A FOLLOW-UP STUDY OF A MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROGRAMME

By

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Submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN SOCIAL SCIENCE (MENTAL HEALTH)

in the

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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NOVEMBER 1992
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DECLARATION

I declare that the study entitled: "A Follow-up Study of a Marriage Preparation Programme" is my own work and that all the sources I have consulted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

ARLENE BERNSTEIN
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank the following:

* Dr. K.J. Collins, my supervisor, for her ongoing support, encouragement and valued input.

* Prof. W.F. van Delft, my joint supervisor, for his consultation.

* The couples who participated in the research study, who shared their experiences so willingly and gave freely of themselves.

* My colleague, Etta Goldman, for her constant friendship and support.

* The Jewish Family and Community Council Transvaal, and my co-facilitators of the Marriage Preparation Programme, for the opportunity to be a part of the challenging field of marriage preparation.

* Lynn Schneider, my indispensable typist, who managed to transcribe my handwriting with patience, efficiency and humour.

* My mother, for her concern and support especially during the writing of this thesis and my family and friends for their continued interest and enthusiasm.
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SUMMARY

This exploratory study followed up ten married couples who attended a voluntary six session psycho-educational Marriage Preparation Programme under the auspices of the Jewish Family and Community Council - Transvaal.

A literature review on marriage: preparation, evaluation and enrichment provided the framework for the study and interview schedule. The study aimed to confirm and/or modify the existing Marriage Preparation Programme and to explore marital adjustment in detail.

The findings indicate:

* Couples had positive recall of the programme.

* Attending a Marriage Preparation Programme was not necessarily helpful but had a positive influence on couples' commitment.

* Respondents experienced difficulties in loosening ties with their families.

* The establishment of a family unit was central to marital adjustment.

* Role allocation was influenced by role models in respondents' families of origin.

* Dealing with socio-economic issues were exceptionally difficult.

* Changing roles and expectations of parenthood affected respondents' style of parenting.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

1.1 PROBLEM FORMULATION

Fournier and Olson in Levant (1986:197) state that research and clinical observations have demonstrated that "the problems couples have during engagement are carried over into their marriage". In addition, couples are expected to adjust to each other, negotiate complex issues and grapple with situations for which they have had no adequate preparation or appropriate role models (Bernard 1982; Mace 1982).

The marriage preparation movement developed as a preventative measure, to assist couples with the challenging but often difficult transition to married life. Historically, marriage preparation was the domain of the clergy, who offered the engaged couple services ranging from ad-hoc individual counselling to formalised programmes (Stahmann and Hiebert 1987).

As they were confronted with growing numbers of couples seeking guidelines for marriage and marital counselling, the educational system and the helping professions became involved in the field of preparation. In turn, a number of university courses, measurement instruments and preventive programmes were established to meet the different needs (Duvall and Miller 1985; Fournier and Olson in Levant 1986).

The effectiveness of marriage preparation has been widely debated. On the one hand, Mudd in Levant (1986:25) questions whether "one can prepare another person for an experience he has not had". On the other hand, some proponents affirm the place of marriage preparation and its' positive effect on the marital relationship (Stucky, Eggeman, Eggeman, Moxley and Schumm 1986; Pretorius 1988) and state that the cooperative and committed nature of the relationship prior to marriage may enhance the couples' ability to learn about communication skills (Fournier and Olson in Levant 1986).
The criticism levelled at marriage preparation has focused on the didactic and information orientation of the programmes and also on the lack of well designed research in the field. (Bader, Microys, Sinclair, Willett and Conway 1980; Fournier and Olson in Levant 1986). There have been few follow-up studies of existing programmes conducted and research has in the main failed to "examine changes over time" (Levant 1986: 18). The follow-up studies, however, conducted by Bader et al (1980) and Guldner (1971) have been of immense value, as they defined trends and recommended modifications to existing programmes that have altered the approach to marriage preparation. (See Chapter 2 for more details).

The Jewish Family and Community Council - Transvaal, a family welfare organisation based in Johannesburg offers a variety of services to the Jewish community. Because of its awareness of the growing number of divorces in the community the organisation chose to establish a Marriage Preparation Programme as a preventative response to this problem to become involved in marriage preparation (Bloom 1981).

The Marriage Preparation Programme devised in 1988 by the researcher and colleagues, was based on existing programmes and perusal of the relevant literature (Olson 1983). The programme has a psychoeducational focus in that "it involves prevention or development but is concerned with teaching individuals or groups, skills, understandings and competencies so that they can manage their lives more intentionally" (Pretorius 1988).

The aim of the programme is to strengthen a couple's relationship through the process of self-awareness and meaningful interaction. The programme consists of six two and a half hour sessions (fifteen hours in total), conducted on a weekly basis by two co-facilitators (who are qualified social workers). Attendance at the programme is voluntary and couples pay a fee.
The Marriage Preparation Programme Outline: (Described in detail in Appendix I)

| Session 1 | Introduction                      |
|           | Expectations of marriage          |
|           | Expectations of programme         |
|           | Introduction to communication     |
|           | The importance of communication   |

| Session 2 | Roles and values in marriage      |

| Session 3 | The legal implications of marriage |
|           | Communication                      |

| Session 4 | The creative use of conflict      |
|           | Handling anger                    |
|           | Communication                      |

| Session 5 | Finances - families - friends and fun |
|           | Communication                      |

| Session 6 | Sexuality in marriage             |
|           | Communication                      |
|           | Evaluation                         |

The purpose of this study is to follow-up couples who attended this specific Marriage Preparation Programme to ascertain whether attending a programme assisted them in adjusting to marriage. The couples' observations and feedback will in turn, be utilized to both confirm and modify the existing programme and plan for future developments.
1.2 MOTIVATION

More couples, as a response to the stress of living in an unsatisfactory marriage, are opting for divorce. The alarming increase in the divorce statistics indicate that urgent attention is essential to assist couples in coping with the pressures of marriage. It has been suggested that the trends for increased marital dissolution can be attributed to the increase in personal and social acceptance of divorce as a viable method of ending unhappy marriages. The change in economic and political attitudes have led to shifts in traditional roles. The religious community has become less prohibitive of divorce and the legal barriers to divorce have decreased significantly with couples able to engage in "no-fault" divorces (de Leeuw 1981; Mace 1982; Bader and Sinclair 1983; Fournier and Olson in Levant 1986). Longres (1990: 287) states that in the United States of America, demographers predict that "half of all marriages will end in divorce". This is also said of South Africa, that one in two marriages will end in divorce. While this ratio cannot be quoted with statistical accuracy, the South African statistics reflect international trends and the divorce rates have increased by 88% in the last twenty years - 1970 to 1990 (Central Statistical Services 1991).

Figure 1.1 Changes in Marriage and Divorce Rates in the White South African Population Group 1970 - 1990

![Graph showing changes in marriage and divorce rates from 1970 to 1990.](image-url)
It is evident that the rates of marriage in the population, steadily declined until 1989, when there was an upsurge. This may be attributed to the strong "pro family" movement (Bernard 1982) endorsed by South Africans and the fact that marriage is still considered desirable, despite the high divorce rate. The possible effect of such factors as AIDS on family life may affect this upsurge. Statistics for the other population groups (not including the Black population group, which were unavailable) indicate that divorce has risen alarmingly, and if the whole population was considered in the above graph, the figures would increase significantly.

In the Transvaal, there were approximately 300 Jewish marriages in 1990, and 147 recorded divorces. Emanuel (1991) states that according to the Johannesburg Beth Din (Jewish Ecclesiastical Court) the divorce rate rose by 20% between 1982 - 1989, reflecting the broader communities' trend towards the increase in divorce.

Goode in Merton and Nisbet (1976) points out that "divorce rates will rise with the number of marriages, because more marriages are at risk". Significantly, the divorce rates have risen for couples in the first years of their marriage. In the period 1979 to 1989, the specific divorce rate, that is the number of divorces per 1000 married couples increased by the following percentages: (Central Statistical Services 1991).

Table 1.1 Increase in the Specific Divorce Rate from 1979 - 1989 for the White Population Group

<table>
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<th>Duration of Marriage</th>
<th>Specific Divorce Rate</th>
<th>Increase</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than one year</td>
<td>12,4</td>
<td>22,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First year</td>
<td>24,2</td>
<td>36,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second year</td>
<td>28,9</td>
<td>37,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third year</td>
<td>26,7</td>
<td>34,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth year</td>
<td>24,0</td>
<td>31,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth year</td>
<td>21,0</td>
<td>26,5</td>
</tr>
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It emerges that the first years of marriage are fraught with difficulties: more couples are resorting to divorce in the early years. The following writers confirm this finding and emphasize that adjustment in the early years of marriage is crucial for a successful marriage (de Leeuw 1981; Mace 1982; Bader and Sinclair 1983; Alpaslan 1989).

Couples in the early years of marriage are in the process of formulating their family unit. This process has been described as one of the most complex and difficult transitions of the family life cycle. The "utopia syndrome" or the mythical expectation that couples have of marriage being in love forever and that conflict is unnatural, leads to couples experiencing disillusionment and disappointment when their expectations are not met (Lederer and Jackson 1968; Watzlawick, Weakland and Fisch 1974; Carter and McGoldrick 1989).

The rationale for marriage preparation, is to assist couples to address issues at this idealistic stage and open channels of communication for future debate (Fournier and Olson in Levant, 1986). Couples bring into their marriages, ideas, beliefs, expectations and attitudes that have been moulded in their families of origin (Trotzer and Trotzer 1986). Adjustment in marriage is centred on the accommodation and compromise of the couples' different styles of interacting.

The patterns which connect the couple to their own families of origin have evolved over time, and leaving home and restructuring the established boundaries is a major developmental task of every marriage (Watzlawick et al 1974; Minuchin 1977; Carter and McGoldrick 1989).
In the process of adjustment, couples have to negotiate amongst other issues, role division, allocation of time and space, financial decision-making and management and parenthood. Many factors will contribute to the couple’s successful resolution of differences in these areas namely: clear communication and conflict resolution styles, appropriate role models from their families of origin and the commitment to working on their marriage and helping it to grow and develop (Lederer and Jackson 1968; Trotzer and Trotzer 1986).

The motivation for following up couples who are in the process of adjusting to early marriage, is to track their perceptions of adjustment and in turn benefit by their feedback to alter the existing Marriage Preparation Programme (Minuchin 1977).

1.3 AIM

The aim of the study was to collect information to enhance the effectiveness of the Marriage Preparation Programme by modifying and/or confirming the existing programme.

1.4 OBJECTIVES

1.4.1 To review the literature in the field of marriage preparation and related fields, which will in turn provide a theoretical foundation for the study.

1.4.2 To ascertain what couples recalled of the Marriage Preparation Programme.

1.4.3 To assess the effect the Marriage Preparation Programme has had on couples’ adjustment to marriage.

1.4.4 To explore the following aspects of marital adjustment:
   i) Relationships with family of origin.
   ii) Formation of own family unit.
iii) Allocation of roles.
iv) Socio-economic factors.
v) Parenthood and planning for parenthood.

1.4.5 To investigate the need for an early marriage programme and suggest an outline for a programme based on the findings.

1.5 METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

1.5.1 Research Design

The design used in this study is exploratory. Tripodi in Grinnell (1981: 199) states that the purpose of exploratory studies is to "describe social phenomena in a qualitative manner for the purpose of developing general concepts into more specific measurable variables". He describes the cross-sectional case study as a design method which fits with the research study under review, that is the basic strategy of this design is to describe in depth a single unit during a specific time. The sample consisted of ten couples who attended a Marriage Preparation Programme during a specific time and who had been married between eighteen months and three years.

Further, this design method requires that the practitioner/researcher "be skilled in deriving abstract, qualitative generalisations from direct observations ..... to locate variables that may be associated with changes over time" (Tripodi in Grinnell 1981: 211).

1.5.2 Sampling Procedure

The sample in this study was a non-probability accidental sample. This type of sample is best suited to exploratory studies, when the sampling units are in "key positions to observe or experience the phenomenon being investigated" (Seaberg in Grinnell 1981: 86).
The sample criteria were couples who:

* Had attended the Marriage Preparation Programme under review.
* Had attended all six sessions of their Marriage Preparation group.
* Attended groups during the time period - 11 July 1988 to 29 September 1989.
* Had been married between eighteen months and three years.
* May or may not have had their first child.
* Would be available for a joint interview of approximately two and a half hours during the period August - September 1991.

Ten couples (20 respondents) were recruited by telephone from a list of twenty possible couples. Five couples had emigrated. Three couples could not be reached and two couples agreed to be interviewed, but cancelled and were unable to recontract with the researcher.

The ten couples were interviewed in their homes, in the evenings. This was positive in that it enabled the couples to feel comfortable and have time to think through their responses. Exposure to the couples homes allowed the researcher to gain a fuller picture of the couples physical lifestyle and interaction. The couples' were reassured of confidentiality. They were encouraged to be honest in their responses, although this is an ideal, a degree of interviewee and researcher bias must be accounted for in the study.

1.5.3 The Interview Schedule

The interview schedule was semi-structured and designed by the researcher based on the literature and clinical evaluation and observation of the Marriage Preparation Programme over the past four years. (See Appendix 2).

The answers were recorded by audio-cassette recorder, which Gochros in Grinnell (1981) confirms as providing accurate and comprehensive data.
The interview schedule was divided into sections and each couple discussed every topic under review but the order and intensity was flexible. The interview schedule was divided into:

- Socio-demographic information.
- Family of origin relationships.
- Formation of a family unit.
- Allocation of roles.
- Socio-economic situation.
- Planning for parenthood.

These areas of adjustment are discussed in detail in this research study.

In view of the limited scope of this study, it was not feasible to include the mass of information received during the interview process. The researcher has not commented in detail on the following sections of the interview schedule:

- Observation of each couple's communication and conflict resolution styles as the patterns and trends that emerged required detailed analysis and explanation.
- Religious and spiritual issues for the couple (mentioned briefly in Chapter 3).
- Allocation of quality time and personal space (these findings overlapped with previous data presented).

1.6 ANALYSIS OF DATA

1.6.1 Pilot Test

In order to validate the semi-structured interview schedule, this schedule was pilot tested with two couples. One couple had been married for one year (no children) and one couple for three years (one child). The pilot test confirmed that the areas of adjustment under review were relevant.
It was confirmed that for the purposes of this study, it was not essential to separate couples who had not had children from couples with children. The couples had all been on the Marriage Preparation Programme and they could offer valuable feedback.

1.6.2 Content Analysis

The interview sessions were audiotaped and the cassettes were transcribed and analysed. In the process, individual and couple responses were identified. Owing to the small size of the sample, the belief that each respondent’s comments represents their "truth and is therefore valid" is endorsed in this research study (Watzlawick et al 1974:54). Babbie in Anstey (1990) states that content analysis clearly defines units that can be tracked and analysed in order to establish trends. The data has been descriptively presented and figures or tables have been used to illustrate salient points.

1.7 SHORTCOMINGS OF THE STUDY

* The sample was of limited size and was specific to the cultural group and social class of the respondents. For this reason, the findings may not be generalised.

* While the interview schedule was validated by literature review and pilot tests, it may reflect the researchers’ bias and specific areas of interest.

* The close relationship between researcher as one of the Marriage Preparation Programme facilitators may have led to researcher bias in the analysis of the findings.

* The respondents may have had a vested interest in presenting themselves as coping and well adjusted and may have biased their responses accordingly.

* One spouse may have felt inhibited in revealing issues in front of the other, and their responses to the questions posed in the interview may have been affected.
1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS (as used in this study)

* Marriage Preparation
Olson (1983) states that the purpose of marriage preparation is to facilitate meaningful dialogue between the couple and is a method of anticipatory planning. It is the act of attending a formalised programme to prepare for the adjustment to marriage.

* Follow-up
A long term study to gather information from couples over time.

* Respondents / Couples / Spouses / Husband / Wife
These terms are used interchangeably in this study.

* Researcher / Interviewer
Used interchangeably to denote the writer of this research study.

1.9 PRESENTATION OF CONTENTS

The dissertation is divided into four parts as follows:

Chapter I Introduction and Orientation.

Chapter II Review of the Literature.

Chapter III The Research Findings.

Chapter IV Conclusions and Recommendations.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1  THE FAMILY - A SYSTEMS APPROACH

The study of living organisms in the field of biology revealed that these organisms were not simple units existing in isolation rather, they were complex components in dynamic interaction with other organisms and their environment (Von Bertalanfy in Watzlawick, Jackson and Beavin 1968). These findings had great relevance for fields beyond the scope of biology, including the field of engineering, economics and human sciences. Von Bertalanfy in Watzlawick et al (1968:42) cautions that not all physical systems, organisms and societies are the same, but in principle "certain aspects, corresponding abstractions and conceptual models can be applied to different phenomena".

