

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the introduction and general orientation of the study was presented. In this chapter, the literature review will be dealt with. The historical overview of marriage enrichment as well as the major theoretical foundations of marriage enrichment will be looked at. The different marriage enrichment programmes currently available for couples will also be discussed in this chapter.

The availability of current scientific literature on marriage enrichment and marriage enrichment programmes was found to be limited. The major source of information contained in this report was obtained from the following authors:

- Hunt, Hof and DeMaria (1998),
- Denton (1986),
- Garland (1983),
- Brown and Brown (2002),
- Brown and Christensen (1999), and
- Hanna and Brown (1999).

The theoretical models of couple therapy that will be explored in this chapter are relevant as they form the theoretical basis for the development of marriage enrichment programmes. The following table outlines the different models and programmes discussed in this chapter:

THEORETICAL MODELS	PROGRAMMES
Structural Model	Couple Communication

Strategic Model	Working Together
Behavioural Marital Model	Relationship Enhancement
Experiential Model	Training in Marriage Enrichment
	Choice Awareness
	Creative Marriage Enrichment
	Marriage Encounter
	Structured Enrichment of a Couple
	Marriage Communication Labs
	The Quaker Format

TABLE 2.1: TABLE OF THEORETICAL MODELS AND PROGRAMMES

This chapter also includes a discussion of research conducted in South Africa in the field of marriage enrichment.

2.2. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT (ME)

The movement to enrich marriages and provide education rather than therapy for couples began only four decades ago. The Roman Catholic Marriage Encounter programme began in Spain in January 1962 under the initiative and leadership of Father Gabriel Calvo (Hunt, Hof & DeMaria, 1998:26). It grew out of a desire to help families to relate more effectively together. Father Calvo's belief was that it was necessary to start with the relationship of the marital dyad to address the needs of families. Although Marriage Encounter originated in the Roman Catholic Church, several Protestant and Jewish versions have been developed and continue worldwide today.

David and Vera Mace began their work with retreats for the Quakers in October 1962 (Mace & Mace, 1974). They started experimenting by gathering groups of five or six couples with apparently satisfying marriages, to spend a "weekend retreat" together. The aim was for these couples to share their

experiences of marriage. They found that very often these supposedly “good” marriages revealed what, in fact, were clear evidences of the early stages of maladjustment. They also found that these early manifestations of potentially serious trouble could in the trustful atmosphere of the weekend retreat be relatively easily faced and cleared up. This new process had to have a name and they chose the term “marriage enrichment” (Mace, 1987). The way was now open to explore the concept of prevention in helping married couples.

In the late 1960s Sherod Miller and his associates began conducting their studies in marital communication from which they developed the Minnesota Couples Communication Program, which evolved into the CCP (Hunt, Hof & DeMaria, 1998:33).

In 1973 David and Vera Mace founded the Association of Couples for Marriage Enrichment (ACME) with the following four purposes:

- 1) To encourage and help member couples to seek growth and enrichment in their own marriages,
- 2) To organize activities through which member couples can help each other in their quest for marital growth and enrichment,
- 3) To promote and support effective community services designed to foster successful marriages,
- 4) To seek to improve the public image of marriage as a relationship capable of facing both personal growth and mutual fulfillment (Hopkins, Hopkins, Mace & Mace, 1978:21).

ACME is made up of couples representing many different programmes. The slogan of the organization is “ To work for better marriages, starting with our own”. In 1975 ACME joined other enrichment groups to form the Council of Affiliated ME Organizations (CAMEO), which concerned itself primarily with developing leadership and training standards.

Marriage enrichment organizations have grown significantly in the last two decades benefiting thousands of couples and laying the groundwork for new understanding of the marriage relationship (Dinkmeyer & Carlson, 1986:19).

Many ME programs are local in scope, in that they have been developed and are used, for the most part, by particular individuals or couples and their associates within a small geographical area. Many other programmes are much larger in scope, in that they operate nationally in the United States of America.

The movement to enrich marriages started in the church and has been continued ever since. Marriage enrichment in the church is based on the belief that persons who have learnt to satisfy their basic needs should continue to grow by developing their creativity or their unused potential (Garland, 1983).

Marriage enrichment is a challenge to individuals to grow as individuals, to grow as a couple and ultimately, the enrichment of the marriage should result in the strengthening of the family structure. For the church, marriage enrichment expands to a network support among families, congregations and communities.

Church-related marriage enrichment depends on the knowledge and assistance of helping professionals in areas such as communication, conflict resolution, anger management, decision-making and sexual enrichment (Garland, 1983 in Hinckley, 1996:76).

