

MARRIAGE IN THE EIGHTIES :  
WITH PARTICULAR REGARD TO THE PREVALENCE  
AND EFFECT OF BRIEF OR SUSTAINED INFIDELITY  
AND THE CHALLENGE IT POSES FOR THE  
CLINICAL SOCIAL WORKER

BY

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DEDICATION

To my husband, Gerald, and children, Paul, Jonathan and Emma - whose love and confidence in me, validates more than ever, the worth of marriage and the family.

## ABSTRACT

In the modern western world, infidelity or deviation from the monogamous sexually constrained 'till death do us part' marriage, is often judged as unhappy, deviant or placing the marriage on the verge of divorce.

Marriage is a highly complex relationship, with multiple areas for potential conflict. Contemporary marriage falls prey to dissatisfaction and stress far more than marriages of years gone by, where roles were traditionally more clearly defined and expectations were unchallenged.

This paper serves to focus on the institution of marriage in western society and the changing face of marriage in contemporary society.

Today there are many problems and difficulties experienced by married couples and not least of all, that of the extramarital affair.

Treatment for the problem of infidelity proves an increasing challenge for clinicians today. Methods and difficulties in this regard will be discussed.

Five case studies from the writer's private practice case load will be presented to augment the preceding theoretical discussion. In describing the nature of the cases, highlights will be made of the salient variations in circumstances, treatment and outcome.

## CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
INTRODUCTION	
<u>CHAPTER 1 : THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE</u>	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Historical Overview of the Institution of Marriage.	5
1.3 The Structure of Marriage and the Family.	7
1.4 The Changed Status of Women.	9
1.5 What Constitutes a Successful Marriage?	10
1.6 The Concept of 'Love' in Marriage.	10
1.7 Mate Selection.	12
1.8 The Courtship - Dating System versus the Arranged Marriage.	16
1.9 What the individual brings into Marriage.	18
1.10 The Value of Marriage and Family today.	19
<u>CHAPTER 2 : THE CHANGING FACE OF MARRIAGE</u>	22
2.1 Social Change - Progress or Problem for Marriage?	22
2.2 Developmental Stages of the Family.	23
2.3 *Basic Values in Marriage.	24
2.4 Egalitarianism between the Sexes.	25
2.5 Gender Identity.	27
2.6 The Realities of Differing Expectations in Marriage.	28
2.7 Finance and Money Management.	30
2.8 Decision Making and Power Patterns.	31
2.9 Children and their Effect on the Marital Relationship.	32
2.10 In-law Relationships - Old and New Problems.	33
2.11 The Revolutionary Change in Sexual Attitudes.	35

	<u>PAGE</u>
2.12 Alternatives to Traditional Marriage Patterns.	36
2.13 The Later years in Marriage.	37
2.14 Developmental Disillusionment : An Overview.	39
 <u>CHAPTER 3 : THE EXTRAMARITAL AFFAIR</u>	 42
3.1 Variations and Functions of Infidelity.	42
3.2 Morality, Control and Commitment.	45
3.3 Commitment in an Unfulfilled Marriage.	47
3.4 Cross-Sex Friendships	48
3.5 Causes and Prevention.	50
3.6 Further Factors Associated with Infidelity.	53
3.7 The Role of Jealousy.	54
3.8 The Role of Sexuality.	56
3.9 The Mixed Messages of Sexual Gender Socialisation.	60
3.10 Effects of Infidelity.	62
 <u>CHAPTER 4 : CLINICAL APPROACHES IN THE TREATMENT OF INFIDELITY AND THE ROLE OF THE THERAPIST</u>	 66
4.1 Qualities and Attitude of the Worker in Extramarital Problems.	66
4.2 Client Attitudes to Extramarital Sexual Affairs and the implications for Treatment.	69
4.3 Particular Issues and Difficulties in the Assessment Stage.	71
4.4 Dealing with the Crisis.	77
4.5 The Concept of Grief and Loss in the Treatment of Infidelity.	80
4.6 The Value of Support.	82

	<u>PAGE</u>	
4.7	Conjoint versus Individual Interviews and Implications for the Therapist.	84
4.7.1	Indications for Conjoint Therapy.	84
4.7.2	Indications for Individual Sessions.	86
4.8	Therapeutic Action in Relation to the Problems Identified.	89
4.9	Transference and Counter transference in Marital Therapy.	92
4.10	Commitment and Motivation in Treatment.	95
4.11	Final Comments on the Treatment of Infidelity in Marriage.	96
 <u>CHAPTER 5 : SELECTED CASE HISTORIES</u>		 99
5.1	Rationale for the use of the writer's professional Case Load Material.	99
5.2	Case No 1 Michelle and Craig	101
5.3	Case No 2 Peter and Barbara	105
5.4	Case No 3 Dick and Marlene	110
5.5	Case No 4 Annie and 'Van'	116
5.6	Case No 5 Pat and Bruce	121
5.7	Concluding Comments on the Case Histories Presented.	127
 <u>CHAPTER 6 : CONCLUSION</u>		 128
 <u>SELECTED REFERENCES</u>		 133
 <u>TABLES</u>		
1.	Breakdown of Assessed Cases 1 June 1985 - 1 June 1987	99

## CHAPTER 1

### THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Western-type marriage and family life have somehow persisted and continued in spite of an increase in divorce rates world wide. One explanation for this is the innate need in man for structure and the need to order into meaningful units, an otherwise potentially chaotic life style (Durkheim, 1951). As society has become increasingly complex and stressful the institution of marriage and the family have fallen prey to the pressures and effects of social, political and economic strains and influences (Goode, 1963).

The inter-meshing of institutions calls for a readjustment to facilitate adaptive and harmonious functioning both on societal and individual levels. Marriage is no exception, but because of its highly personal and intimate nature, as well as its emotive and entrenched traditional qualities, it has been slower to adapt to change, or to show adaptive facilitation to these changes.

For centuries, men and women have been getting married, but the traditional patriarchal marriage system is somewhat outmoded today. Mate selection is based on the courtship-dating system which relies heavily on a free-choice mode, and yet even this has not proved an ideal answer, as divorce rates continue to rise (Leslie and Leslie, 1977).

Marriage used to be the institution for the physical survival of two people and their children within the larger extended family system, but today the picture is somewhat different. The move today, in a highly industrialised society, is towards psychological and emotional survival, and yet the structure, form and process of marriage has not kept up to cope with all the problems that have evolved.

Interest in the topics of love, marriage and family life have been over time (and continue to be) a source of interest to professionals and laymen alike. A possible explanation may be that these topics are concerned with living and fulfilment, and touch everyone of us in one way or another.

A major change that occurred in the second half of the twentieth century was that there evolved a new openness in discussing personal aspects of one's life and it was through this need and change in attitude, that family and marital therapy were born. Divorce, marital strife, desertion, family disharmony and emotional and physical illnesses that manifested were the problems that came to the attention of professionals for full investigation and treatment.

In spite of this increased willingness to share and discuss certain problems, there still remains a taboo around the topic of extramarital affairs or infidelity. One explanation offered is that the 'victim' of this feels so devastated and undermined, that for fear of loss of dignity and self esteem they resist divulging it. Others, try to cope with strong defences such as denial, both to themselves and others, that this could happen to them. The involved or active partner, on the other hand, is often struggling to deal with the guilt that they feel, and therefore either continues with the affair in a clandestine manner, and avoids the risks involved in bringing it out in the open. Either way, there is an indication that although many changes in the marriage relationship have occurred, there still remains an interesting aspect of resistance, to admit the violation in the morality and commitment dimensions in monogamous marriage.

To understand the new trends of the high (and increasing) incidence of infidelity, (Jacobson and Gurman, 1986) one must look to the roots of present practices and attitudes. This perspective gives a special understanding which cannot be gleaned solely from the 'here and now'. The course of treatment therefore, relies heavily on what has gone before, the "how's and why's" of the present and on what the options and expectations of the future involve.

The debate as to whether sexual morality in marriage is declining and as a result the importance of marriage and the family are on the decline, raises some controversy. Even though some commentators (e.g. the O'Neills, 1973) choose to believe that this is the case, the literature generally seems to indicate that there is a need for responsible sexual behaviour, which is characterised by integrity and mutual concern in this sphere. (This applies similarly to premarital sexual relationships, but since this is not the topic of this dissertation, it will not be dealt with here).

By virtue of the above required characteristics, the shift presently lays an emphasis on the quality of the interpersonal relationships and not on the act itself. In other words, there has been an historical preoccupation with sex as an act and now the trend is to view sex as part of an interpersonal relationship, and vice versa. Very little is known about relationships in this sexual context, and their components, and what precisely causes them to flourish or wither and die. There remains much scope open for research into understanding this interaction between sex and interpersonal relationships more clearly.

Data from numerous studies that have been done, indicate that there is a tremendous range of factors that influence

the qualities of relationships that contain a dimension of sexual expression. Added to this it has been realised that these factors can and do change from time to time in the course of a relationship, and that there are many consequences that can result. One of these is infidelity, and this is the problem this dissertation addresses.

The view that marriage will survive in the future, is one that is popularly supported, but to predict with certainty what form it will take is somewhat uncertain (e.g. Bernard, 1983; Duvall and Miller, 1985). What seems to be certain, however, is that to ensure a stable society, some measure of control on sexual behaviour is needed.

The rationale for choosing this topic is based on the fact that the writer has been involved in marital counselling for fifteen years and over the past few years, has noticed a steady increase in the incidence of infidelity amongst her clients. (This is not to say that every case where infidelity occurs necessarily presents as such). The treatment of infidelity is not entirely straightforward, although there are a few factors and guidelines, common to all cases with this problem, and these will be discussed.

Perhaps there are two major aspects of this topic which stand out. Firstly, it is a myth that there is such a thing as a 'typical affair', as every affair is as unique as the couple and circumstances involved. Secondly, the raised awareness of the frequency and prevalence of this problem seriously begs the question of whether the problem of infidelity in marriage has indeed increased, or whether it was in fact always there, but ill defined and not clearly described.

The purpose of this dissertation, therefore, is not only to offer a concise and factual background of marriage and the

present situation surrounding infidelity and its treatment, but also to raise questions and open the door for future contribution to deal with this very real problem.

## 1.2 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE

Marriage may be defined as a legally sanctioned union between a man and a woman and which accords status to their offspring. It is regulated by laws, customs, beliefs and attitudes that prescribe the rights and duties of the partners (Garrett, 1982).

Across diverse cultures and societies, there remains a universality of marriage that prescribes the basic social and personal functions it is meant to perform. Amongst these, and peculiar to each culture in its own definition, some of the following are universally accepted. Sexual gratification; care of the children for their nurturing, education and socialisation; some form of division of labour between the sexes for both economic production and consumption; the satisfaction of personal needs; and for affection, status and companionship (Duvall and Miller, 1985). All of the above are highly dependent on the characteristics in size and complexity of economic, political, religious and social development of a given society. In western-type marriage, up to present times, the sexual relationship is considered monogamous, and is characterised by the duty of faithfulness. Traditionally, it is a heterosexual relationship, although in contemporary society, same-sex couples are engaging in similar ceremonies.

Modern western-type marriage is a product of a long development which historically has its roots in Greek, Roman, Hebrew and Christian traditions. Through the Middle

Ages, the regulation of marriage was regarded as a task of ecclesiastical rather than secular authority (Russel, 1972).

Since the dawn of history, men and women have been getting married in the traditional patriarchal system, wherein the husband and wife, (later as father and mother) pulled the yoke together (albeit in clearly defined, diverse roles), to form a co-operative unit for survival. Marriage structure, matched marriage function, and the entire matrix of society encouraged it to perpetuate itself. This notion is somewhat outmoded today.

Marriage now is almost universally a formalized transaction, requiring a public act or ceremony and the question of what kind of act or ceremony i.e. secular or religious, is relevant to the actors and the setting. The concept of civil marriage which evolved over time, still engenders some contention between the church and state. There remains, however, a differential approach by various religious groups, e.g. Jews and Greeks who, for recognition insist upon a religious ceremony and in some cases a civil ceremony is performed as well. Some countries do not require a civil ceremony per se, for legal purposes and have thus not prohibited the performance of solely the religious one.

One major and fundamental fact that underlies the conception of marriage itself, is that of commitment. Commitment may come in various forms such as a written contract, religious verbal vows and promises made before witnesses or simply an understanding or consensual arrangement.

Wide as the variety of forms of marriage commitment may be, the contents usually consist of some combination or permutation of two fundamental dimensions of the marital relationship : exclusivity and permanence.

(Bernard, 1982, 86)

The function performed by the marital commitment is one of protecting the relationship from the pitfalls and temptations of everyday life. The restrictions imposed by the commitment are recognised (even if somewhat reluctantly at times), as being beneficial in the long-term even if it interferes with individual freedom.

It seems safe to predict at least for the near future that informal unsanctioned forms of commitment will increase. But the elimination of the binding formal commitment is by no means in the stars. The formal, even religious commitment will remain the preferred mode for most people for a long time to come.

(Bernard, 1982, 84)

Humans tend to function in incompatible ways. They want excitement, novelty and adventure and yet they also strive for safety and security. Both are difficult to define in one relationship. Perhaps traditional marriage lessens this conflict. Durkheim (1951), observes that men need the restraints of marriage to prevent them leading disorganised or chaotic lifestyles.

### 1.3 THE STRUCTURE OF MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

Most clearly established since the first half of the twentieth century, in industrialised cultures of the western world, is the concept of the small nuclear family vis-a-vis the large extended family system. The latter

underwent a revolutionary change and many basic differences have evolved in the formation of the nuclear family.

Former concepts of the large extended family included some of the following. The male was recognised as the undisputed head of the household; large families (many children) were valued, particularly sons; there were strong undertones highlighting the socio-economic advantages of many family members living and working together; there was heavy emphasis on the interdependence of the family in their clearly defined roles, and the responsibility and care for older, more dependent family members was unquestionably assumed by the family. This all changed with the evolvement of the nuclear family, which comprised husband and wife and their immediate offspring to constitute an independent household.

Whereas in the extended family system marriages may have been arranged by the family, with the assumption that love comes after marriage, this notion has now been seriously challenged.

It is now assumed that love precedes marriage and little emphasis is given to socio-economic aspects that may or could ultimately benefit the whole family. The focus is clearly on the individuals themselves, when considering marriage. The consideration of other family members is no longer as important and even elderly relatives whose opinion and status was formerly so highly valued, now cease to play a significant role. The prestige and power they once commanded has decreased to such an extent, that many old people are now forced to live alone or be cared for by the State. The high value of former times in having many

children has also changed and with new trends in contraception and family planning, the size of the family is now limited voluntarily.

A cry for more equality between husbands and wives is being made today in the western world, and as a result roles have changed dramatically.

#### 1.4 THE CHANGED STATUS OF WOMEN

The feminist movement, in its demands for equal status for women world-wide, has exposed them to a variety of social, economic and sexual alternatives in their life style. Together with political emancipation and the development of women in terms of higher education, many choose to follow meaningful careers, thus providing them with significant earning capacities. Others, although untrained for the labour market, are forced to find unskilled jobs as a matter of necessity, to supplement the family income. Whether by choice therefore or necessity due to a universal rise in living costs, the notion of a working wife is no longer a phenomenon. In either instance, this has serious implications for the care of children in the nuclear family, as well as the altered status and roles of the marital dyad, thus affecting the structure and relationships in marriage and family life.

Russell (1972) sees women's social emancipation as being directly associated with marriage and morals. He feels that prior to this state of liberation, the virtue of women was secured by segregating them. Rather than allowing them inner self-control, they were protected by removing all opportunity for sin.

Woman's emancipation therefore, has in many ways made marriage more difficult. Unlike in years gone by, where the wife adapted herself totally to her husband, (and he

did not have to adapt to her) nowadays, women on the grounds of liberation and a search for individuality, are no longer so willing. On the other side of the coin, it seems that many men still hanker for the old tradition of masculine domination.

### 1.5 WHAT CONSTITUTES A SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE?

A successful western-type marriage is viewed as one that brings personal satisfaction and happiness to the two people involved. It is believed that happiness is based on factors such as mutual respect, the sharing of similar goals in life, companionship, similar moral and spiritual values, mutual sexual satisfaction and the meeting of psychological needs.

It is the writer's view that within the one-to-one-relationship marriage, a person should be able to fulfil his or her most profound physical and psychological needs, thus validating the experience. At every different stage of human development there is, in different measure, the need for intimacy, trust, affection, affiliation and acceptance. The very nature of the marriage relationship provides a closeness that few other relationships offer and yet a major prerequisite for a successful marriage today is that this closeness should not stifle the individual's development within this unit.

### 1.6 THE CONCEPT OF 'LOVE' IN MARRIAGE

Lederer and Jackson (1968) cite amongst several false assumptions about marriage, the following concerning love:- People marry because they love each other; most married people love each other; and that love is necessary for a satisfying marriage relationship.

It is as well to attempt to clarify (if possible) what in fact love is. In the writer's opinion, it is a subjective and vague concept and there are as many definitions as there are people who attempt to define it. Love in its most rewarding sense, requires years of hard work and mutually shared joy, pain, loyalty, concern and caring. Prior to, and in the early stages of marriage, love may in fact be confused with sexual attraction.

The literature (e.g. Murstein, 1980) suggests that love is a learned response; a 'hope' signal; a pleasurable expectancy and that the love object is a generalized secondary reinforcer. Many studies on the topic of love have failed to produce substantial findings to explain or justify love concepts, which leads one to conclude that it is a very personal and unique state of being, and something that is not easily measured or defined (Murstein, 1980).

A somewhat practical definition of love is,

"When the satisfaction or the security of another person becomes as significant to one as is one's own satisfaction or security, then the state of love exists".

(Sullivan, 1953, 42)

However obscure the notion may be, there remains a popular view that love and romance are a prelude to marriage. In the western world, this is backed up by the idea of free choice in marriage, sometimes referred to as "love marriage". Generally, there is also a continued movement towards the monogamous marriage. Although not within the scope of this text to enter into great detail, it would be remiss not to mention the increase in cohabitation in courtship behaviour which has become prevalent over the past decade or more. "The primary change occurring in

courtship behaviour revolves around the rapid rise in cohabitation" (Murstein, 1980: p.780). This has been accepted more readily by society, and in that particular life style, without the legal ties of marriage, many of the mate selection concepts apply similarly. These concepts will now be considered.

### \* 1.7 MATE SELECTION

Young people today generally find themselves someone whom they think they would like to marry and only then do they consult their parents. Then with (or without) the family's approval, a marriage is arranged.

Pertinent to the above, it is worth considering the outcome of studies which support the psychoanalytic theory (Jedlicka, 1984) of indirect parental influence in mate selection. These studies confirm that this influence is present even if not directly so. It seems that mothers have more influence than fathers and that there is a tendency to marry according to expectations based on the dynamics of psychoanalytic theory. A further observation made was that children raised by a single same-sex parent, depart from the cultural norms of mate selection more often than children in two parent households. In this situation, the ideal image associated with the opposite sex parent is lacking (unless there is a significant substitute parent).

Random mate selection is therefore more common in those without a well developed image of that parent. Although more research is needed in this area, it does seem that the results shown occur more frequently than expected by chance.

The dating and courtship approach to marriage is an outgrowth of the way people view themselves and marriage.

In choosing a mate, it would seem that the capacity of the one partner to reward the other, one way or another, is an essential factor. There are many theories and notions that motivate people to concentrate on particular attributes of a potential mate. Some of these will now be discussed.

According to Good (1970) all courtship systems are market or exchange systems. In such a system where the young couple select each other through mutual attraction, there is less larger kin emotional sustenance. The marital unit becomes the main place where the emotional input-output balance is maintained. Therefore, emotions within this unit are intense and much depends on the stability of this unit as to whether the relationship longterm will succeed or not.

A review of the decade (in the 1960's) in dating and courtship and mate selection (Moss et al, 1971) focused on complementary needs. Winch (in Murstein, 1980) gives specific emphasis to the theory based on the principle that opposites attract. This theory holds that people choose partners who give promise of meeting their unfulfilled personality needs.

The dilemma of whether "opposites attract" versus "birds of a feather flock together" (in contrast to Winch's positive assertion that opposites attract) is an interesting one. Value theorists have tended to combine both assumptions, (although seemingly contradictory in principle) into a more inclusive one. As far back as 1859, Fowler (in Murstein, 1980, 781) advised

Wherein, and as far as you are what you ought to be, marry one like yourself, but wherein and as far as you have any marked excesses or defects, marry those unlike yourself in those objectionable particulars.