These concepts were endorsed and developed by early family therapists who recognised the need to look beyond individual pathology, to understanding individuals not as isolated, self-contained entities but rather as interdependent systems interacting in complex larger systems (Watzlawick et al 1968; Longres 1990).

The family, therefore, can be seen as a number of connected parts in constant interaction. The behaviour of every individual in the family is related to and dependent on the behaviour of the others, and change in one part of the family system affects changes in all other parts of the system (Watzlawick et al 1968; Trotzer & Trotzer 1986).

In its interaction with broader systems, many elements impinge on the family. In adjusting to these perturbations and changes, the family needs to continuously balance its need for autonomy and "homeostasis" which is maintaining the status quo in the family and conserving the patterns that exist within the family structure (Watzlawick et al 1968; Carr 1991), with the need for change or "morphogenesis" (Trotzer and Trotzer 1986; Carr 1991).
Minuchin (1977) confirms this view and adds that the family can be seen as an open socio-cultural system in transformation, adapting to changed circumstances so as to maintain continuity and enhance the psychosocial functioning of each member.

As the family journeys through time, it encounters many internal and external forces which impact on its functioning. These occurrences, which occur at critical points in time can be identified as the developmental life cycle stages of the family.

2.2 THE FAMILY LIFE CYCLE APPROACH

The family life cycle model developed by Duvall and Miller (1985) and elaborated on by Carter and McGoldrick (1989) has offered a positive means to understand the obstacles and challenges that face the family as it travels through the life cycle.

The family is described as a unique and complete emotional unit, much more than the sum of its individual parts. As the individual members grow, develop and mature so the family, itself, follows a predictable sequence of development (Levinson 1978). The stages of the family life cycle develop within the context of a historical, biological and social time framework.

Neugarten in Carter and McGoldrick (1989: 5) states:

"there is a socially prescribed timetable for the ordering of major life events; a time in the lifespan when men and women are expected to marry, raise children, a time to retire".

Carter and McGoldrick (1989) identify a six stage lifecycle model as follows:

* The unattached young adult.
* The joining of families through marriage.
* The family with young children.
* The family with adolescents.
* The launching of children and moving on.
* The family in later life.
The family negotiates these stages and as each new developmental crisis is encountered, the family adapts to the new responsibilities which may in turn open up opportunities and challenges (Duvall and Miller 1985).

Not all families experience their crises in the same way or necessarily in the same order, but common to all is the existence of stresses that impinge on the smooth transition from one stage to the next. Carter and McGoldrick (1989) highlight the following:

* Vertical Stresses: Stresses transmitted from generation to generation, that is family attitudes, taboos and expectations.

* Horizontal or Normative Stresses: Produced as the family moves forward in time and copes with the transitions of family life.

* Here and Now Stresses: Occur as part and parcel of daily living conditions, for example divorce, unemployment, AIDS and pollution amongst others.

Families may resolve their life cycle crises on their own or they may require professional help to deal with the temporary unbalancing of their system. The field of family therapy has developed to meet these needs.

The family life cycle model has been criticised in that it neglects life cycle events that detract from the "norm", for example, single parent families and childless couples. Aldous (1990) and Longres (1990) suggest that these areas should be addressed in future research.

2.3 THE RELATIONSHIP LIFE CYCLE

In the same way that the family life cycle has evolved, Monte in Weeks (1989:291) proposes that relationships as entities in themselves, have their own developmental life cycle and he describes relationships as more than "the neat summation of two individual developments".
The relationship life cycle is primarily concerned with the balancing of two opposing phenomena: interdependence and differentiation.

The challenge to "find fit" (Watzlawick et al 1968) requires that the couple constantly negotiate their boundaries in order to ensure that their individual needs are met, and "lifecycle issues, needs, tasks and transitions will be acknowledged and integrated" (Monte in Weeks 1989:293).

Table 2.1 Relationship Life Cycle Schema
(Monte in Weeks 1989:295)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Life Cycle Stage</th>
<th>Approximate Time Frame</th>
<th>Focal Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Starting up</td>
<td>0 - 2 years</td>
<td>Differentiation, identity, intimacy and trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settling in</td>
<td>2 - 4 years</td>
<td>Identity/inclusion/exclusion, power commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision time</td>
<td>3 - 7 years</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving on/Latency age</td>
<td>7 - 15 years</td>
<td>Identity, production, competence, commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midlife/Adolescence</td>
<td>15 - 24 years</td>
<td>Identity, self-esteem, competence, power, intimacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Launching</td>
<td>25 - 35 years</td>
<td>New beginnings and resolutions versus stagnation and despair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older age and Death</td>
<td>35 years plus</td>
<td>Endings, intimacy and continuity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The stages outlined in Table 2.1 are presented in chronological, sequential order. They should however, be viewed as interconnected with overlapping and flexible boundaries confirmed by Alapack in Weeks (1989:292) who states, "We face certain life issues repeatedly, rarely do we deal with them once and for all, we return to certain meanings again and again in a spiral fashion".

This model does not take into account relationships that do not fit conventional patterns, rather it presupposes that couples travelling this lifecycle will be monogamous, middle class and heterosexual. Further, they would have married in their mid to late twenties and have children within the first few years of marriage. (A profile which fits the sample utilised in this study - See Chapter 1).

2.4 MARRIAGE - A STAGE IN THE FAMILY LIFE CYCLE

Trotzer and Trotzer (1986 : 154) state that the marriage ceremony marks the commencement of a committed life together, with the wedding being the transitional ritual "that shifts the relationship from a private coupling to a formal joining of two families". The couple openly announce their intention to become a unit.

Duvall and Miller (1985) and Freeman (1990) call this the "beginning stage" while Bernard (1982) identifies the process of marriage as the joining of two systems, namely "his" and "her" systems that join forces to become the "marriage system".

The process of "joining" (Carter and McGoldrick 1989) is not accomplished with the wedding, but becomes a life long negotiation process. Lederer and Jackson (1968) view marriage as an ever-changing fluid process between two people. Clinebell and Clinebell (1970:18) see marriage as an opportunity "to participate in the wonderfully creative process of self-other fulfilment; the ability to achieve intimacy". While Stahmann and Hiebert (1987) describe marriage as an intricate tapestry, comprised of many strands interwoven and intermingled in a special way.
Marriage is, therefore, concerned with the building of intimacy between the couple, an ongoing and growing process that cannot be measured in specific terms. Clinebell and Clinebell (1970: 25) state that in order for intimacy to develop, there needs to be "openness" between the spouses with each being "emotionally available" to the other. The building of "trust" between the spouses occurs as they experience crisis and conflict resolution, and "caring" develops as they take responsibility for themselves and become warm and responsive to each other. The struggle to achieve intimacy and in turn marital satisfaction is a difficult process for the couple. Traditionally, marriages were thought to be happy if the couple remained married for some years. However research has indicated differently. Cuber and Harroff in Longres (1990) described couples who had been married for twelve years and had never considered divorce or separation and concluded that while some couples enjoyed open, mutually satisfying and happy marriages, many couples remained in marriages that were characterised by conflict, boredom and isolation. Couples remained in these unsatisfactory marriages as it met their needs and maintained the family system.

Young couples starting off their marriages are usually idealistic and determined to build "a perfect happy marriage". Bowman in Longres (1990) states that a healthy marriage is able to adapt to the individual growth of each partner, while respecting each other's perceptions, choices and opinions. The qualities of a healthy marriage include: direct and open communication, appreciation for one another, spiritual and religious commitment, adaptability and flexibility and clarity of family rules. Gove, Style and Hughes (1990) link marital wellbeing to "healthy individuals" and state that positive interaction in marriage will enhance the wellbeing of the individuals involved.

Naude (1990) cites factors which should be present in a marital relationship for optimum satisfaction. These areas include: open constructive communication between spouses, skilled handling of conflict, characteristics of spouses, compatible value systems, sexual fulfilment, socio-economic security, premarital factors, influence of children, influence of family and in-laws, mutual interests, personality characteristics, knowledge of development phases of marriage.
Markman in Jacobson and Gurman (1986) confirm these areas of marital satisfaction, as does Alpaslan (1989). He includes personal and mutual growth and development as key elements in the marital relationship.

All the above-named are factors essential to a happy and satisfied marriage. They may seem formidable to the couple, and may affect their expectations of marriage.

2.4.1 Expectations of Marriage

Fournier and Olson in Levant (1986) state that engaged couples are at their most idealistic emotional state, than at any other time in their relationship. This period that should be spent by the couples in real contemplation of their future, is often overshadowed by the many details involved in the wedding ceremony. People do not enter marriage without some preconceived notions. They have dreams and expectations of how their lives will turn out and how their spouses will behave, that form the basis of their relationship (Stahmann and Hiebert 1987).

Many myths about marriage exist, which encourage the individuals to have unrealistic expectations. Lederer and Jackson (1968) state that people are under the false assumption that they marry "because they love each other". While this is an ideal and may be true, the realities are often more pragmatic, people marry for a myriad of reasons, because of family and societal pressure, financial security and even loneliness. These couples that believe themselves madly in love are bound to face disappointment and disillusionment after their wedding day (Mace 1976, 1977). Couples, therefore, need opportunities to explore their expectations of themselves, each other and their relationship in a way that confronts the realities of marriage, while maintaining the intimacy and uniqueness of their relationship.

2.4.2 Selection of a Marriage Partner

The contention that mate selection is an ad hoc process has been debated in the literature.
Stahmann and Hiebert (1987: 18) state that "mate selection is not accidental and human beings choose exactly the mate they need at that time". Carter and McGoldrick (1989) suggest that most decisions to marry are influenced by extended family life cycle events, for example, the retirement or death of a parent, illness or relocation. In the main, couples seem unaware that there are broader determining factors governing their choice of a partner. This search for a mate to fit an individual's specific needs may account for the difficulties experienced in later years when the partners change and no longer fit their initial "description".

The spouses' ordinal position in the family, that is oldest, middle, only sibling has been proposed as a factor in partner selection. Theorists propose that couples may select a spouse that comes from a complementary sibling structure, for example, a spouse who was the oldest of their siblings and used to being "in control with authority" may seek a spouse from a "younger" sibling constellation who would not challenge his/her position. Similarly, a spouse who was the "youngest" in their family may choose an "older" spouse to continue a pattern of protection (Trotzer and Trotzer 1986; Stahmann and Hiebert, 1987; Langenmayr and Schubert 1990).

These examples are broad generalisations and may not exist overtly in any mate selection process. They are not predictors of the relationship but rather offer understanding of interpersonal dynamics and behaviour.

2.5 ADJUSTMENT TO MARRIAGE

2.5.1 The Beginning Stages

The first years of marriage are fraught with difficulties, and this is the most critical stage of the entire marriage. Statistics presented in Chapter 1 highlight the increasing number of couples opting for divorce in the early years of their marriages.
Couples have to negotiate many issues in their marriage, with the adjustment areas explored at length in the literature (Clinebell and Clinebell 1970; Mace 1982; Filsinger 1983; Rolfe 1983; Bader 1985; Duvall and Miller 1985; Carter and McGoldrick 1989; Longres’1990).

Bader in Mace (1983: 78) state that couples need to cope with two main tasks at the beginning stages of marriage:

* Development of basic male and female roles. Finding ways of meeting each other's needs in sexual, social, psychological and economic satisfactions.
* Partners must relinquish their relationships with their family of origins.

Newly married couples are in the main concerned with leaving their parents’ homes and entering the establishment phase of their cycle. They must deal with the transitions from being single to being one of a pair. During this process they work on the tasks to build their unit (Duvall and Miller 1985). The process of couples leaving their families of origin launches the family of origin into a new transitional stage. The stresses that ensue in this process will either enhance or hamper both families’ adaptation. The process of achieving some level of pair adjustment in early marriage augurs well for the marriage. Landis & Landis (1977: 242) claim that couples who make satisfactory adjustments in early marriage are more likely to cope with later demands that life makes upon them.

2.5.2 Areas of Adjustment

Every area of interaction requires adjustment in marriage. Bader et al (1980) conducted a comprehensive five year study concerning the effectiveness of marriage preparation and couples’ adjustment to marriage. Olson, Fournier and Druckman (1987) developed an inventory to provide a quantitative picture of a couple's relationship profile. This became known as the PREPARE-ENRICH programme and is widely used in the field of marriage preparation.
There was a great deal of consistency in the areas of adjustment identified by the researchers and the following are the main areas that were identified:

- Realistic Expectations
- Communication
- Household Tasks
- Leisure Activities
- Sexual Relationship
- Women's Job
- Children and Parenting

- Personality Issues
- Conflict Resolution
- Time and Attention
- Financial Management
- Man's Job
- Family and Friends
- Religious Orientation

All of these adjustments have to be made by couples in the early stages of their marriage, and must constantly be renegotiated as their relationship develops. While some areas remain highly contentious for some couples and unimportant for others, the fact that these broad topics are major adjustment issues is unquestionable.

2.6 RELATIONSHIPS WITH EXTENDED FAMILY

"The family .... is inescapable. You may revile it, renounce it, reject it.... but you cannot resign from it. You are born into it and it lives with you and through you to the end of your days" (Howard in Trotzer and Trotzer 1986 : 95).

2.6.1 Family of Origin

Stahmann and Hiebert (1987 : 83) asserts that it is well-established that the "degree of separation a person has from his/her family of origin can be an important factor in marital success".
Marital attitudes, behaviours and expectations are not inborn and automatic; we learn them mainly from our parents and significant others. It becomes important to trace the invisible loyalties "that influence personality and affects marriage and the family of creation" (Howard in Trotzer and Trotzer 1986:95).

Bader and Sinclair (1983) add that the first year of marriage becomes the time when many families exert subtle pressure on their children. The process of "leaving home" is essential to the successful formation of the new family unit. Stahmann and Hiebert (1987 : 69) list some negative consequences if a spouse fails to achieve separation:

* The spouses continue to be involved in their primary families crises to the detriment of their new marriage.

* People who remain enmeshed in their families, are used to "being taken care of" and may expect the same from their spouse.

Couples seem to settle into a pattern that best helps them relate to their families of origin. Carter and McGoldrick (1989:104) believes that the usual pattern is "some contact, some closeness and generally some avoided issues".

2.6.2 Patterns of Interaction

Olson et al (1987) devised the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems to describe family relationships.
This model allows couples to evaluate their families of origin (in pre-marital preparation) or their own family unit (in marriage enrichment).

**Marital and Family Cohesion** is concerned with the amount of togetherness in a marriage/family. The families may have the following range of relationships:

* **Enmeshed** indicates that there is an extreme amount of emotional closeness, dependency, lack of personal space or separateness. Energy is focused inside the marriage/family, there are few outside friends or interests. Leichner in Gurman & Rice (1975) confirm that couples who have lived in symbiotic family systems find it difficult to cut the umbilical cord.
**Connected** indicates that there is some emotional closeness and bonding, and loyalty ties. While there is more time to be separate, there is an emphasis on togetherness. Friends and interests are shared by the couple.

**Separate** means that the couple / family enjoys emotional separateness with time together and time alone. While there are joint decisions, most decisions are made independently.

**Disengaged** is characterised by extreme emotional separateness. There is little involvement between the couple / family member and people have their own individual interests. Leichner in Gurman and Rice (1975) claim that disengaged families may retain a hold on their members who then have difficulty separating and letting go emotionally.

**Marital and Family Adaptability** focuses on the amount of change the marriage or family system can accommodate. The families may have the following range of relationships:

* **Rigid** implies that one member is highly controlling with strictly defined roles that do not change.

* **Structured** indicates a less rigid relationship. The leadership is less authoritarian, and controlling and roles are usually shared. While rules can be changed, this is not frequent.

* **Flexible** means that the leadership and roles are equally shared and the rules in the family are open to change.

* **Chaotic** implies erratic or limited leadership. Decisions are impulsive and not well thought out, with unclear roles that shift from person to person.
Spouses tend to recreate or reverse the patterns they experienced in their families of origin. The circumplex model allows couples to evaluate these relationships in order to understand the effect they have on present relationships. In this way couples can become more aware of the patterns of their relationships and deal with the consequences more effectively.

Ideally, couples should be able to experience a balance between being separated from and connected to their family of origin. Whatever the functioning, the couples style is unique, and should be viewed in its social and cultural context.

2.6.3 Ethnicity and Marital Interaction

Emanuel (1991:168) defines ethnic groups as those who "conceive themselves as alike by virtue of their common ancestry, real or fictitious and who are so regarded by others". Giordano in Carter and McGoldrick (1989) state that ethnicity patterns our thinking, feeling and behaviour in obvious and subtle ways. It plays a major role in determining what we eat, how we work, how we relax, how we celebrate holidays and rituals and how we feel about life, death and illness. The concept of ethnicity therefore helps researchers and practitioners to relate family process to the broader social context.

