary to exclude the husband's marital power by Ante nuptial Contract as the case needs to be. Irrespective of whether the marriage is in or out of Community of Property there is no marital power in marriage contracted after 1 November 1984, the date of the Commencement of the Matrimonial Property Act.

Advantages of Marriage Out of Community Of Property / Ante Nuptial

- ◆ During the marriage the parties administer their own affairs.
- ◆ There is no need for consent when doing any transaction.
- ◆ Neither is answerable to the other for what they do with their belongings.
- ◆ A financial calamity which befalls the one will not automatically cause bankruptcy.
- ◆ This contract is ideal or normally relevant for mature couples who have already acquired a measurable estate and might have been widowed.

Disadvantages of Marriage Out of Community of Property / Ante Nuptial

- ◆ Not suitable for a situation where other partner is not working.
- ◆ While the one partner is amassing assets and the other is contributing at home by doing non-monetary contributions, in the event of divorce the latter is at a disadvantage.

8.3.1.3 Ante Nuptial Contract Including Accrual System

The above mentioned system provides for a sharing of the amount by which the estate grew during the course of the marriage. The Law Commission states that the fundamental idea is that a spouse contributes to the growth of the other spouses' estate. In dissolution of marriage, sharing of assets and liabilities is executed. The Accrual System applies to every Ante Nuptial Marriage Contract, if the marriage falls after 1 November 1984 unless the Ante Nuptial Contract specifically excludes Accrual System.

Advantages of Ante Nuptial Contract Including Accrual System

- ♦ during the marriage the parties administer their own affairs.
- ♦ No consent from the other is necessary in the administration of the affairs.
- ♦ Provision by the act provides that a spouse can be prevented from managing his or her estate in such a way as to seriously prejudice the other spouses' right to share in accrual.
- ♦ On divorce the spouse whose estate shares the small accrual or no accrual at all, is given or claim to share in the accrual of the spouse whose estate shares greater income.
- ♦ It is usual for people entering an Ante Nuptial Contract with accrual to value their estates at the beginning of the marriage and even to exclude certain assets completely from the accrual.

Disadvantages

- ♦ When spouses value their assets at the beginning of the marriage they usually include items like furniture and cars. These depreciate with time and use.
- ♦ The system requires that the value of the accrued be assessed as though the assets maintain their value.
- ♦ This is often in appropriate when a man or woman senses the imminent breakdown of the marriage, she or he may try and hide certain assets by transferring them into the name of a trust or another person or close relative.
- ♦ Retirement annuities and pension schemes need to be taken into account when calculating the wealth.

Customary Marriages

South African law recognises only those marriages, which have been formalised in terms of the Marriage Act. There is a limited acceptance of customary marriages contracted by black South Africans.

In other respects customary unions and those entered into in terms of certain religious rules are not afforded the status of marriages. The religious rules regulate the proprietary arrangements between the people e.g. indigenous African communities, Islam, Hindu and others. The division of assets depends on these community rules.

Under customary law in Xhosa tradition, women maintained the status of a minor. According to a Journal of Family Law : G30 in terms of section II 3 (b) of the Black Administration Act (sic) a wife in a customary marriage was deemed to be under the guardianship of her husband.

The wife did not share in the ownership of the property of her house. However, since 2nd December 1988 Black South Africans enter the South African common law marriages, that is, ante nuptial or in community of property.

6.4 Summary

This chapter has dealt with premarital counselling. The reasons for the need for education in marriage have been discussed in some detail.

Robert and Judson Cornwall's foundations for marriage have been used as a guide to a premarital course which has allowed a dialogue with the present Xhosa traditional expectations.

These foundations include open communication, basic spiritual unity, family back ground interaction, sexual compatibility, financial responsibility and family responsibility.

For the various foundations a sample couple has role-played the position of preparation for marriage. Relevant professional people were engaged to come and offer input to the sessions through discussions and diagrams in the presence of the lay-team and the writer who took the role of the minister as participant – observer. The invited resource people came from the fields of medicine, law and finance. Xhosa traditional concepts were allowed to be in dialogue with the input offered.

A prepared hand-out on Marriage contracts has been discussed and clarified. The hand-out was prepared in English and Xhosa by the minister who was assisted by a lawyer. The information in this chapter should be able to address unanswered questions which often bother couples who are preparing to enter into matrimony. It is the writer's conviction that education in marriage is important for good relationships in the lives of our people.