2/12  
Here it is relevant to bring in the concept of exogamy, which is the exclusion of certain groups when choosing a mate. This may or may not be legally enforced, or may be taboo within a particular religion or society. Some examples could be, marriage between family members; someone of a different religion or race or in fact someone of the same sex. Endogamy on the other hand, is the preference for partner selection from groups which are similar. This too may or may not be legally or religiously enforced. Pertinent here, in South Africa, to both exogamy and endogamy, was the statutory prohibition of inter-racial marriage until recently (now replaced by The Immorality and Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act 72 of 1985).

Much criticism of this theory has been given and it has been labelled as superficial in that research cannot adequately substantiate this as personality needs are highly abstract and difficult to measure. A further observation is that the perceptions of a partner or date may not necessarily be accurate or actual. Karp et al, (1970) in their studies showed that women were inclined to select mates that resemble their ideal selves rather than their actual selves.

Equity theorists have as their primary axiom, that individuals tend to match up with someone who can equitably reward them in approximately the same measure as they perceive they ought to be rewarded. This reward, although equal, does not necessarily have to be identical in similar characteristics. For example, a wealthy middle-aged man, of high professional or business status, may choose to marry his young attractive secretary. His wealth and power is equitably balanced by her youth and beauty. (Murstein, 1980). This gives rise to theories of exchange and balance.

Murstein and Beck (1972) extended the Stimulus-Value Role Theory (SVR) in the development of dyadic relationships in both friendship and husband-wife relationships. This is an exchange theory, positing that in a relatively free choice situation, attraction and interaction depend on the exchange value of the assets and liabilities that each of the partners bring into relationship. The three variables are stimulus, value comparison and role. Simply stated, the stimulus stage is the attraction stage or how the couple is drawn together, e.g. mentally and/or physically. The value stage is the assessment of their compatibility, e.g. in attitudes to life, interests, etc. The role stage concerns the expectations each have of the other. It was found that successful passage through all three stages, generally led to a better chance of permanency in marriage, friendship or cohabitation.

Research studies in the U.S. by Murstein (1980) and Vandenburg (1972) indicate that there is a tendency for people to choose partners who are similar in physical and psychological characteristics. These are known as homogamous factors. They include also age, education, religion, socioeconomic status, race, ethnic background, personality traits, values, interests and political persuasions. This is backed up by Lewis in his Dyadic Formulation theory. (Murstein, 1980).

In the experience of the writer, it would seem that just as adaptiveness attracts adaptiveness, similarly does pathology attract pathology. The literature however, although confirming this, does so in measured amount. Studies by Vandenburg (1972), Dunner (1976) and Murstein (1976) were carried out on personality inadequacies. These were shown to be selective, although to a fairly small degree. This may be attributed to the fact that personality characteristics are not as readily available as

others such as intelligence, education and attractiveness. A further complicating issue is that people, particularly during courtship may choose to present only the 'good' side of themselves and therefore personality traits and particularly maladaptive ones are difficult to quantify. This in research presents methodological difficulties.

On the issue of age heterogamy (i.e. dissimilarity), some interest has been shown by various researchers. Atkinson and Glass (1985), show that over the past eighty years, marital age heterogamy has moved towards age homogamy. They also associate age heterogamy in marriage, with lower socioeconomic groups, lower occupational status and with re-marriages. Although Vera, Berardo and Berardo (1985) confirm this latter association, they find in their analysis, no significant differences in quality between age homogamous and age heterogamous marriages.

There is presently an increasing need and demand for more theory in the field of mate selection but with a difference. That difference lies in the doubt as to whether in an increasingly mobile society, it is sufficient to dwell solely on social and cultural determinants of mate choice. Whilst the latter are important, the point being made is that the former emphasis on those factors should be integrated with the dynamic aspects of inter-individual relationships, and the emphasis should be on the correlates which indicate the causes of why things go wrong.

#### 1.8 THE COURTSHIP-DATING SYSTEM VERSUS THE ARRANGED MARRIAGE

It is relevant to mention here that the present process of mate-selection takes place within a courtship and dating system. \* Traditional 'dating', however, in present times has changed its form in many ways. There is far less

structure and decreased emphasis on the 'appropriate' or clearly defined male-female expectations than formerly, e.g. the male is no longer expected necessarily to foot the bill for both himself and his date. Today, dating in groups often begins at an early teenage stage and 'pairing off' usually takes place when a couple are older and more serious about a long-term relationship (either marriage or cohabitation).

Dating, vis-a-vis the arranged marriage is seen by many as a far better system of mate selection in present society, which places the happiness of the individual couple as its paramount value. The writer's opinion however, is that the dating system does not serve all the functions it should and therefore cannot be considered ideal. The high divorce rate in the western world indicates that the system leaves much to be desired. This system also seems to suggest that more unhappy marriages result as opposed to the arranged marriage system. This may be viewed, on the other hand as a doubtful conclusion, as the measure of success of marriage is entirely different in both systems. Whilst the arranged marriage focuses on economic advantage and prestige to the family, as well as an abundant production of children, the main emphasis in the courtship - dating system is on the husband - wife relationship.

In order to strengthen marriages and improve interpersonal relationships between the marital dyad, a refinement of methods in mate selection is clearly indicated. One method of raising an informed awareness would be through preparation for marriage and premarital counselling as compulsory education. This is not the case in South Africa, and although some churches or family agencies offer this type of service, it remains a voluntary choice for participants, thus limiting its potential impact and value to society, as opposed to a compulsory curriculum in schools or universities in this regard.

### 1.9 WHAT THE INDIVIDUAL BRINGS INTO MARRIAGE

Consciously or unconsciously, every couple brings into marriage certain individual characteristics that will directly influence and affect their future relationship. Most people are oblivious to these well-entrenched norms, and it is often a surprise to discover that one's partner may be very different in certain ways and attitudes to oneself (Garrett, 1982). As a result, the diverse expectations of each other may become apparent. This is often a basic source of conflict unless there is the ability and the capacity to problem solve and negotiate.

Every one of us is familiar with family life in one form or another and therefore believe that we have an accurate grasp of what family life is all about. If this were indeed the case, there would be little need for studying these issues. The fact is, that although one's own family experiences are extremely important, they are subjective and often cloud an objective overview concerning the critical contribution of the family to human development. Distortions or discrepancies in the differential family of origin experiences that the partners bring into marriage often hinder their adaption to their own new family and this is particularly so in a changing society.

Significant personal family experiences include perceptions of the state of one's parents' marriage; childhood emotional experiences; discipline; role socialisation within the family; decision making and problem-solving methods; attitudes to sex; the level of significance of religion; money management; the role of education and social patterns (i.e. social networks). Last and by no means least, the structure of the family is an important if not vital aspect that must be considered. By this the writer refers to whether the family of origin was enmeshed,

disengaged or showed clear boundaries. (Minuchin, 1974).

Apart from these family experiences, as well as the personal characteristics of the couple, mention must be made here of the value of sufficient or adequate time that a couple need to get to know each other properly. "People who think they are in love are impetuous, hurried and careless in getting married". (Lederer and Jackson, 1968: p.44).

#### 1.10 THE VALUE OF MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY TODAY

Marriage and family life have in recent years received both positive and negative commentary. Some commentators have chosen to emphasize the decline and demise of the importance of marriage and the family, whilst others feel positively, that in spite of dramatic changes in patterns, both are here to stay (Duvall and Miller, 1985).

It is the writer's contention that there is still a high value placed on marriage and family life in contemporary society and that they are important variables in the stability of any society both now and in the future.

The most important functions of marriage is to generate affection and love, provide security, acceptance and companionship, give a sense of purpose and whilst sharing and caring in a unified way, not to stifle the individual growth or potential of each partner.

The family, together with love and nurturance, provides for children a social setting for socialisation, boundaries or limits to engender discipline and a sense of right and wrong and to establish values and norms pertinent to the particular family concerned and within its larger societal context.

Sto

Mount (1982) cites the family as being the most enduring and permanent enemy of all hierarchies and ideologies. He says that society repeatedly challenges the tenacity of families, but they resist interference to the last. Whilst acknowledging realistically that families can also be a source of stress, he asserts that this has not decreased the position of importance and strength of the family. Couples still continue to marry, have children and develop strong bonds of affection and place the family and its concerns above many other social obligations.

This may raise the question of why the institution of marriage (and re-marriage) has persisted in spite of rising divorce rates. One explanation offered by the O'Neills (1972), is that man has an innate need for structure and order and that the urge drives him to place into meaningful units what otherwise might be a potentially chaotic life style. Here the reference is to free sexual liaisons resulting in children without the restraints and security that a family can offer. Without wishing to appear naive and present an idealised picture, it can be acknowledged that sexual relations do take place outside of marriage, but in spite of this, marriage is still seen as the normative and legitimate relationship for reproduction to take place, and this in turn places an expectation on parents to be responsible for their children.

It could also be argued that as society becomes more complex, the institutions of marriage and family (no matter how diverse in culture, style and configuration) suffer the pressures and effects of social, political and economic strains and influences. The intermeshing of institutions calls for a readjustment or realignment in order to function in conjunction and more harmoniously. Marriage and family are no exceptions, but because of their very intimate personal natures, and highly emotive and

traditional qualities, they are often slower to adapt to these changes.

Over the past fifty to sixty years, 'social progress' has brought with it many difficulties. One might say that there has been a heavy price to pay for modern industrialisation and high speed technology and the emancipation and liberation of women. The demise of the extended family, economic strains, rising costs of living and the resultant change in roles in the home and marriage have all contributed to seriously questioning marriage and the family.

The move in today's society is geared towards psychological and emotional survival and yet the structure, form and process of marriage have not coped with the problems and demands that have evolved in a highly competitive world. Divorce, marital strife, desertion and emotional and physical illnesses are some of the symptoms that are on the increase as a result.

It is essential, therefore, to recognise that there are new roles and relationships between men and women today and the pressures on marriage and family life are enormous. This would suggest then, that individual growth is seriously stunted within the confines and restraints of distressed marriages and families. "The more civilised people become, the less capable they seem of lifelong happiness with one partner". (Russell, 1972, 70).

In the following chapter, problems in marriage will be considered, taking into account the life cycle of the marriage, as well as the changing face of marriage in contemporary society.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE CHANGING FACE OF MARRIAGE

#### 2.1 SOCIAL CHANGE - PROGRESS OR PROBLEM FOR MARRIAGE?

Continuity and change in human experience are unending. People are born into families, grow up in them, marry and create families for their own children. Each generation improvises on the cultural script provided to it and alters the style of life of its predecessor, sometimes almost indiscernibly and sometimes drastically.

(Leslie, 1977, iii)

The influence of social structures on marital stability is something social scientists have long been interested in. The reductions of the social values of marriage may be as a result of pressures imposed on the individual by a modern society.

Social identity is a complex structure, comprising several role identities which relate to the status the individual holds. In the role identity hierarchy in western society, one could postulate that the marital status is a 'normal' part of an adult's social identity.

Although marriage is still popular, it is a fact that young adults are not marrying as early as they did three decades ago. More and more tend to postpone the decision to marry until their mid or late twenties. (Cherlin, 1981).

The social forces of industrialisation and urbanisation has had its effect on every known society and particularly so on western society. As a result, there has been an alteration in marriage and family patterns and the focus here is directed on the nuclear family, and the problems it faces.

The conjugal system specifies that status obligations of each member are far less rigidly stipulated than in the extended family system and there is a wider variation of roles in family performance in present day society. There has thus been a spill over effect on modes of child care, since industrialisation and urbanisation as well as with the advent of sophisticated technology.

A further important source of change is the ideology of economic progress. Here the individual is evaluated and not his lineage. A further assertion, seen 'democratically', is that if one's marriage or family life is unsatisfactory, one has the right to change it.

Before embarking on the various pertinent areas relevant to this, one needs to consider the normal developmental stages of marriage and the family.

## 2.2 DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF THE FAMILY

The idea that a person develops through a series of psychological and social stages of development through life is well known to social scientists. (Erikson, 1963). The concept of 'tasks' which have to be mastered at critical stages is fundamental to facilitating emotional, physical and social progress for future stages.

Similarly marriages and families undergo normative changes over time in terms of a developmental life cycle. The tasks associated here are more complicated than in the individual's development as there is often more than one role to be played. Roles change and increase over time e.g. from wife, to wife and mother. There are also several actors within the family, complicating the interaction and adaptation.

These stages have critical effects on the interpersonal relationships within the family and often put strain on the marriage. Here one must take into account the basic assumptions that directly bear on the coping capacities of the individual. To provide a broad framework, influences include the uniqueness of the person, social factors, cultural influences, personal goals, previous life experiences, changing life responsibilities and needs, and the question of whether critical previous life tasks have been adequately mastered. If this is the case, there is a better chance of adapting to each new challenge. Universally, there are certain basic values which have not changed dramatically in relation to marriage, which need to be discussed briefly, before considering those areas which have altered in modern society.

### 2.3 BASIC VALUES IN MARRIAGE

Certain fundamental characteristics and human values are widely shared by both sexes and in different cultures. Many of these have persisted over long periods of time and today are as important as ever. One of these values is the need for interpersonal intimacy that continues throughout life. Together with this are the needs for self-esteem, love and personal growth. (Maslow, 1954). The latter three flourish best in an atmosphere of security and responsibility. The purpose of reference to the above values serves to remind one of an important fact, and that is that in spite of near revolutionary changes in recent years, people still hold dear these basic human values that have endured for centuries. This is important to bear in mind and that in spite of the changing face of marriage, there is often a struggle in coping with that change and yet placating one's innermost needs and values.

The writer will now consider various aspects of marriage that have changed over time and how these affect the relationship in the marital dyad.

#### 2.4 EGALITARIANISM BETWEEN THE SEXES

In an attempt to examine this concept, it is necessary to acknowledge that this is not a simple task.

The status of woman is almost impossible to analyse fully within the entire social structure.

(Goode, 1970, 54)

The reality of the trend in the modern western world, is that women may hold any type of job. They may own property, vote and in fact they have acquired economic and legal rights which enable them to participate in important decision making in all spheres and not least of all, in the family. Underlying this, is that there is today a far smaller discrepancy between men and women in education and training. As a consequence, an increasing number of women earn substantial amounts and can live independently from their own earnings.

Women, within highly industrialised nations, form a large part of the labour force. Many work as a result of financial need, but there is also a high percentage of women who choose to work after marriage and there has been an increase in the proportion of women in high level and professional positions. Garrett (1962), suggests that women whilst enjoying the benefits of liberation, they do not enjoy it when men no longer treat them as 'ladies'. (That is to say, they still hanker after the privileges of women in terms of being the 'weaker' or more protected species of humanity). Thus, as the status of women has changed, so has the status of men, in terms of obligations and rights, and not least of all within marriage.

Perhaps it is safe to say that the area of employment is one of the most significant in terms of having changed the position of women in respect to men in not only in the larger society, but within marriage and the family.

One social assumption that has remained (to a lesser or greater degree) is that whatever job a woman takes, she should continue her responsibility for homemaking tasks. The prime obligation is hers, even if her husband helps somewhat. Unless there is a viable and affordable substitute service available, the burden on the working wife is very large.

Occupational status between spouses is often a sensitive and salient issue. In a competitive society, upward mobility is often the goal sought and in marriage where both partners work and have this goal, the competition can be very great. According to Garrett (1982) social mobility occurs in two steps. Firstly, from the family of origin and secondly, on individual achievement in education or work. In the case of solely the husband seeking this goal, his ambition needs to be matched by his wife in a complementary way. Often this involves a social adaption e.g. entertaining or socialising accordingly, or 'fitting in' in ways to meet his ambitious efforts and growth in his business or professional life. If she does not match this, she may indeed get 'left behind' in many senses and this could become the cause of disharmony and dysfunction within the relationship. In such circumstances, it is not unusual for her to be viewed as a 'disposable hindrance' to her partner and this could well lead to an extramarital affair or the seeking out of new and more compatible or exciting relationships or interests on his part.

Hart (1976) notes that 'anomie' occurs as a result of

dysfunction. That is to say that the norms which the individual has come to rely on and accept as legitimate, are now rendered invalid and the individual's expectations are unfulfilled.

Since expectations of the sexes in marriage differ, it is necessary to consider not only the differences between the sexes per se, but also the psychological effects of the family of origin on sexual or gender identity.

## 2.5 GENDER IDENTITY

In contemporary western type monogamous marriages, many problems manifest as a result of unfulfilled expectations of the opposite sex. The notion of psychological sexuality or gender identity develops during the first years of life and these have critical implications and distortions on expectations in marriage.

By age three, a child has modelled itself after the parent or caretaker of same sex and it is firmly identified as male or female. (Erikson, 1963). Most parents condition their children from infancy onwards and girls seek love and approval in dependent relationships with others, whilst boys are conditioned to ambition, competitiveness and independence. Schools continue this process and even today, in a changing world, sex-stereotyped subjects are clearly defined and made available differentially for the sexes, e.g. needlework and domestic science for the girls as opposed to woodwork for boys.

In reality, today's cultural and social demands are clearly inconsistent. Although it is now emphasized that women are as competent as men, they still have to defer to men in many situations. This in itself is a great source of

conflict in heterosexual interaction and particularly so within a marriage.

## 2.6 THE REALITIES OF DIFFERING EXPECTATIONS IN MARRIAGE

Although in recent years, attitudes towards expectations within marriage have changed, there is no doubt that there is still a significant discrepancy in these between the sexes. Men's expectations have not altered to the same degree as have women's. The main reason is that although girls are socialized in the traditionally feminine role, the modern approach to tertiary education is that it is considered just as important for the female. Similar attitudes are held about jobs and rewarding careers for women. As a result many women have begun to question whether marriage and parenthood is entirely fulfilling. (Katelman and Barnett, 1968).

On the other hand, it seems as if the ego adaptation of women who have already established for themselves meaningful careers often do not reject or resent marriage, parenthood and domesticity, but rather use it as an enrichment experience.

It would be safe to say that generally marriage is an adult norm and that most girls want marriage and children. Problems arise however, when having attained that, they may feel some dissatisfaction in terms of fulfilment and long for a more meaningful, stimulating job outside of the home. One cannot ignore the other reasons why married women go out to work e.g. financial pressure, but in either case there is often the expectation that the husband will assist in, or share household duties and child rearing.

In a study by Brid and Brid (1984) on determinants of family task sharing, it was found that sex-role orientation

## 2.7 FINANCE AND MONEY MANAGEMENT

People have questioned for years whether personal and marital happiness increase directly with the size of one's income.  
(Leslie, 1977, 210)

There are many variations in financial needs of a family over time, and this can be a source of strain and potential conflict in marriages. Financial values may differ in partners depending on their family patterns and experiences in childhood. Careers or job choices also determine the potential income of a couple. Many young couples enter marriage feeling they'll be able to make out but this is not necessarily so long term and few consider that aspect. Today finance and income plays a far greater role than in former years.

As living costs and needs of the family increase, incomes do not necessarily rise in ratio to these or to inflation. The basic need for security of tenure or simply the basic need for adequate family accommodation, can cause a great strain on the relationship if this is not met. Additional expenses arise with the birth of children and it is often at this stage that the second income ceases. Schooling, tertiary education and parental responsibilities are all linked financially and this increases as time evolves.

Over and above budgeting, long term financial planning and insurance for retirement is essential and yet few couples are cognisant of this need for the future. Credit card facilities are frequently abused in order to cope with heavy demands and taxation may be a further source of strain. The problems, (at any stage of marriage) associated with income and finance, are endless. Suffice it to say that love and respect in a marriage can be seriously threatened when the relationship and daily

interaction is clouded by this problem.

## 2.8 DECISION-MAKING AND POWER PATTERNS

Power patterns in terms of decision-making become established early on in marriages. 'Give and take' relationships may soon change towards 'dominance-submission' styles once serious and important decisions need to be made in marriage. Submission by one partner is often qualified by them as a means of 'keeping the peace'. This tendency and characteristic soon becomes apparent to the more forceful partner and it becomes a convenient vehicle for facilitating a strong will. Over time, this leads invariably to resentment and bitterness in the one who constantly 'gives in' and that partner begins to feel that he/she always 'loses out'.