The South African Jewish family has its roots in Eastern Europe and some common characteristics identified by Schlesinger (1987) and Emanuel (1991) are as follows:

* Centrality of the Family

According to Hertz & Rosen in Emanuel (1991:170) the Jewish family is closely bonded and the extended family remains extremely important to young married couples, "typically these couples spend a great deal of time defining boundaries, connections and obligations between them and their families".
Families place a high value on geographical as well as emotional closeness and living far from extended family is viewed as unacceptable. The extended family of the past was seen to be "overprotective" in response to real physical dangers. This tendency to overprotect the children is evident in present day family relationships (Lamm 1980; Schlesinger 1987).

* Intellectual Achievements and Financial Success

Success is vital to the Jewish family ethos, with the Jewish couple measuring their success in terms of being good parents, good spouses and good providers. Hertz & Rosen in Emanuel (1991) comment that the pressures to achieve in the Western World have infiltrated Jewish culture and success is measured by the attainment of wealth, material goods and education. The couple may experience pressure to keep up with peers as an indication of their "successful relationship".

* Verbal Expression of Feelings

The focus on self-expression, high achievement and verbal skills as well as the ability to express pain and anger are valued within the Jewish family. Minuchin (1977) suggests that subsystems exist within the family in varying combinations. The interaction of these subsystems and the establishment of boundaries govern how the family communicates, resolves conflict and deals with crises and transitions.

One of the most central subsystems is between parent and child. In some Jewish families, children may be encouraged to voice their opinions and take on roles that result in them becoming part of the parental subsystem. This leads to unclear boundaries between members of the families and may foster close, enmeshed relationships or separate distant interactions.
It is an overgeneralisation to say all Jewish families conform to this style of interaction. The role models experienced in family of origin may be positively or negatively integrated by the couple.

2.6.4 In-Law Family Relationships

In-law family relationships have historically received much bad press. While spouses may experience difficulties accommodating and connecting with their in-law families, the potential for positive and nurturing role models with the in-law family should not be discounted (Fields 1986). Goetting (1990) in an article on in-law relationships states that these relationships have no clearly defined rules or role definition. Hence, difficulties may arise in interactions between the spouse and the in-law family system.

Landis and Landis (1977); Fields (1986); Goetting (1990) and Naude (1990) have all identified various problem areas in in-law relationship. These can be summarised as follows:

* The spouses' reluctance to share their mate with their own family of origin.
* The in-law families' resentment of a "stranger" usurping their family member's time and affection.
* Differences in values and attitudes between new spouse and the family.
* Different socialisation styles, for example, varied ways of celebrating special occasions, traditions and festive holidays.

Referring back to the family life cycle, it seems that while the couple has to make adjustments, the in-law family too has to recognise and change. This need not be a traumatic transition if it is viewed as the joining of two families as opposed to the loss of one special family member.
2.7 FORMATION OF A FAMILY UNIT

The main task confronting the newly-married couple is the establishment of their own unique family unit. The first undertaking of each spouse is to move from their single status to being one part of the marital couple. In this transition, the spouse should ideally identify their own developmental issues, defined by Sheehy (1976) as shaping a dream; preparing for life work, finding a mentor and forming intimate relationships without losing oneself. In this process, the spouse has to relinquish the single role and the symbolism attached to it, including freedom and a lack of accountability. It emerges that even with long courtship and engagement periods, some spouses still find difficulty in making the transition to marital status with its concomitant facets of responsibility and accountability and they experience feelings of loss, anxiety and fear (Landis and Landis 1977; Weeks 1989). Successful adjustment and "adaptability" allows the couple to begin building their family unit (Longres 1990).

In the "starting up" stage (0 - 2 years) of marriage (Monte in Weeks 1989) intimacy is a central issue. The couple's main purpose is to realign priorities and test their interactional behaviour and deal with the consequences that emerge. In the process the couple confirm their mutual trust of each other, an important building block for their relationship.

The "settling in" phase (2 - 4 years) is characterised by further establishment of identity, interactional patterns and boundaries. Couples may at this stage still be struggling with power issues, that is who makes decisions, and takes responsibility in the relationship. Patterns of interaction are usually more defined.

Monte in Weeks (1989) maintains that the couple should begin to develop joint traditions, values and goals which help to form the fabric of their family life. Clinebell and Clinebell (1970) in turn, demarcate the first stage of engagement/marriage as the time when the spouses present their best attributes, masking "undesirable" feelings and behaviour.
The second stage of marriage affords the couple the opportunity to come to terms with each other's imperfections, negotiate roles and plan for the introduction of children into the family system.

2.8 ALLOCATION OF ROLES

According to Duvall and Miller (1985: 131) marital roles are the "behavioural expectations of husbands and wives in a particular society at any given time". Traditional roles which clearly distinguished between the roles of husband and wife are no longer so clearly defined. Women have become independent and liberated and men, in turn have been freed from the burden of being the total support of their families (an issue which in itself raises many questions).

Komarovsky in Duvall and Miller (1985) asserts that men are now encouraged to express their feelings, be more gentle and tender and not adhere to the stereotyped image of the "macho man", that is brave, aggressive and tough. This has resulted in the man being much less sure of himself and of what is expected of him in relationships. Women, too, have been confronted with confusion and difficulty in adjusting to the many demands that result from juggling a career, being a homemaker and fulfilling personal goals.

Piotrkowski and Repelti (1984) and Bernard (1982) maintain that role negotiation and division of labour have become central issues in marital adjustment. Bader's (1985) research study found that the most consistent area of disagreement between couples in the first five years of their marriage was household tasks. He suggests that family background plays a central role in determining how partners take to the practical tasks of marriage. For example, if a male spouse comes from a home where his father did not do household tasks, he is unlikely to get involved in his own home, or conversely he may choose to be different from this role model. Duvall and Miller (1985) suggests, however, that couples may benefit from more flexibility in their roles. Lederer and Jackson (1968: 67) write that it is a false assumption that the differences between men and women are binding.
Rather, they suggest that the trouble is not the differences but in the inability to choose and activate the desirable or necessary role (Shelton 1990).

Trotzer and Trotzer (1986); Goldenberg and Goldenberg (1990) and Sillars, Weisberg, Burggraf, Zietlow (1990) state that ideally couples should share both instrumental and affective roles within the relationship, and clear and open communication skills are needed to negotiate roles. These roles may be defined as:

* **Affective roles**: as those centering on the emotional needs within the relationship and how the couple supports and nurtures their relationship.

* **Instrumental roles**: as those concerned with practicalities and the sharing of tasks, chores and clear division of labour.

In the South African context, the issues of role allocation and division of labour are different, owing to the employment of the domestic worker in the home. The presence of a maid within the home of a newly-married couple has a significant role to play in the couple’s adjustment to marriage. The couple is afforded practical help in their home, alleviating many of the burdens experienced in a dual-career home. Dynamics operating in a couple’s allocation of roles may be obviated because the domestic helper steps into the breach and temporarily resolves the problem.

It is hypothesized that these contentious issues would be deflected into other areas of the marriage. The couple in the early stages of marriage are concerned with establishing their autonomy and independence and the presence of a domestic worker, on whom they become dependent, may generate conflicting feelings for the couple and in turn, affect their interaction. Cock’s (1980) study of the role of the domestic worker described the inherent authority and power vested in the employer which affects the relationship between employer and employee and must have significant repercussions on how the couple conduct their relationship in the outside world. In view of the changes in South Africa in 1991, and the growing empowerment of domestic employers, it is suggested that more research be conducted in this area.
2.9 SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

The pressures associated with earning sufficient money to make ends meet has become a major issue in adjustment in early marriage (Landis and Landis 1977; Bader 1985). In many cases, couples during their idealistic courtship and engagement period have never discussed money management issues and once they are married they are faced with the harsh realities (Leichner in Gurman and Rice 1975; Trotzer and Trotzer 1986).

Fields (1986) suggests that the cost of the wedding, honeymoon and home is often a reflection of the financial attitudes of the couple and may set a pattern for the entire marriage. If this is mismanaged, a negative interactional pattern may be established very early on in the marriage.

A marriage represents a financial arrangement, that while not identical in every couple, concerns the decision-making processes surrounding the way money flows into and out of the shared household.

In the process of dealing with money, spouses need to view the money earned in a marriage as "our money" regardless of the different contributions each partner makes to the joint income. This attitude models the idea of equality and respect within the relationship (Fields 1986; Trotzer and Trotzer 1986). Couples bring into their marriage their experience of their families of origins attitude to finances and practical handling of money. If these styles are compatible, the couple appears to adjust easily to managing finances in their own relationship. Difficulties arise, however, when spouses have contrasting styles (Landis and Landis 1977). Fields (1986) outlines some hallmarks of a healthy approach to money (and every other aspect of marriage). These include the need for openness, trust, mutual respect and attentiveness to detail. This area of adjustment is noted by Bader (1985) to remain a consistent a conflict issue for couples in the first five years of marriage and more research is required in this area.
2.10 PARENTING

The birth of the first child represents the parents' first experience of parenting; they have no previous experience and in many ways the first child is an experiment for the parents (Carr 1991). The adjustment that parents face is in the extension of them as a couple to the domain of being a family. Prior to the birth of the baby they had limitless time for themselves which the presence of a baby disrupts. The presence of a child changes the traditional roles within the family and the process of renegotiating these roles is an important factor in adjustment. First time parents are usually unaware that their fears and anxieties are normal and they worry that they are failing and their marriage is unstable. The media has placed pressure on parents to be perfect and the picture of the contented couple, with smiling baby is a myth that contributes to the difficulties of parenting (Goldenberg and Goldberg 1990).

Cowen, Cowen, Heming, Carrett, Coysh, Boles (1985) suggests that men and women have different experiences of parenthood. The male role is less defined, and slower to develop. They are often expected to become involved in practical duties for which they may have had no appropriate role models, while the female role involves a radical shift to becoming the sole nurturer and caregiver for the baby. The key to the couple adjusting is in how they work together to meet the changes they face in their transitions to parenthood.

The birth of baby makes parents into grandparents and siblings into aunts and uncles, which in turn affects the broader family system. A child can generate activity and bonding with the family and act as a catalyst to bring subsystems together. Cowen et al (1985) maintains that the birth of a child can shift the new parents' perceptions of their families of origin, for example, by becoming more tolerant of difficulties experienced by their parents. With the birth of their first child the couple becomes recognised as a "family" (Duvall and Miller 1989) and begins the next stage of the family life cycle with all its concomitant pressures and potentials. Couples at this point in the family life cycle, benefit from support of others in similar circumstances, for example, antenatal programmes. The responsibilities of parenthood are immense and services to support parents are essential (Levant 1986; Carr 1991).
2.11 MARRIAGE PREPARATION

Longres (1990) states that healthy families contribute to the general good health of a community. Children, as much research has indicated suffer immensely as the innocent victims of divorce (Wallerstein and Kelly 1980).

It makes good sense, therefore, to seriously consider the statement made by Fournier and Olson in Levant (1986:197), that premarital and newly-wed programmes can "reduce the emotional and financial burden of millions of children each year who directly experience divorce". From a preventative perspective it seems essential to help couples get their marriages off to a good start. Research conducted by Alpaslan (1989), demonstrated that the problems couples experience in their engagement are usually carried into marriage. These, in addition to the normal anticipated problems that couples expect in married life, can lead to these couples feeling overwhelmed and helpless.

Marriage preparation may take the following forms:

* **Family life education courses**: these are promoted in high schools and may take the form of open discussion or didactic learning.

* **Testimonial approach**: here happily married couples tell engaged couples how happy they are. A limited, simplistic and basically ineffective model. (Rolfe 1983)

* **Encounter approach**: this method helps people become more aware of their feelings and needs in their relationship and can be a rewarding experience for a couple. It is an intense, at times overwhelming and personal experience for couples preferring this type of approach.

* **Lecture followed by unstructured discussion**: this method is often used by the clergy who have time constraints. It is valuable in the absence of anything more thorough. This approach would also attract couples afraid of a more personalised programme. Mace (1982) stated that couples are unlikely to have any long term gains from attending a lecture.
* **Group therapy approach**: couples need to acknowledge they have problems and are in need of attention. Attendance at this type of group can lead them to examine their relationship and work on it intensely within the group. (Alpaslan 1989).

* **Couple communication programmes**: this approach focuses on the development of the couples process skills in weekly time limited sessions. Programmes have a psychoeducational basis, in which couples are encouraged to increase their self-awareness and their ability to communicate. (Rolfe 1983; Levant 1986).

* **Enrichment programmes**: this method is offered to married couples to enhance their quality of their marriages. These programmes may be individual or conducted in small groups.

### 2.12 EVALUATION OF MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROGRAMMES

Research has indicated that while marriage preparation is of value, the exact degree to which couples retain and use the skills they acquire during their marriage remains vague. Bader and Sinclair (1983) hypothesised that couples who attended marriage preparation programmes were more likely to seek help during marriage than those who had not attended. His research further indicates that while couples state that they value the input before marriage, they would benefit more from programmes conducted between six months and two years after marriage.

Alpaslan (1989) in his Masters thesis at the University of Pretoria states that marriage preparation was viewed as a viable undertaking by his research sample. He considers the field of marriage guidance as an alternative to marital counselling for newly married couples. His results indicate that marriage guidance programmes are effective and may have long lasting benefits.
The PREPARE/ENRICH Programme devised by Olson (1987) has been thoroughly tested and is at present possibly the most measurable intervention tool in the field. (See Bader and Sinclair 1983; Rolfe 1983; Mace 1982; Stahmann and Hiebert 1987). This programme is extensively used by the Family Life Centres in South Africa.

2.13 MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT

Marriage enrichment is defined by Hof and Miller (1981: 3) as "an educational and preventative approach to relationship enhancement. The term refers to the philosophy and process of the approach as well as to the great variety of programmes". Historically, marriage enrichment has appealed to couples who have been married for many years and have settled into comfortable interactional patterns. Garland (1983) suggests that the purpose of marriage enrichment is to teach couples attitudes, communication behaviour and knowledge about family and marital relationships. It is designed to meet individuals' personal needs and enhance their development. Marriage enrichment was developed by both human service professionals and the clergy to help couples explore their relationships and prevent them from dying a slow death from neglect. Lange (1986) states that marriage enrichment does not propose an idealistic view of marriage, as in fact issues such as conflict management, anger and power are confronted. The idea however, is to address these topics in a positive and growth orientated fashion. Emanuel (1990) comments that marriage enrichment in South Africa is still a relatively new field and much more publicity, awareness and openness of the concept is needed before it becomes an acceptable option for married couples.

The division between therapy and enrichment is often blurred. Couples who attend marriage enrichment often go through a growth and healing process similar to therapy. Mace and Mace in Lange (1986) state that marriage enrichment programmes do not promise therapy, rather deliberate attempts are made to exclude couples who are not coping in their marriages.
It appears therefore, that marriage enrichment is suitable for couples who are committed to their marriage and are not in the midst of marital crises (Garland 1983). Marital therapy and enrichment should be viewed on a continuum and couples should be able to utilise whichever modality best suits them at that particular time.

2.14 EARLY MARRIAGE PROGRAMMES

It can be seen from much of the data presented within this chapter that marriage preparation is vital as an awareness and preventative service to aid couples to adjust to the difficult years of early marriage. Marriage enrichment has an established place in the services to couples who have longstanding marriages. There is, however, a dearth of services for newlyweds.

Bader, Microys, Sinclair, Willet and Conway (1980) refer to the first programme for newly-weds established by Guldner in 1971. This programme was offered to couples at one month, three month and six month intervals after their marriage. He found that the final group (six months) was the most receptive and gained the most benefits. Further, he found that pre and post wedding sessions were perceived as more helpful by couples, that is, five sessions prior to the wedding and three sessions six months after the wedding. Mace (1983) working along similar lines, developed a programme for couples in their first year of marriage.

It seems that couples who attend marriage preparation are more likely to attend programmes for early marriage and in turn marriage enrichment. It is the writer's contention, after much involvement with couples in the Marriage Preparation Programme under review that the couples need the input when they are in the "heat of the situation", when they are really experiencing the communication, role conflicts and time and space issues in their marriage.

This area requires more research and investigation and hopefully this research dissertation will be a small contribution to the body of knowledge on this subject.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the findings of the ten couples (twenty respondents) in the research sample. The findings are presented descriptively, and supported by graphics. The term couple/respondent is used to refer to the sample. On occasion the term spouse or partner/fiance is utilized to refer to the sample. Couples were reassured about confidentiality. They were encouraged to be honest and critical in their responses because their feedback would be invaluable in modifying future programmes.