The many developments and adaptations of marriage enrichment in the past two decades have involved influences from both ME and marriage or couple therapy and assessment. Many of the exercises and other therapeutic elements developed for ME programmes are also being used by marital therapists in sessions and as homework (Luquet, 1996 in Hunt, Hof & DeMaria, 1998).

ME emerged out of both the visions and the frustrations of therapists who have worked with couples from several theoretical approaches. This suggests that the ME movement extends well beyond the couples who have participated in enrichment events. It has also indirectly influenced marital therapy and psycho-education.

2.3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND APPROACHES

2.3.1. INTRODUCTION

One of the goals of marriage enrichment is to increase marital adjustment. The dominant theoretical framework used in marriage enrichment is therefore the **general systems theory** (Minuchin, 1974). The general systems theory is concerned with the process and structure of relationships rather than specific problems. The systems theory deals with relationship variables rather than personality variables.

The marital relationship is seen as a social system with the spouses considered as units of the system, above and beyond their individual characteristics. A central concept is that the system functions to develop patterns of coping with and relating to changing inputs from within the system (developmental, affective and other changes in each partner) and from the environment (changes in employment, relationships to extended family, etc).

The system uses information from both sources to understand how it is functioning for its members and in its environment. If these data indicate some disparity between the actual effects and the intended effects, the marital system/relationship must change in some way (Garland, 1983).

From a systems theory approach, the couple is seen as living in an ever-changing relationship; the change is prompted by environmental inputs and limited by environmental constraints and its own inertial force.

In conceptualizing the marital relationship as a system, spouses' roles are defined as processes requiring adaptation and change in both the individual and the system. Roles involve interaction and adjustments between the components and the system. It is a multiple concept referring to the demands upon the component by the system, to the internal adjustment processes of the component, and to how the component functions in meeting the systems' requirements.

The adjustment it makes is frequently compromises between the requirements of the component and the requirements of the system. In order for couples to make adjustments they must go through the process of communication. First, new information about the component (spouse) and the system (marital relationship) must be transmitted. Second, spouses must receive this information. Finally, the partners must react to and act upon the information.

The following models of couple and family therapy will now be discussed in detail in order to provide a clear theoretical background that forms the basis of marriage enrichment programmes.

- a) Structural Model
- b) Strategic Model
- c) Behavioural Marital Model
- d) Experiential Model.

2.3.2. STRUCTURAL MODEL

According to Brown & Christensen (1999:49) structural family therapy is a term that is used to encompass both a conceptual model of families and an applied model of intervention with families. It emphasizes the active and organized wholeness of the family system. Structural family therapists focus on the interaction and activities of family members to determine the organization and structure of the marital relationship. Emphasis is placed on how, when, and to whom spouses currently relate in an effort to understand, and then to change, the structure of the marriage.

According to Brown & Brown (2002:32) the key concepts of the structural model are:

- The family as a multibodied organism
- The function of subsystems within the family system
- The characteristics of marital boundaries
- The effects of enmeshed and disengaged behaviour between spouses
- Evolution of change

The Family as a Multibodied Organism

In the structural model, the client is the family, and a problem with one spouse is seen as a symptom for the marriage. The structuralist assumes that that problems or symptoms are created and/or maintained by interactional or structural problems within the marriage (Brown and Brown, 2002:32).

The Couple System

The family system contains three key subsystems (marital, parental, and sibling) within the total family organism (Brown & Brown, 2002:32). The marital subsystem is the first to form and is central to the functioning of the family. The marital subsystem's basic role is to provide mutual satisfaction of the couple's needs without compromising the emotional environment necessary for further growth and development of two maturing, changing individuals (Terkelsen, 1980 in Brown & Brown, 2002:4).

The marital subsystem is that part of a marriage that includes all the behavioural sequences that have evolved out of the partners' commitment to "love and cherish" each other. The marital subsystem does not include the role each partner plays with other members of the nuclear and extended family. In other words, the marital subsystem includes transactional patterns related to giving attention to one another, but does not include those transactional patterns concerning the giving of attention to their children (Brown & Brown, 2002:4).

Marital Boundaries

The boundaries of a subsystem or system are "the rules of who participates and how" (Minuchin, 1974:53), and many couple conflicts are related to boundary issues. Each couple's boundaries vary in their degree of flexibility and permeability. Some boundaries may be too rigid (distant), and therefore make it difficult for the couple to adjust to new situations. Permeability of a system or subsystem's boundary refers to the amount of access spouses have across boundary lines. Some couples' boundaries are too permeable in that the boundary becomes diffused or ill-defined and allows too much access (or interference) from friends or relatives (Brown & Brown, 2002:5).