Early studies in the United States tended to show that husbands generally exercised more influence in the family decision making, but a study by Centers, Raven and Rodrigues (1971), with a sample of 776 (seven hundred and seventy-six) husbands and wives interviewed in Los Angeles (subjects resembling the entire population of the U.S.A), indicated an almost equal power role between husbands and wives. (Autocratic type i.e. equal but independent). A rating of both partners being 'very satisfied' with this correlated highly with this. Of note, however, was that the next most prevalent type was the 'Husband-Dominant' type of marriage, with a proportionately high correlation of satisfaction. Consistent therefore with present contemporary values, it appears that autonomic decision making was the most valued and seemed to correlate highly with marital satisfaction or success, but the high rating of satisfaction with male dominance seemed to indicate a persistent need for the male to take charge and 'manage things'.

The syncretic or equal and shared decision making was also rated fairly high in satisfaction, and the only category which clearly provided little satisfaction was the 'wife-dominant' one.

From this study one might discern or speculate that although there is a definite change from conventional patterns, there is still resistance to the woman assuming full responsibility or power in decision making in marriages. This has particular reference and bearing even today with the many changes in society and their effects on marriage. Although, as has been pointed out previously, women have advanced in many spheres, there is still some lag in their jostle for power within the marriage relationship. Power structures are important, not only within the marital dyad, but also in their function in parenting.

## 2.9 CHILDREN AND THEIR EFFECT ON THE MARITAL RELATIONSHIP

As a result of the changes that have been mentioned above, including the fact that husbands can no longer command unquestioned obedience from their wives, so too have parents lost some authority over their children. Particularly where mothers work, children have gained some independence and the former close links in relationships between parents and children have been altered. There is more parent-youth conflict and confusion today than in the traditional authoritarian system. This can be attributed not only to the pace of change in contemporary society, but also to the shift from the extended to the nuclear type family.

It could be argued that the success of a marriage is inextricably bound up with the mutual love and concern for the children of the marriage. This is not necessarily so,

for although children can be a source of great joy to parents, they can also present many problems.

Over the developmental stages in a child's life, different problems and challenges present and these can put a great deal of strain and stress on the parents' relationship as well as on the family as a whole. Infancy, toddlerhood and the school going stage and adolescence all have different implications and responsibilities for parents to face. The emergent adult stage also presents its own difficulties and this stage is often accompanied by financial strain on the parents.

Although the trend is towards smaller families over the past 30 (thirty) years, due to convenient and sophisticated safe contraception methods, parents still need to make major adjustments when a baby is born.

Styles of parenting need to be established early on and mutually agreed upon and congruent patterns of discipline and child-rearing need to be negotiated. If this is not the case, friction and dissension can occur and disrupt family relationships, not least of all the marital one.

The developmental difficulties, which are normal and occur in all families, become exaggerated in families where there are already unresolved difficulties. The working wife/mother syndrome has its own particular problems and the sharing of child-rearing responsibilities is often a source of potential strain and conflict.

#### 2.10 IN-LAW RELATIONSHIPS - OLD AND NEW PROBLEMS

Adjustments to and management of relationships with in-laws are historically known as a potential source of tension. This is not only as a result of the couples responses, but

very often due to parents who make excessive demands on time and the attention of their children when they fail to 'let go'. Some parents simply do not adjust and accept that a young couple have individuated from their families of orientation and need space and consideration to begin to form their own family and set up a unique and independent home and life style. Rather than encourage this in a healthy way, interference by in-laws can cause havoc in a marriage and split loyalties often come into play between the couple. In today's changing world, there is a particular potential for this to occur, particularly where ambivalent feelings of dependence-independence are engendered. As a result of rising costs and great financial pressures on young couples setting out, parents may be financially helpful. Whilst such assistance is being meted out, a couple may feel guilty and as a result feel obliged to maintain a dependent allegiance to their parents. This is reinforced in a circular pattern and eventually leads to resentment. It would appear there is a fine line between interference and assistance from in-laws and the perceptions of the partners in the marriage may not correspond.

The prevalence of working wives and mothers today is a typical example. Whilst it may be convenient to have the help of in-laws in child care, it is not always acceptable to be told how to rear one's children.

Since in-laws traditionally can play a positive and supportive role in both financial and emotional ways, a balance needs to be found in order to have an adaptive relationship that is acceptable to all concerned. Minuchin's (1974) concept of clear boundaries is relevant here.

### 2.11 THE REVOLUTIONARY CHANGE IN SEXUAL ATTITUDES

In considering the change in today's society towards sexual matters, it sounds naive to say simply that attitudes are far more 'open' than in former years. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to discuss in detail the various patterns of change that have taken place over the past two decades, but it is a fact that young people come into marriage more sexually aware than any previous generation. This is not to say that promiscuity is the order of the day, for promiscuity has existed for years, and the literature does not indicate any substantial evidence that it is more rife today. In spite of changed patterns in sexual intimacy prior to marriage, one cannot generalise that a casual attitude accompanies this.

Whilst it is true that the invention of sophisticated contraceptive techniques have had critical implications on sexual attitudes, particularly so for women, this is certainly not the only contributing factor. (Abortion, although not legally sanctioned in all western countries, has also had considerable influence).

Sexual problems within marriage are highly dependent on attitudes, experience and mutual needs. The availability today of sex-therapy is an important advance, but the point is that unless there is commitment to the relationship, these problems can remain unresolved and increase the conflict and dissatisfaction within the marriage. This could lead to alternatives involving more willing or able partners, and whilst this is not peculiar to present times, what is pertinent is that the change in attitude and availability today (together with factors mentioned in the last paragraph) could lessen the motivation to persevere and correct the dysfunction.

It would now seem appropriate to consider some of the options and different forms of marriage that are practised by some people in today's society.

## 2.12 ALTERNATIVES TO TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE PATTERNS

Open marriage was first described by the O'Neills (1972) and was contrasted to closed or conventional marriages. Open marriage can be defined or described as a relationship in which the partners are committed to their own and each others growth. It is flexible enough to allow for change which is constantly renegotiated in the light of changed needs.

Open marriage often involves a departure which may be radical from conformity of traditional husband-wife roles and this may not be easy to effect. A major feature of the open marriage and which sparks considerable controversy is the acceptance of extramarital sexual relations.

This sexual freedom, according to the O'Neills is the ultimate test of whether one has overcome the possessiveness of traditional marriage. This they call a 'non-binding commitment'.

Severe criticism has been levelled at this concept and some critics have accused the open marriage of being little more than a justification for extramarital affairs.

There appears to be no solid empirical evidence to date to demonstrate the improvement in quality of marital life or that it necessarily fosters the personal growth of the partners.

(Garrett, 1982, 216)

Swinging or mate swapping is a form of recreational sex, with the consent of the partner (and often engaged in together), with other couples. It is seen as complementary to the marriage, in order to revitalise or enhance marriage, which may be boring. Research to substantiate the long term value of swinging is also limited and dubious (Bernard, 1982).

Communal or Group Marriages are scantily documented, as a further alternative style of marriage, but these are uncommon, not heard of often and have also not succeeded in making any significant impact as a viable option to the conventional pattern.

### 2.13 THE LATER YEARS IN MARRIAGE

Having looked at the changes in marriage in present day society and considered the most vital aspects of adjustment in the early stages of married life, it is necessary, in terms of the developmental cycle, to look at the later years in marriage. Although it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to deal with every source of potential problem in this later stage, it would be remiss not to cover a few of the major aspects which are relevant.

It is safe to say that more couples show distress or in fact break up during the first four years of marriage rather than later, but this is not to say that longer standing marriages are immune to difficulties. (South African Central Statistical Service Report [1985] No 07-02-19: p.67).

The mid-life crisis is the term used to describe a transition period in middle age where there is often a need to select new roles. The term mid-life crisis has come to be popularly used to describe the males re-evaluation of his life, where he may seriously begin to feel that life is

passing him by and makes a desperate attempt to make up for lost time and act in uncharacteristic ways (often leaving his wife for someone much younger) or changing his life style dramatically. Although this may hold true in some cases, women are also equally susceptible to these dramatic psychological and behavioural changes and therefore both sexes are equally vulnerable to such transformations in personal identity. (Garrett, 1982).

Menopause in women may also produce both psychological as well as physical symptoms and this requires a spouse who is informed and understanding if this stage is to pass successfully. (Health problems in either spouse may manifest and have a similar effect).

The 'empty-nest syndrome' in the post parental phase, when the children leave home can lead to depression and social dislocation, particularly in women who feel that their purpose in life has ended. Unless the marriage is resilient and functioning adequately, it can be a time for restlessness and dissatisfaction.

Retirement or loss of job can also be demoralising and present a difficult time particularly if it has been unplanned. The idea of younger people taking one's place can be very hurtful and reinforce the feeling of inadequacy.

All the abovementioned situations may well undermine the confidence and well being of the individual and thereby have a negative spill-over effect on the marital relationship. (Deutscher, 1973). Depression in either partner may result and is not uncommon at this stage.

The picture however is not all gloomy. According to Garrett, (1983), those who are most likely to have a

healthy outlook in the postparental or retirement period, are those who can formulate clear personal goals and see this as a chance for self-fulfillment, growing closer again as a couple and adjusting in a socially healthy way. It may also be a time of freedom from previous heavy financial responsibilities.

Some women take up the challenge of starting new careers and fill their lives once more with meaning and direction. Men in retirement may choose to follow hobbies they have always dreamed of. Some couples may choose to travel if they can afford it or continue their life style in a companionable and socially appropriate way, enjoying the opportunity to rediscover one another and enjoy each others company. The less fortunate ones are those who have little to say to one another and have to face the realisation that they were either too busy or too out of touch with each other to have realised before how little they have in common.

#### 2.14 DEVELOPMENTAL DISILLUSIONMENT : AN OVERVIEW

The use of a developmental model of marriage and the family was simply to highlight the life cycle of events that occur and to illustrate through this, and highlight the potential conflict areas at each stage.

Duvall and Miller (1985) cite the first child's birth as the start of a couples critical period of adjustment. Whilst not negating that concept, the writer's opinion is that there are many critical and accumulative stages and variables in the life of a marriage. Adjustment initially, and again at each different stage, is vital. Failure to adjust may cause the family to function inefficiently (or dysfunctionally). In other cases family life could be destroyed.

In considering the differences in the socialisation of the sexes and changes in present day society, the potential for conflict at any stage is boundless. Learning to live together initially is vital for setting the tone for the future.

Lederer and Jackson (1968) note that severe disappointment often occurs within a few months after the marriage. A study conducted by them at Palo Alto with married couples of one year standing, showed an outcome of disillusionment in expectations. The authors assert that if the realities of marriage were made known to young people prior to marriage, the divorce rate would diminish. The writer's stance is that although in theory this notion is sound, it is not always possible to get a young idealistic couple in love, to project into the future and consider potential conflict situations. Sadly, often one has to experience such situations before one can grasp the reality and seriousness of them.

Leslie (1977) posits that the honeymoon is that period "while illusion lasts". He also suggests that however maturely and rationally a couple have approached their marriage (and even if they have cohabited prior to marriage) there is an inevitable time of reality testing and serious adjustment. In the writer's opinion "the golden rule is that there is no golden rule". Each couple is unique and each family is unique and it is difficult to lay down hard and fast rules.

One thing is certain however, and that is that at some stage in marriage, partners become aware that the other is not able to meet their every need at all times. The range of needs is diverse, encompassing psychological, physical, emotional and practical aspects.

It would seem that consideration and negotiation are necessary to overcome these disappointments and conflicts and not every couple is sufficiently well equipped with these skills. Over and above this, however, is the notion of commitment. If these conflicts are not dealt with, they become exaggerated over time and repetitive destructive patterns may develop. In repetitive patterns of conflict, the danger is that the focus on the real issues are lost and personalities become the target of the struggle. Old history is dug up and 'character assassinations' result. This leads to defensive behaviour on the part of the attacked partner and a feeling of rejection and humiliation sets in. Self worth and confidence suffer and a feeling of not being understood abounds. Hostility results and this in turn seriously affects the relationship one way or another. The resulting behaviour and events can take many courses. In extreme cases, divorce becomes an easy way out for marriages in distress, particularly where legislation is easy in this regard as here in South Africa. (The Divorce Act, 70 of 1979).

Not all dysfunctional marriages end in divorce. Many marriages continue tenuously with difficulties such as poor communication; sexual problems; disinterest in family life; ineffectual parenting; depression or alcoholism; over-involvement in work to 'escape'; and last but by no means least, the indulgence in an extramarital affair (or affairs) may result. It is this latter problem that will be the focus of the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE EXTRAMARITAL AFFAIR

#### 3.1 VARIATIONS AND FUNCTIONS OF INFIDELITY

Extramarital relations have existed as long as marriage itself.

(Neubeck, 1969, 1)

Since this chapter is concerned with extramarital heterosexual relationships in western type monogamous marriages, terms such as 'infidelity', 'adultery', 'unfaithfulness' and 'affair' will be used interchangeably. All these refer to the eternal triangle, which is when a third party develops a close emotional or sexual bond with one partner in a marriage and this begins to shake, threaten or discredit the marital dyad.

✓ Extramarital sexual relations may serve different purposes and be interpreted differently by different couples. It may be regarded in some cases as symptomatic of a dysfunctional marriage, whereas in other cases it serves neurotic needs or it can be an integral part of maintaining the relationship's dysfunction. (Jacobson and Gurman, 1986).

✓ A study by Thompson (1984) into emotional and sexual components of extramarital relations, revealed several interesting findings in differentiating between the above mentioned components. For analytic purposes he posits that it is necessary to be clear about the type of relationship under question, study or interpretation. Simply stated, it may be strongly emotional, although not sexual, or vice versa. Confirming what many marriage counsellors already know, the results show that where there is a strong emotional as well as sexual bond with the significant other, there is a greater chance of more serious and destructive consequences on the marriage.

Sandford (1980) in his use of the Jungian concept of the archetypes 'anima' and 'animus' in opposite sex relationships, describes the interesting phenomenon of the projection of these concepts onto a particular other. This is experienced as a magnetic sexual attraction and can lead to powerful psychological ties with the person who is carrying that projection. Very often, this projection falls outside the marriage relationship, since the marital partner has become a familiar person, whose human weaknesses and frailties are well known.

The projection requires a perceived 'idealised type'; someone who is somewhat of a mystery; and someone who conjures up feelings of fantasy and facilitates the release of a great deal of psychic and sexual energy in the admirer. In other words, this person, sets a tone or climate for arousal of desired projected images and fantasies. Through this person the admirer can live out a fantasy of being in love with the third party, and truly believe they are out of love with their mate. This is often kept a secret initially and when it is revealed, can cause much damage to the spouse.

We cannot try and find happiness and fulfilment at someone else's expense, without damaging our own souls in the process.

(Sandford, 1980, 85)

In spite of the fairy tale notion that people get married and 'live happily ever after', in reality this is not necessarily so. The individual's need for growth and maturity does not (nor should it) cease with marriage. When there are overt or covert conflicts and tensions within the marital relationships this can become a problem. Attitudes and feelings change towards one another and the marriage, and spouses begin to drift apart in one way or another.

A new partner presents a change in a person's life and it can be speculated that this occurs when that person is hungry for change. The built in permanence factor of the marriage contract, makes little allowance for change and growth that occur in people over time. It also does not take into account the uniqueness of the individual in terms of differing needs and rates of change and growth.

✓ When a spouse does not consciously work at providing adaptations to the partner's needs, there is the danger of another person fulfilling this role and this sets up the potential for the destruction of the existing marriage. It must, however, be clearly stated that if a marriage does not provide a solution, there is no reason to suggest that an extramarital affair (or affairs) will necessarily provide it either. What is certain, however, is that whether or not the affair leads to the break up of the marriage, the seriousness of the transgression of the 'basic ground rules' have long term and serious implications.

According to Neubeck (1969: p.13) these ground rules are:

- "1. Individuals enter marriage voluntarily.
2. Marriage is a permanent relationship.
3. In monogamous marriage one man is married to one woman".

Neubeck says that these ground rules, whether implicit or explicit, have remained relatively stable for centuries. These rules are shaped and refined by religious institutions and in western societies, they are also codified by statutory authority. (One cannot here overlook the influence of culture and individual interpretation of these rules).

It is safe to say that although an affair or affairs are violations against the sanctity of marriage, not all affairs are considered that seriously by the participants. Some affairs are interpreted as mere 'sexual adventures', which do not carry any long term serious threat to the existing marriage by the participant partner. (This is usually a secret casual relationship and if found out may in fact have more serious results than perceived by the active partner).

The extramarital affair is by and large not something that is admitted openly, for many reasons. Basically, because our society is socialized into valuing marriage and as a result, there is a built in need to defend and preserve it. It is often only in the most serious of relationships that it is admitted or in the case of being found out, that people react in very different ways to justify or explain it.

The multiple 'once off' affair pattern versus the long standing relationship also have varied dynamics and meanings. The stage of life of the participants and the marriage is also critical for diagnosis and treatment. Why or how the affair was revealed to the non-active marital partners is also a vital factor.

The combinations of factors is endless, but the above was to give some indication of how 'different' one affair is from another. There is no such thing as a 'typical affair'.

### 3.2 MORALITY, CONTROL AND COMMITMENT

Morality is no longer considered a stagnant quality, the same yesterday, today and forever, but it is transitional

and evolutionary. Within this framework, it follows that people today are more openly assertive in demanding a wider degree of liberty even in marriage and show less tolerance of unhappiness when it manifests.

Western culture places a high value on marriage and yet, whilst the 'permanence' of marriage is stressed, it is paradoxical that divorce is permitted and catered for in the majority of cultures and religions.

Historically, commitment may be either to the institution of marriage, (that is conformity to external pressure), or to the other person (that is the commitment the man and woman make to each other as persons.

(Bernard, 1982, 172)

The monogamous or exclusive relationship which is the focus here, carries with it many hidden undertones, for example, trust, unerring faithfulness and an unwritten taboo. One of the major functions of Judeo-Christian marriage was to supply the sexual controls that were felt to be needed. The limitation and confining of sexual relations, were to protect women in their status of dependence, and that this protection would avoid them being 'cast out', if and when husbands were bored with them sexually.

Neubeck and Torbett (in Neubeck, 1969) explore the question of 'efficiency of marriage'. (Efficiency defined as 'serving to effect the purpose or producing intended or expected results'). They beg the question of how effectively does marriage work for those who enter it? They say that effectiveness in marriage can only occur when both spouses behave towards each other in certain ways. This then conjures up the notion of a reciprocal play between obligation and need fulfilment.

### 3.3 COMMITMENT IN AN UNFULFILLED MARRIAGE

However binding a marriage is sexually or emotionally, one fact cannot be denied, and that is that the repertoire between a couple, eventually becomes familiar and it loses the mystery and uncertainty of the courtship stage. In other words, "very few marriages can continue in a state of perpetual excitement". (Leslie, 1977, 196).

Swenson and Trahaug (1985) state that there is a common assumption that people who remain married for a long period, do so because their relationship grows and becomes more satisfactory.

Rollins and Cannon (1974) in their evaluation of marriage over the life cycle, state that marriage satisfaction declines the longer a couple has been married.

When needs constantly remain unmet by the partner, in attitudes and preferences, and interests differ, or there is a sexual incongruence, it seems that all these factors could well provide the basis for extramarital involvement.

There are undoubtedly, some people who deny to themselves, or others, any feeling of sexual temptation in relation to anyone other than their mates. These people adhere to the value of lifelong fidelity and to whom the notion of extramarital sex, carries shame and disgrace. The Kinsey Reports (1948 and 1953), shocked the world with findings that an estimated 50% of husbands and 25% of wives have sexual intercourse at some time with someone other than their spouse.

There are few recent data as comprehensive as Kinsey's but in several studies some new factors have emerged. One factor being that men still have more opportunities for

affairs generally and that more women are indulging in this behaviour than in previous years. A study of 100 (one hundred) middle class middle aged couples showed that 58% of husbands compared with only 28% of wives had the opportunity. (Cannon et al, 1971; Johnson, 1970).

Frequencies of extramarital relations range from 30% to as many as 60% of men and 25% to 40% of women. (Libby, 1977). The incidence therefore appears to be on the rise and as with other sexual behaviours, the gap between men and women is narrowing.

