THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

THE MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER AND MARITAL COMMUNICATION

by

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ABSTRACT

In order to investigate the effectiveness of the Marriage Encounter as a means of increasing marital communication, the Marital Communication Inventory (Bienvenu, 1969) was administered to forty couples before and after participation in a Marital Encounter. A control group, matched on the basis of age, length of marriage, social status, and number of children, also completed the test, with the same time interval between the tests.

For both the experimental and control group, and on the pretest and posttest, husbands and wives perceived their marital communication significantly similarly ($p < .01$, $r \approx .61$-$.69$). There were, however, no significant differences between the experimental and control group in the amount of change in communication scores from the pretest to the posttest. In viewing these data, it is important to consider the fact that the experimental and control group obtained significantly different scores on both tests.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Of the basic values that a man searches for and pursues, an authentic and deep relationship with another person seems to be the most profound, and it is primarily through marriage that people seek to obtain this relationship (Curran, 1968). Ninety percent of people in Canada get married at least once in their lifetime (Jacobson, 1969). It is evident, however, that the institution of marriage is undergoing great revolutionary changes and that the "until death do we part" no longer seems to apply to many people. Marital statistics for Canada indicate that before World War I the number of divorces granted was less than one in a thousand marriages, and that between 1957 and 1967 there was an increase of 6,498 divorces, which means that the rate per 100,000 rose from 38.2 to 54.7. For Manitoba, the census of 1965 showed an increase of 35.9 to 49.5 percent (Canada Year Book, 1968).

While unhappiness and conflict in marriage are widespread, a study showed that the possibility of improving difficult marital situations may be possible more often than is usually thought.

> No one doubts that many separations or divorces may be necessary or desirable, but no one familiar with the evidence can doubt that a very moderate effort will improve the situation (Locke, 1951, p. 35).

The desire to examine and study the possibility of "improving the situation" gave rise to the present study. Through personal observations and research, the investigator realized that there is a

growing recognition of the need for education to promote successful marriages and provide help for couples in need, yet it seemed that Manitoba had not yet made sufficient effort to meet these needs. As Carl Rogers (1954) pointed out, the need is so great that the efforts made until now are far too limited in comparison to the needs. It seems the chief result of the efforts made in the past has been to produce only a few more or less highly trained specialists. According to Ruben Hill (1966), psychologists have the necessary tools for doing research and building theories about the marital dyad, but these have been little used. Until recently, psychologists, as scientists, have focused their interest mainly on the child, giving little attention to the family as a group, and still less to parents as a couple in a growing relationship. Hill further stated that most of the theorists of personality have developed sub-theories on interpersonal relations which could be of great help to better research in the marriage area; but because these theories are new, and because they have been oriented mainly toward therapeutic relations, they have had little or no impact on marriage research. Whatever the reason may be for not having produced more research in the past, the time is ripe for a greater effort to study marriage from the point of view of the relationship between husband and wife.

The work being done by Marriage Preparation courses, Marriage Counseling Services and Conferences is more in the line of preparatory and remedial work. There seems to be a lack of attention to helping to improve relationships after marriage and before breakdown when preventive measures might be effective. The unwillingness or inability

to repair lines of marital communication appears to be a root cause of the breakdown and failure today (Cuber and Harrof, 1963). It is the opinion of a growing number of authorities (Bienvenu, 1969; Curran, 1968; Karlson, 1963; Locke, 1951) that effective communication is the key to marital success. Because communication plays such an important role in marital adjustment, greater efforts should be made to find means of improving communication between couples. It is in an attempt to do this that the Marital Encounter has been used in Manitoba.

The Marriage Encounter

The Marriage Encounter was developed in Spain eleven years ago and was first tried in the United States during the summer of 1967 at Notre Dame University. In 1968 and 1969 it was received at Closter, N. J. as well as in Newport, R. I. In 1970 there was an experiment using it in Montreal, and in October of the same year, in Manitoba.

It is important to describe differences between this and sensitivity groups. Although efforts are made to sensitize husband and wife to each other, the emphasis is placed on the experience of the couple as a dyad rather than as the group. It has been described as a "well-oriented meeting between husband and wife", and "a method by which a couple renew their basic commitment to each other (Knoll, 1970, pp. 45-48)". The same author referred to it as a gift that married partners offer each other - the gift of individual attention in an effort to deepen mutual understanding and love.

The Marriage Encounter involves a weekend spent together as a couple; a time which provides an opportunity to learn more about each other through interpersonal dialogue; and in effect, it can be said

that the Encounter is "given" by the couple, each to the other. The Marriage Encounter develops according to the following outline, the main components of which are: lectures (given by the coordinating team); questionnaires; personal reflection; much dialogue between husband and wife; and some sharing with the group. These lectures include practical and effective skills in the art of communication, in the capacity to listen, and in the different means of interpreting statements, events, and behavior without letting them become a cause for breakdown in communications. The art of love-making is also stressed, and an effort is made to dispel sexual hang-ups and misunderstandings, and promote a healthy and fulfilling relationship. After the lectures, the couples receive questionnaires which they answer, sometimes separately, sometimes together. The following is a sampling of the questions:

> What are the things I like most (least) about you?
> Do I make you happy in our sexual relations?
> What is the main failure in our home as such?
> How can our family open itself to the community, the nation, and the world?

The time allotted for reflection and writing answers is approximately fifteen minutes. Husband and wife then meet, exchange papers, and finally discuss their answers. One of the convictions that comes out strongly from the Encounter is that falling in love requires no great maturity, but staying in love, and growing in it, and helping it to grow is the challenge. In order to investigate the process, the present researcher participated as an observer of a Marriage Encounter weekend. The perusal of the evaluation sheets completed by the participants offered real insight into the problem. A quick overview of the four Marriage Encounters held in Manitoba in the past year suggested that

between ninety and ninety-five percent of the participants reported that they were satisfied with the results. The following is a sampling of some of the evaluation feedback provided by the participants:

> Now that we have communicated so very deeply, I feel that there is much more cause for hope. This hope should enable me to stand the stresses of daily life better and stimulate me to find time for the most important relationship I shall ever have.

Another individual described it as a "launching toward a life of mutual understanding and love". One couple said that they had had a "more meaningful talk in 24 hours" at the Encounter, "than in 24 years". "Dialogue", said one husband, "is easy to duck. I don't really have to work at the office seven nights a week. This Encounter has brought us to an honest dialogue which deepened our union."

"Before the Encounter, our marriage had deteriorated to the point where I had lost faith in my wife. Now our communication has been renewed." A lack of negative comments was evident though some suggestions were given as to how the Encounter could be improved. The weekend is for healthy couples and not primarily rehabilitative in nature. Rather its goal is to teach participants some concepts and exercises for improving their mutual communication.

Purpose of This Study

That difficulties in marriage are common is evident. They have increasingly been viewed as communication problems and analyzed within that context. Benefits of positive marital communication are often prevented by social and cultural norms which impair development of open communication. In response to such considerations, more emphasis has been placed on assessment of communication processes in troubled

relationships. It would seem essential to investigate possible techniques of increasing marital communication. One promising approach to communication problems in marriage seems to be through the use of a programmed weekend called the Marriage Encounter. However, the techniques which the coordinating team of the Marriage Encounter uses in marital communication have not really been examined scientifically.

Hypotheses

In order to respond to the purposes of this study, the following hypotheses about marital communication have been generated:

1. As measured by the Marital Communication Inventory, there is significant correlation between the level of communication of husbands and of wives, whether or not they have participated in the Marriage Encounter.
2. There are significant differences in pretest and posttest marital communication as measured by the Marital Communication Inventory (MCI), between a sample of married couples who have participated in a Marriage Encounter and a control sample.