The Effect of Enmeshed and Disengaged Behaviour Between Spouses

The concept of boundaries is closely related to the concept of enmeshed behaviour in the structural model. Minuchin (1974) describes an axis at the ends of which couples have extremely diffuse or permeable boundaries. When boundaries are too permeable, spouses are enmeshed at the expense of their own autonomy, not learning to work out their problems. At the other end of the axis are couples who have rigid boundaries and are disengaged from each other. Spouses in this case are too autonomous, maintaining their separateness at the expense of mutual support (Brown & Brown, 2002:32).

Evolution of Change

The couple must develop transactional rules and patterns to meet the needs of each new stage of the life cycle. Each stage of the life cycle brings with it a new set of needs. For example, the couple that experiences the birth of a child has different needs than the couple whose child has just left home. In each case, the couple must develop patterned interactions or structures that meet their needs at their developmental stage.

2.3.3. STRATEGIC MODEL

Jay Haley (1973) quoted by Brown and Christensen (1999:81) defines strategic therapy as therapy in which the clinician initiates what happens during treatment and designs a particular approach for each problem. This is relevant for marriage enrichment as it involves the development of a programme designed to deal with specific issues.

The strategic therapy model shares similar constructs with the structural therapeutic model. According to Stanton (1981) quoted in Brown & Brown (2002:36) and Brown & Christensen (1999:82) both approaches view the couple in the following adapted ways:

1. Spouses interact within a context. Problems and functions must be considered within the interactional context in which they occur.
2. Problem couples are seen as being “stuck” at a particular stage within the family life cycle. The couple has difficulty making the transition from each stage of the family life cycle to the next.

3. Symptoms are system-maintained and system maintaining. A marital system works to maintain homeostasis in interactional patterns, and symptoms serve to maintain this system.
4. Emphasis is on the present rather than on the past. The couple's history is not so relevant, since dysfunctional behaviour is maintained by current interactions.
5. Insight is not a necessary prerequisite for change. Problems cannot be alleviated through understanding alone, because ongoing interactional processes maintain the problems.

Strategic therapists are concerned with five interrelated concepts:

- 1) Symptoms
- 2) Metaphors
- 2) Power
- 3) Sequence of interactions
- 4) Hierarchy.

These will be discussed further hereunder.

Symptoms

Strategic therapists place primary emphasis on symptoms, which they see as a way to maintain balance in the marital system. Symptoms can be a way of communicating metaphorically within the marital system. A wife's depression may be a way of conveying her unhappiness in a marriage. Strategic therapists are much more symptom-focused than are structural therapists, and both are more symptom-oriented than are trans-generational therapists (Stanton, 1981 in Brown & Brown, 2002:36).

Strategic therapists assume that symptoms characterize the ways couples interact with each other (Brown & Christensen, 1999:83). Symptoms are more likely to occur when couples are making a transition to a new stage of the life cycle.

Metaphors

Symptoms may be metaphors for describing some aspect of the family system. A metaphorical message usually contains an explicit element (for example, “I can’t sleep”), as well as an implicit element (for example, “I want you to be more attentive to me”). A symptom may be a report on an internal state, and also a metaphor for another internal state: a wife’s headache may be expressing more than one kind of pain (Madanes, 1981:225).

Power

Haley (1976) believes that any relationship is a power struggle. Brown & Christensen (1999:86) state that the power struggle between two people is not a question of who controls whom, but rather, of who defines the nature of the relationship and by what means.

Haley (1976) notes that, “when one person communicates a message to the other, he is by that act making a maneuver to define the relationship”. Any message has elements of both “command” and “report”. When a wife says to her husband, “The toilet is leaking and there is water on the floor,” she is reporting on the toilet, but also may be requesting him to fix the toilet or clean up the floor. If he refuses, he is engaging in a power struggle with his wife (Brown & Brown, 2002:37).

Sequence of Interactions

The strategic therapist places special emphasis on the sequence of interactions. In assessing the problem, the therapist should begin to look for sequential patterns of behaviour. Does one spouse accuse the other of being neglected? Does one spouse feel that the other spouse does not care what is going on? When one spouse speaks, does the other spouse interrupt or reject what is being said? By assessing the sequence of interactions around the presenting problem, the therapist gains information useful in developing a strategy to alleviate the problem.

Once spouses have expressed their views on the problem, the therapist should get them to interact with each other about the problem. The therapist may want to see if the husband and wife can discuss the problem without turning to the therapist. The therapist should be careful not to be central to this interaction; instead, he or she should get family members to talk to each other (Brown & Brown, 2002:37).