Another factor is that those who indulged in extramarital affairs rated their marital relationships as less satisfying than those who did not indulge. (Here there may be some distortion in order to justify their behaviour). Nevertheless, it does seem to follow that where there is genuine low satisfaction in the marriage, there is more possibility of infidelity. Another trend today is towards thinking and concentrating more on the incompatibility of the marriage, rather than focusing on violating a promise or breaking the commitment to the marriage.

#### 3.4 CROSS-SEX FRIENDSHIPS

When people marry, they do not cease to exist as separate individuals however committed they may be to one another. This means there is constant exposure to people of the opposite sex. These contacts can provide opportunity and temptation to become emotionally or sexually involved.

In the work situation today, both men and women are constantly in contact with members of the opposite sex. Under conditions of mutual interests and sharing, this may lead to cross-sex friendships on a very personal and regular basis. An assumption has been made, that cross-sex

friendships after marriage could be a serious threat to the marriage.

A fact which has been known all through man's history, but which our own age has accomplished the remarkable art of forgetting, namely that sexual love has the power to propel human beings into situations which can destroy not only themselves, but many other people at the same time.

(May, 1982, 50)

Here one could argue that there does not necessarily have to be an erotic component in cross-sex friendships, thus allowing them to be entirely platonic. But this may be unrealistic, particularly where many common interests are shared and the friendship may indeed provide some fulfilment which the spouse is unable to satisfy. - The spouse being entirely removed from management of such friendships would seem to be the key issue here. If there is a completely honest and open relationship, with firm clear boundaries, there might be less danger of such a friendship encroaching on the marital dyad. Friendship relationships between males and females are somewhat of an anomaly among adults who are beyond the courtship period.

A study of Booth and Hess, (1974) which examined the opportunities and constraints affecting cross-sex friendships of middle aged men and women, showed that women had fewer opportunities and that they were subject to more constraints with respect to the formation of such friendships than men. (Although the researchers' focus was one which excluded any sexual motives for the friendships, they acknowledged that there may indeed be a subtle covert motivation underlying all cross-sex friendships).

The results showed that wives involved in these friendships with other men, were usually employed and married to men in

white collar occupations and who belonged to professional or recreational voluntary associations. Many of these friendships were initiated by their husbands.

### 3.5 CAUSES AND PREVENTION

Moving away from the extent of frequency in extramarital relationships, it becomes necessary to consider the question surrounding the motivation of individuals engaging in it. Whitehurst (in Neubeck 1969) suggests that personal motivations combined with the pressures and changes in our complex world, clash with the concept of eternal fidelity. He introduces the notion of 'alienation' and cites that where there is a great amount of 'alienation-potential' plus the opportunity being present, extramarital sexual activity may be predicted.

Neubeck (1969) suggests that the unpleasant actions or unco-operativeness of the mate may drive the spouse into an affair. He also feels that infidelity is a symptom of unmet personality needs. Neubeck (1969) notes that a low strength of conscience accompanies sexual involvement, but this is a very difficult variable to research and is open to various interpretations.

Ellis (in Neubeck, 1969) using a rational-emotive stance, identifies healthy and unhealthy reasons for infidelity. He states that man is not a truly monogamous animal, but is 'monogynous', which means he desires one woman at a time, rather than a single woman for a lifetime. This suggests that a 'healthy' attitude may be in not denying the lust or desire for a woman other than the spouse, but being able to maintain a steady marriage relationship and yet engage discreetly and sufficiently to satisfy this desire. The need for love enhancement, gratification of drives, seeking adventure, curiosity, escapism, ego bolstering and sexual

problems are all cited as causes of people looking outside of the marriage for fulfilment.

The distinction Ellis makes between healthy and unhealthy adulterers is that the latter uses his adulterous relationship as a means of avoiding his serious problems in life, whereas the former is one who is able to separate his marriage, family life and problems, from his need for this type of behaviour, which he sees as an adjunct to the other aspects of his life. The major thrust being, that in spite of his behaviour he does not lose sight of his basic responsibilities, and act this out as a neurotic solution to his problems.

Eskapa (1984) puts forward an interesting theory that too much emphasis is placed on the 'failing or unsatisfactory marriage', where infidelity occurs. Since the main focus in her book is on the 'other woman', she postulates that the 'third party' should be seen as a determined predator, who ruthlessly or relentlessly sets out to alienate a man from his wife. She does, however, acknowledge that a weak marriage may be more vulnerable than a strong one, but cites many examples and cases of the 'ideal couple' falling prey to the other woman to substantiate her theory, and says that even ideal marriages are not impenetrable.

The question of why people have affairs is an interesting one. Lake and Hills (1979) say that it is because growth occurs through love and sex and if the marriage can't provide this climate for growth, people look elsewhere.

The authors identify two kinds of affairs which they consider to be the main types. One is the 'adolescent' affair, which helps people to grow from an unresolved adolescence and here they struggle to grow into a sexual

adult. The other, they call the 'middlescent' affair which is an attempt to move into the middle years as a fully developed loving adult, with less 'adolescent type' acting out behaviour. Common factors surround both types. Both have to do with the need to feel loved and wanted in a novel way, and are attempts to make up for a personal underdeveloped deficiency in themselves. They gain a confidence and validation of themselves through the excitement and arousal they feel in a different context.

✓ The 'adolescent type' affair, is seen as a continuation of the power struggle with parents. Sexual rebelliousness and the thrill of secrecy come into play here, but using the spouse as a substitute parent in the dynamics.

The 'middlescent affair' on the other hand, is seen as a search for purpose and meaning in life, beyond a purely sexual theme. They long to become 'complete' adults.

Neubeck (1969), in studies on the causation of extramarital relations found that there are multiple causative factors. Whatever the causes may be for setting the scenario for infidelity a pertinent question is whether in fact methods to prevent this behaviour are feasible?

In the case of a spouse suspecting that the partner is developing a friendship or relationship that could lead to an affair or a threat to the marriage, some authors believe that open communication and sharing the felt anxiety could reinforce the solidarity of the marital bond and act as a deterrent to further involvement.

The writer's stance from experience with couples in this situation, is that this notion is not quite as simple (or positive) in all cases. It may in fact cause more problems as a result of the suspicion expressed. This can be

followed by denial and further conflict and may not deter the relationship but even encourage it, through constant nagging, suspicion and mistrust. Jacobson and Gurman (1986, 419) back this up by saying "the perceived injured party may not be able to let go of feelings of anger and jealousy and a negative spiral results that could push the partner further into a possibly more detrimental relationship".

Leslie (1977) suggests that prevention or protection against an unplanned affair, (as in cross-sex friendships) is to be highly aware of oneself and one's relationship with others.

### 3.6 FURTHER FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH INFIDELITY

Affairs are generally associated with deceit and lies and the main reasons for this will be discussed. Firstly, there seems to be a built-in need to protect the marital relationship. There are many reasons for this. One of the most common, is the value that society, even in a changing world, has invested in the institution of marriage. Another is to lessen the pain or impact on the 'innocent' partner. Added to this is the natural avoidance particularly initially, to any drastic changes in the already established relationship and status of husband and wife.

Most importantly however, denial is heavily associated with guilt and the fear of being caught out. There is often a grappling for justification of the behaviour. The denial in simple terms is a defence.

In the writer's experience, the basic notion of self-deceit, or not being honest with oneself, is often the very core of this type of behaviour and indeed is often the

basis too of any form of unresolved marital discord or conflict.

Extreme attitudes are held by 'active' partners, such as "it was a casual relationship and meant nothing" or "it was real love and I don't have that in my marriage". Now and again all blame is directed inwardly and this may be geared to protecting the spouse, the lover or both. (e.g. "It was all my fault").

Having established earlier, that the incidence of extramarital affairs is common to both sexes in marriage, a few further aspects will be mentioned, in relation to either of the sexes actively indulging out of the marriage.

The extramarital affair is differentiated from the 'casual one night stand'. Although the latter can certainly be classified as an act of infidelity, there is a decidedly different quality attached to it. It is often without serious emotional ties and considered to be inconsequential in the long term by the participants. It also carries with it the connotation of 'sex only'. Here it must be mentioned however, that a series of 'one night stands' can carry with them a need or behavioural pattern which is not dissimilar to that which accompanies the serious or sustained extramarital involvement.

### 3.7 THE ROLE OF JEALOUSY

Jealousy is a powerful emotion that everyone has experienced at one time or another in their lives. It is generally believed that men react differently to jealousy than women. Reiss (1986) says men often respond aggressively to jealousy, whilst women tend to become depressed.

Jealousy may have its roots in sibling rivalry, but this emotion is in no way as powerful as when it is involved in the sexual relationship. Individuals differ in their susceptibility to jealousy. This is based on factors such as basic trust, self-confidence, feelings of self-worth and past life experiences. The focus here is specifically on the issue of couples, when a third party constitutes a real or imagined threat to the couple relationship.

According to the literature, a number of studies have consistently reported moderate but significant correlations between jealousy and various individual trait measures. Jealous people tend to be self-depreciating, dissatisfied, unhappy, anxious, dogmatic and externally controlled. More jealousy also seemed to manifest in people who have more sex-stereotyped attitudes (Jacobson and Gurman, 1986).

✓ Suspicion, uncertainty and doubt usually precede jealousy and this often unleashes all manner of emotions. If suspicions remain unconfirmed it can cause the person to feel doubtful regarding their own judgement or even sanity. It can become a self-destructive torment and powerful cause of fear and insecurity, and can shatter self-confidence.

Faber (1976, 38) states:

What sets jealousy apart from other possible responses to a real or imagined infidelity - such as rage and grief, is its quality of obsession ... literally, obsession means being oppressed or besieged, as if by an evil spirit.

Imagination and fantasy begin to work overtime. One not only begins to question and evaluate the marriage, but oneself. Speculation becomes endless.

Sometimes evidence is blatantly left by the active partner for discovery by the 'innocent' partner and this has interesting implications and interpretations.

In other cases the third party feels a compulsion to 'anonymously' inform the uninvolved partner of what his/her spouse is up to. (It is not uncommon to hear of a letter or phone call 'informing' the uninvolved partner of facts 'they ought to know').

Reactions to this also differ markedly. In some cases there is denial or disbelief and a pretence that it never happened. In other cases, the reaction is dramatic - confrontation ensues and/or major steps are threatened to divorce or leave without any negotiation or opportunity for explanation. Communication is blocked and there is resistance to any suggestion of trying to work things out and to 'try again' to reinstate the relationship. Trust is shattered.

Another reaction to jealousy can be in the form of trying to hit back at the partner who has been unfaithful. This is often a futile attempt at retribution and seldom achieves what it sets out to do. If anything, it may indeed further compound an already chaotic and complicated situation.

### 3.8 THE ROLE OF SEXUALITY

It has often been generalised that women are less interested in sex and place more store on being loved and cherished. This belief today has become somewhat eroded with the move towards equality of the sexes. Sexual freedom for women has been enhanced by sophisticated contraception and a revolutionary change in attitudes of female sexuality. Women are now openly acknowledged to

have the same right as men to enjoy sexual intercourse both within and out of marriage. For women this was a turn about from Victorian attitudes of compulsory frigidity.

Preoccupation with sexual fulfilment and the importance of orgasm, 'G-spots' and innovative and novel approaches to enhance sex for women are everyday features in magazines, books and the media in general. In fact "the last two decades have brought remarkable advances in our knowledge of human sexuality". (Kaplan, 1984, xi). Not only has the emphasis been on new techniques to improve the quality of the sexual experience, but there has also been a remarkable turn towards treatment for sexual dysfunction. People feel more comfortable to talk openly about sex and generally are more knowledgeable about the subject. Clear definition is made of the phases of the act itself (i.e. response - desire, excitement and orgasm stages) and books and other literature are freely available to increase knowledge to broaden one's sexual repertoire, and to enhance the experience. This was certainly not the case in former years.

Kinsey in the 40's and 50's and later Masters and Johnson in the 60's punctured the myths surrounding sexual needs and behaviour of both sexes (Masters and Johnson, 1970). They also acknowledged and confirmed that sexual activity need not necessarily decline in either quantity or quality at later stages of human development.

Extramarital relations have both historically and traditionally been tolerated more in men than in women. Women were somehow expected to tolerate or cope with infidelity more than men were. Generally, in earlier times, the desire for extramarital relationships were far more characteristic of husbands than of wives. Kinsey et al (1948, 1953) somehow demystified this long standing

notion by showing that women too, were not immune or closed to this experience, and although not at the same rate, were indulging in this type of sexual experience out of their marriages. They were shown to be just as receptive as men in experiencing similar desires and excitement in this type of relationship.

Extramarital affairs are the dark side of sexuality, the bit one would rather not look upon, which we know exists, but whose implications we would prefer not to discuss.

(Lake and Hills, 1979, 8)

According to Reiss (1986), a feature of the sociological definition of sexuality is that it is learned in a societal context. In other words, it is primarily a matter of having been socially taught how to approach sexual interaction with others.

Reiss (1986) also asserts that in all cultures there is a commonality towards sexuality i.e. no culture is indifferent to it, but whether the culture restricts or encourages it is peculiar to the individual culture. He also adds that sexuality goes far beyond its reproductive consequences, cross-culturally.

Here the notion takes into account cultural variations in jealousy boundaries, for example even where custom permits extra-marital sexual relations with other people, there is a tactful doctrine surrounding this delicate issue and clear boundaries associated with this, thus still protecting the marriage relationship.

According to Constantine (1986), there is some debate whether sexual jealousy is truly cross-culturally universal, but there is little argument that it appears in some form in nearly all cultures.

Reiss (1986) further cites two major factors involved with sexuality as, firstly its physical pleasure and secondly (not as obvious as the latter), its self-disclosing qualities. This involves disclosing or revealing intimate aspects of the self to another. The attributes of pleasure and disclosure are the nucleus of all valued human relationships. Another assertion is that in all societies, sexuality is linked in some way to three elements of social structure and these comprise marital jealousy, gender-role power and beliefs about normality.

In linking sexuality to marital jealousy, this can be seen on the macro-level as a boundary and maintenance mechanism that aims at protecting those relationships that are viewed as important. Since marriage is a valued institution (as has been discussed earlier) it would follow that when sexuality and marriage are combined, the relationship is worthy of protection by jealousy boundaries. On a social-psychological level (or micro-level), jealousy is a negative emotional response to a felt threat from an outsider to a valued relationship.

In western society, there is a common feeling that sexual relationships outside the marriage may be intrusive and may violate the priority of the marital dyad. In fact the pleasure and self-disclosure aspects in marriage could easily be disrupted and undermined if they do not remain exclusive to this intimate relationship.

In gender-role power, it appears that in spite of an overall increase in equality for women in political, economic and family institutions, there has not been the same equality in terms of sexual rights. This is greatly linked to conformity to basic sexual ideology (not only in western culture) that it is 'natural' for men to be more interested and prone to 'casual sex'. This reinforces the

male power position in seeing himself as having more sexual rights than his female counterpart, however much lip service he may pay to her equality in sexuality.

### 3.9 THE MIXED MESSAGES OF SEXUAL GENDER SOCIALISATION

Humphrey (1982) takes an interesting look at the variations in socialisation of the sexes in western society. He describes the differential standards and rules that are prescribed for males and females. Boys are encouraged to 'sow their wild oats' and prior to marriage, the ritual of 'stag parties' is carried out. Here a great play is made (in a sympathetic fashion) of the man having to 'give up his freedom'. Often these parties include strippers or 'blue movies' and although it is done in a light-hearted and humorous vein, it subtly undermines the seriousness and responsibility of fidelity, and mocks at the restraints of the future monogamous relationship.

Girls on the other hand, are discouraged from any behaviour which could label them as promiscuous, and at the premarital stage they indulge in rituals such as 'kitchen teas' and 'bridal showers'. These are geared to re-confirm her role as a homemaker in setting up a new 'nest'. Not only do the pots and pans confirm this, but in another form she clearly indicates her willingness 'to please her man' by collecting seductive lingerie and nightgowns, for his sexual pleasure with her. No hint is made here of any suffering or discomfort she may feel in the future through monogamy. It is amazing that in spite of such diverse messages, both sexes are expected equally to practice unerring sexual fidelity for a lifetime.

Sexuality carries with it a power in social bonding, and not least of all so, in marriage. In this context sexual bonding promotes the formation of kinship ties and this in

turn helps to form the gender-role concepts of a society. If one gender exerts more power over the other, then that gender also possesses greater sexual rights and privileges. Therefore the areas of ideology, kinship and power are all strongly linked to sexual gender custom.

Heterosexual permissiveness has been on the rise since the 60's. (Saunders and Edwards, 1984), and it is only in the last decade that any sustained attention has been devoted to this growing phenomenon and particularly to extramarital aspects. Together with considerations of the concepts put forward by Reiss (1986) and which were discussed above, there are also the notions of the degree of marital sexual satisfaction, experimentation, intimacy and the autonomy of interaction with the opposite sex.

Extramarital sexuality appears to be slowly on the rise, and, as with other sexual behaviours, the gap between men and women is narrowing. Constantine (in Jacobson and Gurman, 1986, 412).

Saunders and Edwards (1984), in comparing males and females, find some evidence that women are tending to become more like men in their extramarital sexual attitudes. This seems to be shared by others in the literature on this topic, (as above). In the former, sample, there was little difference between the sexes in attitudes to justify extramarital relationships. (This encompasses both happy and unhappy marriages and with or without affection for the extramarital partner).

The women generally reported not enjoying the same level of autonomy as their male counterparts in interaction with the opposite sex, thus they have minimal opportunity to meet attractive people with whom they could become sexually involved. (This was particularly so in the case of

housewives).

The level of marital satisfaction seemed to be highly influenced by marital sexual satisfaction and this hypotheses held for the sample used. If the satisfaction in the marriage is considered insufficient, a person is more likely to seek it elsewhere.

Two major findings from this research indicate that any research dealing with extramarital permissiveness, should firstly, explicitly differentiate between males and females and secondly, a clear distinction is essential in whether it is attitude or behaviour that is being evaluated.

To return briefly to the above mentioned findings of housewives who reported having less opportunity for meeting people with whom they may become sexually involved, a study by Allen and Kalish (1984) found that professional women or those in career roles, find alternatives to their marriage by a willingness to indulge more freely in intimate personal and sexual relationships outside of the marriage. This was particularly so for late-marrying women. The overall feeling, however, was that these outside relationships severely reduced the value and attractiveness of the marriage.

### 3.10 EFFECTS OF INFIDELITY

In one marriage, a single incident of extramarital involvement may be symptomatic of a profound breakdown of the marital relationship, whilst in another on-going affairs may function as a form of enrichment experience, unrelated to the couples problems.

Here one begs the question of why in some marriages is the extramarital affair so devastating. It might be said that

sexual behaviour is a very important and special human interaction and the impact of infidelity can be traumatic as it encompasses many contrary emotional meanings and feelings. For example, there is a fine line between love and hate; moral and sinful, rejection and acceptance.

Many people and particularly women, exhibit high psychological defences in reaction to the notion of infidelity. Denial or repression of the thought may be used. People often secretly delude themselves with thoughts like 'it could never happen to me'.

The issues involved in infidelity are highly personal and they depend entirely on the persons concerned. Lake and Hills (1979) postulate that the age of the participants or the length of duration of the marriage do not make any difference. The writer begs to differ here in that in the older marriage, there are special factors that do make a vast difference. These differences are involved with alternative in choices for the future in terms of finance, opportunity for other relationships or remarriage (in the event of divorce) and the fear of loneliness.

Where the writer would agree with the concept that age or length of marriage is irrelevant, is in terms of the emotions experienced when an affair is detected by a spouse. The issue of diminished or destroyed trust is the most important factor here.

If a couple have become accurate in predicting their partner's behaviour and become used to depending on them, the revelation of an affair is shattering and it consequently will affect every aspect of their lives. The whole structure requires to be rebuilt, redefined and re-evaluated. It virtually means having to start all over again.

Ancient Roman law gave a husband the right to execute a wife found guilty of adultery, although a wife was not given that same right. (Queen and Haberstein, 1967). Today, even though extramarital affairs occur with some frequency and they still do create feelings of jealousy and betrayal, they do not always lead to divorce. There are two main reasons for this. The first is that many affairs occur without the knowledge of the spouse, and the second is that even if detected, many spouses may choose to forgive infidelity rather than dissolve the marriage.

✓ Although low marital satisfaction can be considered a reason for indulging in extramarital relations, this is not always the case. Some people find it possible and desirable to indulge in it whilst still valuing and appreciating the marriage.