The chapter is divided as follows:
* A demographic profile of the sample.
* An assessment of the Marriage Preparation Programme.
* Major aspects of adjustment to marriage:
  * Relationship with family of origin.
  * Formation of own family unit.
  * Allocation of roles.
  * Socio-economic factors.
  * Parenthood and planning for parenthood.
* Development of an Early Marriage Programme.

3.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF SAMPLE

3.2.1 Couples

* Age:

The sample consisted of ten couples (twenty respondents) who at the time of the study had been married for 18 months to three years. Respondents ranged from the youngest at 22 years to the oldest at 33 years. The average age of the respondents was 26 years.
Courtship/Engagement:
The majority of the couples had known each other between two and eight years. Only one couple had known each other for nine months. Most of the couples stated that they felt they "knew each other well" before committing themselves to marriage. It is notable that couples with longstanding relationships were attracted to a voluntary Marriage Preparation Programme. The engagement period ranged from four months to ten months, highlighting that the length of engagement has shortened in recent years concurring with the findings of Landis and Landis (1977). Fournier and Olson in Levant (1986) maintain that it is essential that couples attend marriage preparation programmes soon after their engagement, in order to have time to consider their decision.

Education:
Fourteen of the twenty respondents had had tertiary education qualifications, ranging from technical diplomas, to graduate and post graduate degrees. Two respondents, who had no tertiary qualifications were employed in family businesses which afforded them job security and advancement.

Accommodation:
Two couples (four respondents) of the sample had lived together before getting married. One respondent had lived alone in a flat and the balance of the fifteen respondents all had lived at home with their families until their marriage. Eight out of the ten respondents had moved from rented accommodation into their own homes, during the course of their marriage. This factor has implications for commitment and financial responsibility.

Siblings:
Goldenberg and Goldenberg (1990) state that through participation in a sibling subsystem one learns patterns of negotiation, cooperation, competition and mutual support. As all the respondents had siblings, these qualities should provide positive role models for their marriage.
* Children:

Six couples had had their first child. The couples had been married for between one and two years before having their first child. All couples stated that their children were planned.

3.2.2 Profile Summary

The profile seems to fit the typical profile of couples who attend marriage preparation programmes, that is, middle class, well-educated, who have had a fairly long courtship and who are usually close in age. Couples on the whole were socially aware and had discussed many of the issues relating to marriage prior to taking the course, and were on the whole, "mature". The findings of this study concur with the following writers' research; Landis and Landis (1977); Bader et al (1980); Alpaslan (1989) and Monte in Weeks (1989).

3.2.3 Parental Marital Status

Figure 3.1 Parental Marital Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Widow (Remarried)</th>
<th>Widowed (Not Remarried)</th>
<th>Divorced</th>
<th>Deceased</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of respondents in the sample came from homes where their parents had been married for more than 20 years. One respondent's parents had divorced just prior to his wedding and one respondent's mother had remarried one year after her marriage. Another respondent's parents died, leaving her head of her family.
Figure 3.2 Profile of Couples in Research Sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUPLE</th>
<th>PRESENT AGES</th>
<th>CHILDREN</th>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>LENGTH OF COURTSHIP</th>
<th>LENGTH OF ENGAGEMENT</th>
<th>DATE OF WEDDING</th>
<th>LENGTH OF MARRIAGE (To Date)**</th>
<th>DWELLING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A (H)*** (W) 25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Hotel Manager *</td>
<td>7½ years</td>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>November 1989</td>
<td>21 months</td>
<td>Flat (owned by parent)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (H) (W) 23</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Computer Prog.* Factory Manager *</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>June 1989</td>
<td>27 months</td>
<td>Own house</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C (H) (W) 25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Accountant * Advertising Exec.*</td>
<td>3½ years</td>
<td>10 months</td>
<td>January 1990</td>
<td>20 months</td>
<td>Own house</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D (H) (W) 25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Businessman * Pharmacist *</td>
<td>4½ years</td>
<td>7 months</td>
<td>September 1989</td>
<td>24 months</td>
<td>Own house</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E (H) (W) 33</td>
<td>Son 18 months</td>
<td>Businessman Bookkeeper *</td>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>5 months</td>
<td>October 1988</td>
<td>33 months</td>
<td>Own house</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F (H) (W) 28</td>
<td>Son 9 months</td>
<td>Businessman Comp.Prog* (P/T)</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>November 1988</td>
<td>34 months</td>
<td>Own house</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G (H) (W) 22</td>
<td>Daughter 4 months</td>
<td>Dentist * Home Executive</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>August 1989</td>
<td>23 months</td>
<td>Own townhouse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H (H) (W) 30</td>
<td>Daughter 2 years</td>
<td>Technician Beautician (P/T)</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>8 months</td>
<td>September 1988</td>
<td>36 months</td>
<td>Own house</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I (H) (W) 24</td>
<td>Daughter 5 months</td>
<td>Technician Student * (P/T)</td>
<td>3½ years</td>
<td>10 months</td>
<td>January 1990</td>
<td>20 months</td>
<td>Rented house</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J (H) (W) 27</td>
<td>Son 4 months</td>
<td>Physiotherapist * Doctor *</td>
<td>3½ years</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>May 1989</td>
<td>28 months</td>
<td>Own townhouse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Tertiary Education
** To date = up to 30 September 1991
*** (H) = Husband / (W) = Wife
P/T = Part-time
3.3 THE MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROGRAMME - ASSESSMENT

This assessment will be discussed under the following headings:

* Recollections of respondents.
* Positive aspects of the Marriage Preparation Programme.
* Less positive aspects of the Marriage Preparation Programme.
* Topics to be included in the Marriage Preparation Programme.
* The impact of the Marriage Preparation Programme on respondents' marriages.
* Reaction to attending a reunion of the Marriage Preparation Programme.

3.3.1 Recollections of Respondents

It is of note that couples had time to "prepare" their spontaneous responses and most respondents commented that knowing the researcher was coming had made them think about the Marriage Preparation Programme and their marriage. Fifteen respondents stated that the Programme was on the whole, a positive and enlightening experience:

"We dealt with issues we had never discussed before".

"I thought it was going to be like therapy, and it wasn't, nothing was forced or exposed".

"An opportunity to be together and help you through the engagement period".

"It was important to be with people in the same boat".

There were no overt negative responses and not one respondent stated that they regretted attending the course or that it had been a "waste of their time". This may be because the couples were inhibited by the interview situation and the familiarity of the interviewer, who in some instances had also been the programme coordinator.
Five respondents were less positive about the Marriage Preparation Programme:
"We would have got to the same point whether we went on a programme or not".
"It was like being at a sales seminar - go on it and for a few weeks you are all fired up
and excited, then it wears off".

3.3.2 Positive Aspects of the Marriage Preparation Programme

These categories were derived from the respondents spontaneous responses. The categories
cover specific sessions of the Marriage Preparation Programme as well as themes conveyed
during the Marriage Preparation Programme.

Figure 3.3 Positive Aspects of the Marriage Preparation Programme
Group Interaction

Almost every respondent stated that they benefitted from "seeing other couples in the same boat". The group interaction enabled respondents to see how other couples conducted their relationships and the respondents stated that they valued discussing topical issues in the group. The couples unanimously declared that they preferred to be in a group with couples they did not personally know.

In the main, while couples did not maintain contact with their group members, they recalled being positively bonded to the group.

Bader et al (1980) and Fournier and Olson in Levant (1986) stress that group interaction is a vital component of a course and this is confirmed by the feedback from the respondents.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution is presented within the Marriage Preparation Programme as a "creative and learning process" that can enhance a relationship if correctly handled (Rolfe 1983; Stahmann and Hiebert 1987).

Five couples recalled that the sessions dealing with conflict had had a major impact on them at the time of the course, and may have contributed to their sustaining some skills up to three years into their marriage.

Seven respondents recalled the specific conflict resolution skills demonstrated in the Programme, that is not becoming defensive and blaming (Gordon 1975). The respondents recall of this skill can be seen in the comments: we must say "I feel" not "you always" in an argument. (Egan 1982, Appendix 1).

Four couples related incidents in their marriage where they had been en route to a major conflict - which they stopped by saying to each other; "Remember the Marriage Preparation Programme, we need to back down and not attack each other". Two couples commented that they were more aware of their spouses different styles, and had sustained this awareness during their first years of marriage.
While some respondents could recall the basic details of the conflict resolution skills, they were unable to utilize them "in the heat of the moment". Most of the couples demonstrated an awareness of conflict being a more natural and normal process in marriage.

Communication

Communication is the theme of the entire six week Marriage Preparation Programme and was presented didactically and experientially. Confirming Mace (1982) that couples rarely remember didactic information, no respondent recalled any of the communication "information" presented didactically, for example, listening and responding skills. The couples recalled having group discussions, sharing ideas and exchanging opinions. On the whole, they could not recall the details of these discussions.

It remains evident that most of the impact of the Marriage Preparation Programme was from participation in the experiential exercises.

Role Play: this technique was used to demonstrate communication skills and the group members volunteered to role play in front of the group. Five couples vividly remembered the role play experience, in which they were either "actors or spectators" and two couples remarked that when they experienced situations during marriage similar to the ones enacted in role play during the programme, they were able to diffuse the situation by referring back to the skills they had learnt. The value of role play is confirmed by Pretorius (1988).

Ice-Breaker Exercise: this exercise is used to "break the ice" in the group when group members form dyads and introduce each other to the larger group. The purpose is to forge initial bonding and to set a tone of openness, awareness and informality. The beginning skills of "active listening" are emphasised in the exercise and used as a model for the communication sessions in the programme. (Egan 1982, Appendix 1).
It was striking that almost every respondent could recall the person they had introduced to the group. They also recalled the anxiety of the need to "listen carefully" so that they could repeat the information accurately. It is unclear whether the respondents were able to sustain an awareness of "listening" when introduced to new people in other situations since their marriage.

Individual Written Exercises: the respondents were required to complete individual exercises and then discuss them as a couple. One respondent stated "putting pen to paper and considering my answers was the most difficult thing to do, but the most challenging", while another respondent said that writing made him "consider issues much more deeply than if he had just spoken about them".

In sum, couples recalled the experiential aspects of the communication sessions that required them to actively listen and actively participate. The feedback from the couples confirms the place of experiential exercise in the programme and indicates the need to increase their use. The memory of didactic information was not sustained.

Expectations of Marriage

The couples perceived their attendance at a Marriage Preparation Programme as a normalising experience. The group process helped to reinforce their normal reactions and enabled them to gain some perspective on their emotions during the engagement-marriage transition. This reaction is described by Carter and McGoldrick (1989).

One respondent stated that it was comforting to see that it was "okay to be two different people, being exactly the same was not ideal". Another respondent commented that the course "helped me say a lot of things to my finance I was scared to, because I didn't know how she would react - but as soon as you hear it on the course it's okay to talk about money, divorce, in-laws, instead of bottling it up for fear of rejection and hurting".
Couples at the engagement stage have not usually encountered the often unromantic and pragmatic aspects of marriage. They stated that exposure to them on the Marriage Preparation Programme, had prepared them to confront issues and feelings they may never have discussed.

3.3.3 Less Positive Aspects of the Marriage Preparation Programme

In their recall of a Marriage Preparation Programme, fewer respondents remembered the following topics illustrated below in Figure 3.4:

Figure 3.4 Less Positive Aspects of the Marriage Preparation Programme

Sexuality

This session was presented by a gynaecologist/sexologist. The format was a slide show covering physiological information and an open discussion.
Three male respondents volunteered that the session on sexuality was extremely beneficial. One respondent stated "I didn’t know any of the facts and I’d never heard sex discussed so openly using the correct anatomical words". Another respondent stated that it cleared up many misapprehensions and myths. While no other respondent volunteered feedback, with further prompting, most of the respondents seemed to remember the session. Some couples said this session had opened up channels of communication between them, and highlighted problem areas. The rest of the couples' reticence on the subject of sex may have reflected their difficulty in discussing it as a couple. No respondent recalled that he or she had not benefitted from this session.

Legal Session

The legal session was designed to provide an overview of the legal contracts involved in marriage. An attorney presented an informal session which gave couples the opportunity to ask questions. The session had an impact for some of the respondents, who recalled that the information was new to them. The couples remarked that they found the informality valuable. Six couples recalled that ideally couples should consult an independent attorney when drawing up their pre-nuptial agreement. In this way they could begin marriage on an equal non-biased footing, with neither partner disadvantaged. Five couples stated that they had taken this advice and felt positive about the outcome.

In conclusion, both the sexuality and legal sessions were presented by guest speakers, who were both informative and engaging. The couples' recollection of these sessions may have as much to do with their recall of the guest speakers as with the content of the sessions. This indicates the need to have dynamic presenters of the course.

Finance Session

This session was presented by the facilitators who offered the couples:

* Opportunity for group discussion regarding values and attitudes to finances.
* Detailed individual / couple exercise concerning budgeting.
* Opportunity for individual couple and group discussion re practical financial options.

Two couples stated that the finance session had generated much discussion during and after the Marriage Preparation Programme, because it was a problem area in their relationship. These couples recalled that the session was the first time they had ever discussed some of the issues, for example, joint versus separate banking accounts and insurance policies. Three couples recalled the session after prompting, but only in vague, non-committal terms. Five couples had no recollection of this session at all.

The following reasons may be suggested for the couples' poor recall of the session:

* Couples are idealistic in their engagement period and may block out discussion of practical, unromantic issues, that is, finances (Fournier and Olson in Levant 1986; Trotzer and Trotzer 1986).

* Attitudes and values that surround the subject of money may prevent open and honest discussion by couples.

* The taboo surrounding the subject of money may be linked to self-esteem, status and personal values. These issues may not have been discussed by the couple during their courtship and engagement and may generate differences that couples are afraid to confront.

* If the respondents had been living at home with their parents, they may not have been aware of the cost of living expenses, or the need to share their own salary.
Family, Friends and Fun

This topic was covered in one session by the facilitators. The aim of the session was to:

* Highlight relationships with extended family.
* Allow couples the opportunity to explore their personal relationship with their family of origin by way of written exercises and discussion.
* Discuss the effect their relationships had on the couple.

On the whole, the couples could not recall much of this session. One respondent stated that he remembered "hearing my wife should come before my parents, according to Jewish law" (Schlesinger 1987). Three couples stated that while they did not remember "details of the session" they remembered talking about some family issues especially related to their wedding preparation.

This topic emerges during marriage as one of the major adjustment areas for couples, and their lack of recall of this session can be attributed to:

* Insufficient experiential exercises in the session.
* Sessions not fitting participants needs at the time, that is needing to be more specific and/or in depth dealing with "separation" issues.
* The couples may not be ready to discuss their family relationships and risk jeopardising their security at this tenuous time of engagement (Trotzer and Trotzer, 1986; Carter and McGoldrick 1989).

3.3.4 Topics to be included in the Marriage Preparation Programme

Finance

Only two couples recalled the inclusion of this session in the Marriage Preparation Programme, but all of the couples stated that finances had been a major adjustment area in their relationship, and that they would have welcomed more input on this subject.
The suggestions included:

* Blueprints for budgeting.
* Practical advice savings/bonds/insurance.
* Inflation and future financial planning.
* Contingency planning in the event of retrenchment.
* Communication financial matters.

One female respondent suggested that in order to remedy the lack of information on the subject of finance, couples should undergo a theoretical exercise where they are required to price items of furniture they require and undertake a hypothetical shop for groceries and household items. They would then be able to discuss financial planning and budgeting from a more "realistic basis". The feedback received from the couples reinforces the findings that more realistic experiential situations are necessary. The researcher, however, questions whether more in-depth financial input is appropriate prior to marriage but suggests that it should rather be offered to couples during an Early Marriage Programme as supported by Landis and Landis (1977).

**Childbirth and Parenting**

Six of the couples in the sample had had babies by the time of the investigation. The topic was covered very generally during the sexuality session by the gynaecologist when basic issues such as contraception and the timing of the first child was discussed. The fact that couples should form their own family unit before planning a baby had been emphasised.

These couples stated that they would have liked to have had more preparation for the birth of their first child. After discussion, they agreed that it did not belong within the scope of a marriage preparation programme, as parenthood was not a reality for many couples at the engagement stage of their relationship.
The function of the Marriage Preparation Programme could be to:

* Alert couples to the potential changes that they may experience as a result of pregnancy and parenthood.
* Assist them to utilise adequate community resources when they are in that stage of their family life cycle (Carter and McGoldrick 1989; Carr 1991).

Religious/Spiritual Issues

The Marriage Preparation Programme operates under the auspices of a Jewish organisation and offers the programme within a Jewish cultural context. (Chapter 1; Emanuel 1991; Schlesinger 1987).