Hierarchy

Hierarchy begins to emerge once the sequence of interactions maintaining the problem has been identified. In functional families, parents are responsible for their children. However, in dysfunctional families, the hierarchy may be violated. For example, when conflict between a husband and wife increases, a wife may get closer to her son - a cross-generational coalition that undermines the parent's role (Brown & Brown, 2002:37).

Brown & Christensen (1999:89) state that when the therapist requires family members to interact, the family structure and hierarchy begin to emerge.

2.3.4. BEHAVIOURAL MARITAL MODEL

The behavioural marital model is derived from social learning theory (Bandura, 1969), which combines operant conditioning with social modeling (Brown & Christensen, 1999:154). Early models of behavioural marital therapy were based on social learning and operant principles or rewards partners exchange with each other. More recent models focus on cognitions and attitudes. The combination of social learning theory and cognitive theory led to the development of cognitive-behavioural marital therapy. These therapists believe that changing cognitions such as expectations and beliefs are critical to helping couples achieve satisfaction in their marriage (Brown & Brown, 2002:43).

According to Brown & Christensen (1999:191) conflict management and communication skills can be taught in a group format. The authors explain that Markman, Floyd, Stanley, and Clemons (1993) taught 33 couples effective communication and conflict management skills through the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP). The PREP programme utilized techniques of cognitive-behavioural marital therapy and communication – oriented marital enhancement programmes.

Positive Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement occurs when an event follows a behaviour that increases the probability of that behaviour's recurrence. If the husband agrees to hang up his clothes, such behaviour is more likely to occur if the wife compliments or recognizes (positively reinforces) this behaviour. Likewise, the therapist is more likely to increase positive couple interactions by complimenting each spouse or recognizing their progress.

It should be noted that an event is only reinforcing when it increases the behaviour it follows. Often behaviours that were once reinforcing are no longer satisfying. In many cases, low levels of positive reinforcers are coupled with high levels of aversive or punishing behaviours. The result is a distressed marriage in which both spouses are dissatisfied (Brown & Brown, 2002:44).

Extinction

Extinction refers to the reduction or elimination of a behaviour through the removal of a reinforcer. In many marriages, behaviours (attention) that were once reinforced (affection) are ignored, and attention continues to decrease until it is extinguished.

Presenting complaints such as “He doesn’t notice,” “He doesn’t care,” or “I can’t seem to get his attention” are indications that behaviour is being or extinguished. Therapeutic efforts in these cases may begin by getting spouses to stop ignoring and instead attend to desired behaviours in the other spouse (Brown & Brown, 2002:44).

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is a concept derived from social learning theory that refers to the equitable exchange of rewarding behaviours between spouses. Spouses often reinforce each other at an equitable rate that maintains the behaviour of both parties.

Reciprocity is often conditional on other aspects of the relationship, and does not necessarily mean that spouses will immediately reciprocate. The expectation that one’s spouse will do so immediately is often disappointing and leads to further conflict in the relationship (Stuart, 1980).

2.3.5. EXPERIENTIAL MODEL

Carl Whitaker and Virginia Satir, though very different in personal styles, best represent the distinguishing characteristics of an experiential approach (Hanna & Brown, 1999). Whitaker and Satir both place great emphasis on personal growth rather than on altering dysfunctional interactions or removing symptoms.

Growth may include autonomy and freedom of choice. Growth occurs when each spouse is able to experience the present moment and, furthermore, share that moment with the other partner. The therapist uses him/herself to help spouses express things as openly and honestly as possible. Theory is de-emphasized while the conceptual focus is on individuality, freedom of choice, and personal growth (Brown & Christensen, 1999:137).

2.4. MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT PROGRAMMES AVAILABLE INTERNATIONALLY

Several different marriage enrichment programmes have been developed that aim to increase marital satisfaction among non-distressed couples. Diskin (1986:111) states that marriage enrichment programmes have developed as a response to a multitude of technological, religious and social shifts in our society. Diskin (1986:111) further explains that ME programmes attract participants with the goal of enabling basically good marriages to expand and grow.

Since marriage enrichment programmes provide skills and models for partners in their search for a new kind of relationship, different types of programmes have evolved. At the core of all of these programmes, however, is an opportunity for couples to experiment with new ways of relating (Diskin

1986:114). Enrichment programmes usually adhere to an educational model, teaching skills of communication, conflict negotiation and decision making. They act as a support service for married couples.