CHAPTER II

SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE

According to Cavan (1959), recent scientific research on family behavior in North America has been stimulated by, and directed to, times of crises. The author mentioned that there were three periods of crisis corresponding roughly to the three decades since World War I. Research done in the thirties by Kirkpatrick (1937), Terman (1938), Burgess and Cottrell (1939), among many others, showed that scientists of those time periods were more concerned with the success and failure of families as units than they were of individuals as marriage partners.

With the coming of World War II, psychologists focused their attention upon the crises caused by the separation of children from parents, and husbands from wives. Reuben Hill (1955) commented on the uncertainties of soldier-return, and the burden it placed on "marriage ties".

Our present situation in Canada in 1971, however, cannot be defined as a crisis caused by depression or war; yet the impression is widespread that there is a kind of impending crisis which has been ironically termed "the permanent emergency". So far, no major studies seem to have succeeded in grasping the causes of this vague and generalized uneasiness, though certain commentators have succeeded in speaking of it convincingly.

In spite of what has been said about the family as the basic unit of society, the present investigator considers that the family,

pure and simple, is not the basic unit of a stable society, but that what constitutes the basic unit is the stable marriage. According to Winston's dictionary, stability is the ability to withstand change. One can say, therefore, that stability in marriage comes from successfully meeting and overcoming obstacles and working together through whatever difficulties life brings. This, of course, requires dialogue, and therefore it may be said that stability depends in some measure on the couple's capacity to communicate. If the universal desire of couples at the time of their wedding is eternal togetherness, which implies a desire for stability, what, then, causes such instability in a marriage to the point of leading to its breakdown? To carry the question further, what main elements are associated with marital stability? What is it that enables one couple to withstand threatening forces, while another breaks under the strain? These were the questions that guided the present investigator in the review of the literature that follows.

In this study, marital adjustment was considered as the couple's or the partners' capacity to adapt in such a way as to avoid or resolve conflicts sufficiently, so that the partners feel satisfied with the marriage and with each other. In the discussion that follows, marital adjustment is considered as the extent to which the husband and wife agree to disagree, are satisfied with the marriage and with each other, and have achieved common interests and activities (Karlson, 1963).

Marital Adjustment

Background Factors Associated with Marital Adjustment

While excellent studies have been made in the field of marital adjustment, Kirkpatrick (1954) stated that there was a need for checking

previous research as well as a piecing together of the results. Among the first background factors to be studied by Kirkpatrick are the following: family authority patterns of childhood, sex favoritism on the parts of parents, sibling position, and father's occupation. In his study, he made a comparison of 104 married couples who had been rated as well adjusted, and 70 couples whom friends had rated as poorly adjusted.

Similarity in authoritarian pattern of childhood was not shown to be associated with good marital adjustment, although similarity of background was found to be favorable. It was found that 39.4% of the well adjusted couples reported identical authoritarian patterns during childhood, while only 35.7% of the poorly adjusted couples reported identical authoritarian patterns; the results were considerably negative. It was believed that sex favoritism in family background might be related to subsequent marital adjustment, but no evidence of such a relationship was found.

As to the relation between intimacy with parents and marital adjustment,both sexes reported greater intimacy with the mother than with the father. Both Kirkpatrick (1954) and Hamilton (1929) suggested that in the case of men, greater fondness for intimacy with the mother was unfavorable to happiness. Hamilton found that only 36% of women equally fond of both parents were happy, in contrast to 70% of men. In the case of women, there was a fairly marked tendency for greater intimacy with one or the other parent to be unfavorable to marital adjustment. Kirkpatrick, like Hamilton, found that equal intimacy of women with both parents made for adjustment rather than maladjustment.

No very striking relationship was revealed between sibling

position and marital adjustment, though poorly adjusted husbands were likely to have younger sisters. The study revealed that in general, there was no relationship between sibling position and marital adjustment.

Excess or deficiency of friendships with the opposite sex was shown to be unfavorable to marital adjustment of males. Kirkpatrick's (1954) data revealed no significant relationship between the father's occupation and marital adjustment, while Bernard (1966) found a positive correlation between the two.

According to Hamilton (1929) education was associated with marital satisfaction of men, while Terman (1938) observed no association for husbands, but for wives there was a tendency to greater happiness when the husband had more education than the wife. Kirkpatrick (1937) considered education to be slightly associated with well adjusted marriages.

As to the age differences between spouses, the trends found were somewhat different in different studies. Hamilton (1929) came to the conclusion that similarity of age was associated with fairly good marital adjustment. Locke (1951) also found a positive association between similarity of age in the mates and happiness of the marriage. An age difference of three to ten years was more common among his divorced couples than among his happily married, and similar ages were more common among the happily married couples. Kirkpatrick (1937) found that age was slightly associated with better adjustment, while Burgess and Cottrell (1939) found that it was of no great importance. The least favorable case was where the husband was from four to seven years older than the wife. All other cases were about the same with regard to

marital adjustment. Barnard (1932) found that for the women the highest satisfaction was found when the husband was 0 to 5 years older, and for the man, when the husband was 0 to 10 years older. On the other hand, Terman (1938) found no significant linear correlation between happiness and age differences between spouses. For wives, the highest mean happiness occurred in the group where the husband was four to ten years younger than the wife; the next highest where the husband was three to five years older, and the lowest where the husband was from nine to eleven years older. For husbands, the highest mean happiness was found where the husband was twelve or more years older, and the lowest where he was six to eight years older.

If it takes intelligence to live successfully, there is no doubt about the fact that intelligence is especially necessary for marriage success, since problems are constantly arising and must be met. Like most researchers in that field, the investigator was of the opinion that successful marriages were distinguished from the unsuccessful ones, not by the absence of problems, but by the possession of resources with which to meet them. With Flinn and Jacoby (1926) the present researcher is of the opinion that the chief resource is intelligence.

Another factor which strengthens the point of relation between intelligence and marital adjustment is that intelligence has a direct influence upon the role-expectation, and this is an important point in marital adjustment. Too great intellectual differences could result in some unfulfilled expectations and dissatisfaction, particularly for the more gifted spouse. Terman and Oden (1947) found that their gifted subjects on the whole had a somewhat lower average happiness than the

spouses who constituted the group of a little less than average intelligence. Equality in rated intelligence was favorable to marital adjustment among the subjects of Locke's (1951) sample.

Similarity of cultural background, as studied by Burgess and Cottrell (1939) appeared to have the effect of creating similar role-expectations, and therefore there was an association between cultural background and marital adjustment.

Since race differences are almost surely accompanied by cultural differences, racially mixed marriages were found to have a low degree of marital satisfaction. As early as 1937, a study was made of forty-eight mixed marriages, and though the rated average happiness was low for the whole group, it was lower for the group where greater color differences were found. More recent studies by Locke (1951) and Karlson (1963) found the same results.

Personality Factors Associated with Marital Adjustment

When attempting to explain the successes and the failures of husbands and wives in marriage, it seems necessary to discuss personality and its influencing factors. The reason, no doubt, stems from the fact that individuals live in a social situation. It is logical, therefore, that in diagnosing marital adjustment, the two personalities united in marriage be examined as the way that personality factors of each partner influence the other. The present review is limited to examining a few of these factors which may have an influence on marital adjustment.

The findings of Burgess and Wallin (1953) regarding the relationship between personality variables and marital adjustment (as measured by adjustment tests) characterizes the happily married couples

as being emotionally stable, considerate of others, companionable, self-confident and emotionally dependent; while the unhappily married showed opposite characteristics.

Three studies carried out by Terman (1938), Burchinal (1957) and Dean (1966) compared happily married to unhappily married couples by using personality tests which measure neurotic traits. The results of the three studies showed correlations between personality test scores and marital adjustment for males to range from .28 to .38, and for females from .35 to .42. The tests used were the following: Benreuter's Personality Inventory, Thelma and Gwinn Thurstone's Neurotic Inventory, and Dwight Dean's self-rated emotional maturity scale.