The Programme has a psycho-educational as opposed to religious orientation and is run by professional facilitators as opposed to clergy (Stahmann and Hiebert 1987). As couples received religious input from other sources, namely their Rabbi and synagogue, this was not duplicated in the Programme.

Five of the ten couples had become more religious during the course of their marriage and stated that with hindsight, they would have welcomed more religious input in the course. At the time of their engagement, however, they were not religious. This opinion was confirmed by other couples who attended the Marriage Preparation Programme in the past four years. As a response to couples' requests, the Marriage Preparation Programme has been modified over time, and an additional session covering the spiritual facets of marriage with input from a Rabbi as a guest speaker, has been included in the Programme.

Personal Feedback

Two female respondents requested more private feedback from the course facilitators to address issues that were too personal to be discussed in the group.
They requested a couple interview at the start and end of the course. The respondents who requested this subsequently sought individual therapy for themselves, for interpersonal issues.

The balance of the respondents revealed that they felt they could approach the facilitators if they had a problem, but preferred that it be left to them to request help. This supports the tenet that marriage preparation is growth orientated as opposed to therapy or problem orientated. The couples stated, however, that they would have welcomed personal feedback on their relationship style, some confirmation that they were on "the right track". This would need to be carefully assessed and could be offered as part of the existing programme or through other Marriage Preparation Programmes such as PREPARE/ENRICH (Olson et al. 1987; Chapter 2).

Additional Comments

Comments were made that the course could have included more audiovisual material and "real-life scenarios on video". A valuable suggestion, borne out by the findings confirm that respondents are more receptive to alternative forms of learning. Two of the male respondents stated that dealing with stress would have been helpful. This confirms Emanuel (1991) who writes that stress management was found to be essential for inclusion in a marriage enrichment programme.

3.3.5 The Impact of the Marriage Preparation Programme on Respondents' Marriages

In response to this question, the couples again could not equivocally state that the Marriage Preparation Programme was a major factor in their adjustment to marriage. This confirms the reality that many factors (highlighted in the course of this chapter) impact on the marital relationship, that no one factor can be viewed in isolation. The couples had not identified the various areas of adjustment to marriage and the effects of attending a Marriage Preparation Programme.
The impact of attending the programme alerted couples to "relationship strengths and growth areas" (Olson et al. 1987). The discovery of problem areas in their relationship, while alarming for the couple, had a positive payoff in that couples were more able to seek help. It emerged from the interview schedule that in the adjustment phase, five respondents had experienced difficulties and had sought professional help in dealing with issues. This professional help included their Rabbi, the co-ordinators of the marriage preparation programme and private therapists.

One male respondent stated "I would never have gone for help if we hadn't been to the programme" and another male respondent said that "attending the Marriage Preparation Programme helped me see my partner as a separate person and when she went for counselling I accepted it more than I would have before the programme".

The balance of the respondents maintained that if problems arose in their marriages they would seek professional assistance. These findings confirm Bader et al. (1980) who hypothesised in his follow-up study that couples who attend a Marriage Preparation Programme are more likely to seek counselling should the need arise. Goldman (1991) who conducted a study of the same Marriage Preparation Programme under review in this study, compared a treatment group and a comparison group of couples marrying at the same time who attended the programme. She found that 87% of the treatment group would consider seeking professional help as opposed to 50% from the comparison group.

It must be noted, however, that while these findings are encouraging, the sample couples may have been aware of problem areas prior to attending the Marriage Preparation Programme and were attracted to the programme for that very reason.

3.3.6 Reaction to Attending a Reunion of the Marriage Preparation Programme

Two couples from the sample were offered the opportunity to attend a reunion group six months after their weddings. Neither couple was able to attend owing to time constraints, and reunion groups were not offered to the other sample couples.
The researcher was, however, interested to ascertain whether couples would have attended a reunion group. Five respondents stated that they would have liked a reunion group "to compare notes with the other couples". They expressed a feeling of anticlimax that they had invested much time in preparation for the wedding but after marriage they were left to deal with difficult adjustment issues alone. One female respondent likened her "let down" reaction to the lack of follow-up to her pregnancy and childbirth experience. After the intensity of contact with doctors during her birth experience, she was left alone "holding the baby". She stated that "just when you need support, the services end." This is confirmed by the Mace (1983) and Bader et al (1980) who stated that pre-marriage groups are only the first step in the support network for married couples.

3.3.7 Summary - Feedback on Marriage Preparation Programme

* On the whole, couples recalled their attendance at a Marriage Preparation Programme as a positive factor in their relationship.
* Attendance at a Marriage Preparation Programme contributes to couples "sticking it out during the trying times of early marriage".
* Couples identify their relationship strengths and growth areas.
* Couples who have attended a Marriage Preparation Programme are more open to seeking professional therapeutic help if problems arise.
* Couples would have welcomed reunion sessions to assist with their adjustment in early marriage.

3.4 MAJOR ASPECTS OF ADJUSTMENT TO MARRIAGE

The following topics will be discussed in this section:

* Relationship with family of origin.
* Formation of own family unit.
3.4.1 Relationship with Family of Origin

Frequency of Contact with Family

The couples reported that maintaining regular contact with their family of origin was a high priority in their daily routine. After marriage every female respondent remained in daily telephone contact with their family. The majority visited their family of origin a few times a week.

Male respondents described their frequency of contact as ranging from, five respondents who had telephonic contact with their parents on a daily basis (one respondent worked with his parents), to four respondents who maintained weekly telephonic contact. Most of the male respondents visited their families at least once per week. Contact with in-laws was on the whole limited to a joint weekend visit. These findings concur with Fisher, Sollie, Sorrel and Green (1989), who comment that after marriage women are more likely to maintain contact with family.

Only three respondents reported that they initiated contact with their in-law family on a regular basis. This situation emerged as an issue for some couples, who felt that their spouse should take more initiative in fostering in-law relationships.

Proximity to Family of Origin

A finding of this research survey revealed that couples chose to live in close proximity to their family of origin.
The majority of the sample couples resided within a 5 km radius of the female spouse's family of origin and in the main not more than 10 km from the male spouse's family of origin. They said that they could not imagine living "too far away from family", and out of their familiar environment.

Emanuel (1991) states that geographical closeness is a feature of the closely knit Jewish community, and Trotzer & Trotzer (1986) state that it is understandable that young couples want to remain close to their family. While this is positive, however, it contributes to couples' difficulties in separating from their family of origin and forming their own family unit.

The majority of the couples had discussed emigration, either for job advancement and financial security or as an alternative to the socio-political climate in South Africa. None of the couples was seriously contemplating emigration, citing their inability to leave their family as a major deterrent.

Established Family Patterns

It emerged as a fairly consistent pattern that the majority of couples in the early years of their marriage spent most of their free time with both sets of families (Fischer et al 1989). As Friday nights and traditional Jewish holidays have become accepted cultural means for families to gather (Schlesinger 1987; Emanuel 1991) the majority of couples, in order to "please" both families have adopted an often rigid system of sharing the time with respective families.

The couples said they experienced pressure to conform to the usual traditions of "family get-togethers" in order not to break established patterns. The majority of couples stated that they felt they could not invite one set of extended family over, without the other, without risking repercussions. Few couples had had open discussions with respective family members to clear this issue and remained "in-limbo" afraid to change their perceived expectations of the situation.
Couples on the whole, had not been able to establish their own traditions, and none were able to, for example, have a Friday night dinner on their own. It emerged that the pressure to maintain this rigid routine with extended family was twofold:

* Respective families’ expectation that they be apportioned equal time.
* The respondents themselves, who felt reluctance to lessen these ties in their family.

One respondents’ comment highlights this point of view - "We have to go every Sunday; it’s just expected ...... I couldn’t imagine not being there, I would miss out".

In order to change the set family patterns, the couples stated that they need mutual recognition of the situation and mutual support. While the close family contact enjoyed by most of the couples is viewed as a positive and nurturing experience, their inability to separate creates tension in adjustment, and prevents them from forming their own family unit.

**Patterns of Relationship with Family of Origin**

Relationships with family of origin can be divided into four categories: disengaged, separated, connected and enmeshed.

These categories are described by Minuchin (1977) and Olson et al (1987) and are outlined in detail in Chapter 2.

**Disengaged Relationships**: this is defined as relationships with extreme emotional separateness. Prior to marriage no respondents described their relationship with their family of origin in terms that fit this category. This corresponds to the findings that family involvement is highly valued by the respondents in this study.

After marriage one couple had become disengaged from the male spouse’s family of origin. The male respondent had converted to the Jewish faith to marry and had been through a stringent conversion process. In this case both families had voiced objection to their relationship for the following reasons:

* Fear that the couples’ cultural and religious differences would be insurmountable in a relationship.
* Fear of change and concomitant changes in the respective families.
Separated Relationships: this is defined as having some emotional separateness and time apart from family members. Prior to marriage in this sample male respondent "A" had been physically and emotionally "separate" from his family of origin, throughout his student years, a period of approximately 12 years. His parents had emigrated. He described his parents as "providing the basic groundwork, but it was left to us (siblings) to get on with it and bring ourselves up". He claims that the sound values fostered in his home as a child assisted him to become independent. A second male respondent "B" stated that he had travelled a great deal prior to marriage and he had become self-sufficient at an early age. His family had supported his independence and he enjoyed close contact with them.

After marriage the situation was as follows: Respondent "A" had a difficult adjustment to early married life. He stated that he felt restricted by the constraints of marriage which in turn affected his married relationship. Respondent "B", however, adjusted well to his spouse's different but complementary style. Clearly, differences in patterns of family of origin relationships are relevant only if couples are affected by the differences, and are able to make adjustments to different styles.

Connected Relationships: occur when family members are involved with each other and assist in decision-making. Prior to marriage six respondents described their relationship to their family of origin within "connected" terminology. They enjoyed close contact with their families who appeared not to be overpowering but accepted respondents leaving home and forming their own family units. The following comments illustrate this point:

* "I had a special place in my family, my room, my chair in front of the TV".
* "I was scared to leave home, I knew I would miss my parents, but I was ready to go".

Generally after marriage the situation was as follows: the respondents who had "connected" relationships with their parents relied for the most part on their parents for assistance with decision-making. Some decisions did, however, remain private, for example, planning a family.
Those respondents who had been able to forge a degree of dependence from their parents while still living at home, that is, being free to come and go without being accountable, stated that on the whole, their transition to marriage was less traumatic.

**Enmeshed Relationships**: can be defined as an extreme amount of emotional closeness with members very dependent on one another. Prior to marriage eleven respondents described their relationships in their families of origin in terms that fit this category of description:

* "My relationship to my family was exceptionally close, I used to lie and watch TV with them in their room almost every night".
* "I am so close to my family that I could never have married someone they didn't approve of".
* "I have worked with my parents every day for all my working life and couldn't imagine leaving them".
* "Nothing has ever happened in my life without my telling my parents about it - no matter how small".

The respondents stated that after marriage they remained highly involved with their family members. It emerged that when both spouses were from "enmeshed families" this had an impact on the couples' adjustment and ability to compromise.

The effect of this pattern was twofold: on the one hand, this pattern of relationship was comfortable and familiar for each spouse. They were more prepared to accommodate their spouse's need to have this degree of family involvement. As demonstrated by one respondent who said: "We are scrupulously fair about apportioning our time between our families. Our whole weekend is spent at either her family or mine". On the other hand, it emerged that some respondents felt threatened by their spouses involvement with his or her family of origin. The couples were attempting to recreate an enmeshed relationship within their own marriage and needed each other's constant interaction and feedback.
Major areas of adjustment appeared to arise when one partner was overly involved with their family at the expense of their spouse's. This emerged as an issue with three couples, as illustrated by the following statement:

* "For the first six months we were married every time I saw my mother we both sat and cried ..... we just felt we had lost each other".

This relationship pattern can be summarised as having had the following effect on the couples under discussion:

* The uninvolved spouse felt left out and unconsulted resulting in demands for attention or withdrawal.
* The marital relationship became "competitive" a fight for recognition between spouse and extended family.
* Spouses' priorities were unclear and they often experienced "torn loyalties".
* Each spouse became protective of their family and would not hear anything disparaging about their own family.
* Job advancement was affected when a respondent had difficulty changing her job as it prevented her from seeing her family everyday at lunchtime.

On the positive side, one respondent said :-

* "My close involvement with my family has shown my husband how much I value family - so he knows I will be exactly the same to our family".

On the whole, the couples stated that the positive nurturing qualities modelled in their family of origin had contributed to their feelings of self-confidence and their positive attitude to succeed and attain happiness.

Clearly the key factor in adjustment, is not the specific category of family of origin relationships, but rather the effect this has on the couple and their ability to accommodate each others' loyalties. The purpose of a Marriage Preparation Programme should be to allow couples the opportunity to identify their respective family of origin patterns and discuss the effect this has on them as a couple. The uniqueness of the couple and individuality of the partners are paramount and there is no one ideal style.
Leaving Family of Origin Behind

Three respondents were the last to leave their family of origin, hence leaving their parents alone for the first time in many years. This period of the family cycle has been labelled the "empty nest syndrome" and is well documented in the literature (See Chapter 2). Parents may react in many ways; they may withdraw and become helpless, their marriages may even break down. The parents of the respondents in this study, used the opportunity to develop their own separate interests, go on holidays, and in one case "retire from the family business". The respondents had ambivalent reactions to these developments. On the one hand, they were relieved that their parents had stable and secure marriages so as to make these often radical changes.

On the other hand, they felt pushed aside, uncertain of their place within the family of origin home. This was especially real when one respondent's family sold the "family home". She said my parents were so busy enjoying themselves, I felt they couldn't wait for me to leave".

This process augurs well for the family of origin in their own life cycle development, and as a positive role model for the couple. It may be, however, a contributing factor in respondents need to remain enmeshed with their family of origin, for fear of losing everything familiar (Carter and McGoldrick 1989).

In-Law Family Relationships

Trotzer and Trotzer's (1986) findings describe the blending of two families as a difficult and painstaking task. After three years of marriage, couples seemed fairly tolerant of each other's different backgrounds and the need to address the differences and adjust as opposed to being embroiled in constant conflict on issues they could not change. Two respondents stated that "the hardest thing about marriage is bringing two different families together". These respondents with their spouses tacit permission, took on the responsibility for bringing the family together.
One couple stated that major differences between the family culminated at the wedding and the families have had no contact with each other to date. This has placed pressure on them as a couple to act as "messengers" between the respective families. The couples in the sample as a whole had intense, often "enmeshed" relationships with their family of origin and seemed to expect that they would have similar relationships with their in-law family. After three years of marriage, negotiations and decisions around in-law relationships still seemed to be fragile and tense for some couples.

3.4.2 Formation of own Family Unit

Carter and McGoldrick (1989) state that marriage launches the couple into a new transitional state, one that requires the couple to work together to build a family unit. The following factors described by respondents contributed to the formation of their family units.

Transition from Being Single to Being Married

As noted in Chapter 2, respondents commented that a major factor in forming a family unit was the transition from being "free and unaccountable" to being "married, tied down and accountable" (Lederer and Jackson 1968). Five respondents expressed that the transition from being single required them to move from thinking "I" to "we" and from "me" to "us".

Bloom (1984) states that the passing of time plays an important role in the couples willingness to compromise and Clinebell and Clinebell (1970) maintain that both spouses should contribute to the transition of marital status. A long courtship and/or engagement can prepare couples to some extent for the transitional process. This was confirmed by the findings in this study.
The Stages of Marriage

All the couples had been married for between 18 months and 3 years, and all stated that they had seen their relationship "change and develop".

The couples responses can be broadly divided into two stages:

First Year of Marriage is generally characterised by:

* Establishing commonality and compatibility with each other.
* Getting to know each other more intimately.
* Clarifying expectations of themselves and their spouse.
* Needing constant affirmation from spouse.
* Negotiating spouse's need for personal time.
* Moving from "the need to impress during courtship" to being yourself.
* Persevering through conflict situations.
* Learning to trust one another.

The high divorce statistics outlined in Chapter 1 are a reflection of the many difficulties in adjustments in the first year of marriage.

Second to Third Year of Marriage is a period that can be linked together as most of the couples could distinguish the "first difficult year", but could not significantly distinguish between the second and third year.

This period is generally characterised by:

* Becoming more accepting of each other's differences.
* Developing self-confidence in role of husband/wife.
* Becoming more accepting of the need for personal space.
* Discovering aspects about spouse, as yet undiscovered.
* Building on the first year of marriage - consolidation family unit.
* Greater consensus over handling of conflict situations.
* Thinking about parenthood - decisions and plans.
* Birth of first child - the effect on the marriage.
* Awareness of the future - goals and planning.
* Taking joint responsibility for achievement of future goals.