A study done by Tavris and Sadd on this aspect, (in Garrett, 1982), showed that only 6% of their subjects were reported to be simultaneously involved with happy marriages and extramarital relationships. This gives some confirmation to the difficulties of dual relationships emotionally and socially.

There is no single answer to describing the effects of extramarital relationships on marriage. Much depends on whether the affair continues after it has been detected. Another important variable is how it was found out. The level of emotional involvement is very important here and whether it has got out of hand or is still able to be controlled, or whether it is seen as a passionate or emotionally committed relationship. The time duration of the affair is also an important factor - is this a first affair or were there others before? The marital status of the third party is of relevance to ascertain whether there is an equal-loss potential on both sides. Simply this means, is the 'other'

married and also at risk to lose his marital partner? In fact, what does he/she stand to lose? Finance, family, professional or business and social status all have implications on the effects of affairs. To say nothing of how vital these indicators are in terms of interpretation and diagnosis.

Some affairs never go beyond one sexual encounter. Again there could be many reasons for this. It might have been disappointing, or circumstances may prevent the possibility of repetition for many real reasons. Guilt may interfere on either or both sides with continuing, or there may be a sudden fear and realisation that the marriage could be in jeopardy.

If an affair continues without spouse awareness and then dies a natural death, it may not have any specific effect on the marriage. In most sustained or prolonged affairs, the spouse eventually, one way or another, suspects or finds out about it. This can have a very destructive effect not only on the marriage, but on the 'innocent' spouse. Personal feelings of inadequacy can result, such as feeling inadequate sexually (or in other ways) and the whole marriage comes into serious question.

All of the above have direct implications for treatment in marital therapy, which will be dealt with in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### CLINICAL APPROACHES IN THE TREATMENT OF INFIDELITY AND THE ROLE OF THE THERAPIST

#### 4.1 QUALITIES AND ATTITUDE OF THE WORKER IN EXTRAMARITAL PROBLEMS

In this chapter the use of 'therapist', 'clinician', 'counsellor' and 'worker' will be used interchangeably. The use of the pronoun 'he' will also be used for convenience.

The role and attitude of the worker is particularly significant in the treatment of the extramarital affair, and it is crucial that he is clear and comfortable with his own values and attitudes. Although role and attitude persist throughout the therapeutic alliance, it is most important that they are not used as a basis to establish desired goals or the outcome of treatment. Whilst it would be unrealistic to expect the therapist to drop or deny his own value system, it is equally unrealistic to deny that however much it is controlled, that it will not somehow impinge on the client's values, and this interplay should not be underestimated. (Knapp, 1975).

If the therapist feels particularly strongly or is disapproving about a particular issue such as infidelity, it is imperative that he is open and responsible enough to share this with the client or clients at the beginning, and offer them a suitable referral. If this is not done, the relationship in therapy could be subjected to a judgemental and biased distortion and the clients would fail to get the professional support and guidance in their search for alternatives. Often the couple themselves present with incongruent values and if the worker too feels ambivalent with his own values, it is difficult to control this countertransference. Therefore, for an effective working relationship to be established, the therapist's personality

and values should not be an obstacle in any way. According to Taibbi (1983), it is difficult to remain objective because of the pressure of social attitudes and the therapist needs to be alert to identify any vicarious support, projections and reaction formations.

In order to invite trust and confidence, he requires to have trust and confidence in himself and he needs to be an expert in facilitating communication, as the therapeutic alliance relies heavily on the dynamics of interaction. The concept of awareness and listening with a 'third ear' and as Reik (1956) suggests, it is better not to understand than to misunderstand. The therapist must be protected from becoming a judge or policeman in his quest for fairness and truth and he should be able to accept dilemmas and contradictions.

Becvar et al (1982) present a hypothesis that an increasing effort to help families and marriages may inadvertently increase their potential for dysfunction. They stress the need to include the broader societal perspective, as well as the institutions of marriage and the family, in assessing whether the labels of 'functional' or 'dysfunctional' are appropriate. The main thrust being, that extreme caution needs to be exercised in the enthusiasm of helping professionals in trying to do good, they should firstly be cautious not to do any harm.

A particular pertinent point they make, is that although it is accepted that family and marriage problems do exist, the professional's response should be clearly defined in terms of whether the theories he uses, gives meaning to understand, predict and influence the events experienced.

Mankind ... has been infected with an incurable disease to make sense out of experience, to raise to higher and higher levels of abstraction the heterogeneous phenomena that surround and impinge upon us.  
(Paolino and McCrady, 1978, 555)

Therefore, it is one thing to believe a theory oneself, but to believe it is necessarily good for everyone, is another thing. Perhaps it is necessary to question theories of marriage and the family and ask whether these institutions are in a state of crisis, or whether it is a stage in the growth of society.

Many of our contemporary social crises, while creating dissonance in the current context, are necessary developmental experiences in the evolution of societies.  
(Becvar et al, 1982, 389)

It seems paramount therefore to recognise both the strengths and weaknesses of these institutions in the light of the undergoing developmental phases, which with proper handling, can grow in nature and become better functioning institutions which can contribute more to society.

Briefly, one must mention here that the gender of the therapist is a factor not to be overlooked in treating cases of infidelity. It is not always feasible to offer a male-female co-therapy team which is considered by some to be more balanced in this type of problem. The writer found no empirical evidence to substantiate this conclusively (Todd; Dare; Lieberman and Lieberman; Rice and Rice; in Jacobson and Gurman, 1986). Suffice it to say that the sex of the therapist does have implications in transference and counter transference issues (which will be dealt with later), and also in the interaction between the therapist and the spouse of the opposite gender. Here great sensitivity needs to be exercised not to show any biases.

Having looked at the necessary attributes and role of the therapist, consideration will now be given to client attitudes to extramarital sexual activity.

#### 4.2 CLIENT ATTITUDES TO EXTRAMARITAL SEXUAL AFFAIRS AND IT'S IMPLICATIONS FOR TREATMENT

Extramarital behaviour is a complex phenomenon which requires a high degree of knowledge, sensitivity and recognition of individual differences and variations in behaviour and attitudes of clients.

A common paradox of contemporary western society, is that there is an overwhelming number of people who disapprove of extramarital sex, and yet many people indulge in it. According to Jacobson and Gurman (1986), studies show that 70 - 75% of married people practise it.

✓ Not everyone who has an affair lands up in treatment, and of those who do, many present with other problems initially. Sprenkle et al (1978) report that only 30% of clients report extramarital sexual behaviour at the outset of therapy, and that later, once rapport and trust is established, 60% of the same clients disclosed this type of involvement.

Sprenkle et al (1978) find the concept of a 'script' useful for evaluating and studying sexual behaviour. This is a complete organisation of internalised beliefs, values and perceptions, which reflect the sociocultural definition and norms around this topic. They acknowledge that whilst different individuals will have unique scripts, there are generally shared beliefs, common to a social group.

The two major themes of such scripts are as follows:-

Firstly, there are all the reasons why such behaviour should not be encouraged; it is considered immoral and deviant; it could destroy marriage and lead to divorce; and it is an indication of a distressed marriage.

Secondly, if it does occur, there is a need to be secretive about it. Guilt will be experienced, and the spouse will react with feelings of jealousy and rejection if it is discovered.

Religion, it seems, has traditionally played, and still plays, a major part in forming the norms of this type of script, but other socializing agents such as parents, peers and the media also contribute to such thinking. There is also a particular underlying emphasis on the restriction of such behaviour for women. Although there is little empirical evidence to test this, practical experience of counsellors (including the writer) confirm this.

The main point that is made here, therefore, is that most individuals have not managed to escape this type of traditional script and that such attitudes are well and truly internalised in many people today, in spite of an increasing incidence of extramarital behaviour.

Linked with the conventional type of script outlined above, there are several myths or generalisations that need to be mentioned. For example, people tend to believe that all affairs are underhand and sneaky; or that very few people indulge in this type of behaviour; and that this occurs as a direct result of serious problems either in the marriage or within the individuals themselves.

Although, any or all of the above may be true, it is not a given and cannot be assumed in relation to all extramarital behaviour.

#### 4.3 PARTICULAR ISSUES AND DIFFICULTIES IN THE ASSESSMENT STAGE

There are many forms of presentation of the extramarital affair. When a client or couple seek help for their marital problems, even if there has been an extramarital involvement, this is not reported initially in every case. There are many diverse ways in which this issue can come to the attention of the therapist. A couple may present with crucial difficulties which they consider to be the major cause of their distress, and only after several sessions is the infidelity revealed.

Another situation is where the infidelity is not mentioned at all, even if it is still happening, and this can be either for the reason that it is not considered to be a problem, or that there is a reluctance to disclose this type of information.

Of course, the problem of an extramarital affair may be presented as the problem right from the start, either as real, or as a fantasy or suspicion of one partner, and this may be the motivating factor for seeing the counsellor or the therapist in the first place. Often the discovery of the affair is the precipitating factor leading the couple to treatment.

The affair may be an on-going dynamic relationship process, either brief or sustained or it may be something of the past which has just come to light. In any event, it must be seen as having a function and playing a role within the marriage itself and in understanding the elements of this relationship, the therapist must formulate appropriate management of the case accordingly.

A complex situation is where the couple present with a problem or problems unrelated to extramarital behaviour and

only later is the 'secret' reported privately to the therapist in an individual session, by one partner. The implications of this are highly complicated, particularly if the affair is current and the confidentiality of the fact is requested by that partner.

It is highly debatable, and very much an individual choice, as to how the therapist should respond to this particular situation and also depends on several factors. For example, did the couple present conjointly and are both committed to working on the marriage, or did one spouse insist that his or her reluctant spouse come along to discuss the distress?

(An affair of the past does not have quite the same impact in the choices or alternatives for therapists in dealing with this issue of confidentiality, and to insist that this fact be revealed to the unknowing spouse, may be deemed counterproductive).

Some therapists find it extremely uncomfortable to be placed in this situation and might suggest to the disclosing partner that unless there is a completely honest and open basis for communication by all parties, that he will not continue to deal with the case. However, it is not necessarily right for a therapist to make this decision or to insist, but rather to recommend that either the affair be terminated, (if there is an earnest desire to work on the marriage), or to evaluate the meaning of the other relationship in terms of the assessment (which will be given presently), and weigh up the choices for disclosure or not to the spouse.

On the other hand, in accepting such information from one partner and then continuing with conjoint therapy whilst holding the secret of a continuing current affair, the

therapist is in effect colluding with that spouse and this puts an unfair psychological advantage over the other partner.

According to Humphrey (1982), the revelation of a secret affair, often occurs during an individual session and the therapist, having promised confidentiality, must respect this. This, as discussed above, raises an issue of ethics, since the doctrine of the worker in marital therapy may indeed be that all important issues be shared or it may be a case of the therapist's own moral code which precludes him from handling the issues objectively. This may be an appropriate time to suggest referral.

In the writer's personal experience, it is not the duty of the therapist to impose his own moral codes and also not his decision as to whether it be shared or not. This decision and responsibility lies exclusively with the clients involved. What is the responsibility of the therapist however, is to offer the opportunity to examine and determine the meaning of the relationship and to consider alternatives around decisions and risks for the future regarding them.

Humphrey (1982) suggests that a high level of romantic eroticism often prevents a person making a logical and appropriate decision at this time and needs help with reality planning and a raised awareness of what this could mean if it is found out. He also adds that in treating the 'different struggles' of the partners at the same time, it is possible to treat other aspects of a dysfunctional relationship and in so doing the partners may begin to grow closer and communicate more easily. This could lead to a decision by the active partner to decide to terminate the affair, or to reveal it, in which case appropriate support for both can be given by the therapist.

Having considered briefly the complex issue above, it is as well to move on to other levels of assessment in order for the clinician to assess the priorities of treatment focus. Here one is working on the basis that the extramarital activity is either known or suspected by the spouse.

Different therapeutic stances or different models determine how extramarital activity is explained, defined, emphasized and treated. In all cases, though two major differentiations can be made. Firstly, the individual historical perspective and secondly, the couples interactional perspective.

The individual historical focus includes early modes and learning, identification issues, parental distortions and unresolved developmental difficulties. The major part of future treatment with these would be to modify, 're-parent' and to correct the distortions. The interactional perspective looks at the current relationship of the couple.

Barton and Alexander (1981), trace the functional aspects of affairs as a means of meeting system needs and mostly as a means of regulating distance. The behaviour is part of an interlocking network of family members in order to maintain a certain system level.

✓ Often authors, such as Edwards and Booth (1976), define the extramarital affair as an outcome of a couples inability to resolve other problems. This is also seen as 'acting out' behaviour in transactional analysis terms, the cashing in of "brown stamps" thereby supporting the problem. (Berne, 1964).

Napier and Whitaker (1978) suggest it is a means of breaking a marital impasse, which then forces the couple to

communicate more deeply and brings energy into the system.

A developmental perspective sees affairs in the light of the developmental adult crisis, and the normal stages of the marital cycle. Here, affairs are redefined within the larger context of both anticipated developmental tasks and earlier choices.

There appears to be ample support for all the above mentioned perspectives. Treatment goals and methods are however coloured by the clinician's primary working orientations. In the writer's opinion however, there seems to be no reason why more than one orientation shouldn't be used, for example, combining problem-solving, behavioural and communication.

Taibbi (1983), looks at two levels of assessment when the client or clients present.

The first is the client response, which concerns the grief reaction and crisis level. The second is the context of the affair in terms of the couple's relationship and the individual dynamics involved.

There are several crucial questions that need to be asked in order to gain a thorough understanding of the situation. These areas will now be dealt with when dealing with the first above.

How did the client find out about the affair? Were they told? Did they discover it or suspect it and at first was it denied or was any evidence left around for them to discover? Was there a confrontation and if so, what repercussions were there? What does this mean to the client? This involves the emotional response, or what 'script' they hold and the level of surprise or shock they

felt. How is he or she coping with the grief. With anger? Self-punishment, guilt or depression? What is the present level of functioning? Is the reaction rated realistic by the therapist? How does the affair fit into the larger context of the marital relationship? This involves many other major marital problems or stresses.

Why now? What expectations and goals does he or she have (and are they realistic?) Are support and clarification priorities? Are there other supports? Can the spouse be involved? What transference implications are there?

If the couple is seen together, much of the above is appropriate, but extra information is also needed. For example, the interaction dynamics must be gauged. Who is more immobilized? Does one blame or placate the other? How they deal with communicating the conflict? Do they appear motivated to move beyond this crisis? What reasons do they give for coming for treatment i.e. expectations and goals? Is guilt or anger the main priority to deal with? How do they see the therapist, as a judge or does it appear that they intend replicating their situation by using the therapist for further triangulation?

Humphrey (1982) suggests that diagnostically, extramarital activity varies so greatly that the therapist must be highly sensitive to this and may in fact take for granted certain vital aspects which could alter the meaning and function greatly. For example, the affair may not necessarily be a sexual one.

Also one needs to evaluate the perception of the involved partner as to whether 'love' or 'passion' is present in a sexual affair or is it simply seen as a pleasurable, exciting relationship without any commitment or long term

implications? Do both participating partners feel the same way about the nature of the affair or is there pressure or threat around either continuing or ending it?

✓ Beginner marital therapists may fail to realise that when a couple seek help, (for whatever reasons they give), the possibility of an affair should not be ruled out. Failure to enquire about this type of activity may cause them to blunder ahead with conjoint sessions and they fail to extract this vital information. Humphrey (1981) suggests that whilst the conjoint approach of interviewing is highly useful, it may preclude the sharing of such threatening yet crucially significant information. Therefore all couples should be given an individual session at least once during assessment.

Supervision for the less experienced practitioner particularly is invaluable and could help the couple move beyond an impasse and pick up any hidden agendas that clients may have and which underlie real issues.

The active role of the therapist at this assessment stage, can also clarify his position within the process and make clear that he will not tolerate any replication of the triangulation which is already present.

#### 4.4 DEALING WITH THE CRISIS

Sexual fidelity is the expressed norm in western marriage unless it has been specifically negotiated otherwise by the couple. In spite of this, the real norm was exposed by Kinsey in his studies on married men and women and their sexual habits. (Kinsey, 1948, 1953). As a result, marital therapists are coping with extramarital sexual affairs as a common type of problem in therapy.

An important question raised by Humphrey (1982) is why are extramarital sexual affairs so devastating to marriage if statistics show they are 'normal'? He attempts to answer this by suggesting two possible answers. Firstly, the use of the psychological defence mechanism of repression and denial by people in order to ward off their anxieties about their partners having affairs. Secondly, sexual behaviour, because of its symbolic nature, is treated significantly differently from all other types of marital behaviour.

The point being made, is that there is so much repression and denial about such an event, even when it is suspected, that when it can no longer be ignored and it is confirmed, the full impact strikes the person as a devastating blow, and feelings explode.

The stressful realisation that one's marriage is in jeopardy as a result of an affair can certainly present a crisis. Theoretical foundations to deal with a crisis have been established and a basic framework for intervention is well documented.

According to Golan (1978) goals for intervention are defined as follows:-

1. To alleviate the immediate impact of the disruptive stressful events; and
2. To help mobilize the manifest and psychological capabilities and social resources of those directly affected ... for coping with effects of stress adaptively. (Golan, 1978, 4).

Whether the crisis is a single catastrophic occurrence in a series of mishaps that have built up accumulatively, the following characteristics are always present according to Golan's crisis theory.

It is usually initiated by a 'hazardous event' which puts the individual into a 'vulnerable state'. This raises his anxiety and disrupts his normal problem-solving capacity. A 'precipitating factor' may then bring about a turning point causing disorganisation and disequilibrium. This then is the point of 'active crisis'.

Events begin to present as a 'threat' and the concept of 'loss' can occur. This is particularly relevant in the case of a spouse engaging in an affair, and where the 'victim' or uninvolved partner perceives the loss of the spouse or marriage as a potential consequence. The crisis is experienced by the individual as a realistic struggle in his current life situation and this can often reactivate earlier unresolved conflicts or crises, which further leads to an inappropriate or exaggerated response.

During a crisis, fixation at a particular stage may occur and the therapists role is to assist the client to 'do his crisis work' and attempt to master the situation.

Length of time from the initial blow to resolution, may vary. During resolution, the individual is particularly amenable and emotionally responsive to help. Here support and assistance to focus on goals can be invaluable and here the clinician plays a crucial role.

In the re-integration phase, a new and strengthened ego may emerge, with new adaptive styles learned during the process. If however, appropriate help has not been received during this critical time, it can result in a weakened ability to function adequately in the future.

#### 4.5 THE CONCEPT OF GRIEF AND LOSS IN THE TREATMENT OF INFIDELITY

Taibbi (1983) puts forward the notion that although the clinician has various means of conceptualizing the aetiology or function of extramarital activity, for the individual or couple, his initial responsibility and focus should be on the client's response, conceptualisation, and his mode of management of the crisis brought on by disclosure.

The one who contacts the therapist is usually in a grief reaction and the client is dealing with a high level of loss. (Particularly when the discovery of the affair is the precipitant for seeking help).

Whether or not the perceived threat of loss of the spouse or the marriage is real or not, the feeling of loss is indeed very real. Depending on whether the realisation of a spouse's affair has developed over a long period of time or whether it is discovered with shock, the dynamics and effect of loss are somewhat different, yet both still undergo a series of specific phases.

Antagonism and conflict are rife, and an emotional separation from the partner is experienced. This is not unlike the reaction to a bereavement or the sudden loss of a loved one. (Kubler-Ross, 1969).

The person may fear not only the emotional loss of the spouse, but also loss of image, dream, pretence of self, and the marriage. (Even though relief may be first experienced in that the 'air is cleared', and that it is 'out in the open', the realisation that all this shifts onto the marriage relationship initiates a grief reaction). Denial is the first phase, wherein the notion is too painful to accept. The feelings of loss and depression set in. There is a feeling of isolation that

accompanies this. Anger and ambivalence then manifests and it is often at this stage that people seek help.

It must be mentioned here that the stage at which the client's enter therapy is often a culmination of weeks or months or even years of denial. For the couple it must be seen as a joint sense of loss as well as the acknowledging guilt and defensiveness of the 'active' partner. Bargaining may occur at this stage. Gradually the focus becomes re-orientated to the present and future - and a great emphasis here is placed on the self in terms of re-establishing one's identity, purpose and feelings of self-worth.