Many programmes have been developed internationally. Some of these international programmes that will be discussed are as follows:

- i. Couple Communication
- ii. Working Together
- iii. Relationship Enhancement
- iv. Training in Marriage Enrichment
- v. Choice Awareness
- vi. Creative Marriage Enrichment
- vii. Marriage Encounter
- viii. Structured Enrichment of a Couple
- ix. Marriage Communication Labs
- x. The Quaker Format

2.4.1 Couple Communication

This program focuses exclusively on couple communication. It targets skills rather than issues. These skills are: (a) awareness skills – those which enable partners to understand their rules and interaction patterns, and (b) communication skills – those which enable partners to change their rules and interaction patterns.

The format of this program may be altered to suit different groups, but the usual course meets once a week for sessions lasting three hours. A screening interview for prospective participants is held prior to the first session. Leadership is restricted to certified instructors trained for this purpose. Groups are usually limited to 5-7 couples to allow ample time for group feedback to individual couples practicing their newly acquired skills. A supportive

environment is created and leaders model the skills to be learned. Couples work in the group setting and are expected to do exercises between sessions as well as reading of certain passages from prescribed reading material (Diskin, 1986:115).

2.4.2. Working Together

The program is designed to respond to the particular needs and stresses of dual-career couples. According to Avis (1986:29) this enrichment programme focuses on the following aspects:

- Renegotiating roles and responsibilities,
- Structuring and managing time,
- Meeting emotional needs,
- Dealing with competition and
- Sharing control and power.

The programme consists of seven two-and-a-half hour weekly evening sessions in a comfortable lounge which is both pleasant and private. Sessions are limited both in number and length to accommodate the severe time constraints of dual-career couples. The group consists of 4-6 couples. Structure within the group is seen as essential in order to reduce anxiety of participants and ensure that involvement is goal-directed.

Each session begins with a brief “community time”, which allows unstructured time for participants to raise questions, concerns or learning occurring since the last session. This is followed by some combination of structured experiences, mini-lectures, skill practice, couple and group discussions designed to meet the session objectives.

Sessions are designed to respond directly to issues raised by participants during the pre-workshop interview and during the first session. The group

leaders are ideally a dual-career therapist couple, although it may also be provided by an unmarried male and female therapist team, or by a single leader working alone. Because of the nature of the exploration of gender-role issues in the program, a male-female team (whether married or not) is considered most effective in giving support (Avis, 1986:29).

2.4.3 Relationship Enhancement

This program builds upon the humanistic psychology concepts that people can express themselves fully and joyously as they grow toward the expression of their potential.

An empathic climate is established enabling participants to freely express their feelings. This leads to increased self-acceptance and knowledge, which in turn, leads to increased acceptance of others. Participants are taught to respond with understanding and acceptance in both the speaker and listener roles, to recognize their own feelings and motivations and to express themselves congruently. Complete acceptance with respect for the negative as well as the positive feelings are stressed and modeled by the leader.

This program can accommodate a wide variety of formats ranging from weekly hour meetings, to a weekend marathon session (Diskin, 1986:116).

2.4.4 Training in Marriage Enrichment

Dinkmeyer and Carlson (1986) provide the following account of this program: Training in Marriage Enrichment (TIME) is an educational program based on the Adlerian approach to human relations.

The program is designed to help married couples learn the skills they need to build a loving supportive relationship. TIME helps couples develop skills that

enable them to enrich their marriage and to deal with particular challenges that they experience. Couples define the marriage they want and then develop the skills needed to maintain the relationship. Participation in a TIME group does not imply that a couple has marital problems, it's rather an indication of their desire to grow and strengthen their relationship.

TIME is based upon the following principles:

- Developing and maintaining a good marriage relationship requires a time commitment.
- Specific skills essential to a healthy marriage can be learned.
- Change often takes time, but all changes begin within the individual.
- Feelings of love and caring that have diminished or disappeared often return with behaviour changes.
- Small changes are very important in bringing about big changes.

The TIME program is organized systematically. Each of the ten sessions is basic principles and provide opportunities to practice the necessary skills for enriching a marriage. This goal is achieved through reading, meaningful discussions and applications of the ideas, and activity assignments and exercises.

In the sessions, couples learn and apply the following skills:

- To accept responsibility for their behaviour
- To identify and align goals
- To encourage each other
- To identify factors that influence a marriage relationship and understand their responsibility in creating the desired relationship
- To communicate honestly
- To make choices that support their marriage goals
- To learn a process of resolving conflict and applying this conflict resolution to common marital challenges

- To commit to the process of maintaining an equal marriage.