Both Burchinal (1957), and Dean (1966) reported that while the husbands' marital adjustment scores correlated negligibly with their wives' scores on personality inventories, the wives' marital adjustment scores varied positively and significantly with the husbands' personality scores. Moreover, Dean noted that the variable which correlated highest with both the husbands' and the wives' marital adjustment scores was the wives' positive rating of their husbands' emotional maturity (.52 and .55 respectively). Thus, if both the husband and wife rated the husband positively on a personality inventory, the marriage tended to be happy.

There have been two longitudinal studies of engaged couples who were followed through marriage. The first one was directed by Burgess and Wallin (1953) and the reported correlations between the Thurstone Neurotic Inventory scores before marriage, and the marital adjustment scores were .25 for men and .18 for women. The second of these two studies was carried out by Uhr (1957) where Kelly's data (1955) was

used from a follow-up after almost eighteen years of marriage. Uhr divided the couples into happily and unhappily married groups. He reported that the husbands in the unhappy group (18 years after marriage) were, at the time of engagement, significantly more neurotic in tendency (as measured by the Benreuter Personality Inventory) than the happy husbands. On the other hand, the wives who were unhappy eighteen years after marriage, differed at engagement from the happy wives on only one variable of the Benreuter - being less sociable.

Since after eighteen years of marriage the unhappy husbands' scores on the Benreuter had improved so much that they did not differ significantly from the happy husbands (except in now being less sociable), it can be concluded that at the beginning of marriage the husband's personality traits were more strongly related to later happiness in marriage than were those of the wife. As to the wives, since there were no significant differences between the happy and unhappy ones, Uhr concluded that the personality weaknesses of the unhappy husbands hindered the couples' early adjustment to marriage, thus leading to unhappiness in marriage. It is possible, of course, that the increase could have been due to the fact that couples tended to see themselves as happier than they really were.

Corsini (1956) conducted a study of twenty couples and found that the only significant correlation between understanding of the spouse and marital happiness occurred when the husband was the object of the wife's understanding. Amazingly enough, this relationship was the same even when the husbands and wives were randomly paired. This, it seems, indicated that a stereotyped conception of the "good" husband

was shared, not only by wives, but by husbands, and that there was a relevant relationship between marital happiness and a shared ideal of a good husband. Marital adjustment seems to be related not only to the wife's perception of her husband, but also to his self-perception. No studies seem to have found such a relationship existing between marital adjustment and the husband's perception of his wife with her self-perception. No one has challenged Corsini's findings.

A more recent study of Kotlar (1956) seemed to support Corsini's reasoning about the stereotyped conception of the husband's role. In his study, the husbands rated themselves on the Leary Interpersonal Check List. The results showed that those in happy marriages did not differ from those in unhappy marriages, but the wives of the happy marriages rated their husbands significantly higher than did the wives in the unhappy marriages. One can conclude, therefore, that the important factor may not have been congruence of perception, but the motivation to perceive the husband as above average in fulfilling his marital role.

A number of studies have shown that similarity of personality is related to marital adjustment (Blazer, 1963; Corsini, 1956; Dymond, 1954). Byrne and Blaylock (1963) suggested that assumed similarity of attitudes provided an index of marital satisfaction. Levinger and Breedlove (1966) reported that assumed similarity of attitudes was more highly correlated with husbands' marital satisfaction than with wives'.

It is interesting to note that Kelly (1955), who reported on the same data, without dividing the couples into happy and unhappy groups had shown that husbands and wives did not tend to become any more similar after eighteen years of marriage than they were at the time of

engagement. Uhr, however, reported that after eighteen years of marriage the happy spouses were more alike, and the unhappy ones more unlike one another.

Summary

A pattern appears to emerge from these research data. Factors pertaining to the husband appear to be crucial to marital success. Background factors generally considered to lead to a stable male identity, such as happiness of the husband's parents' marriage and the husband's close attachment to his father were related to happiness in marriage. The higher the husband's socioeconomic status and educational level, the greater the marital happiness. The more stable and non-neurotic the husband portrayed himself on personality inventories at the time of marriage, and the more consistent he was in such self-portrayal over the course of the marriage, the happier the marriage. The higher the wife rated him on emotional maturity as well as on fulfilling his role as husband in conformity to her cultural expectations, the happier the marriage. The more the wife came to resemble her husband in attitude and personality inventories, the happier the marriage. Intelligence as well as age level at time of marriage, and the difference in age proved to be important factors. It would appear that a sense of self-identity established through affectional ties with the father and supported by academic and/or occupational success and the esteem of his wife, were strongly related to happiness in marriage for the couple.

Relevant research on communication was examined next in an attempt to explain the data provided by this review of marriage research over the past decade.

Communication

Background and personality certainly appear to play a great role in marital harmony, but it may be that what determines the outcome of marriage is not only the personality of each partner, but mainly the way the two personalities interact. A study of the factors involved in this "way of interacting" certainly appears to be crucial in understanding the quality of a marriage.

Communication appears to be one of the most seriously neglected aspects of marriage study. This is not to say that communication has been overlooked by social science. Mass communication has been receiving increasing attention by social scientists and others, and such work has been done in linguistics by psychologists and anthropologists, but the subtle aspects of communication in marriage are only now emerging as an important subject of social science research.

Definition of Communication

There are many definitions for communication appearing in the literature. Newcomb (1950) defines it as the process by which a person refers to something, either by pointing to it or using a symbol for it, in such a way as to lead another person to have a more or less similar experience of it. Authorities in the behavioral sciences suggest that human communication consists of messages or information passing between the members of a group of two or more. It is the vehicle for social interaction - the process of transmitting feelings, attitudes, facts, beliefs, and ideas between living beings (Bienvenu, 1969). The present study took these definitions into consideration, but especially bases itself on that proposed by Locke (1956) and Bienvenu (1970). According

to Locke, communication was viewed as the exchange of meaningful symbols, both words and gestures. Locke's definition appeared to complement the definition of marital communication used by Bienvenu (1970) who saw it as an exchange of feelings and meanings as husbands and wives try to understand one another and to see their problems and differences from a man's and a woman's point of view. Bienvenu went on to say that while language is the primary means of communication, it is by no means the only one. Nonverbal communication encompasses listening, facial expressions, silences, gestures, touch, hearing, vision and the other nonlanguage symbols and clues used by persons in giving and receiving meaning (Bienvenu, 1969). Ruesch, in the same line of thought, said that interpersonal communication may include all the means by which individuals influence and understand one another (Ruesch, 1963).

It was with these definitions in mind that an examination of the literature in communication as related to marital adjustment was made. Many authorities in the field of family relations have considered good communication to be the key to marital success. There are increasing indications that this vital facet of the family processes is a significant problem facing the contemporary American family. Within the family, where love is expected to prevail, there is much evidence of lack of understanding, lack of listening, lack of empathy; in short, lack of communication (Jourard, 1964). Almost all men and women in search of counselling help to mend their marriages, or seeking divorce to end their lives together, complained that they were unable to "talk to each other". They often admitted that each one rarely tried to understand the meanings of the other's words or actions. This probably

means that adequate communications never were established or failed to continue in operation (Curran, 1968; Bienvenu, 1970).

Types of Communication

It seems clear, then, that there are two major types of communication: verbal and nonverbal. It is difficult to determine which type is the more important in marital interaction. Nonverbal symbols such as gestures, facial expression, and the like are certainly crucial in marriage. It is no doubt an art for each spouse to learn to interpret those nonverbal cues which convey meaning in and of themselves. A simple answer may not be very meaningful to others, but the perceptive spouse who is familiar with the mate's typical modes of communication, may detect much more. A "no" may mean anything from a strong negative feeling to a mildly affirmative one, given the particular situational context.

Fields of Communication

The importance of communication as a factor in marital adjustment has been the concern in two marriage studies by Karlson and Locke (1951). According to Karlson, three fields of communication are extremely necessary for marital adjustment. They are: communication of expectations, communication of intentions, and communication of love.