Acceptance and achievement of a new level of functioning finally occurs when the person or couple have begun to re-establish a feeling of personal adequacy and coping. Interpersonal interaction then moves on to a more adult level so that plans can be made for the future. (This would apply either way, in the case of whether the affair has ended and the marriage is reinstated or whether agreement has been reached to end the marriage).

Client reactions are determined further by previous losses and coping capacities in the past. There may be an overload of previous life stresses and the discovery of the spouse's affair is the 'last straw'. This is more so the case when the client's dependency needs are great, and self-esteem low, and when major losses or unresolved crises of the past still linger.

In dealing with the client's perception of the event and crisis, the use of Rational-emotive therapy (R E T) (Ellis in Corey, 1982) or Reality Therapy (Glasser, 1965) are often useful as pragmatic approaches at this time.

Here one would deal with the meaning of the affair to the client, the distortions, generalizations or interpretations of the facts and this will help amplify his perceptions of

the problems to be faced and solved. Those who think well of themselves and can express themselves clearly and are able to take some appropriate action, will be less likely to be in extreme distress. This is not to say that grief is not present, but those who show more adaptive patterns generally will tend to move through this more easily.

#### 4.6 THE VALUE OF SUPPORT

In addition to being the vehicle for the development of awareness and action, the therapeutic relationship serves a broad supporting role.

In discussing the counselling relationship, Carl Rogers (1951) says:-

It is experienced as basically supporting, but it is in no way supportive. The client does not feel that someone is behind him, that someone approves of him. He does experience the fact that there is someone who respects him as he is, and is willing for him to take any direction which he chooses.

(Rogers, 1951, 209)

In spite of this clearly defined and succinct description of the function and value of support, Brammer and Shostrom (1977) stress the principles of flexibility and timing in the use of support and suggest that there are times when it is necessary to be more supportive than at other times.

In crisis intervention, the role and value of support is somewhat different and will be dealt with briefly. The aim of crisis intervention methods is to not only move the client from a disorganised state to a state of equilibrium but ultimately to a higher level of growth. It is here that an appropriate supportive relationship provides hope and can act as an antidote for grief and despair. Several

therapeutic values of support are cited by Brammer and Shostrom (1977). Its principal value is seen in reducing excess anxiety and develop a feeling of security and comfort. The inadequate or very distressed client can lean temporarily on the counsellor or therapist whilst he develops or repairs confidence and strength.

A supportive climate can enhance the client's feeling of acceptance of his own feelings and give him permission to share them openly. It can also give the client the freedom he requires to change his views or behaviour. Even if the therapist does not agree with the client, he is nonetheless receptive to the client's views and opinions.

Very important, is the function support serves in prevention, and here the writer refers to client's possible impulsive, drastic or abortive solutions to their problems e.g. suicide. It is at this time that within the framework of a supportive (and supporting) environment, that the client can search for alternatives that are more adaptive.

The limitations of too much support include the danger of an overdependence of client on clinician, or its misinterpretation as sympathy. It may also, if given in overdose, cause the client to become immobilized and not strive for change or growth. (The latter occurs when anxiety is so greatly reduced that a complacency or unrealistic acceptance is experienced).

Another disadvantage of excess support is that its authenticity may be doubted by the client and he may perceive the therapist as insincere.

Support therefore needs to be used appropriately, economically and not in an unrealistically reassuring way.

#### 4.7 CONJOINT VERSUS INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE THERAPIST

The predictable course of therapy in infidelity depends heavily on whether the 'innocent' or non-participating partner knows about the affair or not. (In the discussion to follow, the focus will be mainly in the case of both partners being aware of the extramarital activity).

##### 4.7.1 INDICATIONS FOR CONJOINT THERAPY

According to Nadelson et al (1975), the motivation to explore marital problems together is often considered the primary indication for the treatment of couples conjointly. However, it must be stated here that depending on the evaluative findings, technique and approach must be modified accordingly. Haley (1963) suggests conjoint therapy is useful when techniques at individual therapy have failed; when sudden symptoms related to marital discord manifest; when it is requested by the couple or when an improvement in one partner as a result of individual therapy changes the equilibrium of the marriage and this has caused more conflict between the partners.

Nadelson et al, (1975), feel that where family relationships are distorted and unrealistic, or the couple is about to disintegrate the marriage, or when there is severe acting out behaviour by the couple, or one partner is poorly motivated, these are all indications for conjoint work.

A number of authors stress the need for conjoint sessions when one partner is severely disturbed psychologically. The rationale for this being that a relationship equilibrium could be based on one partner's mental illness, and if improvement occurs, the healthy partner can begin to develop symptoms of another sort.

Nadelson et al, (1975) also suggest that conjoint marital therapy may be useful at different points of an individual treatment process and recommends that these sessions be used to confirm the goals that have been achieved, as a means of evaluating and monitoring progress.

Contra-indications for conjoint marital therapy may include some of the following factors. When one or both partners exhibit an inadequate tolerance of the other, or when anxiety is at a particularly high level. If there is an inordinate amount of hostility between the couple and control is an issue. Where behaviour (such as extramarital activity) is unknown by the one partner. The severe personality disordered client or one who is highly manipulative or displays paranoid tendencies would be counterproductive in regular conjoint sessions.

Whilst bearing in mind the above indicators, the writer wishes to stress the need for the therapist to use professional discretion regarding the appropriateness and productivity of the conjoint method, and the use of sound clinical judgement should be the guiding factor as to when it should be avoided or delayed.

It cannot be denied that the conjoint method can be highly useful for giving couples the opportunity to examine and express feeling and search for alternatives to old patterns that have led up to their distress, but it can also be a complicated and counterproductive vehicle if it is not appropriately used. An example of this is where one partner may be so attacking that they may in fact push the other further away and ruin chances for negotiation. Another is the unconscious attempt of clients to replicate their triangulated situation with the therapist.

The issue of transference and countertransference is also a highly complicated one in the conjoint approach and this will be dealt with in more detail in Section 4.8. Nadelson et al (1975) however, do not accept as applicable the concept of transference as it is known in individual terms in a couple situation, where they see the interactional aspects involving both partners and the therapist as the primary focus.

It would be remiss not to mention the problem of the clinician appearing to collude with one partner during conjoint marital therapy. Great skill and care is needed on the part of the therapist to focus on the couple system interactions to avoid being seen as a judge or become embroiled in a collusive situation. If a couple become fixed, or are unable to move beyond a blaming or placating mode, this may be one indication for punctuating with an individual session, to allow appropriate ventilation and clarification before returning to the conjoint approach.

#### 4.7.2 INDICATIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL SESSIONS

Often only one marriage partner presents for help with a marital difficulty and the onus lies greatly with the clinician to assess whether this method (the individual method) is appropriate for future meetings.

If it is the 'victim' of an extramarital affair who seeks help (and it is often this spouse who does come initially), then the clinician has a responsibility to carry out certain tasks.

Firstly, to allow ventilation and assess the grief and crisis reaction during clarification of the problems. Support here is extremely important and may go beyond the one-to-one contact between the client and clinician.

For example, there may be a need for medication or contact with family members or a need to reduce work or other stresses temporarily. Here the worker plays an educative, advocacy role in making contact with collateral sources with client permission. Secondly, there is a need to stabilise the client sufficiently to be able to look at goals and possible courses of action from this point. One, may be to suggest the inclusion of the spouse and encourage communication in that regard.

If the spouse fails to respond to an invitation for conjoint therapy, the presenting client must be treated individually, but caution should be exercised not to interpret behaviour or judge 'the absent' partner through the eyes of the client. The use of clear clarification of goals and the use of reframing the problem are often useful techniques at this point. The context of the individual therapy should not in any way represent a threat to the absent spouse, or it will forever exclude him or her from possibly engaging in treatment in the future if this is the case.

Another possibility is that the 'active' partner in an affair is the first to come to the therapist and in this case there is a somewhat 'confessional' quality about it. Here one needs to establish what the purpose of the contact is. For example, has there been a change in the marriage or in the extramarital relationship or is there any internal or external pressure to seek a solution one way or another?

It would be safe to say that the goals and expectations of this client be respected and they should be treated according to the purpose of the client's individual concerns. Similar clarification and options must be discussed in order to help him or her find the best

solution, but great care is needed not to give support for the affair, if the client is clearly needing a relief from guilty feelings. The distortions must be corrected and the client must gain a more realistic attitude in relation to the problem (and a problem it must indeed be, or he would not have made contact with the therapist in the first place!).

A rather difficult situation is one (which was touched on in Section 4.3) where a couple have presented for marital therapy and it is only in an individual session that one partner confesses an extramarital involvement, either current or past. Since many of the issues around this have already been discussed, the main purpose here is to assess and ascertain why the client has introduced this material, at this time, and in this manner. Was it intended for better clarification of expectations and goals, or is it to try and enlist the acceptance of support of the therapist?. Here again, a clear assessment must be made, and it may concern the moving of the focus from marital to individual issues of this client, until a more honest and realistic view of the problems are gained. This type of client very often has a 'hidden agenda' which may well involve more interpersonal work than he has recognised.

Contra-indications for individual sessions would be when there is a clear need and motivation by both to work out mutual problems, and a readiness expressed by both. Another example would be where the absent partner feels 'left out' or insecure when the spouse attends therapy regularly and he feels unsure about the problems being dealt with. (Bearing in mind that 'improvement' in one spouse can cause a state of disequilibrium in the other or in the marital relationship). This could be remedied by suggesting a conjoint session or sessions, or the possible use of concurrent individual sessions.

While dealing with the appropriate use of either conjoint or individual treatment in extramarital relationship problems, it would be remiss of the writer not to mention contact with the 'third' party in either of these methods.

Although from a systems theory perspective, this person should indeed be included, as they are a highly relevant contributor to the marital system at this time, (particularly in a current affair), in practice, this contact is rarely made. (Humphrey, 1982). There are many reasons for this. It may be as a result of reluctance by any of the three people involved. For example, the outside partner may refuse to be drawn in. The 'active' spouse may feel protective to both spouse and partner and therefore reject this, or the non-active partner may refuse to ever discuss the matter with this person.

Humphrey (1982), suggests that counter-transference issues in this type of situation could be unmanageable and this may be a reason it is not often encouraged. A useful suggestion that could be made by the clinician is that referral be made to another therapist, for concurrent and collaborative therapy if this is requested or indicated.

As a rule of thumb, where both partners present initially, it is useful to see both for assessment initially using both conjoint and individual sessions to complete a thorough history, then treatment should be tailored to what the clients need and can cope with, otherwise it is a waste of time.

#### 4.8 THERAPEUTIC ACTION IN RELATION TO THE PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED

According to Golan (1978) the advent of infidelity or divorce is ranked second to a death in terms of impact and

crisis. This is understandable if one considers that the expectations of society and of couples, is that love is sufficient for the successful development of a marriage partnership. In today's world, where stresses of life have increased, temptation abounds and divorce is easy, this is not realistic. Bearing in mind the disparate psychological and cultural histories each bring into the marriage, problems do occur and often without attempting to work things out, people look for ways out. One of these ways is to indulge in an extramarital sexual affair.

Successful marital therapy rests on the ability of the clinician to not only understand the development of the conflicts and dissatisfaction within the marriage, but to use positive action to reduce or eliminate destructive behaviours which have manifested. According to Humphrey (1982), there are dual foci in the treatment of extramarital sexual affairs, the first is to initially focus more on the affair and then to shift to the marriage relationship.

On presentation for help, much information is already gleaned by the therapist through the source of referral, motivations and commitment expressed by the clients (and the value they put on the threat to the integrity of the marriage) as well as the reality of their goals in treatment.

Individual contributions to the problems need to be tackled and communication must be encouraged between the spouses. There is a need for reframing and exploration, and after ventilation to move beyond the emotional reactions in looking for clarity in taking positive action to change dysfunctional patterns. Techniques such as modelling, confrontation and reflection are useful. Here Hollis's (1972) psychosocial treatment procedures are also

indicated. These include the use of Sustainment, Direct Influence, Exploration-description; Ventilation; Person-Situation reflection; and Personality and early life reflection. At this stage appropriate referrals should be made with client permission, if indicated, with client permission, such as for family therapy, or medication from a doctor or psychiatrist.

Since aetiology is a complex and sometimes contradictory issue, it is better to speak of 'reasons' rather than 'causes', as the latter implies linear effects (Humphrey 1982). The main emphasis should be on what the affair is providing that the marriage is not. The focus then becomes "What can be changed?".

There are many reasons for extramarital affairs as a result of deficiencies in the marriage. These include sexual reasons, love, physical separation from spouse or enforced closeness to the other (either at work or socially). In the latter case, 'love' can develop, according to Reiss (1976) from an innocent association where rapport begins to build up. One way of dealing with this is by environmental manipulation i.e. distancing the partners (physically or socially), plus working on the marriage.

Marital conflict can also be a reason to cause a spouse looking elsewhere and here one needs to deal with conflict management and improved communication between spouses.

Where there appears to be intrapsychic bases in the marital couple, one needs to be cautious in evaluating if these are as a result of personal unresolved conflicts or insecurities or as a result of the reaction to the dysfunctioning marital relationship.

#### 4.9 TRANSFERENCE AND COUNTER-TRANSFERENCE IN MARITAL THERAPY

According to Rhodes (1979), the influence of the workers personality and vulnerability on transference, as well as the client's behaviour and function to effect counter-transference, is an important dimension which is often overlooked in couple work.

In looking at the personality of the worker, she asserts that this plays a major part in the outcome of intervention, and rates it as high as the clinician's technical expertise.

The client's perception of the therapist, one cannot deny, may be coloured or distorted by the level of their stress and functioning, and right from the beginning they develop a sense of 'who' and 'what' this person is, beyond their professional role.

Although a great deal of marital work is conducted on a conscious reality level, and some authors believe that transference is not fostered as a result, the writer's opinion, in line with Rhodes (1979) is that it is still somehow present and influences the therapeutic relationship.

Rhodes (1979) asserts that the worker's personality acts as a catalyst for the intense or excessive feelings of the client and therefore is an interactional dovetailing of worker behaviour and client susceptibility. Here it is necessary that the components of 'real' and 'unrealistic' be sorted out. When this is done, it approximates a real-life situation and this somehow de-emphasizes the pathology and normalises the process of taking personal responsibility for behaviour.

Counter-transference on the other hand can give powerful diagnostic cues to the clinician of what unconscious processes are interfering with the therapeutic interaction in the client's behaviour. (Of course, it can also be a sign of the neurotic vulnerability on the worker's part). Both however, are useful tools for better management of therapy.

Grayer and Sax (1986) propose that counter-transference may be used as a model which facilitates the therapist's ability to conceptualise responses both within himself or herself and the client or client's, and is highly valuable for diagnostic and therapeutic use.

In conjoint couple therapy Guttman (1982) illustrates the importance of transference and counter-transference in the triangular situation, which she asserts always engenders both sexualised and non-sexualised feelings in all the participants. She cites that a crucial spin-off of dealing with present behaviour on a realistic level, puts more emphasis on the therapeutic relationship and therefore there is far more potential for transference and counter-transference issues.

Greene et al (1963) use the term 'triangular transference' to acknowledge and emphasize both therapist and spousal influences in activating past conflicts which manifest in dreams, fantasies and acting-out behaviour. This complicates couple work.

Although the use of the terms transference and counter-transference has been questioned in this context (e.g. Nadelson, (1975)), Freud emphasized that transference is a universal phenomenon in every meaningful relationship and this is not necessarily peculiar or exclusive to the therapist-client relationship.

(Guttman 1982) states that whilst the above is correct, it is the therapist's neutral analytic stance and not transference that makes the therapist-client relationship what it is. This, the writer feels is not quite so simplistic, since spouse reinforcement also plays a significant role in the distorted behaviour of the partner.

In conjoint therapy, the couple assume the role of siblings and the therapist of parent. The latter may be either perceived as nurturing or withholding by both or one partner. This could either lead to 'splitting' behaviour or in fact move the couple closer together in order to close ranks 'against' the therapist. This is just one example of the 'non-sexualised' difficulties that may arise in conjoint transference reaction.

Sexualised transference reactions usually occur when there is a young and attractive therapist. Although Guttman (1982) emphasizes the need to bring this type of issue out in the open and clarify, Minuchin (1974) suggests that a better way of dealing with this is to resist interpretation and rather 'rebuff' the 'advance' thus correcting the skew, and forcing the couple to form a coalition in defence.

It is not only transference interpretation that is useful in marital therapy, but also Gestalt and psychodrama techniques such as 'doubling', 'role-reversal' and 'sculpting' which are also helpful to facilitate and promote change and raise an understanding and awareness of behaviour and responses hitherto unchallenged.

In counter-transference, the therapist needs to be particularly aware of not being thrown into a 'child' role and aligning with the spouse who subtly offers to fulfil parental needs in himself, (the therapist). If this occurs, the other spouse becomes distanced and this is

counterproductive in this context and renders the therapist impotent as an agent of change within the couple system.

#### 4.10 COMMITMENT AND MOTIVATION IN TREATMENT

Rosenbluth and Cameron (1981) emphasize the identification of commitment to the marriage and motivation for change, as well as the capacity to work in therapy. They quote a figure as high as 70% of people who alone request psychotherapy and after assessment it is found that the problems they present are directly related to marital dysfunction. They feel that in spite of the realisation of the importance of marriage difficulties, by mental health professionals, too little attention and documentation is given to the assessment involved in recognising marital problems.

Couples may be accepted for treatment without a clear understanding by the therapist of the problems. The therapeutic goal and the weighting of the problems in an overview is essential, as well as the need to establish the client's expectations and goals. The point made by Rosenbluth and Cameron (1981) is that adequate assessment facilitates appropriate treatment choice, and they look for what they consider to be an 'assessment attitude' by clients.

Questions that need to be answered by clinicians themselves after assessment, (and which are often omitted) include ones such as, 'Is treatment really necessary?' If so 'what factors facilitate treatment?'

There are cases when treatment may not be necessary because the couple may in fact have achieved a workable equilibrium. It may also be too late for treatment - or one partner may be completely unmotivated and this could

sabotage any attempts at change. The locus of the problem is something that must be clearly determined.

There are many conscious and unconscious reasons that send people to look for treatment. Some of these may in fact be blocks to change. For example, they may need to confirm that it is all their partner's fault that things have gone wrong, or they may wish to 'dump' the spouse in the therapist's lap, and by so doing get rid of the problem.

If some of these factors are not recognised, the therapist stands in line not only to become involved in prolonged and ineffective therapy with the clients, but may indeed add to the couples helplessness and hopelessness and foster further dependency in them.

It would seem that if the problems seem to lie mostly within the marriage and all other outside functioning is adaptive, this would indicate and confirm a need for marital therapy.

There are no clear cut rules however, and most importantly, the client should be made aware that if marital therapy is indicated, it is for all involved to participate and to work hard, as the therapist simply does not have any magical solutions.

#### 4.11 FINAL COMMENTS ON THE TREATMENT OF INFIDELITY IN MARRIAGE

Because of the highly complex nature of infidelity, bearing in mind the variety of relationship types, reasons involved, basic motivations dynamics and consequence, the therapist needs to exercise great skill in using appropriate techniques and strategies which best serve the interests and uniqueness of the clients. In many respects, treatment should be tailored to meet the particular needs

of the couple in question. (Sometimes it is necessary for the clinician to employ innovative and novel means, rather than planned techniques from training, or 'Wet Cocker Spaniel Therapy', as proposed by Pittman (1984)).

The more conventional types of treatment interventions used range from straightforward common-sense approaches, to indirect paradoxical solutions. Straightforward methods include cognitive, rational-emotive and reality therapies, and communication approaches, all geared to correcting misconceptions and distortions. In these interventions use is made of clarification, explanation and problem-solving.

Im et al (1983) emphasize the importance of exploring and defining boundary relationships to alleviate jealous distress. They also assert that jealousy is an ubiquitous phenomenon that often needs to be addressed in couple therapy, and the writer adds that this, in her experience, is certainly the case when dealing with cases of infidelity.

In jealousy situations (which is often the case in infidelity) Watzlawick et al (1967), stress the value of reframing, which involves the changing of perceptions of symptoms or problems, by interpreting them in a different way. This is done by replacing words that are negative and destructive with words that have a more positive connotation. For example, 'over protective' or 'possessive' may be reframed as 'caring' or 'concerned'.