In general, the points outlined during these stages of marriage are not mutually exclusive. The issues are interlinked and are in the main continuous processes throughout the course of the marriage (Weeks 1989). While not all the couples experienced all these issues, the key elements that emerged in the findings was the "willingness to be flexible" and to expect that their relationship would undergo developmental phases. It seems that if problem areas are identified in the early years and are not dealt with by the couple, they may dissipate or may become entrenched issues and may re-emerge throughout the marriage. Weeks (1989) and Naude (1990) confirm these findings.

Establishment of Patterns for Interaction

The establishment of patterns of interaction and the management and maintenance of a home is an important facet of early marriage adjustment. It emerged that couples who immediately took responsibility for their own actions in formulating routines felt more in control and independent.

One couple stated that in their first year of marriage "We didn't go home for meals every night and to have our laundry done. We decided to do it all ourselves .... and we are better off for it". Establishing routines regarding mealtimes and menu choices, social arrangements and quality time was for some of the couples a positive, enriching experience. One respondent summed this point up:

"When I was living at home (family of origin) my needs weren't always taken into account, and I was more demanding and difficult - but in my own home I have more choice and we decide together, so I have less need to demand".
The establishment of routines are essential in the affective areas of the relationship, that is, in socialising habits, quality time together, building the fabric of their relationship by sharing common experiences that bind the couple together. Carr (1991) talks about the concept of developing a "language" of a relationship. The findings reveal that in establishing routines, the couples begin to formulate their own language and unique patterns of negotiation and interaction. Further, the couples' independence and willingness to take responsibility for their relationship are key factors in forming their own family unit.

In summary, the couples' formulation of their own family unit is affected by:

* Successful transition from being single, free and unaccountable to being a responsible marital partner.
* The development of their marriage, from the early testing and establishing phase of the first year to consolidating and building the relationship in the ensuing two years.
* The willingness to be flexible and accommodating to each other and to constantly renegotiate decisions and situations as they arise.
* The establishment of routines that become "the language of their relationship". The utilization of their own unique styles in an independent and responsible fashion.

3.4.3 Allocation of Roles

The findings reveal that while these respondents are conforming to more equitable role sharing, in the main the traditional approaches and stereotypes held by this sample are difficult to alter.

Roles can be defined as instrumental (who does what) and affective roles (emotions and nurturing), with instrumental roles provoking conflict in couples in the early years of marriage.
In sharing instrumental roles, the following factors contributed to the respondents’ decision-making process:

* Involvement in instrumental roles prior to marriage.
* Patterns established in family of origin home.
* Realities of daily living.
* Employment of domestic help to assist with instrumental roles/tasks.
* Socialising and entertaining.

**Involvement in Instrumental Roles Prior to Marriage**

* **Males:**

Seven respondents had lived at home with their family until their marriage. They stated that their basic needs had all "been taken care of" without much involvement on their part, for example, meals were prepared, laundry washed and packed away. They credited their mother and/or maid at home for this service. Five of the respondents helped out in their family of origin home on occasion, for example, shopping, banking, basic household repairs and gardening.

Notably, two respondents stated they "rarely did anything at home, they were too busy". Of the remaining three respondents who had moved out of home prior to marriage, one respondent was responsible for maintaining a flat. He felt that the experience had been essential in his "gaining maturity". He felt he "had paid his dues" in terms of taking responsibility and felt strongly that his spouse should "take over, ..... with his support".

In general, eight respondents who were involved in instrumental tasks prior to marriage were more inclined to continue in their new home.

All the respondents stated that they agreed that tasks should be equitably shared, but in reality they resented, "being ordered and instructed" as stated by one of the respondents: "I’m told exactly what to do, and then I’m expected to do it immediately". It seems that many decisions regarding roles were often not adequately resolved.
Females:

Five of the female respondents said they were involved in instrumental tasks in their family of origin homes. They enjoyed sharing household tasks with heightened interest when they began preparing to leave home. The remaining respondents stated that they were "uninvolved in their home" leaving decision-making and chores to parents, other siblings or the family maid. Two respondents described themselves as "undomesticated" prior to marriage.

Regardless of their involvement prior to marriage, the female respondents saw their role after marriage as taking responsibility for the daily maintenance of the home. On the one hand, they were fairly demanding of their spouse to be equally involved, for example, "I refuse to do everything myself, so * has to share the jobs with me". While on the one hand, traditional stereotypes and years of socialization in the cultural environment of the respondents result in the female being "surprised at her good fortune if her spouse helps out". For example "I'm very lucky. * is so good around the house, he helps me a lot"; "* is unusual, he does things that many men refuse to do".

In summary, couples wish to and are attempting to move from traditional role stereotyping towards a more egalitarian approach and as one respondent stated "to see beyond the role of husband or wife and remember the person underneath". This remains difficult to do as roles are often entrenched and patterns hard to change.

Patterns in Family of Origin

In linking patterns that existed in the family of origin home to respondents' participation in their own homes, it can be seen that parental models are carried into the marriage by the spouses, either overtly or covertly. All the respondents saw their mothers as being a central figure in managing their family of origin households. One couple who had both lost their mothers, stated that "we could see how our families fell apart without a mother".
The role of a father was somewhat different, and distinction was made between instrumental and affective roles. Three male respondents stated that their fathers had not been actively involved in household chores, as they were "pressurised, busy, overworked, prepared to pay others to do tasks, disinterested, supportive but unavailable". These respondents' reactions to being involved in instrumental tasks in their own home ranged from "I want to be more involved in my home, than my father was", to "I didn't realise ...... I suppose I'm just like my father". Four female respondents described their fathers as being more active and involved in their family of origin homes than was their spouse. This resulted in comparisons, and unexpressed expectations between the couple, often leading to conflict.

The research findings seemed to indicate that while some patterns observed in the respondents family of origin are transferred into the marriage, the interaction between the couple is unique and may not mirror their early experience. There are many factors involved in selection and undertaking of roles in the family - of which family of origin may be a factor.

Realities of Daily Living

Nine out of the ten respondents lived in houses. The couples reported that this move marked an increase in responsibility and for some respondents resulted in their "feeling scared and overwhelmed". If both spouses shared these feelings - they were more likely to work together to reach a satisfactory solution.

The birth of the first child generated more activity on a daily basis. The female respondents concerned stated that they had more reason to expect assistance from their spouse and the couple as a whole, stated that they were more accommodating of each other.
Employment of Domestic Help

The couples in the sample had opted to employ domestic help to assist with housework. The relationship between employer (couple) and employee (maid) was complicated and ambivalent. Every couple in the sample employed a maid:

* Seven couples employed fulltime maids who lived on their property. Five of these seven couples had children.
* Two couples employed a maid three to four times per week. One of these couples had a child.
* One couple employed a maid once per week. This couple did not have a child and lived in a flat.

The couples stated that payment of an adequate salary for help was considered a priority in their budget. Employment of a maid in the main freed the respondents to work as well as take on more social and leisure activities.

Psychological Factors

Most of the respondents had a maid in their family of origin home, and stated that they viewed the maid as "one of the family". However, employing and maintaining a relationship with a maid was raised as a major issue by at least five couples. One couple stated that "the dilemmas about our maid have led to such arguments .... we needed a session on this in the Marriage Preparation Programme".

Couples were at the outset of marriage struggling with independence and confidence issues. For some couples, the employment of a maid seemed to reinforce their dependency needs and challenge their competence, that is, they could not manage without help. Four of the female respondents found it difficult to "assert their authority" and "make demands" on their maid.
They said they felt uncomfortable with the role of employer and had difficulty communicating instructions to the maid. In these situations, the female respondent attempted to involve their spouse to "share the responsibility". This often seemed to lead to conflict, when neither spouse felt able or prepared to confront the situation, in the process highlighting the couples' communication strengths and weaknesses.

The Effect on the Couple

The presence of a maid in the household may have a number of effects on the couple. The literature indicates that role allocation and negotiation is a major adjustment area for couples. This study revealed that while roles do emerge as a concern, it is not seen as a major issue. A proposed reason may be the utilization of maids in the home environment, who in the main take over the instrumental tasks for the couple. This may not address underlying relational problems but may prevent conflict from arising.

The employment of a maid as a babysitter/caregiver for the couples who had children raised further dilemmas. On the one hand, the couple was dependent on the maid to take care of the child, while they worked and socialized. On the other hand, in accordance with modern childcare practice, they were keen to be "hands-on parents" and spend quality time with their children, as supported by Carr (1991). Some of the couples stated that they felt "guilty for overburdening their maid" and expressed amazement at "how families manage overseas". This attitude further entrenches their dependence on their domestic maid.

Socialising and Entertainment

The area of entertainment and socialising was considered to be a factor affecting adjustment in the early years of marriage. If both spouses helped each other with the necessary physical and social responsibilities and according to one respondent had "a sense of pride in their home and relationship", they were able to socialise and entertain with more confidence. When one spouse, however, did not help with the entertaining, it seemed to result in the development of overt or covert conflict. Trotzer and Trotzer (1986) confirm this in their research.
3.4.4 Socio-Economic Factors

This area of adjustment was difficult for the majority of the couples, as discussing finances appears to have become taboo in society. The interviewer had to build up sufficient trust to discuss this area and answers to these questions may have reflected the couples’ perceptions and values.

Income:

All ten male respondents worked in fulltime jobs and earned salaries. Five female respondents worked fulltime and four respondents worked part-time. They all contributed their salaries to the joint income. The majority stated that they had to work in order to meet their monthly expenses. All couples earned sufficiently to meet their monthly expenses. Their joint nett salaries ranged from R45 000 to R120 000 per annum.

No couple admitted that at the time of the study they were in financial difficulty, but many stated that they were "financially over-extended", that is, repaying cars, hire purchase and insurance premiums. Eight out of ten couples were repaying a bond which they stated was a major monthly expense. Four couples had resorted to extra work to bring in extra funds, for example, selling goods at flea markets and working overtime or privately.

Budgeting:

As stated previously, couples had difficulty recollecting the financial session offered during the Marriage Preparation Programme. Their styles of budgeting have developed as a result of their own expertise and family modelling and may be defined as:

Rigid: included one couple who kept a daily bookkeeping system with every expense accounted for in detail. No spending was permitted by the female spouse without joint consultation.
The respondent had his financial future mapped out in minute detail and postponed all pleasures and enjoyment until his planned retirement - some 10 years away. His spouse appeared to have adapted to this rigid approach and would not be drawn into commenting on the effect this has on her, save to say "he is his own person, I go along with him".

**Rigid/Flexible**: this encompassed three couples who kept careful control over their finances. While spending was not so overtly rigid, there was a strong quality of being checked upon, and very unclear lines of communication. One respondent stated that she regularly drew up a budget but her spouse did not try to comply but "spent money we don’t have". These couples preferred joint accounts and the spouse who tried to keep a separate account felt the need to justify its existence, for example, "I keep my account open, as I want to keep my credit rating open". One respondent stated that he "had done without as a single student" and felt entitled to enjoy financial rewards without the permission of his spouse. This resulted in conflict as neither was able to compromise.

**Joint/Flexible**: this comprises four couples who seem to have a balanced outlook to finances, spending and budgeting. They shared responsibility for generating income and decision-making. These couples usually had joint and separate accounts, manage independently with mutual sharing. These couples did not always have well planned budgets and were vague about future finances. The couples following this style were open about the discussion of finances in the interview and they modelled clear communication skills. However, these couples expressed the need to be even more open and gain knowledge necessary to think ahead and consider options.

**Laisses-Faire**: allocation of finances, budgeting and planning was non-existent for two couples in this group. They appeared to manage their money and make decisions on an ad-hoc basis, that is, "whoever has it, pays". This style was usually affected by one spouse, resulting in the other spouse feeling insecure and "out of control". It emerged that the couples with these styles of communication were receiving financial assistance from their family of origin, or they wished they could have assistance.
Assistance from Extended Family:

On the whole, the couples in the sample described themselves as motivated "to achieve the best they could". They were ambitious and determined to succeed as evidenced by their responses in this section of the interview. Eight out of the ten couples stated that they managed independently. Most couples stated however, that families were generous in providing wedding, anniversary and birthday gifts. Gifts may have included assistance with a deposit on a home, furniture and appliances (Goetting 1990; Fields 1986). Two couples admitted to receiving financial help from their extended families. They viewed this as temporary, and while they felt "obligated", it was not a major problem.

In view of the findings related to the difficulty in separating from family of origin, it is notable that couples are attempting to take responsibility for their own financial management. This determination has a major effect on the couples and the following areas were highlighted as creating differences and conflict:

* Basic attitudes and values regarding finance.
* Different styles in spending and budgeting of money.
* Expectations of family of origin.
* Communication skills in dealing with money.

3.4.5 Parenthood and Planning for Parenthood

Planning for the First Child

Six couples in the sample had had their first child, aged between five months and two years at the time of this study. Three couples do not have children and one couple is expecting their first child.
Of the three couples who do not have children, the female respondents were "not ready for the commitment" and the couples were not financially able to support a child. The male spouses worked long hours and weekend shifts and until they were able to restructure their working environments, the female spouse would not consider parenthood. These couples, however, saw themselves as having children within the next 2 years, regardless of whether the above conditions had been met.

The six couples with children responded to the planned pregnancy question as follows:

* Their children were planned in that none of the respondents were using contraceptives at the time of conception.

* Couples were surprised at the speed with which they conceived and anticipated a longer period to prepare, hence they hesitated when asked whether the baby was planned.

* The timing of the baby coincided with the couple feeling "ready" that "it was time to move on" and "feeling broody".

* No couple admitted that the child was seen as an antidote in a difficult relationship, but it was evident that at least three couples were "having a difficult time adjusting to each other" prior to conceiving.

**Adjustment to Parenthood**

Two respondents commented that they needed preparation for parenthood much as they had needed marriage preparation (Bernard 1982). The birth of their baby had a marked effect on the couples' relationship.
All the female respondents commented that their reactions ranged from "shock and depression" to "elation, joy and disbelief", often within one day. While three of the male respondents shared their feelings of "uncertainty at their role" and "total exclusion from the mother and child cocoon". The fathers in the study appeared to be confused and overwhelmed with their new roles and duties. On the one hand they felt pressurised to share the parenting load equally and bond with their baby. While on the other hand they felt inadequate and unprepared to undertake these responsibilities. These findings concur with Carr (1991).

Only two of the six couples with children had discussed their expectations with each other with regard to their parenting roles. The remaining four couples seemed to have a lot of unresolved conflict over division of duties and the degree of involvement of each spouse. One couple experienced severe conflict as a result of unexpressed feelings during this period and had seriously contemplated divorce.

Family Unit

Three of the six couples stated that having a child had completed their family circle and had been the most major source of satisfaction in their marriage. They saw their child as a motivation for being married and a reason to persevere through problem areas.

The remaining three couples stated that they felt their marriage remained the "most important factor" and having a child had added to their feeling of wellbeing. They admitted to feeling frustrated and restricted by parenthood, on occasion.

In general, adjustment to having a first child is demanding and difficult, and couples requested a support network to assist them at this stage of their family life cycle (See Chapter 2; Chapter 4).
3.5 DEVELOPMENT OF AN EARLY MARRIAGE PROGRAMME

Following Mace (1982) and Bader et al (1980) and confirming the findings emerging from this study, adjustment in the first years of marriage is a "difficult process". Clearly, couples could benefit from some form of intervention at the early stages of marriage, to assist them to deal with issues before they become entrenched as negative patterns of interaction (Minuchin 1977).

3.5.1 Attendance at an Early Marriage Programme

Nine respondents reacted to the need for an early marriage programme by saying it was "essential" and that the lack of continuity after attending the marriage preparation programme had led them to feeling "abandoned- an anti-climax". The respondents stated that they would have welcomed a follow-up programme and would willingly have attended.

Eight respondents were doubtful of the need for an Early Marriage Programme, stating that "once you were married you should go it alone" fearing that attending such a programme would label themselves as having 'problems'. Some couples stated that as married couples issues "were private" and not for group discussion. While, these respondents would not make attending an early marriage programme a priority, they said they would "consider attending if it was offered". In these circumstances it appeared that the keener spouse would need to "persuade" the other to attend.

This process is reflective of the manner in which couples negotiated attending the Marriage Preparation Programme, when one spouse may have attended in order to please their fiance. Feedback received from these respondents revealed that while they started the course reluctantly, they ended feeling positive.
Three respondents stated that they would be reluctant to attend an early marriage programme unless it conformed to their particular needs:

* Offered in the form of lectures by guest speakers in a large impersonal group (as opposed to the small group experiential format of the Marriage Preparation Programme).

* Programme had a religious basis and was presented by a Rabbi in order to enhance the spiritual aspects of marriage.