A couples' relationship form is included as an appendix in this dissertation.



CHAPTER 9

9. THE ACTUAL PRESENTATION OF THE WORKSHOP ON MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT TO THE URBANISED XHOSA CONGREGANTS AT UMTATA METHODIST CHURCH

9.1 Introduction

Six months were spent on intensive training of the lay-team on various issues pertaining to marriage enrichment in the Methodist at Umtata. The theoretical and practical preparation involved bringing about understanding in behavioural patterns in marriage, learning about Christian values in marriage, training in communication skills, education in premarital guidance and awareness about useful Xhosa traditional practices in marriage. This input has been dealt with in some detail in chapters 5 and 6. As much as possible the modern pastoral counselling skills were adapted to suite Xhosa tradition.

The lay team in conjunction with the minister (writer) decided to offer the workshop to one society at a time, rather than the whole circuit. Umtata circuit consists of forty five societies which according to circuit statistics is close to one thousand members (Ref. Methodist Minutes of Conference). It would be thus impossible to work with such large groups. Working with smaller groups would be able to allow to offer some depth and personal warmth. Herman Green, Jr in Herbert Otto, also suggests that working with smaller groups allows the minister involved to be a useful participant – observer readily available to all the couples in the workshop (1976:85).

9.2 **Workshop rehearsal**

The team members felt that there was a need for a rehearsal. This would make the members familiar with the role they would play in the workshop. This would also alleviate nervousness and promote confidence. Decisions were reached as to who to be the workshop facilitator, who to lead the opening devotions, welcome the participants and the rest of the responsibilities.

The following announcement was subsequently prepared and included in the Notice Bulletin in the Urban Society. The workshop was scheduled for the 17th July 1999. For three Sundays the notice was read before the date.

(The announcement design has been adapted to the one in Clinebel's book on "Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counselling" (1984:251).

A similar copy in vernacular language was also designed so as to be read and bring everybody to a clear understanding.

A format of the programme for the day was also designed and appears on the page following the announcement.

The notice was framed as follows :

**THE METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA
UMTATA CIRCUIT
NCAMBEDLANA – URBAN SOCIETY**

9.3 An invitation to couples

Our church is sponsoring a marriage enrichment programme under the theme “Improving Marriages”.

A team of twelve people has undergone a basic training programme on enrichment, helping and coping skills in marriage. The group has been trained to help in promoting communication skills, as much as possible help resolve conflict and help nurture the marriage relationship in love within the foundations of scripture. Some enlightenment on adequate Xhosa traditional practices will also be discussed in the workshop.

All couples : planning to be married, newly-wed, long married, are welcome. The group will be led by Rev. A.L. Sigaba and her husband.

Tea and a light snack for lunch will be served.

DATE : 17 July 1999

VENUE : Ncambedlana Urban Society Church Hall

TIME : 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Please bring Bible, notebook and pen.

**THE METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA
 UMTATA CIRCUIT
 NCAMBEDLANA – URBAN SOCIETY**

9.4 Marriage enrichment programme – 17 July 1999

10 - 10.20 a.m.	Tea time
10.25 – 10.45 a.m.	Praise and worship / opening devotions
10.45 – 11 a.m.	"Knowing me – knowing you."
11.00 – 12.00 a.m.	Basic input on "Family Systems Theory" scriptural references on marriage.
12.05 – 12 45 a.m.	Practical session Divide into three groups : premarital, newly wed, and long married. Give relevant scripture references to different groups. Team members to facilitate discussions and framing of report back, encouraging maximum participation within groups
12.45 – 1.00 p.m.	Report back
1 p.m.	Lunchtime
1.30 – 2 p.m.	Input on valuable Xhosa traditional practices – Mr Dladla (lay team member).
2p.m. – 2.20 p.m.	Response from workshop participants
2.25 – 3.00 p.m.	Input on communication – Rev. AL Sigaba
3.00 p.m.	Teatime

3.15 – 4.00 p.m.	Communication exercises Lay team facilitate couples in listening and conflict resolution skills
4.00 – 4.30 pm.	Evaluation and follow up plan
4.30 p.m. – 5p.m.	Closing celebrations

9.5 **Summary of Workshop sessions**

9.5.1 **Constituency of workshop participants**

The attendance response to the first workshop on marriage enrichment was unexpectedly positive and good. Although the announcement had been offered to one society, some members came from other societies. One couple came from another denomination.