Berman et al (1975) outline three dimensions of marital psychodynamics which they consider to be the basis on which to approach marital therapy. These are:

1. Power i.e. who is in charge or more dominant.

2. Intimacy i.e. the need or fear of intimacy and the struggle involved.
3. Inclusion - exclusion i.e. who else is included or excluded in the marital system.

They conclude their article by stating that in general the monogamous marriage appears to be the preferred lifestyle that carries with it a hope for long term security. They feel that marriage as an institution is likely to survive and reinforce the need for people to search for more meaning and fulfilment in the context of marriage, which they see as a context for growth, development and vitality.

As a last word, the writer wishes to say that there are as many types of treatment as there are variations in infidelity or extramarital affairs, and it rests with the clinician to work within the framework of the particular couples' relationship paradigm. Wherever possible, treatment in this context must therefore be handled in as appropriate a way as possible, so as to keep the affair in perspective in the particular circumstances, and not to exaggerate or undermine it's importance.

In the next chapter, several cases from the writer's personal professional experience will be used to highlight some of the variations of affairs, and treatments that have been discussed in this chapter.

SELECTED CASE STUDIES

5.1 RATIONALE FOR THE USE OF THE WRITER'S PROFESSIONAL CASE LOAD MATERIAL

The writer has been involved in a part time private social work practice in Cape Town for five years and the nature of the work includes couples, individuals and families. Since the worker has been involved in marriage counselling for fifteen years, the bulk of referrals tend to lie in this area.

It was found to be useful to use material from the worker's professional experience to compare the incidence of infidelity, with those shown in the literature and discussed in the body of this text. (Chapter 4).

The writer, therefore selected all cases over a period of the last two calendar years, 1 June 1985 - 1 June 1987, and the breakdown of problems were as follows of the total of seventy-three cases.

TABLE I - BREAKDOWN OF ASSESSED CASES  
1 JUNE 1985 - 1 JUNE 1987

TYPE OF PROBLEM			TOTAL										
INTRA-PERSONAL PROBLEMS			12										
MARITAL	INFIDELITY	<table style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td colspan="2">ACTIVE PARTNER</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><u>Husband</u></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><u>Wife</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> <td style="text-align: center;">18</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;"><u>Both</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">2</td> </tr> </table>	ACTIVE PARTNER		<u>Husband</u>	<u>Wife</u>	5	18	<u>Both</u>		2		25
	ACTIVE PARTNER												
<u>Husband</u>	<u>Wife</u>												
5	18												
<u>Both</u>													
2													
	MISCELLANEOUS (eg. COMMUNICATION, FINANCIAL ALCOHOLISM)		36										
TOTAL			73										

Of the 61 Marital problems, infidelity was a problem in 25 cases (reported by either one or both partners). (The other 36 included communication, financial, alcoholism, second marriage, pending emigration etc.).

Of the 25 cases: 11 reported infidelity as the presenting problem;  
14 reported infidelity after the first interview.

There were variations concerning whether the other spouse was aware of the infidelity or not. There were also variations in whether this information reported by one spouse during an individual session to the worker, was ever later divulged to the other spouse. None of the clients chose to divulge such information during conjoint sessions, during treatment.

The five case histories following, were chosen to highlight particular aspects in both variation of problems, and treatment and outcome. A 'later-stage' marriage involving infidelity was also purposely selected.

The cases (where names and other identifying details have obviously been changed) will be discussed by giving an indication of the problem, the source of referral, the background history, a brief description of treatment and outcome and finally a few comments pertinent to that case.

The use of an individual approach vis-a-vis a conjoint approach or a combination of both will be indicated with rationale for the choice made by the worker.

The purpose of these case histories is also to illustrate the uniqueness of each case, and the need to tailor treatment methods accordingly.

5.2 CASE NO 1 - MICHELLE AND CRAIG

Problem Secret idealised extramarital affair of Michelle's, resulting in severe doubts about her marriage.

Referred by A friend of Michelle's, (an ex-client of worker).

Presentation of Problem

Michele presented on her own. She was a 28 year old attractive, petite Belgian woman with a degree in languages. She had been married to Craig, a 30 year old South African accountant for 6 years. They had a 3 year old son. Michele reported the marriage was a happy one for 5 years, but in the last year she felt restless. She put it down to Craig's intense work involvement and his many trips away from home. During one of his trips away, she met Pierre, a 47 year old ex-Congolese, now living in Miami, U.S.A. He was a history teacher, who had been married twice before and had no children. He was visiting relatives in South Africa.

A dramatic, intense emotional and sexual relationship developed over three weeks, and at about the time Craig returned, Pierre departed for home. On his return he persistently contacted Michelle by letter and telephone and encouraged her to leave her husband and join him in the U.S.A., with her son. She said she was captivated by his attention and was in serious conflict.

Although Craig was unaware of her feelings, he suspected something, which she denied. She said that although she had at one stage considered being honest, Craig has

pre-empted this by saying that if there was ever any sexual involvement out of the marriage, he saw divorce as the only answer. This inhibited her opening up.

In desperation, she consulted a clinical psychologist, who, she said, after two interviews felt it was her resistance to make a decision that was her greatest problem, and since he felt she had in effect made a decision, encouraged her to act on it. She felt dissatisfied with this and terminated with him. Ten days later she phoned the writer.

### History

Michelle had a younger sister of 23 who was at university in Belgium. Both daughters had travelled extensively with their wealthy parents and it was during a visit to South Africa some years before, to relatives, that Michelle had made the decision to come to university here. She lived in her parents' holiday apartment and whilst at university, she met Craig. After she graduated, she took a job as an interpreter. She described Craig as 'typically South African', a good son to his elderly parents, and the youngest child. She said he was ambitious, a good father and husband, but 'boring and predictable'. Although they had communicated well once, she now found it to be superficial. Her relationship with her in laws was somewhat stilted. They were not very well off financially, very religious and culturally vastly different to her family.

Here she compared Craig with Pierre whom she saw as worldly, charming, interesting and exciting and her fantasy was one in which he could offer her a new dimension in life, stressing their common cultural heritage.

Assessment

It was apparent that Michelle was not ready to make a final decision at this point. She was caught in a double-bind situation. Her 'script' dictated that morally it was wrong to deceive Craig and go against her parents' teachings. (They had perceptively gleaned the problem and surreptitiously threatened to cut her off financially if she acted rashly). Coupled with all these guilty feelings, she was also experiencing a fantasy of his eroticism and idealising Pierre in every way. What was clearly indicated was the need for her to work through all these feelings and to separate the issues of her marriage and the affair.

Treatment

Michelle agreed, with encouragement from the worker, to ask Craig to attend a session. He did so willingly and presented as an articulate, open, pleasant person. He was upset and concerned about Michelle's change in feelings towards him, but in a practical way expressed his strong commitment to the marriage and was agreeable to be involved in a counselling situation if that was what was necessary to resolve this issue. Although he hinted at the suggestion that she was 'infatuated with an idea', he resisted expressing any more information. He was very amenable to working for change on both sides if that was the problem, but felt that it was important to establish if she was really committed to the marriage.

The duration of the sessions over a period of sixteen weeks were held on an individual basis with Michelle. During this time she worked on separate issues that concerned her such as feelings about the marriage, her feelings about Pierre and the reality of her choices and alternatives and the risks involved. She also dealt with her guilt and

script and whether long term she could adjust to such a drastic decision and move away to Pierre.

With the use of a rational-emotive and reality therapy approach, she began to weigh up the pros and cons and discuss in detail Pierre's track record in relationships and impulsive insistence that she give up everything she had, for him.

Her parents' 'emotional and financial blackmail' was reframed as care and concern and she acknowledged their experience and worldliness.

Close to termination, she admitted that Pierre's cultural background was a draw and yet most of what he had promised was very 'theoretical'.

She admitted to being bored and missing working since the birth of her son and began to look for a job. At termination, she said she felt 'hopeful' and that the communication between herself and Craig had improved greatly. She began to concentrate on his positive qualities. She expressed her gratitude to him for being so patient and stable and allowing her time to 'sort her feelings out'.

#### Outcome

About nine months later Michelle phoned me to tell me the 'wonderful' news. She and Craig for some years had spoken about emigrating to Australia and had shelved this during the crisis they had experienced in the marriage. Now the opportunity had come up again and they were waiting for their final papers and would be leaving in a few months. Things between them, she said, were infinitely better and they had positive goals for the future. She expressed the

experience with Pierre as being 'a nostalgic dream' but acknowledged that it was unrealistic in the long term.

### Comments

Michelle's decision not to divulge her infidelity to Craig was her choice. The major part of treatment was based on her intra-personal conflict and an eclectic approach was employed here. This of course could only be done, after the crisis was clearly dealt with.

### 5.3 CASE NO 2 - PETER AND BARBARA

Problem Barbara had admitted to Peter that she was in love with a mutual friend and the affair had been going on for some months. Peter felt he could not 'live with this'.

Referred by Peter's attorney, whom he had consulted immediately on hearing this.

### Presentation of Problem

Peter presented on his own, clearly in crisis. He was a 34 year old, handsome, successful property developer with an M.B.A. from Harvard. He had been married to Barbara, an attractive 30 year old housewife, for 7 years. They had a son aged 5 and a daughter aged 3. He said the marriage had always been a very happy one from his point of view, but blamed himself for recently becoming so heavily involved in his booming and progressive company. He expressed a great deal of anger towards the 'friend', as well as to Barbara. He said the friend played squash with them regularly and said recently Barbara had been jogging with him daily as he (Peter) was often too busy with meetings after work. He felt angry and bitter about Barbara having too many

material benefits and possibly 'too much time on her hands'.

### History

Peter came from a reasonably 'well-off' family and had an older brother and younger sister, both happily married. His father had died 5 years before and he was reasonably close to his widowed mother and siblings. Barbara, on the other hand, he reported, came from a poor family. She had an older divorced brother and a younger unmarried brother, a 'rather aimless' man, whom Peter employed. Her widowed, pensioner father, an alcoholic, lived in a private boarding house, since the death of her mother nine months previously, from cancer. He said Barbara resented her father's dependent and unreliable ways and felt a great deal of bitterness towards him for his treatment of her mother over the years. (Her mother was a nursing sister, who worked hard all her life whilst the father moved from job to job). Peter had also supplemented her family financially from time to time and felt this had all been taken for granted.

He described the 'third party' as a 'useless beach bum' who was divorced, presently employed irregularly in sport shops or gyms, and whom he believed had left his wife and children in Durban.

He acknowledged Barbara's honesty about the affair, and her feelings, but felt that her ambivalence was due to the realisation of what she'd lose and he did not want her to stay in the marriage for the wrong reasons.

### Assessment

Peter was clearly in crisis and although he requested quick

and ready made answers, the worker had to slow him down and help him first put some order into the situation, by dealing with it cautiously. He had told Barbara he was coming to see 'someone' and she had agreed she too would come after he had been. There was a need here to examine both their feelings and goals. The severe level of hostility and anger that Peter showed, was not conducive to the conjoint approach at this point and the worker suggested they be seen on an individual concurrent basis.

### Treatment

With both partners, but individually (concurrently) it was necessary to intervene in dealing with the crisis first. In spite of Peter's extreme distress, he showed adaptive ego strengths to cope realistically, except for a somewhat impulsive need for a quick solution. This was pointed out to him and slowed down somewhat.

Barbara, on the other hand, seemed less distressed on her first visit and this the worker put down to her having worked through some of this herself, prior to admitting the affair to Peter. She displayed a somewhat unrealistic attitude by expressing the fact that she could not be rushed into a decision and expected Peter to accept the status quo while she made a decision. This too was pointed out to her and it was suggested that all contact with her lover be ceased during this time.

Peter used the individual sessions productively in that he gained support and clarification of the problem and began to identify aspects of his ambition as being to the exclusion of all else, but he was also grappling with the basic trust violation of the marriage.

Barbara also made good use of the sessions and what clearly emerged was her inadequate acceptance of her mother's death

and a concentrated period of allowing her to deal with her grief work, followed.

The couple were seen on this basis over a period of two and a half months. During this time, Peter found out that Barbara had met her lover for coffee, and he had walked out. She was so distressed by this reaction (as she later told me it had only been once, and then only for coffee) that she made a 'half-hearted' attempt to take an overdose. This again proved to be a new crisis point and some regression occurred. Again the worker had to deal with this new crisis. She worked through the fact that she had used an inappropriate method at problem solving (which she regretted) and admitted it was an attention seeking behaviour. Contact with her doctor, (with her permission) was made at this point.

Several weeks were then spent working through her feelings for the 'other' man which were clouded by her sexual attraction to him.

At a point that seemed appropriate, conjoint sessions were begun and went reasonably well in terms of negotiating and re-contracting their commitment to the marriage and looking at issues they felt needed changing in the relationship. (For example, more time to be together and time spent with their children, as a family).

An impasse, however, was reached at one point when Barbara suggested it would 'take years to forget the other man'. Peter became so angry that he stated he no longer wished to continue and that she 'go to him'. He also stated that he would be overseas for ten days to two weeks on business and would contact me on his return. Barbara was very quiet as they left that day and said she would phone me.

About four weeks later, the worker had a phone call from Barbara saying that she and Peter would like to make an appointment. They told the worker that they were now together again, and working hard at the marriage. It transpired that Peter had phoned 'the boyfriend' after their last visit and had told him of his plans. He then left for overseas. It was during this time that Barbara was shattered to learn from her lover that he was moving away and that although he 'loved her dearly' he was unable to commit himself to a permanent relationship.

On Peter's return she told him the outcome and gave him the opportunity to decide whether he wished to leave or give her a chance to try again. He chose the latter.

Several weeks were spent with this couple in conjoint sessions monitoring their relationship and dealing with their interpersonal and adjustment difficulties.

#### Outcome

Some six months later, Barbara phoned saying that Peter suggested she come to put the worker in the picture. They had moved to a larger house, things were very much more stable in their relationship in that he was not as frenetically involved in his business at all hours, and they were jointly spending more time with their children. She was also very thrilled to tell the worker that she was three months pregnant.

#### Comments

The use of crisis intervention came up several times during the course of this case and eventually not only restored equilibrium to their relationship but moved them beyond that point. The use of both individual and conjoint

sessions was made, but only at times deemed appropriate.

Peter's decision to 'opt out' seemed to break the impasse they had reached and the results proved positive. There was a fair amount of risk involved, but he chose to take it, and the results appeared to pay off.

#### 5.4 CASE NO 3 - DICK AND MARLENE

Problem Marlene suspected that Dick was having an affair as he had been behaving 'strangely' over the past few months. She then received an anonymous phone call confirming his extramarital affair. After her confrontation, he vehemently denied this but she still felt very uneasy.

Referred by Marlene's G.P.

#### Presentation of Problem

Marlene presented on her own. She was a tall, slim, pale and agitated looking lady of 51, who anxiously told the worker that her husband would be very angry if he knew she had sought help. Marlene, a housewife, had been married to Dick for 29 years. He was 54 years old and was the managing director of a firm he had been with for over 20 years. They had one daughter aged 16, and they lived on a smallholding outside the city. They had lived frugally and had made several significant joint financial investments, including buying several properties and a seaside holiday house. Marlene cited Dick's preoccupation with his appearance of late as an indication of 'an affair'. She had recently received an anonymous phone call confirming this and had confronted him. He denied it. She still felt very uneasy and began to relate his secretary's husband's 'sudden death' to Dick's change in behaviour. She felt

that he had expressed an inordinate amount of sympathy for his secretary and began to believe they were involved. She felt extremely restless and anxious.

### History

Both Marlene and Dick came from very average middle class families and had worked hard to build up what they had. Marlene had not fallen pregnant for the first 13 years of their marriage. They were content to leave it at that but were both 'thrilled' when she eventually fell pregnant with Renee.

They worked hard on their smallholding, and had a strong family bond on both sides and although they had a small nucleus of good friends, they were not very active socially. Mostly, they were involved as a family. Marlene said Dick had had the same secretary for 18 years, and recently her husband had committed suicide. He had been very sympathetic. She now perceived it as overly so. She said Dick had always been a caring and devoted father, but recently he had become emotionally distanced from her and Renee and added to this he had been making 'unusual' sexual demands on her, at odd times. Marlene admitted that she found it extremely difficult to discuss this problem with anyone as she felt 'ashamed' after all those years of marriage, so she had turned to Renee and embroiled her into the problem. It now showed in Renee's school work and she was becoming moody and tearful.

This interview was used as a catharsis and the beginning of an assessment by the worker. At the end of the session, the client however announced that she felt better for having spoken to someone but was loath to make any further appointments as 'he would be very angry if he knew'.

Some three weeks later, she phoned in a very tearful state and asked to see the worker urgently. It turned out that Dick had confessed his 'love' for his secretary (although denied a sexual relationship). He said this emotional bonding had only occurred in the last few months and he needed time and understanding to sort out his feelings. He requested that she allow him the opportunity to continue with the marriage, but be allowed the 'space' to see this other woman a few nights a week.

Marlene was extremely angry, rejected his request outright, and immediately drew Renee into the picture as an ally again. Dick reacted explosively in that he was very angry that Renee was now involved. Marlene immediately told him to sleep in the spare room and they did not discuss it the next day, when he left for work. When he got home that night (this was the night before Marlene saw worker) he had arrived home with a typed letter for Marlene and Renee from his secretary. In the letter (which was extremely well worded and convincing) she had confirmed her and Dick's mutual feelings and again denied a sexual or long standing affair and she implored Marlene and Renee to 'take him back'.

#### Assessment

The crisis Marlene presented with on the two occasions were on two levels. Firstly, she 'suspected' the affair and had been grappling with the threat of 'loss' for some time. Caution had to be exercised not to act too hastily, (although acknowledging her real feelings), until it was confirmed. This was based on the rationale that he had denied this, and therefore she should not push him further away with her suspicion and jealousy. The second time it was a reality and she was clearly in a dilemma, (although somewhat relieved that she was not insane or irrational in

her suspicions).

Her life stage and the duration of the marriage were all important variables which had to be considered and dealt with. The nature of family and social supports also needed clarifying and it was also the assessment of the worker that the client was depressed.

She also displayed an inappropriate dependence on Renee for support and comfort and this somewhat replicated a further triangular situation.

She was realistically fearful of the financial implications in the event of a divorce and this needed further discussion. She had also 'written off' any alternatives for the future except as a discarded wife, who had given up the best years of her life.

#### Treatment

At both levels of her presenting crisis, Marlene was allowed to cathart and verbalise her feelings and fears and the threat of the perceived loss she experienced. Her anger at the other woman was particularly important to deal with and a role-play technique allowing her to express this, was used. (She had expressed her anger directly to Dick). She was encouraged to verbalise her means of coping and since she appeared very distressed and depressed, the worker suggested a further visit to her G.P., who was already au fait with the circumstances. She clearly needed some form of mild medication to see her through this period, which he confirmed.

Her fears regarding the future and the financial implications were discussed and at her own suggestion, she

felt a visit to an attorney, to clarify her legal rights, was necessary. This was encouraged by the worker as a means to clarify for her what the real and practical situation entailed.

She was also made aware by the worker of her over-involvement of Renee and she began to realise that whilst Renee should not be excluded from the reality of the situation, she should not be used in a way to have to take sides, judge or be a mediator. She was after all, only 16, and loved and had a loyalty to both parents. It was inappropriate to involve her in their relationship problems.

The worker also discussed the feasibility of involving Dick in the counselling situation. (She said at this stage, she had told him that she had seen me before now and was coming again). She felt quite adamant he would not come.

The very same day, Dick phoned to make an urgent appointment. He was anything but hostile, when he came the next day, and openly told his story. (He presented as suave, articulate and 'charming'). Most of what Marlene had said was confirmed, except that he added that a sexual dimension did exist, and told the worker although there was nothing 'wrong' with the marriage, he had outgrown Marlene, his life style and his quality of life. This other woman, he felt sure, was the answer for him in his future. It was extreme guilt and concern for Renee mostly that prevented him making a move. (Here the worker indicated to him that if he had in fact made this decision, it was only fair to share it with his family and make as fair arrangements as he could). It was the worker's considered assessment that this affair was long standing, well established and there was more involvement than he admitted in his secretary's marriage and her husband's suicide. The worker then gently

confronted him with this and he adamantly denied it, but added that he could understand that this 'was how it must appear'. He was extremely sorry for Marlene, doubted her coping capacities without him and said this was what kept him in the marriage.