3.5.2 The Timing of an Early Marriage Programme

The majority of respondents stated that attending a Marriage Preparation Programme would be a pre-requisite to attending an Early Marriage Programme. Five keen respondents said they would "attend anyway", they described themselves as "willing to do whatever to help our relationship".

In the main, couples stated that the crucial periods of adjustment arose in the first year of marriage. Three respondents said a course should be offered after three months of marriage and thereafter at three monthly intervals. The majority of respondents stated that six months after marriage would be the optimum time for an intervention programme. This confirms Bader et al’s (1980) findings.

3.5.3 Course Structure

The respondents stated that owing to time pressures and "other priorities", they could not see themselves attending a six week early marriage programme. It seems more cost effective and appropriate to offer a programme consisting of two to four sessions, depending on the availability of facilitators.

Clearly, however the programme should be offered as a "whole" when couples attend the Marriage Preparation Programme. In this way the existing programme could be extended to include two additional sessions or split up into four sessions prior to marriage and four sessions after marriage.
Couples should be presented with the entire package when registering for preparation. These couples should be encouraged to attend marriage preparation.

3.5.4 Content of an Early Marriage Programme

It emerged from the findings that the topics covered in the existing Marriage Preparation Programme are relevant and should be repeated in an Early Marriage Programme. More emphasis should be placed on practising skills and discussing "real-life" scenarios. These topics included:

Communication:
* Specifically practising skills of listening and responding
* Watching relevant video tapes of couple communication
* Understanding styles of communication

Conflict Resolution Skills:
* Reinforcing conflict resolution as a creative and normal process
* Practising skills of conflict resolution

Finance:
* Practical assistance with budgeting and financial planning
* Managing dual income households
* Communication about attitudes and values concerning finances
* Contingency planning for birth of baby/emergencies
* Wills, insurance policies and savings
* Goals and future planning

Relationship with Extended Family:
* Separation anxieties and leaving home
* Styles of family communication and the effect on the couple
* Assertiveness and negotiation skills in dealing with family members
* Decision-making skills
* Relationships with in-laws

Allocation of Roles:
* Expectation of each other in the allocation of roles
* Understanding different styles of the partners
* Control and authority issues
* Management and responsibility of a home
* Developing routines and patterns of interaction

Sexuality/Intimacy:
* Exploring intimacy issues
* Communication regarding sexuality
* Awareness of patterns established

Religious/Spiritual Factors:
* Identifying religious/spiritual goals
* Building a marriage within this framework
* Understanding spouses orientation
* Planning for the future

Parenting:
* Planning for parenthood - normalising expectations
* Discussing parenting roles and responsibilities
* Changes of lifestyle
* Planning for the future
CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to collect information in order to enhance and/or modify the existing Marriage Preparation Programme. The information was collected and the present chapter will draw conclusions and suggest recommendations from the data in the previous three chapters.

4.2 CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

The conclusions will be discussed under the objectives formulated for this study.

Objective

* To review the literature in the field of marriage preparation.

This was undertaken by the writer and outlined fully in Chapter 2. The literature provided the theoretical foundation for this study and in many cases, the findings of this study were confirmed and described in the body of literature consulted.

Objective

* To ascertain what the couples recalled of the Marriage Preparation Programme.

All the respondents were able to recall attending the Marriage Preparation Programme and in the main, their recollections were spontaneous and positive. The advantage of a small group psychoeducational programme (such as this programme under review) was endorsed by the findings. The respondents unanimously reported that the group interaction and feedback was positive and rewarding.
The session on conflict resolution had a marked impact on the respondents. The majority of the respondents were able to recall some of the conflict resolution skills that were practiced and demonstrated. They, however, reported that while they were not "always able to utilise these skills in the heat of the moment", they had a more open and less fearful attitude towards conflict and its' resolution in their marriage.

The theme of communication was reinforced throughout the sessions, but on the whole the respondents recalled communication skills that were demonstrated experientially, as opposed to information shared in a didactic, lecture-type format. The respondents verbalised their awareness of the importance of communication, but, whether they retained this awareness after their marriage is uncertain.

Confronting the pragmatic realities of marriage and discussing expectations of themselves and of marriage during the Marriage Preparation Programme, was in itself a normalising experience for the respondents. The findings indicate that essentially "nothing and no one can adequately prepare the couple for marriage except the experience itself". It appears that by discussing some specific issues prior to marriage, couples are alerted to the potential problems and dilemmas encountered in marriage but are not exempted from dealing with them once they are married.

The findings indicate that the area of finances and money management was a key adjustment issue in early marriage for every couple in the sample. It is of note, that respondents in the main, had poor recall of this session during the Marriage Preparation Programme. The couples' idealism, their lack of knowledge about practical cost of living details and the taboos surrounding the discussion of the subject of money may have inhibited discussion. The content and presentation of the session may have affected recollection.

The topic of relationships with family of origin and in-law families assumes great relevance in marriage. On the whole, the respondents had little recall of this session and were not able to utilise the marriage preparation session effectively to deal with family relationships.
The sessions presented by guest speakers, namely the legal and sexuality sessions, were viewed positively by the respondents. The respondents reported that the sessions were informative and beneficial and remembered the innovative and dynamic presentations.

On the whole, they did classify these sessions as the most important areas of the course. This endorses the place of personal exploration and discussion being central to a Marriage Preparation Programme.

The findings revealed that half the couples would have welcomed some religious/spiritual input on the course. These couples had become more observant after their marriage.

Those respondents who had had children, on hindsight recalled that there was not enough input on preparation for parenthood. They agreed, however, that the Marriage Preparation format was not the appropriate vehicle for disseminating this information.

The findings indicate that while only two respondents requested personal feedback on relationship issues, the majority of the couples would have welcomed some feedback about their personal relationship styles.

Objective

* To assess the effect the Marriage Preparation Programme has had on couples' adjustment to marriage.

The overwhelming finding is that attending a Marriage Preparation Programme is not necessarily helpful in adjusting to marriage. The act of attending a Marriage Preparation Programme, however, has an important influence on the couple’s relationship and commitment to their marriage. By their attendance, the couple has "made a sacrifice" and placed value on their relationship indicating a seriousness and willingness to identify their interactional styles and build and develop their marriage. In the end the process of attending the programme becomes more important than any recollection of the content of the course.
The findings indicate that five of the respondents admitted to seeking professional help for difficulties in the first years of their marriage. All the respondents maintained that they would seek professional help should problems arise in their marriage. This finding concurs with Bader et al (1980) who stated that one of the benefits of attending marriage preparation is that it encourages couples to view help positively and without stigma. In sum, marriage preparation will not prevent the couple from experiencing difficulties but it seems to provide them with the determination to confront difficulties before easily opting out. In this way, it may be a factor in preventing the high divorce rate in the early years of marriage.

The effectiveness of the Marriage Preparation Programme in adjustment to marriage is limited, as the programme ends just as the couple embarks on the realistic and difficult experience of marriage. The respondents remarked that they would have welcomed follow-up and an opportunity to have a reunion with their group. In this way, they could have received support and guidelines during the difficult first years of marriage.

Objective

* To explore aspects of marital adjustment.

The following major areas were selected from couples’ perceptions, the observations of the facilitators of the Marriage Preparation Programme over the past four years and the literature on the subject.

* Relationships with family of origin

The majority of the respondents in this sample enjoyed very close relationships with their families of origin. The female respondents worked hard at maintaining frequent telephone and physical contact with their families on a daily basis with no lessening after three years of marriage. The couples lived in close physical proximity to their families homes. While this helped them to remain close to their families, it also fostered dependance and separation difficulties.
Notably, the period of the first few years of marriage is the time of transition, when couples loosen ties with their families of origin and develop independently as a marital unit. The findings in this study indicate that these couples experienced difficulty in making the transition and after three years of marriage, many couples had not yet made "a break" with their families of origin.

In the main, respondents felt torn between their spouse and their family. They expressed that their families of origin exerted pressure and expected them to remain as a central and involved member of the family. It emerged in the study, however, that the respondents themselves were finding difficulty in setting limits and defining their identity. The respondents reluctance to loosen their ties seemed to be twofold:

* Their fear of losing their place within the family of origin
* Their ambivalence about their families resilience at surviving without them, for example, relief at parents self-sufficiency to start a new life and anger at being easily overlooked and forgotten.

Families have specific styles of communicating and the blending of two families involves adjustment and accommodation to each other's entrenched patterns. It emerges that their is no ideal combination, but that the willingness of the couple to be open to discussing their attitudes and feelings allows for the successful resolution of issues.

In conclusion, the transitional stage of early marriage is a joint process of the family of origin allowing their family member to leave and the individual member breaking ties and replacing these ties with those of the marital unit.

**Formation of own family unit**

The establishment of a family unit is central to the development of a meaningful marital relationship. Once the couple have made the transition to marriage, then this area of adjustment is necessary to forge identity and provide the basic framework to build upon.
The respondents stated that their attitude towards being married played a large role in adjustment. This process required a shift in thinking from "I" to "we" and from "me" to "us". Those respondents keen to become involved with each other in day-to-day issues and establishing routines seemed to develop family identity sooner than those couples who resisted these changes and demands.

The first year of marriage emerged as a difficult and testing out period for the couples. This process is well documented in the current literature (See Chapter 2). Confronting some of the issues helped the couples but in the main time was a major factor that assisted adjustment. The second and third year of marriage were characterised by more tolerance and acceptance of being married as the couple learnt to know each other better. The findings emphasize that couples need to use their sensitivity and awareness to alert themselves to problem areas, in order to prevent these from becoming entrenched into the fabric of their relationship.

Allocation of roles

The allocation of roles in this sample reinforces the literature which states that couples tend to be influenced by the role models in their own families. They either perpetuate or rebel against the examples in their homes. It emerged that all the male respondents verbally agreed that roles should be shared equitably regardless of their model in the family of origin. In reality it appeared that this did not happen and conflict arose concerning role allocation, often leaving practical duties undone and situations unresolved.

Regardless of the female respondents' participation in instrumental roles in their families of origin, they identified with the traditional domestic female roles and all expected that they would take responsibility for the daily maintenance of their homes.

An important finding that emerged in the study has been the role of the domestic maid in the home of a newly married couple. The presence of a maid in the home alleviated much of the tension surrounding the role allocation of domestic chores. Yet, it also highlighted the couples' communication styles in terms of decision-making, issuing instructions and willingness to share responsibility regarding the maid.
Socio-Economic factors

The area of money management and planning was described by the majority of respondents as difficult and tense. The manner in which the couples discussed finances in the interview was reflective of their communication and decision-making style. Couples who were open about their financial situation and expressed consensus in decision-making, had in the main a balanced outlook and open communication about these issues, whereas respondents who were resistant to this area of discussion and had set ideas indicated unclear communication channels within their marriage.

After three years of marriage, couples had developed specific interactional styles of communicating about their economic issues. These styles were affected by the respondents' personality, experience in their family of origin and by their marital relationship. Eight out of ten couples stated that they managed without monthly ongoing financial support from extended family members. It is notable that couples were proud of this achievement. Their determination to succeed financially fostered their independence and helped to draw boundaries between the couple and their respective families.

The findings endorse that there is no one ideal way of interacting, rather that the couples' mutual acceptance of a style of interacting and the effectiveness of the communication is more important than the category.

Parenthood and planning for parenthood

The findings of this study indicate that on average couples started their families between one and two years after marriage. All the couples stated that they planned the pregnancy. Attitudes to parenting and changing roles and responsibilities emerged as a major area of adjustment.
The fathers reported they felt pressured to become good fathers and they expressed confusion about what this role entailed, stating that they had no appropriate role models. The female respondents in turn, expected their spouse to bond with the child and share the parenting load. The couples' expectations of each other were often unexpressed and unclear and led to frustration and escalating conflict.

Clearly, the birth of the first child crystallises the family unit, and changes the interactional patterns. The place of the child in the family varies from family to family, with three couples viewing their child as the reason for marriage and the pivot of the family. The three remaining couples stated that their marriage was the important focus of their family.

Long term follow-up on these couples will indicate whether early attitudes to the place of a child within a family affects relationships and interaction in the family.

Objective

* To investigate the need for an Early Marriage Programme and suggest an outline for a programme based on the findings.

Nine respondents stated that an Early Marriage Programme was an essential service while eight respondents were more reserved. They voiced their ambivalence about attending an Early Marriage Programme. They said it would be threatening and they may be labelled as having problems and that marriage meant "going it alone". These respondents, however, claimed that they would consider attending a programme if it was offered. Only three respondents stated that they would only attend a programme if it conformed to their specific needs, for example, religious focus in a large impersonal group.

A notable finding from this study was that attending a Marriage Preparation Programme was seen as a prerequisite to attending an Early Marriage Programme. Only five respondents would have considered attending an Early Marriage Programme without having been through marriage preparation.
The majority of the respondents stated that an Early Marriage Programme should be offered six months after marriage, confirming the current findings in the literature (Bader et al 1980).

The content of an Early Marriage Programme should in the main reinforce the themes of the Marriage Preparation Programme. Special emphasis should be placed on the adjustment areas highlighted in this study, namely relationship with extended family, formation of a family unit, finances, roles, communication, conflict resolution, religious/spiritual factors. In addition, the area of sexuality in marriage should be addressed in an Early Marriage Programme.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.3.1 On a Micro-Level

The Marriage Preparation Programme

It is recommended that the present Marriage Preparation Programme continue as a preventative measure to foster positive marital relationships.

The course should include more opportunity to practice the skills of communication and conflict resolution. In order to achieve this end, sessions could be reorganised and didactic information minimised. These skills should be reinforced at follow-up groups and in an Early Marriage Programme.

The financial session should include more practical information and be presented more dynamically. Couples should engage in an experiential exercise of "hypothetical shopping/budgeting" in order to identify with the financial stresses they will face in marriage. More "couple case histories" could be utilised.
Couples should be afforded more opportunity to identify the interactional styles in their families of origin. More emphasis should be placed on adjustment to marriage in terms of forming their new family unit. Couple case histories and the outcome of this research study may be used effectively in the session.

The suggestion that a session on spiritual/religious issues become an integral part of the Marriage Preparation should be considered by the facilitators of each programme. Couples attending the Marriage Preparation Programme should ideally have a session with a Rabbi as a guest speaker.

Couples should be alerted to the potential changes they may experience as a result of pregnancy and parenthood. This topic should be addressed briefly so that the subject can be opened for discussion and the couples referred to future appropriate community resources.

The course coordinators should consider an appropriate means to provide couple feedback in a non-judgemental manner. This could be offered by way of a couple termination interview at the end of the course, where couples could discuss their impressions of the course and their plans and goals for the future. In this way, potential problem areas could be addressed before becoming entrenched.

**The Early Marriage Programme**

An Early Marriage Programme should be established. The existence of such a programme would offer couples the opportunity to confront issues within their marriage in a safe, accepting and professional environment. Attendance at an Early Marriage Programme would enable a couple to enhance positive aspects of their relationship and confront problem areas without labelling themselves as "at risk".
An Early Marriage Programme should be targeted at couples who have attended the Marriage Preparation Programme and others as well and offered as a "package deal". In this way, couples have an opportunity for continuity and follow-up is built in to the service.

The Early Marriage Programme should address issues of adjustment in a dynamic, experiential manner, promoting open communication, growth and development. The programme should be offered in small groups, with as much use of experiential and audiovisual material. Didactic information should be limited and the focus should be on group interaction, growth and development.

The Early Marriage Programme should be marketed as a positive, healthy option so as to avoid any stigma that may be attached to attending the programme. It should be offered under the auspices of the Jewish Family and Community Council - Transvaal with strong endorsements from the Rabbinites and local synagogues.

4.3.2 On a Macro-Level

Both the existence of the Marriage Preparation Programme and the development of an Early Marriage Programme cannot be viewed in isolation. The services are interlinked and as indicated in the conclusions, couples who attend a Marriage Preparation Programme are more likely to attend an Early Marriage Programme.

It is recommended that services for young couples be viewed holistically and are seen as an interconnecting network.

As illustrated by Figure 4.1 on Page 92, the services offered are interlinked and reciprocal. For example, a couple attended a Marriage Preparation Programme. After six months marriage, they attend an Early Marriage Programme, to help with initial adjustment. In the event of their planning their first child, services exist to cater for their special needs. Alternatively, should they have difficulty conceiving a child, fertility support services would exist.
Figure 4.1  Life Cycle Support Services

FAMILY OF ORIGIN

MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROGRAMME
FIRST & SECOND MARRIAGES

PREGNANCY/CHILDBIRTH

EARLY MARRIAGE PROGRAMME

FERTILITY ADOPTION
FOSTERCARE CHILDLESSNESS

PARENTING PROGRAMMES

MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT ENCOUNTERS

DIVORCE SINGLE PARENT
WIDOW AND BEREAVEMENT
REMARRIAGE STEP FAMILIES

RETIREMENT GROUPS
STRESS MANAGEMENT
EMPTY NEST
GROWTH AND HOBBY GROUPS
Parenting support services which in themselves would feed Enrichment Programmes would be the next level of input. As the years pass the couple or individual (should they be divorced/widowed/never married) are afforded the opportunity to participate in retirement, stress, empty nest and growth-orientated programmes.