Communication of role expectations is a necessary prerequisite to marital satisfaction of the spouses, because without it they do not know what to adjust to, in what direction, and how much to adjust. According to Lewin (1947) it is necessary for the spouses to be able to predict what the other will do next, if there is to be efficient marital

interaction. Communication of intentions is also necessary; without it, the spouses are not sufficiently secure.

Manifestation of feelings of love and tender emotions that spouses have for each other is another prerequisite for marital satisfaction. As Karlson (1963) says, one of the main expectations in marriage is that the other spouse is loving and shows it. Married partners must be able to communicate feelings of disatisfaction. Bach and Wyden (1970) both point out that where this is possible, communication between the couple is improved and, as a result, each faces fewer unpleasant surprises from his partner.

With regard to the communication of role-expectations, it is necessary to take into account the fact that differences between role-expectations will always occur even in a marriage adjusted in the best possible way. Because marital role-expectations are complex, some will be relatively easy to change, and others difficult. It is impossible to hope for a complete correspondence between them.

Main Variables of Marital Communication

A close examination of the major correlates of communication may lead to the development of a comprehensive and definitive description of what is effective interpersonal communication in the marital context. According to Blook and Wolfe (1969), studying the dynamic interactions of married living by isolating important variables is a scientific way of studying communication in marital context.

Empathy and marital status are the first variables to be examined as factors influencing communication. According to Karlson (1963), there is an especially close connection between empathy and the

process of marital communication. The latter described empathy as the ability to receive communication about some of the most crucial areas in marriage. Goodman and Ofshe (1968) said it arises out of the ability of one member of a pair to see the situation as his partner sees it. This definition supported that given by Mead (1934), who saw it as being able to take the role of the other. It appears that empathy develops out of and is rendered possible by the communication process. In turn, the more empathy two people have towards each other, the easier it becomes for them to communicate. To put it in another way, the more two people are "in tune with" one another, the fewer explanations are required to transmit meaning between them. Goodman and Ofshe (1968) added that this gain in communication efficiency is likely to take place in those areas which are central to the couple's existence as a unit. George Herbert Mead (1934) also maintained that in the early stages of courtship involvement, two people are likely to increase their communication with one another and that as the commitment to each other deepens, the interaction becomes more intense and results in an increase in mutual empathy. This, they feel, is especially true in those areas of greatest concern, such as the wedding, married life, sex and children. This improved empathy leads to a greater understanding of the messages transmitted, since gestures rather than completed acts can be understood (Mead, 1934). Once more, this gain in communication efficiency was primarily around those issues that were of some importance to the couple.

Kirkpatrick and Hobart (1954), in a cross-sectional study, demonstrated that increasing involvement in the courtship process is associated with greater empathy. However, the possibility of the less

empathetic being weeded out between the stage of casual dating to the point of marriage could account for these data. Moreover, Udry, Nelson and Nelson (1961) failed to find any relationship between degrees of empathy and length of acquaintance or marriage. The studies of the relationship between empathy and marital happiness made by Locke, Sabash and Thomas (1956) yielded complex and conflicting results as far as empathy and marital success are concerned. No consistent pattern of relationships between measures of communication and empathy emerged, although a few significant correlations were found.

The investigation directed by Goodman and Ofshe (1968) involved three sets of cross-sex dyads, strangers, engaged couples and marital pairs engaged in a communication game (Password) and a role-taking situation. The data revealed that communication efficiency, especially for "family related" words, was greatest for the marital pair, less high for the engaged couples, and lowest between strangers.

According to the experiment, it appeared that words that were central and thus used frequently in courtship and marriage developed on the basis of mutual conditioning of the two members of the pair into a special understanding through which meaning could be transmitted more efficiently than between those not so conditioned. The experimenters stated that during the forty-five experimental sessions they observed, they gained some insight as to how common experience fosters accurate role-taking, and consequently, communication efficiency. First, they found communication patterns in which specific common knowledge was used to elicit the proper goal word. It was reported, however, that it was not only the amount of common knowledge the subjects had, but their

ability to use and interpret this information as they thought the other did, that is, to show empathy with the other. Married couples had the assurance that specific reference would be understood in terms of shared context. The communication patterns employed by the strangers were influenced by the inability of one to take the perspective of the other. In some cases a breakdown in communication resulted among subjects who lacked this common pool of information.

In the light of these facts, it seems that the relation between empathy and communication depended on marital status and that no relationship existed between the two for strangers. Cottrell (1933) found the correlation between these two factors to vary from .07 between strangers, to .31 between engaged couples, and .59 for married couples. The data on the engaged couples approached but did not attain statistical significance. Finally, for married couples, the relationship was substantial and statistically significant. Thus the degree of empathy and communication efficiency went hand in hand as couples moved from being strangers to "almost-marrieds", to husbands and wives.

Taken together, these data stimulated the authors to make inferences of a relationship between empathy and communication efficiency and between both variables with marital status. It also indicated that increasing commitments of two people to each other in courtship could lead to increased communication between them, especially about matters that relate to courtship and marriage. This intense and intimate communication would ordinarily result in heightened possibilities for each to observe and understand the perspective of the other, that is, to empathize with the other. This increase in mutual empathy may then

lead to greater communication efficiency, since meaning can be transmitted in gestures as well as in complete behavioral acts, and the former are more efficient than the latter. Cottrell suggested that the special universes of gestures, as a subcategory of language and communication, arises through intimate interaction in a cooperative enterprise such as courtship and marriage (Cottrell, 1942).

Adaptability has been extensively studied as a variable of marital communication. The term has been used to denote individuals who are capable of modifying their behavior and attitudes in response to environmental change (Schroeder, 1968). Such a skill is no doubt useful in adjusting to the intensive and extensive interpersonal interaction of marriage. Schroeder and his associates dealt with this and found that the ability to adapt varied among individuals, and they devised the following levels of adaptability.

According to Schroeder, low levels of adaptability are associated with rigidity, dogmatism, intolerance and closed-mindedness. An individual with such a low capacity to adapt does not communicate easily. He seeks certainty, has recourse, and will hold to structures, has a low tolerance for stress, conflict and uncertainty, is categorical and inflexible in his attitudes. On the other hand, one who has a broader and higher capacity to adapt was described by Schroeder as being flexible in his dealings with the environment. He is a flexible explorer of his world: he does not close fast under uncertainty, is open to receive, is sensitive to environmental change, is able to listen, understand and communicate (Schroeder, 1968).

Based on the previous discussion, it would be expected that

individuals with high adaptive capacity, in comparison with persons lower in adaptive behavior, would be more likely to be happy in marriage and therefore to have higher marital stability because of their superior ability of communicating and coping with the demands of interpersonal dynamics within the marital relationship. It can be concluded that individuals with low adaptability show more resistance to change in dyadic social interaction.

Modes of Marital Communication

The literature studied or examined indicated that communication between couples occurred simultaneously at many levels and over many channels. Through words, tones, gestures and movements, as well as by the very context of a situation, a "content message" is sent. Apart from this core message, there are other verbal as well as nonverbal messages which are transmitted to the receiver and which indicate to him more or less how he is expected to receive the "content message" and react to it.

Difficulties no doubt arise when two people operating together do not correctly interpret the "content message" of their communications. The reasons for such misunderstandings often have to do with actual differences in the way the messages are understood by the two people involved, and undoubtedly much of this type of misunderstanding could be avoided if messages were expressed more clearly, and if people did not rely so much on private assumptions to carry the burden of communicating.

Four modes of empathetic behavior were suggested by Barry (1970). As his descriptions of those four modes are so interrelated with

communication, it seems appropriate to report them as he gave them.