The worker offered him the opportunity for further contact, which he said he might take up, but felt it was important for Marlene to have someone to speak to. (Here it was apparent that the 'other woman' was adequately serving this purpose for him).

Marlene continued with counselling on an individual basis for several weeks, once bringing Renee along and whom the worker saw alone, and allowed her to cathart. During this time Dick had moved out, and then later saying 'it was over' returned home. After eight weeks, Marlene was emotionally considerably stronger and more sure in her own mind that Dick had returned for the 'wrong reasons'. He was resistant to discussion on this matter and appeared restless, accusing Marlene of not trusting him.

It took several sessions for Marlene to clearly verbalise that she did in fact not trust him and the fact that he had refused to change the work situation with his secretary made her realise that she could not continue with the marriage.

#### Outcome

This middle aged couple ended their marriage with a divorce. Dick was reasonably 'fair' financially, but still blamed Marlene for not allowing him time to work it out, without pressure. Some considerable time was spent with Marlene during and after the divorce to deal with her feelings and provide support. Renee although initially

very upset, was coping better at school and was relieved that the tension was over. Family and friends support was strong and Marlene began to start a new life, although she constantly expressed her bitterness at the years they had spent together and his deception.

### Comments

The mid-life affair has different connotations to the earlier-stages-of-marriage affair. Both Marlene and Dick were clearly negotiating this life developmental stage in a re-evaluative way. Dick was searching for a new meaning in his life, whilst Marlene retrospectively indicated her disappointment after her dedication as a wife and mother over the years. Once again she saw her future role in solely fulfilling her duty to Renee, and was somewhat resistant to seeking a way to enrich and grow in her own right as a person. This may possibly have been part of the original problem. In her singular purpose in pleasing her family, she had neglected her own growth and development as an individual, and she relied heavily on their dependence on her and vice versa. In spite of working through these issues in depth, Marlene emerged a somewhat bitter and disillusioned woman.

Whether in fact the outcome of Dick's relationship was successful, is unknown. The other woman had three teenage children and whether this relationship will survive in the long term is debatable.

### 5.5 CASE NO 4 - ANNIE AND 'VAN'

#### Problem

As a result of Van's extramarital affair during Annie's pregnancy, he was 'out of the picture' at the time of the baby's birth. In spite of his expressed regret and return

to Annie and the baby soon after, Annie felt unhappy and unable to forgive him.

Referred by Annie's gynaecologist, when she expressed her feelings of ambivalence in the relationship.

#### Presentation of Problem

Annie, an attractive, petite blonde aged 28, was anxious and confused as to the 'real problem'. She said she was married for three years to Van, a businessman, nine years her senior (37). He was divorced and had a 15 year old daughter by his first marriage. She was very tearful as she expressed her ambivalence in the relationship as her major feeling was that he had let her down 'when she needed him most'. She said their whole marriage had been a series of love/hate feelings and she had several times moved out and then returned to him after he had 'soft-talked' her and persuaded her that he really cared. She cited his honesty about the affair (as she had suspected) during her pregnancy; his ill-timing in bringing the other woman to meet her and discuss matters, and her reaction of telling him to leave, which he did. She had to be taken to the maternity home by neighbours, and when he appeared, a few days after the baby's birth, she was very sympathetic to him, as he was highly emotional and very apologetic, but she admitted, she had never been able to really forgive him. The baby was now 11 months old, and they had been 'living a lie' until now. Although she had no reason to question his sincerity now, she said she was unhappy, unable to trust him and was beginning to doubt their long term future together.

### History

Annie was the youngest child, with two older brothers, of a wealthy Zimbabwean family. Her father was a wealthy tobacco farmer and her mother, a 'beautiful, social, well loved person in the community'. Most of their family lived in Zimbabwe and they had a large, warm circle of friends. When Annie was 15, her mother developed cancer and eventually underwent a double mastectomy, and a year later she felt hopeless and committed suicide as she could not live with her physical disfigurement, and she honestly believed her prognosis was poor. Annie was the one to find her, and tearfully said she'd 'never really got over the shock'.

Since then, her father left Zimbabwe, remarried, lived in Natal and had a young baby with his new wife. Her eldest brother, an architect, lived in Cape Town with his wife and her second brother was in London, still single, and 'doing well in computers'. She herself, had come to Cape Town, after leaving school and become a secretary. She met Van through friends. She admitted at first, she'd found him rather coarse ('a rough diamond') but although they were 'world's apart' (he was Afrikaans), he was charming, convincing and very attentive. Within a few months he had persuaded her to marry him. She said he was sexually very attractive to her at first, but later she began to find him forceful, compelling and he constantly laid a guilt trip on her concerning her 'duty as a wife' and later on 'as a mother'. She resented this in the light of his infidelity.

### Assessment

Annie was clearly depressed when the worker first made contact with her and this was linked to a post-partum depression which had not been detected. She was extremely

angry and jealous of Van's relationship during her pregnancy and could not forgive him for letting her down when she needed him most. She clearly linked this psychologically to the loss of her mother, whom she perceived as having let her down and abandoned her at a most vulnerable stage of her life. This trauma and crisis with Van, had re-evoked all former feelings in a similar crisis and she was clearly trying to grapple and cope with a basic issue of trust in her marriage. She was also extremely jealous of the other woman (had nightmares about her) and had never got over the crisis.

#### Treatment

Annie's depression was of concern to the worker and with her permission, contact was made with both gynaecologist and G.P. and she was put on appropriate medication to see her through this difficult time. The crisis and jealousy aspects had to be dealt with in detail and the unresolved feelings around her mother's death were also dealt with in depth. She was encouraged to express and verbalise her feelings around this and the use of role play was significant. She could at last talk out her feelings of anger, hurt and rejection, whilst acknowledging the love and concern she knew her mother had for her. She linked this to similar feelings towards Van and used the same technique to ventilate and cathart this anger. Once this was cleared, she was ready to move on to a here-and-now mode and she agreed it would be advisable to tell him of her contact with the worker, and suggest he visit to express his side of the story. (She doubted whether he would do so, but he was hesitantly agreeable and came for one session only). He was extremely defensive (albeit 'charming') and projected the major problem on to her. He saw her as immature, seeking constant reassurance and expecting 'too much from a husband'. The worker made it

clear to him in realistic terms that her expectations had not been met on the basis of what her 'norm' (or script) was in marriage. He saw the point, but virtually concluded the interview by insinuating that her role as a wife, was to fit in with his pattern. The worker made him aware of Annie's major concern, that if he had let her down during her pregnancy, if she ever became ill like her mother, he would not be there to care, like her father had been. He heard this but did not accept this totally. He remained defensive and adamant about his own expectations and needs.

Annie continued to see the worker on an individual basis for about six and half weeks and during this time she moved out with the baby. She worked through the differences she felt she could not ever reconcile herself with, for example his friendships, which were fleeting. She identified that he was unable to make and sustain lasting and meaningful relationships. Culturally, she felt they were worlds apart and rather than integrate their differences, he continually wanted her to do things his way. He did not get on well with his family and every time he disagreed with them she was barred from seeing them. She also admitted her fear of his physical violence and said on several occasions he had threatened her with a knife or gun.

After she moved out, he began to hound her and constantly question whether she was seeing anyone else. He began to become very suspicious of her boss (a single man) and several times made accusing and warning phone calls to him. Finally she decided to go ahead with divorce proceedings. Several times he almost persuaded her to change her mind. The worker then put her in touch with a divorce group which she attended weekly and from which she gained much support. He was difficult about the financial settlement but eventually it was settled. Here she had worked on assertiveness and not giving in, (as she almost did, several times).

Outcome

After the divorce, Annie was like a new person, she admitted feeling free and 'herself' for the first time in years. Some seven months later, however, she phoned the worker to say 'sheepishly' that she was back living with Van after he had persuaded her to do so a month prior to her call to the writer. She said he was offering her many material 'bribes' but she was again feeling unhappy.

This took just three sessions to allow her to talk it out and she finally told him that it was over, for good. She admitted to the worker that she felt she could now never have any regrets that she had not tried again for the sake of the child and the marriage.

Comments

The 'scripts' of this couple were entirely different. It appeared that his first marriage broke up from a similar affair and he had learned little from that. She became clearer in what her real needs and expectations in marriage were, and with the support from the group, her family and good friends, her self-esteem was raised and she began to build her confidence up again and plan for the future.

5.6 CASE NO 5 - PAT AND BRUCEProblem

Pat was highly agitated by a 'friendship' between Bruce and a business client and she suspected there was more to it, but he denied it. She had noted a distinct change in his attitude to her and the children and felt insecure and confused.

Referred by A clinical psychologist, whom she phoned for an appropriate referral.

### Presentation of Problem

Pat, a neat but rather conservatively dressed woman of 32, came on her own. She had explained somewhat lengthily over the phone prior to the appointment what the problem was. She was working as a secretary for an estate agent and Bruce, 31, was a building society official. They had been married for seven years, and had been transferred to Cape Town from Pretoria, nine months previously, at his request. They had two sons aged 10 and 3 (the eldest from her first marriage). She said that the 'friendship' with this divorced lady, had started off on a business level, but he was now spending an inordinate amount of time with her over lunches and other social occasions, at her home. He had often left evidence around of expensive lunches and on confrontation he admitted they had met, but said it was 'just a friendship'. He had taken Pat to dinner at his client's home, and she said that from then on her fears were confirmed. She said she had told him she was coming to see the worker, and asked if he would too. At first he was reluctant, but agreed.

### History

Pat came from a broken and 'unhappy' home in Johannesburg. Her father had deserted the family when Pat was aged 2. Her mother remarried and two children were born (a boy and a girl). The family was not very close. Her step father had died about seven years previously and her mother was highly dependent on her children, and mostly on Pat. She resented the demands her mother made on her and was pleased to get away from Johannesburg.

Pat had met and married a man soon after she left school. A baby son was born and her husband deserted her. To this day, (since the divorce) she is unaware of his whereabouts. She struggled for almost three years on her own with the baby and then met Bruce at a church badminton evening. When they married, he adopted her son. She said he had been a wonderful father to both boys, and showed no discrimination between them. He had also been a devoted husband 'until this woman arrived on the scene'.

Bruce, hailed from Springs, on the Reef, and was the younger of two boys and his mother had died when he was 15. He said his father had always favoured his brother and when his father re-married, his stepmother had eventually forced him to leave home as she was 'very difficult'. He felt he had had a raw deal in life and regretted that he could not study further after school, but had joined a building society at an early age, and moved to Johannesburg to start his training as a clerk.

Pat also stated that Bruce's admiration for this woman, she felt was tied up with the fact the 'she' was everything Bruce had wanted to be. Lively, intelligent, well educated, confident, outgoing and successful in her job at the University. Pat herself admitted, she felt undermined and 'ordinary' next to the 'other woman'. She resented however that while she struggled to help the family financially, Bruce was spending money on expensive meals for his new found 'friend'. Just prior to her coming to see the worker, she had made contact with this lady and told her of her resentment about the friendship. The woman had denied her active role and suggested he was just a good friend who 'may have been somewhat infatuated with her'. Her response to Pat was somewhat condescending and she suggested Pat work harder on her marriage.

### Assessment

When Pat arrived, she was clearly in crisis and this threat of a further loss in her life was extremely anxiety provoking. The family's move to Cape Town was also a factor in that she was still not entirely settled and the support system was not fully established. She was jealous and very threatened by this other woman. Her self-esteem had plummeted and she needed to deal with this. She felt resentful and angry and these feelings were showing in her attitude towards Bruce, aggravating and blocking the communication between them and making her feel even more insecure.

### Treatment

The worker acknowledged the depth of the crisis and loss that Pat was feeling. She had to verbalise these fears and these were linked with her previous life losses and rejections (not only in her first marriage, but her father's desertion). Her jealousy for the other woman was acknowledged and her self-esteem had to be raised by making her examine her strengths and positives. Being a very verbal type of person, she was given time to ventilate but often had to be steered back on course as she became repetitive and this was deemed to be counterproductive. This pattern was pointed out to her and she herself began to question whether she didn't perhaps do this with Bruce.

The worker encouraged Bruce's visit and he came reluctantly and presented as somewhat withdrawn. Any misconceptions he may have had about being judged soon abated and he spoke freely. In fact so freely, he said this was the first time for years he felt able to express his innermost feelings to an objective person and felt very comfortable doing so. He admitted his 'love' and admiration for this woman, but

denied a sexual relationship with her. It was however his fantasy, the worker perceived, that this might come about in the future. He also admitted that there had been many other casual sexual affairs in the past of which Pat knew nothing. This friendship however was 'different' and 'serious'. It was pointed out to him that he was trying to keep his options open by staying in the marriage in a half-hearted way and waiting to see what developed in the other relationship. He said he had outgrown Pat and he 'needed something more', but could not make a decision. It seemed he was waiting for her lead.

The worker continued to see them individually and concurrently over a period of four weeks. Then conjoint sessions began, as the hostility and anger which might have blocked communication had been lowered.

Then events took a strange turn. Pat phoned the worker to say that she had decided to phone the other woman because she suspected Bruce was still seeing her (and they had agreed he would not). The other woman confirmed he had been coming to see her and expressed surprise that he had not been open about it, to Pat. It was at this point that she told Pat that she had met someone whom she was considering marrying. Pat then told Bruce who was shocked and disbelieving.

The next conjoint interview was cancelled by Bruce. (The message received by the worker was that he had a business meeting). Pat phoned a day later to say she felt he was too embarrassed to return. The worker made it clear that it was unsatisfactory to end off like this and even one meeting could clarify where they were at, before termination. She (Pat) agreed she would like that.

The worker did not hear from them for a week, so phoned them. Pat said that things were 'jogging along', the news had been confirmed and although Bruce was very quiet, she could tell he was 'trying' in the marriage. She still felt very uneasy as he refused to discuss the matter, and there was an uneasy calm between them. She doubted how long she could endure this.

### Outcome

As a result of the way this case ended, the outcome is uncertain.

### Comments

Bruce's use of casual relationships in the past were indicative of his searching for something in his life. The affairs may have been his means of supplementing an unsatisfactory relationship in his marriage. The fascination with this woman was clearly indicative of the 'ultimate' in his search for 'his ideal self'. There was an indication of his personal need for change and growth, and he had admitted his job was unsatisfactory and he wanted to 'change his life'. The intra-personal conflicts from the past that Bruce had not resolved adequately were now affecting the inter-personal relationship in his marriage, and he had projected the deficiency on to Pat. The fact that he left evidence for Pat to find, was his way of telling her, without discussing it. This indicates pathology in their communication patterns. The fact that he opted out of counselling without ending off appropriately was also indicative of his lack of following through and skill in communication. Pat too needed further counselling to examine her conflicts and dependency issues. In many respects, she played the role of 'mother' to Bruce, and this may well have been part of the problem. His own

stifled unresolved adolescent issues were now being dealt with by his 'acting out' behaviour.

#### 5.7 CONCLUDING COMMENTS ON THE CASE HISTORIES PRESENTED

The five cases presented, were selected as they represented and highlighted various aspects of real life situations. These incorporated many of the issues and theories discussed in the previous two chapters. There is the common theme of the concept of loss and the crisis this evokes in all the cases. The jealousy factor and the violation of commitment is also notable. The appropriate use of the conjoint and individual approaches in treatment was also indicated.

The purpose of the writer in using real life situations was to allow the reader to get involved on a personal level, thus being able to interpret the theory presented, but with the major emphasis being on the uniqueness of every three-sided (or triangular) relationship configuration.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

The object of this dissertation was to highlight for the reader, the problems and prevalence of marital infidelity and its treatment. In order to fully describe this phenomenon, it was necessary to show how the institution of marriage in the western world has changed its form in various ways. In spite of these changes, however, the concept and expectation of monogamy has remained consistent. It cannot be denied that in some quarters this aspect is seriously questioned, and attempts at alternative life styles have emerged. Yet it is the writer's stance, that even in the light of this, the well entrenched aspect of commitment in marriage has not been seriously or successfully renounced, and the concept of monogamy continues to linger.

Whether, in fact, the day will come when society is truly able to accept the idea of loving more than one partner in marriage, and that this will no longer deem it to be regarded as a clandestine affair, is seriously doubted by the writer. Whilst acknowledging the need in some people for nonexclusive love (for fear otherwise of appearing naive), the writer asserts that this restless continuing search for love or acceptance or intimacy, may well be the option that infidelity provides.

The concept of jealousy, plays a major role in the occurrence of extramarital sexual activity and in spite of the enormous changes in society and a move towards egalitarianism of the sexes, faithfulness and morality mores in marriage continue to be highly valued in expectations of partners.

This dissertation does not intend to provide answers, but rather, to beg such questions as: Why in the light of today's changed society do the implications of infidelity

remain so strongly questioned and condemned and, why in the light of the prevalence and increasing incidence of infidelity, do a great majority of people still frown on such behaviour?

Here the author draws an analogy to the prevalence and incidence of heart disease in present times, where people are now being educated not only to the seriousness of the problem, but also in preventative methods. The point being made is that it is questionable whether either heart disease or infidelity are solely products of our stressed society or whether in fact the problem has always been there, but not as clearly described. In either event, there is a need to seriously address such problems with both preventative and remedial courses of education and action.

In view of the dearth of literature and the reluctance of the public to be frank on this taboo subject, it has been a further aim of the writer to mention the unmentionable, and to offer thoughts and raise an awareness amongst members of the helping professions, who are involved in the treatment of distressed couples.

One particularly vital concern is to dispel the myth of 'the typical affair'. No marriage is typically like another and therefore no affair is typically like another. What is typical however, is that there are common feelings experienced in such circumstances. This needs to be clearly understood and studied by clinicians, before any effective treatment can be rendered. The notions of jealousy and rejection are perhaps the most destructive in this context.

The idea of sexual exclusivity in marriage has deep roots both psychologically and socially and this requires

sensitivity and understanding in treating people damaged by affairs.

The threat of the loss of a partner or the break up of a family, under any circumstances, needs to be addressed with the utmost seriousness, and particularly so when there are children involved. Children rely either consciously or unconsciously for their socialisation by virtue of example, and this has crucial implications in the advent and outcome of extramarital sexual activity.

The fact that marriage remains popular and is a recognised form of normal adult status, leads the writer to assert that marriage and the family are here to stay. If this is the case, the meaning of sexual ethics and morality must surely be worth preserving, or else the institutions of marriage and the family become questioned and undermined.

Qualities such as constraint and self-control are extremely relevant here, and even beyond an attempt at preserving traditional morality, there are and will remain, in all aspects of life, necessary attributes. Ideally, these qualities should be cultivated and fostered in people from an early age, but in the climate of present day society, the question raised is: Is it ever too late to practise remedial and educative means to correct in part, or rectify distortions in those who lack them?

Marriage and the family have for many years, even in changing times, shown resistance to the pressures of outside circumstances, but when circumstances directly impinge on the very basis of stability of these institutions, it is a very different matter. One cannot disregard that together with the advent of industrialisation and the changing role of women, that marriage and the family could not escape these effects forever. These effects have occurred subtly and more

rapidly than might have been predicted. It is only through a raised awareness of the high incidence of divorce and broken families, and the prevalence of infidelity that one's attention is drawn to possible causes of, and reasons for, this change. To try and stop the changing patterns which are inevitable, is impossible, but the focus should be clearly directed on how to address the problems and destructive effects with more adaptive coping styles.

Since a major part of this dissertation is concerned with treatment methods in infidelity, factors such as trust, faithfulness and loyalty must be considered in terms of the damage, and violation these can cause. It is perhaps the betrayal of trust that is one of the prime bases of this whole issue.

To sum up, the institution of marriage and the family are strategically located between societal and individual interests. A weakening of these institutions seriously threatens the basic pillar of social structure and the meeting of the individual's personal needs for healthy development and functioning. The problem of infidelity is seen as one of such serious threats, and is an important subject for study by helping professionals.

The writer's stance is that the future of marriage is important and hopeful and it is a fact that men and women will continue to need intimacy, commitment and love and with this, there remains a need for control on sexual behaviour, whatever that may be.

The five cases presented from the writer's personal case load, were included to demonstrate the variations and uniqueness both in marital circumstances and in the affairs, and the different outcome of each case hopefully

will add an extra dimension for readers, with regard to the problem of infidelity.

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