Ten couples came seeking enrichment in premarital guidance, fourteen couples were newly married and twenty couples participated in the initial workshop. In all, forty four couples participated in the initial workshop.

9.5.2 **Opening devotions (All biblical references are from RSV Bible)**

One couple of the twelve lay-team members acted as facilitator and time keeper of the workshop. The researcher led in the opening devotions. Time was spent on praise and worship. Scripture reading and interpretation was taken from Psalm 127. The verse used for meditation was verse one of the Psalm. "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain who built it."

9.5.3 "Knowing me – Knowing you" session

Another couple from the lay-team led this session. The couple introduced themselves giving the names they preferred to be called by. The participants gave their names, surnames and their clan names or "*isiduko*". This is important in Xhosa tradition because if people belong to the same clan, the possibility is that their values and customs could be similar. This encourages the formation of support systems amongst the group of people.

To encourage further rapport, a game was introduced by the leading couple. The game was about each member sharing how he or she felt when he or she became a man or a woman.

This was done by uttering one short sentence.

Examples :

- When I became a man I felt great
- When I became a woman I felt content.
- When I became a man I felt good.
- When I became a woman I felt fulfilled.

This was done so as to ease tension while providing some humour and being at the same time in touch with one's own feelings.

9.5.4 Theoretical input on marriage

The writer presented this session. Although the writer's spouse is not a co-leader he was willing to offer a hand with the projector and just be present for moral support and when necessary share some experiences.

As a foundation for this section on theoretical input emphasis was put on a quotation from Goldenberg and Goldenberg :-

“Nothing and nobody exists in isolation, the world is made up of systems within systems” (1980 : 84)

The participants were encouraged to identify the various systems that exist in the universe. Responses included telephone system, electronic system, digestive system, central nervous system and others. The group was made aware about the importance of balance between the components within a system. This provides equilibrium and homeostasis. The family was then presented to the group as a system composed of members that need to strive to interact so as to have a comfortable, stable relationship.

The participants were told that the only way of maintaining equilibrium was through developing open lines of communication and being transparent to each other. Having offered the above input, participants were encouraged to ask questions.

9.5.5 Contextual Bible Study (All references from RSV Bible)

The group was divided into its three groups, that is : premarital, newly wed and long married.

The three groups were given different scriptures to discuss and later report back on what the group felt the periscope was saying to them. The premarital group was given 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 to discuss and contend with the meaning of love.

The newly wedded couples were to wrestle with Genesis 2 :18-24 and reflect on what the bible says about origins of marriage. The older couples were given Matthew 19:3-9 and discussed the biblical view of permanence in marriage.

The lay-team members all got involved in facilitating the groups.

9.5.6 **Report back**

The premarital group reported back first on 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. The main concern with the issue of love and sex before marriage was discussed fully. The older couples responded to the young couples by telling them that in Xhosa tradition the couples should not indulge in sexual relations before marriage. Useful contributions were offered to the young couples about the usefulness of using sexual abstinence as a natural way of contraception during pregnancy and breastfeeding. The advise from the older couples was that abstinence should be learnt during the premarital period. This would also help couples in their moral conduct especially at this time, when sexually transmitted diseases are so rife.

The newly-wed couples gave their report back on Genesis 2 :18-24. The main issue in the response was the issue of “cleaving”. Most participants agreed that “cleaving” was a difficult issue in Xhosa communities. The reason, most participants felt, was the fact that union in Xhosa tradition is not only between the two individuals, it is between two families, the family of the husband and the family of the wife.

Women remarked about the strong “cleaving” that seems to exist between men and their families especially with their mothers. The older married participants came up with useful hints on how to adapt to situations where “fusion” was pronounced in the family.

The older couples shared about the concept of permanence in marriage as reflected in Matthew 19: 3-9. Most of the participants agreed that permanence in marriage came with good support systems at home, commitment in Christian principles and good communication.

It was a worthwhile exercise and many couples were made aware that God is in the midst of marriage relationships.

9.5.7 Input on Xhosa traditional practices

Mr Dladla, the Xhosa language lecturer and member of the lay-team presented this input.