The first of these modes he called the "shared cultural mode", in which communication takes place solely through common, exact, literal meaning. This mode requires only a knowledge of the meaning of the standard universe of symbols that make up the formal language of a particular society. Though this mode accounts for the bulk of interpersonal communication, it requires the least amount of empathy in relation to a specific person. Since this mode is so general, the present investigator hardly considered it as being an important element related to marital status. The remaining three modes were of greater interest, and of more use in the nalysis of significant problems in the process of interpersonal communication in a marital context.

The second mode was the "subgroup mode" for which associations provide the means of communication. Barry stated that the degree of empathy that is necessary here is slightly greater than that employed in the "shared cultural mode", because it implies factors which allow the individual to categorize; for example, factors such as social class, religion, education level, sex and many others do open the door to a variety of possible meanings or associations beyond those which are part of the formal language. An individual who is attempting to communicate through one of these modes is able to make use of this more specific knowledge of the other than someone working through the "shared cultural mode". He may, as Goodman and Ofshe (1968) put it, "take the role of the other" in a greater number of possible situations, and therefore achieve greater communication efficiency.

The third mode proposed by Barry was referred to as the

"self-other mode". In communication based on this mode, it is possible for each member of the dyad to "find" within herself or himself the responses of the other, because the mutual interactions they have had in various situations have allowed them to "internalize" and expect certain response patterns from the other. The following example taken from Barry's experiment with couples illustrates this mode of communication. The wife gave her partner the word "piece"; he understood "peace" so answered "corps". To the word "Todd" that she gave him, he answered "bite". When the subjects were questioned about their questions and responses, the couple answered that their son Todd always said "piece" when he was about to take a bite of food.

The fourth type was termed the "inferential" mode, since inference is its key mechanism. For this mode, partner "A" was able to predict "B's" response to a new stimulus, because he had either general knowledge of partner "B", or specific knowledge of "B's" interaction with a third party. Barry stressed that it was necessary for "A" to be able to use this information as the basis for predicting, specifically, some future behavior pattern for "B". This is perhaps the most difficult of the four modes, in that "A" must act as "B" in a manner which is not based simply on a continuation of "B's" past performance in the same situation, but on an extension of it. One illustration of this mode of role-taking was provided by an engaged couple. The female said the word "trouble" and he answered, "in-laws". In this case the female was able to use her knowledge of her partner's complex attitudes, values and cognitions in deciding to select this cue.

It appears clear to Barry that the first two modes are available

to, and actually used by, all people in every interpersonal situation. The last two modes are alternative ways in which one may have obtained more specific information concerning the other in an interactive situation. In a sense, the latter two modes are dependent on the person also using the former two. Those who share a great deal of time and experience, married couples, for example, are in a position to use the "self-other" and "inferential" modes of role-taking, and thus communicate with one another in a much deeper, more efficient fashion than those who know each other less well.

Marital Communication Barriers

Communication presupposes shared norms (Newcomb, 1950). It is not surprising, therefore, that intercultural marriages are faced with greater barriers in communication between the spouses. Besides these larger cultural differences, which may exist as blocks to communication, there are those reflecting differences in previous family culture (Bossard, 1954). He maintained that each family develops its own unique culture with shared meanings attached to particular things and events, and that in each one there are words and forms of experience that are characteristic of the members of this particular family. Because of this, the members come to share common experiences and to understand one another's views and behavior. From this, one may conclude that even though husband and wife may have been reared within the same general culture, the possibilities of certain background barriers to communication are always present, because family cultures often differ.

Another possible barrier described in the literature is that of

sex differences at least in some cultures. This was illustrated in an investigation of fertility planning in Puerto Rico. Hill (1955) conducted an exploratory study of seventy-two families with the objective of identifying barriers of communication between husbands and wives. He found that, according to the idealogies of that country, the woman was defined as weak, naive and pure, and the man as strong, shrewd, and inherently evil. These, of course, influenced not only child rearing practices and role expectations before marriage, but also developed in girls patterns of modesty, low sexual drives and submission to males; in boys, it developed patterns of high sex curiosity, strong sexual drives and assertiveness with respect to women. To maintain this structure, courtships were chaperoned in such a way that the future married couple had no opportunities to communicate on an interpersonal level before marriage.

The author of the study mentioned, concluded that in such a cultural pattern the great respect that the wife had for her husband prevented her from communicating with him, and the fact that the husband saw his wife as being socially insignificant, prevented him from communicating with her on what the researcher of the study considered as an interpersonal level.

Communication difficulties due to sex differentiation do not exist only in traditional cultures. Mead (1949) mentioned that in North American society, communication between the sexes was often blocked by the differential conditioning of males and females. Members of one sex were expected to have a behavior pattern which was totally opposed to those of the opposite sex, especially during the preadolescent

years. From the findings of this study, it can be surmised that they developed into stereotypes and, according to Harper, when courtship time began, it seemed difficult for them to understand deeply the personality traits of the other sex (Harper, 1949).

It was not surprising to note some carry-over hostilities causing difficulties of communication. Besides the communication barriers which are cultural and social in origin, there are also those that have their source in the individual himself. It has already been mentioned in this study that emotional maturity is an important factor in marital adjustment. Carl Rogers commented on the relationship between emotional adjustment and difficulties in communication. According to this psychologist, the whole of psychotherapy is the task of dealing with a failure in communication. The emotionally maladjusted person is one who has broken down communication within himself, and as a result of this, his communication with others has been damaged and therefore he suffers both within himself, and in his interpersonal relations (Rogers, 1954).

Conflicted Communication

If marriage partners communicate at only one level, there would be little misunderstanding as to content or intent. However, this is not the case, so they often "offer each other messages which define one type of relationship at one level and an incompatible type of relationship at another (Haley, 1963)". The wife, who orders her husband to dominate her, leaves the couple caught up in a network of incompatible definitions of the relationship. If the husband dominates her at her insistence, he is being dominated. This is an example of what Watzlawick defines as a

"double bind": the husband is damned if he does, and damned if he doesn't.

It is believed that no great harm is done so long as the double bind can be commented on and clarified. If not, this kind of paradoxical communication is lethal and it may lead to severe emotional problems. Eric Berne conceptualizes the breakdown of communication as being the result of "crossed transactions", rather than a misunderstanding as to the level that a message is being communicated. He indicates that:

> Individuals seem to have available a limited repertoire of ego states which are not roles, but psychological realities: (1) ego states which resemble those of parental figures (parent); (2) those which are autonomously directed toward objective appraisal of reality (adult); and (3) those which represent archaic relics, still-active ego states which are fixated in early childhood (child) (Berne, 1967, p. 23).

Communication will proceed smoothly so long as transactions are complementary; that is, the message sent is the message received. Generally, couples have little difficulty resolving disagreements about which rules to follow, because they can usually reach a compromise. Sharing common possessions, agreeing on recreational and social endeavours and problems of consideration for each other in various areas of living, can lead to disagreements which are reasonably easy to resolve. Conflict is more likely to arise as the couple struggles with the problem of who is to make the rules and this problem is not so easily reached by compromise.

In summary, then, the research appears to indicate that there is an ever-growing trend toward the recognition of communication as the link to human relationships. The research strongly implies that if married

couples can develop skills in communication (verbally and nonverbally) with one another, many problems can be more easily handled, and a more satisfying relationship will exist. At the same time, it seems that few opportunities exist for couples to learn ways to communicate and interact effectively. Most formal opportunities seem to be remedial in nature (marriage counselling) or didactic in approach (marriage preparation courses). North American society seems to be lacking in training for effective, growing marriage.

It may be concluded that belief in the importance of communication in marriage is based not only on common sense view, but also on considerable research evidence. The research tends to support the theory that marital disharmony is due to a breakdown in communication, and that certain background factors as well as personality factors play an important role in building or breaking down communication. Where barriers of communication exist, because of social background, personality traits or destructive relationships, one may have recourse to a "Marriage Encounter" or similar techniques capable of detecting the source of the failure and preventing permanent maladjustment.