Participants prepare for each session by reading in advance a chapter from *TIME for a Batter Marriage*, a couple resource book. The session then follows the following sequence:

- Building communication: several activities are used that focus on building communication.
- Discussion of activity for the week: each week couples are expected to do one or more activities that reinforce the skills introduced in the previous session.
- Discussion and reading: participants express their ideas, feelings and attitudes which emerge as a result of the reading assignment.
- Presentation of the recording: the audio-tapes for each session focus on the skill presented in the session.
- Application: the skill or concept introduced in the session is experienced and practiced through the activity.
- My Plan: a form on which each partner writes their concerns and commitments and assess their progress each week.
- Summary: each member contributes and identifies what he or she has learned during the session.
- Activities and reading for the week.

2.4.5. Choice Awareness

The premise underlying this program is that the quality of relationships is related to the choices we make. Participants are made aware of options within the choices they make and are facilitated to make better choices (Diskin, 1986:116).

2.4.6. Creative Marriage Enrichment

This is a multi-approach strategy using a Rogerian emphasis in working with couples in a group process that incorporates behavioural techniques. Will Schutz's (1966) issues of Inclusion, Control and Affection are the core around which strategies are developed (Diskin, 1986:117).

2.4.7. Marriage Encounter

These weekend programs are highly structured and, although presented in a group setting, each partner "encounters" only the other in private. There is minimal opportunity for discussion with other participants. The program consists of a series of written husband-wife dialogues preceded by 10-14 mini-lectures by a priest and husband-wife leader couple. Trust and acceptance is stressed through opening one's self to one's spouse in the written projects. The end result for most couples is the development of an intense atmosphere of intimacy and a renewed sense of commitment to each other (Diskin, 1986:119).

2.4.8. Structured Enrichment of a Couple

At the base of Structured Enrichment is the belief that enrichment can help couples more than therapy. The goals of Structured Enrichment, are therefore, prevention of conflict, personal and relationship growth and communication skill building.

The aim of Structured Enrichment is to provide a way in which couples can join with one another to increase and improve their interaction through novel face-to-face experiences. These experiences hopefully teach them alternative ways of relating to one another. These alternatives are presented in a

standardized, structured manner, such as teaching individual couples communication skills.

What distinguishes Structured Enrichment from other forms of enrichment is the wide variety of programmes, which are designed to be administered around selected relationship issues. By moving flexibly around specific relationship issues Structured Enrichment is able to confront a wide spectrum of marital issues such as:

- Confronting change
- Sexual clarification and fulfillment
- Cohabitation
- Reciprocity
- Communication
- Assertiveness
- Working through, and
- Conflict resolution

A standard Structured Enrichment program consists of six lessons requiring eight one-hour sessions which may take four to nine weeks to complete. The sessions follow a standard sequence of intake-pretest, six enrichment sessions, posttest, feedback and phone or questionnaire follow-up (Stevens & L'Abate, 1986:60).

2.4.9. Marriage Communication Labs (MCLs)

According to Diskin (1986:120) the basic design of this programme is the retreat model which accommodates ten couples and two leaders. The Marriage Communication Labs use guided discussion, communication skill building, role-plays and group- process as well as awareness and sensitivity training. A

sacred dimension is also stressed within the marital relationship and most MCLs conclude with an informal worship service.

Contents and methods of the lab vary, depending on the concerns of the participants and the skills of the leaders. Two aspects of the program that distinguish it from other programs are: first, they facilitate partners into talking about sex by showing a film about communication and sexuality. Second, they teach communication in conflict resolution.

2.4.10. The Quaker Format

According to Diskin (1986), the Quaker Format refers to a program developed by the Quakers, who are members of the Society of friends, a Christian movement devoted to peaceful principles.

This program has a minimum of structure and no advance planning. Participants are free to shape the entire program to their needs. Leaders, however, are trained and conduct the retreats in much the same manner from session to session. Participants are taught to speak from the “I” position and learn not to analyze, judge, confront or give advice to their partners.

Primary interaction is between husband and wife, although they are within a group setting. Sharing within the group is voluntary and feedback may be solicited or declined as each person desires.

Negotiation skills are modeled by the husband-wife leader couple. Closeness in the context of this model is expressed as mutual understanding rather than “togetherness”.

2.5. MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Marriage enrichment programmes in South Africa are usually presented by religious organizations, universities, other agencies, individuals and couples (Hinckley, 1996:88). However, it seems that they are not widely or generally available. In the researcher's fifteen years of experience in the field of social work, she has not presented any enrichment programme, and neither has she ever heard of other colleagues in the field presenting such an intervention.