Mr Dladla discussed the issues which he handled in Chapters 4 to 6 of this thesis. These include input on “lobolo”, counselling by elders at the “*ukutyisa amasi*” ceremony after the wedding, where the bride is formally introduced to the bridegroom's family. In his input Mr Dladla also talked about “*ukuhlonipha*” practices pertaining to women and men.

Responses to the importance of “*lobola*” where money is stipulated by the bride's father instead of the old way of sending cattle, sheep or goats were quite challenging.

The young men felt that due to economic pressures "*lobola*" had to be abolished or readjusted. Mr Dladla's response was that "*lobola*" was here to stay in Xhosa culture and adjustment or abolition would make marriage lose its value in Xhosa tradition.

The participants spent good time responding to "*ukuhlonipha*" or respect practices. The feeling was that "*ukuhlonipha*" has to be adhered to by both husband and wife. The husband needs to respect or "*hlonipha*" the family of the bride just as much as the bride does to the bridegrooms family. "*Ukuyala*" or counselling by the elders was seen as a useful procedure which needed to be revived in Xhosa tradition. With modern ways of living, children are quickly losing their respect of the elderly people "*Ukuyala*" has to happen in all rites of passage in the lives of the people so as to restore good values in the society.

9.5.8 Input on communication

This session was presented by the researcher. A basic explanation about what communication is and its importance in marriage was given. It was stressed that communication was the most important tool to keep the marriage relationship healthy. Communication exercises need to be learnt and practised by couples as ways of addressing and resolving conflict.

9.5.9 Communication exercise

Again the lay team divided the participants into groups with each couple doing communication exercises together.

The skill practise initially focussed on practising listening skills with the team members demonstrating responsive listening, taking turns to respond to each other's real feelings.

The hall was filled with buzzing sounds as couples communicated with each other. The couples were encouraged to practise responsive listening daily.

To help couples learnt o deal with conflict constructively, the team members presented the ABCD model as has been laid out in chapter 4 of this thesis and as offered by Clinebell (1984:205).

The method was explained as follows : A-Achieving a relationship : this has been learnt in responsive listening.

B-Boiling down the problem into major parts. The couple had to think of a common problem which usually led them to conflict e.g. coming home of the husband late, impulse buying of the wife, conflict about spanking the child in child-upbringing. The leaders gave every day husband – wife examples of conflicts to the couples encouraging them to think of their own. The couple had to explore the problem and come up with solutions.

C-Cope and Challenge to form a constructive action plan looking as resistances but supporting them and encouraging consulting support systems e.g. prayer resource, family support system – elders and others.

D-Developing on-going plan – meeting others with same problem. Keeping on going back to B and C. Affirming efforts to solve the problem.

The last exercise offered was the do-it-yourself enrichment tool "the International Relationship Method" also in chapter 4 of the thesis and explored by Clinebell (1984: 255).

The lay team members encouraged the couples to write on pieces of paper. Step one involved identifying and writing down strengths of the partner. Again the care-givers went round giving examples e.g. Wife could say to husband : "I am happy with the way you provide for us as family materially." This is jotted down as a strength for the husband. Each partner does the exercise.

Step two : identifying and writing down areas that need growth e.g. husband could say to wife "I am not happy with your frequent visits to your home".

This exercise was to be continued by the participants at home. The partners were encouraged to keep their scripts and keep on visiting them to jot down any apparent growth on either steps. They were also to use their newly learnt conflict resolution ABCD skill to deal with step two.

9.6 **Workshop Evaluation**

For follow-up purposes the following evaluation form was given out to the participants and they were encouraged to leave these at the workshop or if not to be left at the minister's study in the following week.

**METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA
UMTATA-NCAMBEDLANA CIRCUIT
MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT PROGRAMME
EVALUATION FORM**

Please give us feedback about the workshop as you experienced it, so that the programme can be more effective next time.

("1" is the lowest rating "5" is the highest).

1. Theoretical input – Family systems theory
(not relevant) 1 2 3 4 5 (very relevant)
Comments.....
Could add.....

2. Theoretical input – Scriptural references
(not useful) 1 2 3 4 5 (very useful)
Comments.....

3. Input on Xhosa traditional practices
(not enriching) 1 2 3 4 5 (very enriching)
Comments.....
Could add.....

4. Input – Communication and exercises

(not useful) 1 2 3 4 5 (very useful)

Comments.....