Since many authorities in the field have come to the conclusion that good communication is the key to marital happiness, more research has been done to discover the factors involved in good communication, as well as the possible barriers and conflicting variables which may destroy it. Increasing efforts are being made to discover techniques which would be of positive help in this field, and the Marriage Encounter is one of them.

Summary

Marital happiness had been the preoccupation of few interested in the field of marriage, but after Burgess and Cottrell (1931) and Jessie Bernard (1933) launched their first predictive instrument, marital adjustment became the focal point of much research, both psychological and sociological. Terman (1938) utilized their findings and Burgess and Wallin (1953) added to the study, and in 1958 Winch developed his "Theory of Complementarity".

In the early sixties, some of these authorities and other new ones looked upon communication as a "vital facet of the family processes" (Bernard, 1964) and as the "most gratifying experience in the marital relationship" (Winch, 1964). Increased recognition was given to the belief that a positive relationship exists between marital adjustment and the capacity to communicate (Satir, 1967). There seems to be little doubt that among the practitioners in the various helping professions, communication is the key to family interaction and the lifeblood of the marital relationship. In spite of this fact, a review of the literature reveals a scarcity of studies dealing exclusively with marital communication.

Four general criticisms may be made regarding the studies of marriage in general. First, they have been basically atheoretical in aiming at discovery by using many types of measuring devices. Second, only a few set out to test specific hypotheses derived from theory; most started with a common sense assumption such as: neuroticism is negatively correlated with marital adjustment; or socioeconomic status is positively correlated with marital adjustment. Third, many of them used samples easily available and often not representative. Fourth,

nearly all of the research suffered from the problem of the criterion used as the dependent variable. Happiness or satisfaction in marriage has been defined on the basis of endurance, absence of marital counselling, or judged happiness, and in the researcher's point of view an important observation was neglected, namely, that many marriages are far from ideal, yet never reach the stage of divorce or even marital counselling, and for a number of reasons having little to do with marital adjustment. Moreover, happiness or satisfaction may not mean the same thing to all subjects. In spite of these limitations, most of the studies done in the field of marital adjustment have helped in going beyond "what seems to be", and they did provide data which can lead to better research and result in insights into the question of marital interaction.

Whatever the limitations of previous research in the area, there is increasing evidence that marital adjustment is a problem for many marriages. Increased recognition is being given to the belief that a positive relationship exists between marital adjustment and the couple's capacity to communicate. There seems to be little doubt among the practitioners in the various helping professions, that impaired communication lies at the heart of many couples' problems. The study reported herein was undertaken in an attempt to meet part of this need.

In searching for techniques which would increase marital communication, the present writer chose to concentrate her investigation on that of the Marriage Encounter and thus examine the relationship between the technique of Marriage Encounter and marital communication.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Remembering that a variable is "anything that can be observed in such a way that the observations can be classified into one of any number of classes" (Edwards, 1958, p. 10), communication was considered as the dependent behavioral variable and the Marriage Encounter as the independent stimulus variable. Both were considered as psychological variables.

Certain behaviors may be easy to observe because they are relatively simple responses, but in other cases they form complex patterns of responses. Marital communication seemed to belong to the latter group.

Since behavior always occurs in a particular setting or environment, and with respect to certain conditions of stimulation present in the environment, the Marriage Encounter was considered an acceptable independent variable, because the environment that it brought to the couples experiencing it was a good example that behavior in a particular setting is in some degree a response to that setting and the conditions of stimulation provided.

The variables in the present study can also be referred to as "response-inferred" variables.

The Sample

The sample was comprised of eighty married couples from Manitoba.

The experimental group (E) consisted of forty married couples who participated in a weekend Marriage Encounter, and the control group (C) of forty married couples who did not participate in a Marriage Encounter. The purpose of the C group was to determine if changes in communication scores as measured by the Bienvenu Marital Communication Inventory would occur without any planned intervention, and to test for the significance of the difference between communication scores of couples who agreed to participate in an Encounter group, and those who had not. In order to achieve this aim, and at the same time reduce as much as possible the number of variables, the same number of subjects were chosen for the C group and they were carefully matched on an individual basis and on the following variables: age-wise (within five years), years of marriage (within three years), religion, number of children, and sources of income. To match them on this point, the writer used the classification given on the last page of the Inventory, a copy of which can be found in the Appendix. The couples of the E group participated in the Marriage Encounter because they had been invited to do so by friends, who had previously taken part in one and who had been pleased with their experience. The mean age of the couples of group E was 33.2 years for husbands, and 31.3 for wives. They ranged from 19 to 53 years. That of the C group was 32.5 for husbands, and 31 for wives. The mean length of marriage was 10.3 years for the E group, and 10.9 for the C group. The mean number of children was 3.1 for the E group, and 4 for the C group. Only 3 of the couples were childless. Of the eighty persons involved in the E group, ten reported having received from seven to nine years of schooling, ten had a B. A. or B. Ed. or both, while eight had either an

R. N. or a teacher's certificate, the other fifty-two had reported having received high school training. With the exception of eight persons, all were Roman Catholic.

The Instrument

The measure of communication used was the Marital Communication Inventory by Dr. Millard Bienvenu. It is best described in his own words:

> A 48-item scale was developed to measure the process of communication as an element of marital interaction. It is not intended to measure content of communication, but rather concerns itself more with the patterns, characteristics, and styles of communication. Among other things, the couple's ability to listen, to understand each other, to express themselves, and their manner of saying things is explored. The Marital Communication Inventory (MCI) is a self-inventory type of device in which the subjects respond by checking one of four possible responses, "usually", "sometimes", "seldom", and "never". The responses to the items are scored from zero to three with a favorable response given the higher score (Bienvenu, 1969).
>
> The 48 items were formulated from a review of the literature and from the author's experience in marriage and family counselling. Concepts and ideas for items were also obtained from colleagues and from an examination of existing instruments dealing with marital interaction. To promote face validity, the items were reviewed by a number of sociologists, social workers, and psychologists whose concensus was that they were relevant to marital communication. Once the questionnaire was completed, each of the individual items was reviewed with a group of married couples to make sure that the items were understandable. Several suggestions for changes in wording were incorporated, followed by extensive pretesting of the inventory.
>
> The instrument, which requires a seventh grade reading level, is designed for the complete

> marital pair or for either of the spouses exclusive of the other. It is suited for couples of any age living together (or perhaps recently separated), with or without children. All of the items relate solely to the married pair (Bienvenu, 1969, p. 27).

Scoring

As previously stated, the items were scored from zero to three, with a favorable response given the higher score. The possible range of total scores was from zero to 144. The higher the total score, the higher the level of, and the more successful the individual was considered in marital communication as measured by the MCI.

In scoring the inventory, the score of each item was marked along the edge opposite the "never" response, and then subtotalled at the bottom of each page. The total score obtained by adding subtotals from Pages 2 and 3 was then placed on the front page in the top right-hand corner. No credit was given for items that were omitted. A paper scoring key was provided and used for scoring.

Administration

The instrument was administered by the experimenter in the following sequence: Group E (participants) completed the inventory on the night they began the Encounter, again two days later, immediately after the Encounter was over. Group C (nonparticipants) completed the inventory on a specific date, then two days later, in order to observe the same pattern followed by Group E. Convinced of the fact that prior planning was necessary, the investigator made an attempt to create a favorable climate for the testing. The

experimenter provided the Ss with reasons for using the inventory and explained the importance of cooperation and objectivity. Directions were read aloud as the couples followed on their copies and the investigator attempted to motivate them to be honest and frank and assured them of its confidential nature. The directions that the investigator read to the couples taking the test are those found on the first page of the inventory. A copy of this inventory and the directions are found in the Appendix.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hypothesis 1: As measured by the Marital Communication Inventory, there is no significant correlation between the level of communication of husbands and of wives, whether or not they have participated in the Marriage Encounter.