Although the need for preventative intervention in the field of marriage and family services is so obvious and needed, most welfare organizations do not have the capacity, funding, or the availability of trained personnel to provide such services.

Various enrichment models are used by these agencies, some based on overseas or western models and others developed locally. A programme of social interest is Prepare-Enrich, designed by Dr. David Olson of Minneapolis, Minnesota in the United States.

Although this programme was designed in the USA, it is widely used in South Africa. This programme has been scientifically measured and validated. It is a computer-linked inventory that covers many areas of relationships in the family, including communication, handling money, leisure time and coping with conflict.

The problem that the researcher finds with internationally developed programmes is that they are generally not suitable for adaptation to the general South African population who are diverse in many aspects but also unique in many ways.

Other examples of marriage enrichment models used in South Africa is The Marriage Encounter Model, developed by James and Arthur Whelan, Couples Communication Workshop, developed by Miller, Nunnally and Wackman and the Marriage Enrichment Workshop, developed by David and Vera Mace (Hinckley, 1996:89).

2.6. RESEARCH ON MARRIAGE PREPARATION AND ENRICHMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

It appears that a few studies on marriage preparation and enrichment has been done on a masters theses level. A few of the available studies will be discussed here.

Pretorius (1982) undertook a study to develop a pre-marital communication program and to evaluate the effectiveness of the program as regards the communication of the test subjects who took part in the programme.

The program was presented over a weekend, starting on the Friday afternoon and ending on the Saturday afternoon. The program emphasised issues such as empathic understanding, genuineness, respect, concreteness and self-disclosure. The content of the program consisted of a written manual titled "*Kommunikasie-vaardighede: 'n Handleiding*" and a video model titled "*Kommunikasie in die Huwelik*". The program also makes use of additional video-material, group discussions and role plays.

The program can be divided into the following steps:

- Each couple receives instructions to discuss a topic of their choice.
- This ten-minute discussion is taped.

- The experimental group reads the manual on specific communication skills.
- A group discussion on the communication skills, as discussed in the manual, follows.
- Video models of a couple demonstrating these skills are shown to participants.
- The initial discussion (step 1 & 2) is played back to each couple separately, and the facilitator discusses it with them. The couple is asked to identify examples in their taped discussion of where they used or didn't use the communication skills.
- The facilitator and the group recaps on the communication skills, role plays are done and the next session is structured.
- Every couple has a discussion again, which is also taped.
- Feedback and evaluation of the final session is discussed

Pretorius (1982) recruited six engaged couples to participate in her study. The test subjects were allocated at random to one of two groups, namely the experimental or the control group. The subjects in the experimental group were exposed to the pre-marital communication program, while those in the control group were only given reading matter that had no relation to the communication program whatsoever.

The conversations of individual engaged couples were recorded on video before as well as after exposure to the experimental program. Verbatim transcriptions of these recordings were used by two independent assessors to evaluate the couples on the empathic, genuineness, respect and concreteness scales before and after exposure. The degree of self-disclosure evident in the conversations of subjects before and after experimental intervention was then measured quantitatively.

It was concluded that the pre-marital communication programme was effective in improving empathic understanding, genuineness, respect, concreteness and self-disclosure of the engaged couples participating in the programme.

Cleaver (1982) developed a structured communication programme, primarily to aid in marital therapy. This programme can, however, also be used for marriage enrichment. The programme was presented in one day, divided into four sessions. The first session started with an introduction, which involved getting to know one another. Couples paired off with a partner other than their own husband or wife, and talked for five minutes. They then returned to the group, and introduced their partner to the group. The rest of the session consisted of three exercises.

The first exercise was on feedback of content. The couples divided into groups of three and were given a list of news items to read. A was to read the article, B had to listen and paraphrase and C had to function as monitor to tell B how accurately in C's view, B had paraphrased the article. Each person had a turn to be the speaker, listener and monitor. The couples then returned to the group and a group discussion followed.

Exercise two focused on recognition of feelings. Each person was handed an answer booklet, and a video cassette was then shown. The tape included an explanation of the communication process, as well as a series of structured exercises to be performed by the subjects, in which they are taught to listen to content, listen with empathy and acceptance, and to disclose feelings and speak for themselves. The models on the video make statements, and for the exercise the participants had to write down their answers on the answer booklet. After completion of the exercise, a group discussion followed.

Exercise three focused on empathy and took the form of group members pairing off with someone other than their own spouses. Each pair had a turn in the "hot seat". They each told of an unusual experience, while the other person

reflected the feelings concerned. After completion of the exercise, the facilitator once again lead the group discussion.