5. Lay team how useful ?

(not helpful) 1 2 3 4 5 (very helpful)

6. Any other suggestions or comments ?

.....
.....

(your name optional)

Please leave form when filled at Rev Sigaba's study as soon as you can.

Thank you for your co-operation.

9.6.1 **Comments on evaluation forms**

Most of the evaluation forms have since been returned. On the whole the comments have been encouraging the major comments were the following :-

- The workshop needs the whole week-end : beginning on a Friday evening, to end on Sunday afternoon.
- Useful work was done within a short space of time.
- The workshop was educative but it was difficult to keep pace with the information offered.

- Time for questions and responses was too short.
- We need reading material to read on our own.
- It would be useful if the workshop was done away from Umtata, in a camping site or by the sea, this would bring about better concentration.
- It is good to be reminded that God is in the midst of the marriage relationship.
- Cultural values are very useful, we need to hear more in our context.
- Bring in the elders from the rural areas.
- We need name-tags in our next workshop.
- We want to keep our friendship
- We could wind off with Holy Communion and renew our vows.

The comments are very positive. They reflect a group which is willing to learn and keep on seeing their marriage relationships grow or improve.

9.7 **Closing celebrations**

Thanksgiving was offered to close off the workshop. An overall appreciation was expressed as the group was made aware of the fact that God was the "Builder" of marriages and thus cares about marriages. The couples were encouraged to enrich their spiritual lives by reading adequate books and develop support groups by visiting each other as couples sharing their joys and pains together.

9.8 Follow up arrangements

Couples who felt they needed further attention were encouraged to leave their contact addresses and telephone numbers with the minister. These were to be sorted out according to their needs and continuity in care-giving was to be sustained as much as possible.

9.9 Summary

The minister and lay team found it necessary to meet in the following week so as to reflect on the experience in the workshop as well as to see what adjustments could be done in preparation for the following workshop.

9.9.1 Lay team comments

- The team expressed the anxiety they had felt before the day of the workshop but did admit that the role play preparatory rehearsal which had been done had somehow helped them to feel at ease.
- Most of the members felt that with the response in attendance at society level it would have been impossible to have the workshop on a circuit level.
- Most members felt it was fulfilling to be given an opportunity to offer support and care to the People of God. In the process they themselves felt a measure of growth from the experience.

- The general feeling was that the communication skills learnt, helped the members themselves to cope with their own problems.
- In fact the skills learnt could be useful not only in marriage but in situation like work, amongst the church leadership itself. E.g. class leaders, stewards, executive committees and even in conflicts that often exist between siblings.
- As most of the members are pensioners their hands were now full again and thus they felt useful again within their community. There was a restoration of self-worth.
- The members who were willing to be part of the team despite what they themselves had gone through in their own marriages felt that the experience of helping others make their own marriages better- indeed made them actually feel what it means to be what Henri Nouwen calls a "wounded healer... within one's own community." (1984":418). If anything they themselves felt a certain amount of release as they shared with other people. Focussing on other people's hurts did away with self-pity. This assured them that themselves were in the process of healing.
- A consensus was reached that there had to be a refresher course at the beginning of each year and perhaps other conflict resolution skills could be included subject to the discretion of the supervising minister.
- Some members admitted that here and there they felt they were making mistakes or felt that their performance in some areas was not adequate, so they needed an on-going training.

9.9.2 **The minister's comments**

Initially the minister affirmed the lay team for the dedication and zeal for the work done in helping God's people cope with their struggles in matrimony. It was put across to the team that mistakes were bound to be there and these should be part of training and the old saying about learning from mistakes was equally applicable.

From the evaluation forms a suggestion about having a whole weekend workshop was agreed upon for the future. The workshop would be planned in such a way that it would perhaps end with a communion service as closing celebration.

As a whole all the team members were prepared to continue in the ongoing caring programme under the supervision of the minister into the 21st century. In response to this the minister encouraged the members to write brief reports when visited by people who needed help.

This would help the members in accountability and would not only be useful for supervisory purposes but would work out as protection strategy for the members and the minister as well.

9.9.3 **Concluding remarks**

This dissertation has sought to focus specifically on the development of skills in enriching marriage relationships.