In order to make prediction of the dependent variable (marital communication) from the independent variable (Marriage Encounter) the relationship between communication scores of husbands and wives for the pretest and posttest was measured. To obtain these measures, Pearson's coefficient of correlation formula was used.

TABLE 1

Correlation Between the Husbands' and Wives' Communication Scores for the Pretest and Posttest of the Experimental and Control Group

	Pretest	Posttest
Experimental Group	.608**	.634**
Control Group	.638**	.688**

** $p < .01$

It is indicated in Table 1, the correlation in communication scores between husbands and wives for the pretest and posttest of the

E and the C groups was significant at least at the $p < .01$. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. The scores indicated that both husbands and wives perceived their marital communication the same way.

The high correlation between husband and wife scores could have been due to the fact that the E group was made up of couples who felt the need of increasing their marital communication, but who already had a relatively high degree of communication. As the C group, it is probable that the couples selected were among those whose marital communication was considered good by those who invited them to take the test. Because of the significant correlation between the communication scores of husbands and wives, it was considered appropriate to use couple scores in the remaining analysis.

Hypothesis 2: There are no significant differences in pretest and posttest marital communication scores as measured by MCI between a sample of married couples who have participated in a Marriage Encounter, and a control sample.

In order to examine the differences between the pretest and posttest communication scores, and that of the E and C groups, an analysis of variance was computed (Edwards, 1958, p. 142-145).

TABLE 2

Analysis of Variance of the Communication Scores Between The Pretest and Posttest and the Experimental-Control Groups

Source of Variance	SS	df	MS	F
A - Experimental & Control	17765	1	17765	12.196 **
B - Pretest & Posttest	2607	1	2607	1.790
A & B	238	1	238	.163
Within	227238	156	1456	

** $p < .01$

With 1 and 156 df, the required F for variable experimental-control scores, an F of 3.91 was required at the $p < .05$, and 6.81 at $p < .01$. Since the calculated F was 12.19, it was concluded that the E-C scores differed significantly beyond the $p < .01$.

For the pretest and posttest, an F of 1.79 was obtained, so it was concluded that the mean scores of the two groups did not change significantly at the $p < .05$ level.

In order to discover whether these differences were true, or whether they were artifacts of the interaction effects, these effects were tested. An F of .163 was found and proved to be nonsignificant.

On the pretest, the scores of the C group were significantly higher than those of the E group; and this relationship did not change in the posttest. The characteristics of the sample were ascertained by computing the mean and the standard deviation of communication scores.

These characteristics were not of interest in themselves, but the data obtained from these samples were used to make estimates about the characteristics of the population from which the samples were drawn.

TABLE 3

Means and Standard Deviations of Communication Scores for the Experimental and Control Groups on the Pretest and Posttest

	Pretest		Posttest	
	Mean	S. D.	Mean	S. D.
Experimental Group	177.1	18.30	187.6	20.71
Control Group	200.6	18.35	206.3	21.23

As is indicated in Table 3, the control group obtained higher communication scores than the experimental group, even on the pretest. This suggests that the couples of the control group perceived themselves as having a higher level of communication than the couples of the experimental group. From the beginning, the two groups were clearly different in the way they perceived their marital communication level. Whatever the reason may be for this difference in samples, it no doubt was an influencing factor in the results obtained in the testing of the hypothesis.

The fact that both C and E group scores increased may be noted. It is not known what repetition testing did, if anything, to the respondents' scores, or what amount of learning, if any, had taken place

in the Encounter. There seem to exist three possibilities: (1) that there was no learning; (2) that some learning occurred, but that it was concealed by the respondents; (3) that the instrument was not capable of measuring the learning that could have occurred.

An overview of the range of scores of the two groups showed a greater diversity among the couples of the control group. It may, therefore, be that nonsignificant results were attributable to none of the above, but were artifacts of the samples; that is, the difference between the experimental and the control group.

One may surmise that the couples who chose to participate in the Encounter did so because they were more aware of their communication weaknesses, than those of the C group. They agreed to participate in the experience because they perceived the need to improve on that point. It is possible that the couples of the C group did not perceive such a need, since they had the same opportunity or choice of taking part in the Encounter.

On the other hand, it may have been that at least for some of the couples of the E group, the weekend experience of the Encounter brought them to an awareness of a lack of communication that they had not previously perceived, and this awareness would have influenced some of the couples to score themselves lower in the posttest.

Another possibility is that the couples may have reached a marital adjustment, which does not necessarily correspond to the standard of communication as measured by the MCI, but which would satisfy Karlson's definition which was adopted for this study, and which is considered as the extent to which the husband and wife agree to disagree, and are satisfied with the marriage and with each other (Karlson, 1963).

Limitations of the Study

There is a possibility that the size of the sample limited the results. The forty couples who participated in the Encounter did so at two different times. Although the same procedures were used, one Encounter does not necessarily produce the same results; more than two groups would have minimized this difference.

The fact that the groups were not randomly chosen, may have been another limitation; especially when one considers how important the relationship between samples and population is, and more so in a psychological experiment where the investigator is interested in the way people behave in a particular situation. It is possible that the samples tested did not represent the general population; however, it is not possible without further research to determine whether a randomized group would have yielded better results. Thus, a selected sample rather than a randomized may be considered as one of the limitations of the study.

There may have been some differences between the actual change in the marital relationship and what the instrument did, in fact, measure. Biased responses may have developed as the subject rewrites the test. A desire to appear in a favourable light to the members of the team, or to other authority figures, may also have motivated the answers of some of the respondents. It may be that such real learnings as may have taken place in the Marriage Encounter, were not measured at all by the instrument. Some couples may have been easily satisfied with the minimum amount of communication, because they were accustomed to low level communication, or they did not judge their mate to be capable of

being more effective. Other couples may have had higher aspirations, and because of the discrepancy that existed between the ideal they had, and the reality they faced; they could have perceived their degree of communication as inadequate, and thus scored themselves low on the test. What every married partner hopes for in his or her marital union is no doubt an important variable, but one which would be very difficult to measure. It may, however, have influenced the results of this study. Though one cannot affirm that the couples who participated in the Marriage Encounter were among those who were aiming at a deep level communication; and that the couples who had not taken part were not as preoccupied with achieving the higher level of communication, there is that possibility.

It is also possible that in answering the test, some were inclined to be "less harsh" in judging their mate's capacity to communicate, and therefore answered some questions more positively.

Perhaps there were some other variables which were influencing the results, and for which the investigator could not or did not control in matching the two samples. Flinn and Jacoby (1926), Terman and Oden (1947) and Locke (1951) all recognized intelligence as being of prime importance in marital communication.

Personality is another basic factor reported to be highly correlated with successful marital communication. The findings of Burgess and Wallin (1953) supported this finding; as did the three studies carried out by Terman (1938), Burchival (1957) and Dean (1966). If the same couples who took the MCI had also taken a personality test, and if a correlation of the two scores had been made, it might have

thrown more light on the meaning of communication scores.

According to Corsini (1956) and Kotlar (1956) marital adjustment is related to the wife's perception of her husband; for example, if the wife is sympathetic and understanding towards her husband, there is marital happiness. This is another point which could have helped in clarifying the actual results. If, for example, the wives who took the MCI had been asked to describe how they perceived their husband in the fulfillment of his marital role, some interesting information might have evolved. The present investigator believes that some wives partly projected this feeling into the last question of the MCI which was, "What is the main fault of Canadian husbands?"

Another possibility could have been to examine the education of the subjects. A relationship between education and marital satisfaction was found to exist, especially when the husband had more education than the wife (Hamilton, 1929; Kirkpatrick, 1937; and Terman, 1938).