Session two of the programme was focused on acceptance. The video tape was shown and the participants had to record their answers in the answer booklet. This session include the explanation, demonstrations and exercises on recognizing feelings, empathy and acceptance. As an exercise the participants had to observe the videotaped models and answer questions in the answer booklets.

The third session focused on speaking skills. The instruction from the videotape was followed. The couples practiced using “I” and disclosing feelings. Each couple got a chance to discuss a topic, while the rest of the group observed and scored for acceptance in the booklet. The group then discussed the use of clear speaking, empathy and acceptance.

The fourth session of the day was based on negotiating. A topic was chosen for each couple, one on which they differed. The procedure that was followed was that A would make a statement. B would accept the statement by summarizing it, briefly reflecting feelings and empathizing. B then makes a statement giving his own point of view (regardless of A’s viewpoint). This time A accepted the statement by briefly summarizing what B had said and by reflecting feelings and empathizing. A then made a statement again, this time taking into account B’s views. B accepted what had been said by reflecting feelings and empathizing. B then made a statement, taking into account A’s view, and A accepted what he said. The procedure continued until a solution was reached.

The general trend of the results seemed to be that levels of empathy and acceptance of partners’ viewpoints had improved. Couples were also more able to express their own feelings, and they also appeared to reach a

compromise more easily. It thus appeared that the programme was effective in improving communication between the couples.

Grobler (1994) designed a marriage preparation programme to be utilized specifically by social workers and social co-workers in the South African Police Service.

The programme was broken up into six sessions. Session one focused on improving the couple's knowledge of the stress that policemen experience and what the influence of this stress is on the marital relationship.

Session two aimed to improve the couples' knowledge of how to better the communication in the marital relationship, while the third session focused on improving specific communication skills within the marriage.

Session four aimed at improving conflict handling and bettering conflict handling skills. Session five aimed to create a better understanding of individual differences between the spouses and what the influence of these differences could be on the marital relationship.

The final session focused on sexuality and improvement thereof. All the sessions consisted of a discussion and practical exercises to be followed.

After completion of the programme, participants completed an evaluation questionnaire. The researcher came to the following conclusions:

- The programme as a whole was evaluated positively.
- All aspects of the programme discussed were considered to be essential for a successful marriage.

- According to the group members the information obtained was practical information that they could apply in their marriages.

Basson (1991) conducted a research study to compare the effectiveness of two ways of presenting marital preparation. The Preparation Programme developed by Pretorius (1982) was used for the study.

Two couples participated. The experimental couple received the Workbook for Engaged Couples and interactive video modules that were to be completed after each session. The couple was thus expected to complete the course in their own time and independently from the facilitator.

The control couple was also given the Workbook, but a facilitator worked through the workbook with them. After completion of the course, both couples completed the same measuring instruments.

On completion of the programme, an interview schedule was used to obtain the qualitative evaluation from each independent couple with regard to the content and presentation of the marital preparation programme.

Results obtained from the study showed that both forms of presentation appeared to be duly effective. Both the control group and experimental group showed a definite improvement with regard to relationship adjustment from being exposed to the marital preparation programme. This was irrespective of the form of presentation used. The conclusion reached by the researcher was that both forms of presentation had valuable learning processes that benefited the couples exposed to them.

Hinckley (1996) did a study to develop a marriage enrichment programme based on the concepts of personality type, as indicated by the Myers-Briggs type Indicator (MBTI). The focus was to educate couples in personality type

differences, thereby creating self-awareness and awareness of others and enabling them to understand themselves and their spouses better.

The programme was designed and developed and then trial tested on two groups of volunteers consisting of two couples in each group. Feedback received yielded positive results, and the participants found the programme to be useful and valuable in their own relationships.

From the above discussion of the programmes developed in South Africa it seems that marriage enrichment as a preventative marriage intervention programme appears to have received insufficient focus and attention by researchers.

The studies conducted by Pretorius (1982), Basson (1991) and Grobler (1994) all seem to focus on marriage preparation or pre-marital programmes. Hinckley's (1996) study is the only one that had a marriage enrichment focus but it was based on the concepts of personality type, as indicated by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.

2.7. SUMMARY

This chapter focused on the literature review pertaining to the subject of marriage enrichment. The historical overview as well as the theoretical background of marriage enrichment was explored. This was followed by a study of marriage enrichment programmes currently available internationally, and then a look at research undertaken in marriage preparation and marriage enrichment in South Africa. Although there are some available marriage enrichment programmes available in South Africa, it appears that these programmes are not used enough (or at all) in the human welfare sectors.