This would be an everchanging, evolving network. A couple contemplating marriage would be afforded a range of services to assist them on the rewarding but tenuous journey of marriage. This suggestion of a community-based approach in some way addresses the need to reach out to people at every level of their development and in this way provides support to build positive relationships, healthy family life and community cooperation.

4.3.3 Research

In order to offer programmes that best suit the needs of specific groups in the field of marriage preparation, there needs to be an integration of practice and research. In this way, every programme that is offered can be evaluated and its effectiveness monitored and assessed. Research should focus on emerging trends and ideally should be geared to identify changes over time.

The process of conducting this research study allowed the couples to look back at their previous experience and link it to their current relationship and attitudes to adjustment. This cognitive and deliberate process activated the couple to explore areas in their relationship that they may have avoided or not consciously recognised. This in itself was a positive and cathartic experience and is an indication that couples may need focussed input to evaluate and work on their relationships. Further research and follow-up is suggested to understand the uniqueness of couples’ styles of learning and long term changes.

The trends that emerged from this study, namely the major areas of adjustment that impinge on marriage: influence of family of origin, forming of a family unit, allocation of roles, socio-economic factors and parenthood are all deserving of more in-depth research.
Marriage preparation in the South African context is specifically geared to couples who fit into a white, middle-class urban environment. There is a great challenge to make the field of marriage preparation more relevant to all the people in South Africa and build up a body of indigenous knowledge. The possibilities for research in this area are broad and undefined.

The suggestion that Early Marriage Programmes be devised to offer support systems to couples in the treacherous first years of their marriage is a new area of development. Research should be built into every stage of this process in order to evaluate the effectiveness of this service. In the same way, the blending of marriage preparation and early marriage programmes should be undertaken in order to assess and monitor future trends in this field.
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OUTLINE OF PROGRAMME

1. DESCRIPTION OF MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROGRAMME

* The programme consists of six, two and a half hour sessions run in the evenings on a weekly basis, that is, 15 hours.

* Six engaged Jewish couples and two facilitators (who are social workers) participate in the Marriage Preparation Programme.

* Two guest speakers offer input on:
  * Legal implications of marriage (a lawyer)
  * Sexuality in marriage (a gynaecologist/sexologist)

* Sessions take the following format:
  * Introduction/feedback from previous sessions
  * Theoretical input by facilitators on topic of the session
  * Group discussion
  * Exercises - done individually and discussed with partner
  * Facilitators circulate among couples (on selected exercises)
  * Large or small group discussion
  * Summary of session

* The theme of communication is emphasised throughout the six-week programme.

* Co-facilitators are regarded as important for several reasons, inter alia, modelling open communication and facilitating small group discussions.

* A fee is charged.
2. PROGRAMME OUTLINE

Session 1
Introduction
Expectations of marriage
Expectations of programme
Introduction to communication
The importance of communication

Session 2
Roles and values in marriage

Session 3
The legal implications of marriage
Communication

Session 4
The creative use of conflict
Handling anger
Communication

Session 5
Finances - families - friends and fun
Communication

Session 6
Sexuality in marriage
Communication
Evaluation

3. COURSE CONTENT

SESSION 1

Objectives

* Introduction to the programme
* Exploration of couple’s expectations of marriage
* Exploration of couple’s expectations of each other
* Exploration of couple’s expectations of the programme
* The importance of open communication
Input

* General introduction of Marriage Preparation Programme by facilitators
* The difference between marriage preparation and marriage counselling
* Recognition of couple's voluntary attendance
* Exploration of couple's motivation and expectation of attending a Marriage Preparation Programme

Exercises

* Ice-breaker exercise
* Expectations of marriage (written individually then discussed as a couple)
* Completion of demographic questionnaire
* Bill Cosby audio-tape re: roles

SESSION 2

Objectives

* Introduction to roles and values in marriage
* Importance of open communication

Input

* Discussion of changes in traditional roles in marriage
* Emphasis on couple's identifying their unique style of interacting - and acceptance of their similarities and differences
* Open communication emphasised throughout session e.g. listening, checking out
Exercises

* Inventory of values in marriage (written individually then discussed as a couple - facilitators circulate)
* Brainstorming ideas

SESSION 3

Objectives

* Importance of communication: acquiring specific skills
* Enhancing self awareness
* Enhancing sensitivity to partner
* Introduction to the legal implications of marriage

Input

* Theory about communication, emphasis on verbal/non-verbal communication; listening skills; self awareness; awareness of feelings; sensitivity to partner; checking out meaning; feedback
* Presentation on legal implication of marriage by guest speaker (lawyer)

Exercises

* Open group discussion and brainstorming of communication concepts
* "Broken telephone" exercise (listening and checking out skills)
* Verbal and non-verbal listening exercise (role play in individual couple)
* Feelings - written individually and then discussed as couple
* General group discussion
SESSION 4

Objectives

* To recognise that conflict is inherent in all relationships
* To become aware of personal styles of expressing feelings in a conflict situation
* To become aware of special skills for resolving conflict
* The importance of open communication

Input

* Theoretical overview of conflict in marriage
* Importance of open communication and skills acquired in previous sessions
* Importance of attitude and timing in resolving conflict
* Use of "I messages" as opposed to blaming
* Willingness to compromise and negotiate rather than a competitive "win-win" situation
* Acceptance and understanding of issues that cannot be resolved
* The process of continuous negotiation

Exercises

* Anger exercise (written/discussed)
* Role play re : a typical scenario of marital conflict facilitators and volunteers
* Handout re : basic steps in resolving conflict
* Group discussion
SESSION 5

Objectives

* To become aware of the importance of financial management in marriage

* To become aware of individual/couple attitude towards money and spending in their relationship

* To become aware of individual couple's relationship to family of origin and future in-laws family

* To discuss the effect these relationships do have at present and may have in the future - on couple's adjustment to marriage

* Awareness of needs in regard to recreation and leisure activities and personal friends

* To create an awareness of the process of the couple forming a unique family unit

Input

* Communication and conflict resolution skills discussed in Sessions 1 - 4

* Open discussion re: money matters - values, budgeting and planning

* Family life cycle model used as a basis for discussion

* Factors that facilitate and hinder a couple's formation of a family unit

* Discussion of individual needs for "togetherness and space"

Exercises

* Money management (written individually then discussed as a couple)

* Experiential "string exercise". Translating connectedness and interaction in family relationships

* Family of origin (individual/couple) leisure time activities (small groups discussion)
SESSION 6

Objectives

* To promote awareness that sexuality in marriage is a form of communication
* To provide factual information regarding sexuality, contraception and pregnancy
* To dispel common myths re: sexuality
* To model open communication about a sensitive area in relationships
* To comment on sexuality in the Jewish context
* To evaluate the programme
* To link and review the six sessions holistically
* To terminate with the group members

Input

* Theoretical input by guest speaker (gynaecologist/sexologist) - slides shown
* Discussion of questions raised by group members / facilitators
* The importance of evaluation

Exercises

* Sexual intimacy handout given to couples to discuss at home
* Evaluation questionnaire (written individually)
* Group discussion
* Feedback from facilitators
* "Love letter exercise". Individuals to express their hopes, aspirations and expectations from their marriage - in a letter to their partner.
APPENDIX II
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. DEMOGRAPHIC DETAIL

* Couple
* Ages
* Children Date of Birth Sex
* Accommodation Owned/rented/otherwise
* Previous accommodation since marriage:
  Reason for move
* Occupation
* Courtship History
  * Length
  * Decision to make commitment
* Engagement
  * Length
  * Issues for discussion during this period
* Date of Marriage
* Wedding
  * Brief discussion on couples feelings about wedding

2. MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROGRAMME

* Recollection of attending programme
  * Spontaneous Responses
  * Probed Responses
* The most impact and the least impact
* With hindsight, what could have been included:
  * At the time of the course
  * Now that you are married
* Has attending the Marriage Preparation Programme made any difference in your marriage
  (Positive, negative)
* Would you attend a Marriage Preparation Programme again
* What do you recall of your fellow group members
  * comfort/discomfort
  * Effect of group
  * Maintaining contact
3. EARLY MARRIAGE PROGRAMME

* Would you attend a programme
* Content of an Early Marriage Programme
* Timing
* Marketing
* Would you attend if you had/hadn't been to the Marriage Preparation Programme

4. ADJUSTMENT ISSUES

* What have been the most difficult areas of adjustment?
* What have been positive areas of adjustment?
  Identify areas - use probes and allow for both spouses to comment and interact.

5. FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Family of Origin

* Who is in your family (your position)
* Marital status of parents
* Frequency of contact
  * Before marriage
  * After marriage
  * Exact times
  * Perceptions of changes
* Rituals, traditional holidays, styles
* Expectations of family relationships
* Couples and families
* Relationship Patterns
  * Describe family
  * How was it growing up in your family
  * Relationship with family now you are married
  * Effect of marriage on significant family members
In-Law Family

* Frequency of contact
* Describe your relationship with each other's family
* Joining of two families
* How has this been achieved
* Transitions, adjustments in this area
* Differences in family relationships
* Prior to marriage  * After marriage

Family Support

* In what way do family help (that is, emotional, material)
* How is help received
* Expectations of couple and family
* Effect of receiving help on spouse
* Future planning in this area

6. FORMATION OF A FAMILY UNIT

* Personal feelings of transition from single to married
* Development of marriage
  First year, second year, third year
  (Pinpoint differences, when and why change occurred)
* Factors assisting family unit formation
* Development of routines
  (language of the relationship - patterns, habits, accommodation to each other)

7. ROLES

Decisions about who does what
* How do you decide
* What did your parents/siblings/self do in your childhood home
  (instrumental roles)
* Attitude towards role allocation
Traditional roles vs. changing roles
Discuss the effects of changes
Expectations
Domestic help
  Role of maid within the home
  Reaction of spouses
  Effect on the relationship
Socialising and entertainment
  Decision making and sharing tasks
  How do couples negotiate this area

8. SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

Income
Expenses
Savings
Who pays for what, how is this decided
Budgeting, financial planning
Decision making - how are they reached in this area
Discoveries about partner
What issues emerge in this area either to be addressed in the Marriage Preparation Programme or Early Marriage Programme

Work

Occupation
Hours of work
Satisfaction with working environment
Promotional or advancement issues - that is, future direction
Effect of premixed jobs on marriage

9. PARENTHOOD

Birth of first child - preparation
Decision-making - factors which influenced decisions
* Expectations of self and spouse
* Realities of raising a child
* Changing roles - role of father / role of mother
* Role of grandparents - extended family
* Differences, that is, changes - positive and negative

10. SPACE AND INDEPENDENCE

Time out and time together
* Changes in this area since courtship and engagement
* Expectations of self
* Preparation for time out and realities
* Feelings about discussing this topic

11. RELIGIOUS / SPIRITUAL ISSUES

* Position prior to marriage
* Changes in this area - since marriage
* Motivation for changes (positive / negative)
* Expectations of spouses
* Reaction of family, friends
* Effect on the couple

12. COMMUNICATION STYLES

* General impression - concerning couples communication styles
  that is, how do you think you communicate
* Observation * open / closed
  * symmetrical / complimentary

13. CONFLICT RESOLUTION STYLES

* General impression
* Observation - of couples interaction and their resolution of differences of opinion
APPENDIX III
RATIONALE FOR INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The Interview Format

The semistructured interview was selected as the main research tool. Reid and Smith in Silver (1987: 56) state that a semi-structured interview format allows the interviewer to elicit information in larger amounts and in greater depth. "It is particularly useful for obtaining data on topics that are complex, highly sensitive, emotionally laden and relatively unexplored".

In addition, the interview allows for spontaneity and flexibility in the sequencing of the questions. The areas of adjustment to marriage may be sensitive for the couples and a face-to-face interview situation in which careful "probing" is undertaken is deemed more valuable in this research design.

Grinnell (1981) suggests that three questions are asked when using a semi-structured interview schedule:

* What is to be learned and how much is already known?

  * It is important to ascertain the couples' spontaneous recollection of the Marriage Preparation Programme. Utilising hindsight, the couples reflection focussed on their perceptions of their adjustment to marriage.

  * The researcher had knowledge of the adjustment areas in early marriage - determined by clinical experience, observation and a literature review. The semi-structured interview format allowed these areas to be explored in depth.

  * The researcher would be able to draw conclusions about marital adjustment in the first three years of marriage of couples who attended the Marriage Preparation Programme.
To what extent are the interviewers trained, prepared and able to elicit data on their own from respondents?

The researcher conducted all the interviews (as well as the pilot tests). In this way, she became familiar with the research tool and could ensure "standardisation" i.e. all couples discussed the same key areas.

The researcher is a qualified social worker with postgraduate clinical training in interviewing skills, and this knowledge enabled the researcher to probe beyond the superficial responses and explore issues in-depth.

To what extent is the simplicity of coding responses (with its implications for validity) to be a determining factor?

The instrument was simple and designed to elicit quantitative as opposed to qualitative data.

The value of quantitative research has been endorsed by La Rossa and Wolf (1985 : 531) who define it as "research that relies on verbal rather than numerical notations and focuses on the symbolic or phenomenological aspects of family life".

Coding was simplified as couples responses were seen as relevant on their own and recorded in terms of group trends where relevant.

The Researcher / Interviewee Relationship

Egan (1982) describes two facets of interaction between a client and therapist that can be transferred to the researcher/couple relationship, in this type of semi-structured interview format.
Immediacy/Awareness

Being aware of the dynamics between the researcher and the couple and utilising the "here and now" effectively. For example, reflecting communication process in the interview as a mirror of the couple's communication style.

Know-How

Utilising empathy, self-disclosure and confrontation in the research process. This was important to help couples feel "at ease" and to "confront" them tactically in order to reach unexplored areas.

Anderson in Bader and Sinclair (1983) comments on the impact of conducting research interviews with married couples: "an interview of this type acts as a catalyst forcing prospective spouses to explore areas which they may have avoided. It asks them questions about the past, the present and the future in a concerted way, a way in which they may have never viewed their relationship before".

In an ecosystemic terminology the study of family development reveals that in the process of observing a system (couple), the observer (researcher) simultaneously perturbs and is perturbed by the system through the process of interacting with it. The researcher is thus simultaneously a participant and an observer in the system (Varela in Carr 1991).
APPENDIX IV
APPENDIX IV

MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROGRAMME
PARTICIPANTS’ EVALUATION

It would be helpful to learn how valuable this course has been for you, in order to enhance wherever possible its values for other participants.

Will you please complete the following :-

Please answer ALL questions.

1. The most valuable topics covered were ..........................................................

2. The least valuable topics covered were ..........................................................

3. In what way did you feel you benefitted in :

   Session 1 : Introductory session : ..........................................................

   Session 2 : The legal implications of marriage : ....................................
Session 3: Communication skills:

Session 4: Handling conflict:

Session 5: Finances, family, friends and fun:

Session 6: Sexuality in marriage/introduction to parenting, evaluation:

4. What else do you think could have been included in:

Session 1:

Session 2:

Session 3:
Session 4: .................................................................................... 

........................................................................................................

Session 5: .................................................................................... 

........................................................................................................

Session 6: .................................................................................... 

........................................................................................................

5. How did you experience the guest speakers?
   a) Session on legal aspects of marriage: ............................................
      ........................................................................................................
      ........................................................................................................
   b) Session on sexuality: ..............................................................
      ........................................................................................................
      ........................................................................................................

For future planning it would be helpful to know whether you would prefer a male and/or female to present this topic

Male □ Female □ Either □

6. Please comment on the group leaders’ roles:
   a) Private couple discussion (mark with a cross (x) which is applicable)
      Was it helpful? Yes □ No □
      
      Please mark preference - Would you have liked:
      More attention □ Less attention □ Sufficient attention □
b) Which 3 did you enjoy the most (in order of preference mark 1, 2, 3)

Theoretical discussion by the group leaders
Discussion by guest speakers
Group discussion
Doing exercises individually
Doing exercises together as a couple
A combination of the above

7. Have you told your friends about the Marriage Preparation Programme?

8. Would you like a "reunion"?

   Yes  No

   If yes, please tick whether in
   3 months
   6 months
   1 year

9. Would you like to participate in a similar group experience in the future?
(Mark all items that apply)

   (i) As a married couple
   (ii) When pregnant with your first child
   (iii) As parents

10. Any other comments

THANK YOU