This has involved helping young couples intending to marry to prepare adequately for their new relationship as well as assist the newly or longer married couples improve their communication skills. Amongst the various causes of marriage breakdowns, poor communication is apparently the main one. Hence the emphasis on re-establishing communication lines. The programme also involved learning to detect relationships that need further professional attention.

The dissertation also wishes to encourage the community of faith to reinforce their relationships through scriptural foundations. By allowing scripture to be in dialogue with their every day life, they could increase their sustenance resources. As they learn to share together they are also in the process of creating a valid support system in their community. Group work would hopefully help individuals identify with those who are going through or have gone through similar struggles and in a way be empowered in means and ways of survival.

Furthermore, the programme attempted to be conscious of valuable Xhosa traditional concepts that could help the couples enrich their relationships as well as widen their horizon for more support systems as they re-establish their links with the wider family, clan or ethnic group. This hopefully could help them maintain their identity within the mixed semi-urban environment.

Most conservative African Church Congregations have laid an emphasis on the various "manyano" groupings. It would seem lay training is necessary to empower the people in leadership committees so that they grow in their care-giving skills.

The "Journey to the New Land" project (1990:1) within the Methodist Church which encourages the formation of "task groups" seems to be an ideal launching pad for this kind of venture. As the clergy and laity work together there is also an amount of gap bridging between the two. All the same the need for constant supervision cannot be over emphasised.

Most of the clergy within the Methodist church have to care for very big circuits. It becomes impossible for them to give everybody individual attention. With the existence of a lay care giving group, it could be possible to offer more counselling opportunities to the community of faith.

Finally it is the researchers belief that when an ordained minister and laity commit themselves to share and address the struggles of the people, they are expressing God' love. At this point and time one could say humanity is hungry and yearning to see God's love in their midst : for it was, is and will always be through God's love that healing can effectively be manifested.



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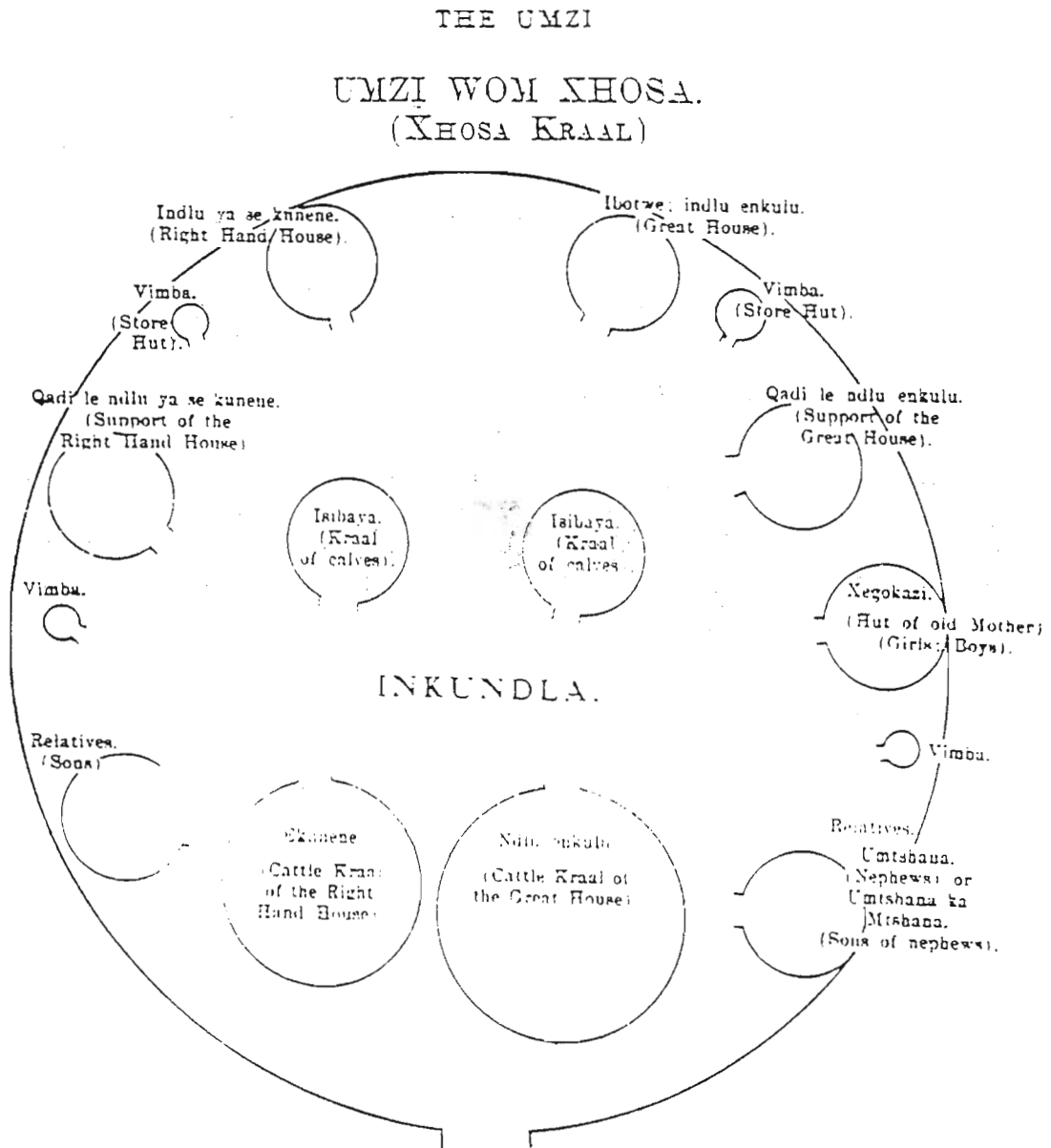


APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

Map I

Umzi Womxhosa (Xhosa Kraal or household)



Source "": Xhosa Law of Persons

(1947:83)

Reflecting the communal environment

Of the traditional Xhosa household

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA UMTATA – NCAMBEDLANA CIRCUIT

MARRIAGE PREPARATION : COUPLES RELATIONSHIP

NAMES :and

DATE:

	MAN'S COMMENTS	WOMAN'S COMMENTS
How do you show love/affection for each other?		
How does your partner <u>communicate</u> his/her need for affection?		
How does he / she show you affection ?		
Can you recognise the difference between needing & giving affection?		
Can you distinguish between need for affection and <u>sexual need</u> ?		
How comfortable are you with the sexual side of the relationship?		
Does your partner need time alone, and are you able to allow it ?		
If your partner is angry, how does he / she show it? Are the reasons clear?		
If your partner is hurt/disappointed how does he / she show it? Are the reasons clear?		
Is the difference between hurt and anger clear?		
Are you comfortable with your partner's use of alcohol?		
Are you comfortable with your partner's use of <u>money</u> ?		
Is smoking or any such habit a problem to either of you ?		
How do you resolve conflict in the relationship?		
Are you confident about your <u>money management system</u> ?		
Are there any difficulties in <u>relationships with parents or extended family members</u> ?		
How happy are you about your & your partner's relationship with friends?		
Do you agree with your partner regarding <u>children and child-rearing</u> ?		

	MAN'S COMMENTS	WOMAN'S COMMENTS
Are you happy with your present <u>religious involvement</u> ?		
Are you satisfied with your work ?		
Have there been any major changes or crisis in your family in the past 2 years ?		
What do you expect from your partner re: household duties?		
What do you need when you are ill ?		
What do you need from your partner at this time ?		
What about your relationship makes you particularly happy ?		
What aspect of your relationship bothers you ?		
Do you have any fears ?		
Which marriage contract you prefer :- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ In Community ♦ Out of Community ♦ Ante Nuptial & Accrual Customary 		

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW RESEARCH QUESTIONS [ALSO ASKED IN XHOSA LANGUAGE]

1. What is the state of the family and married life in Xhosa communities at the present age ?
2. What do you think are the main causes of marriage disharmony in Xhosa communities?
3. Do you feel that Christianity and western culture have had a positive effect on marriage and family life in Xhosa communities?

If yes, how ?

If no, why ?

4. Did Xhosa communities offer counselling to families and couples before Christianity came to South Africa?:

If yes, how?

If no, how was family life maintained?

5. Do you think that Xhosa traditional family practise came into conflict with Christian values in stabilising and enriching marriage and family lie?

6. Does your church offer pastoral care and counselling to families?
7. What suggestions do you offer in an attempt to recapture stable healthy and normal family and marital relationships in your Xhosa locality?