Age differences between spouses were not considered in the present investigation. Locke (1951) found a positive association between similarity of age in the mates and happiness of the marriage. Racial differences were not examined in this study; yet, research made by Locke (1951) and Karlson (1963) showed that racially mixed marriages have more communication barriers to overcome than husbands and wives of the same race. Racial differences are almost surely accompanied by cultural differences, and the findings of Burgess and Cottrell (1939) indicated a close association between cultural background and marital adjustment.

Three types of limitations of the instrument were discerned from

the following sources: the literature, the researcher's own observations, and the respondents' remarks. There is a possibility that answers may have been falsified. There may have been a lack of frankness which resulted in a large number of "undecided" or "neutral" answers. Perhaps some subjects had the tendency to overrate themselves. The instrument did not account for differences in cultural factors, and this may have caused subjects to respond differently to the same question. The scoring of answers to items was based upon the author's own personal judgment and set of values. Some individuals may not have actually had an opinion on what the statement implied; yet may have felt constrained to express one. All respondents may not have interpreted a statement the same way; and the same statement may have had varying connotations for different persons. Because of vocabulary limitations, or of the fact that their native language was not English, some respondents may not have understood the phrasing of some statements. Some respondents indicated that they would have liked to have had the word "always" included among possible answers.

The MCI was considered to be "an experimental instrument" (Bienvenu, 1969). Certainly further research and development of the instrument are needed and are being carried out. The instrument's greatest advantage was its content, which appeared to pinpoint the specific problem areas and patterns of marital communication considered as being of great importance.

In spite of its limitations, the fact remains that the MCI was the best instrument available at the present time and was considered appropriate for fulfilling the purpose of this study.

Recommendations for Further Study

If the MCI is used again in Marriage Encounters, the pretest given at the beginning of the Encounter should aim at detecting areas of marital communication weaknesses that would characterize the particular group of couples participating in the Encounter. If the pretest is given with that aim in mind, then the posttest could be given with the specific objective of finding out if the Marriage Encounter did or did not help to improve the weak areas indicated by the pretest. Instead of giving the posttest immediately at the closing of the Encounter, it might prove to be more valid to give it several weeks after the Encounter took place.

It seems that the whole content of the Encounter (lectures, questionnaires, and other activities) could be geared more specifically to the topic of communication without changing any of its original phases. It would simply be a matter of orienting it to a more definite goal. The MCI could become a part of the Encounter program and be used as a starter (pretest) and as a follow-up instrument. The value of a test such as the MCI depends greatly on how it is presented. Its efficiency depends much on the person administering the test. For this reason, the coordinating team of Marriage Encounters would have to be aware, not only of the content of the MCI and how it is administered, but also of its potential value as a measuring instrument used in detecting weaknesses and testing progress.

In order to avoid the disadvantages involved in the repetition of the test, the odd numbered questions could constitute the pretest, and the even numbered ones, could make up the content of the posttest. A

split-half correlation coefficient on scores of sixty subjects was computed on the odd numbered and on the even numbered statements. A coefficient of .93 was obtained (Counselor's Guide).

It would be worthwhile to repeat this study with a random sample. Instead of being personally contacted by friends, invitations could be sent to a randomly chosen group of couples which would constitute the experimental group, and along with it a control group would be matched on as many factors as possible, such as those which have been discussed in this study. It would also be more valuable if the experiment were repeated many times.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

In order to investigate the effectiveness of the Marriage Encounter as a means of increasing marital communication, forty couples participating in an Encounter in Winnipeg were asked to complete a marital communication test. A control group was selected and matched to the experimental group on the basis of age, length of marriage, social status, and number of children.

The instrument chosen to test the effectiveness of the one variable on the other was Bienvenu's Marital Communication Inventory (Bienvenu, 1969). The test was administered to the couples of the experimental group just before they began the Encounter, and two days later, at the end of the experience. The same pretest and posttest with the same time interval were administered to the couples of the control group.

Pearson's coefficient of correlation formula was used to measure the relationship between husbands and wives of the experimental group and those of the control group for pretest and posttest. The results were significant at least to the $p < .01$ level. There was an increase in the posttest scores for both groups, but this was not statistically significant. The control group had higher scores than the experimental group on both the pretest and the posttest.

An anlysis of variance was then made to find the variance between the scores of the two groups, as well as the difference between the

pretest and posttest. The results of the analysis of variance showed that the scores of the experimental and those of the control group differed significantly beyond $p < .01$ level. On the pretest and posttests, the mean scores of the two groups did not differ significantly at the $p < .05$ level. The interaction effects also proved to be nonsignificant.

One of the most striking findings of this study was the high correlation of the scores of husbands and wives. While it was not specifically tested, the communication score of those married a short time and those married a long time seemed so similar that this similarity seems to indicate that Bienvenu's instrument does measure some kind of communication between husbands and wives. Their scores were consistently similar. The couples in this sample seemed to perceive their marriages the same way, whether they had experienced the Encounter or were chosen from the community at large. They also seemed to perceive their marital communication in the same way. In terms of pretest and posttest scores, this similarity of view appeared relatively stable.

APPENDIX

A MARITAL COMMUNICATION INVENTORY

DEVELOPED BY MILLARD J. BIENVENU, SR.

This inventory offers you an opportunity to make an objective study of the degree and patterns of communication in your marital relationship. It will enable you and your husband to better understand each other. We believe you will find it both interesting and helpful to make this study.

Directions

1. Please answer each question as quickly as you can according to the way you feel at the moment (not the way you usually feel or felt last week).
2. Please do not consult your husband while completing this inventory. You may discuss it with him after both of you have completed it. Remember that counseling value of this form will be lost if you change any answer during or after this discussion.
3. Honest answers are very necessary. Please be as frank as possible. Your answers are confidential. Your name is not required.
4. Use the following examples for practice. Put a check (V) in one of the four blanks on the right to show how the question applies to your marriage.

	USUALLY	SOME-TIMES	SELDOM	NEVER
Does your husband like to talk about himself?	_____	_____	_____	_____
Does he let you know when he is displeased?	_____	_____	_____	_____

5. Read each question carefully. If you cannot give the exact answer

to a question, answer the best you can but be sure to answer each one. There are no right or wrong answers. Answer according to the way you feel at the present time.

Form F	USUALLY	SOME-TIMES	SELDOM	NEVER
1. Do you and your husband discuss the manner in which the family income should be spent?	____	____	____	____
2. Does he discuss his work and interests with you?	____	____	____	____
3. Do you have a tendency to keep your feelings to yourself?	____	____	____	____
4. Is your husband's tone ofvoice irritating?	____	____	____	____
5. Does he have a tendency to say things which would be better left unsaid?	____	____	____	____
6. Are your mealtime conversations easy and pleasant?	____	____	____	____
7. Do you find it necessary to keep after him about his faults?	____	____	____	____
8. Does he seem to understand your feelings?	____	____	____	____
9. Does your husband nag you?	____	____	____	____
10. Does he listen to what you have to say?	____	____	____	____
11. Does it upset you to a great extent when your husband is angry with you?	____	____	____	____
12. Does he pay you compliments and say nice things to you?	____	____	____	____
13. Is it hard to understand your husband's feelings and attitudes?	____	____	____	____

	USUALLY	SOME-TIMES	SELDOM	NEVER
14. Is he affectionate toward you?	____	____	____	____
15. Does he let you finish talking before responding to what you are saying?	____	____	____	____
16. Do you and your husband remain silent for long periods when you are angry with one another?	____	____	____	____
17. Does he allow you to pursue your own interests and activities even if they are different from his?	____	____	____	____
18. Does he try to lift your spirits when you are depressed or discouraged?	____	____	____	____
19. Do you fail to express disagreement with him because you are afraid he will get angry?	____	____	____	____
20. Does your husband complain that you don't understand him?	____	____	____	____
21. Do you let your husband know when you are displeased with him?	____	____	____	____
22. Do you feel he says one thing but really means another?	____	____	____	____
23. Do you help him understand you by saying how you think, feel, and believe?	____	____	____	____
24. Do you and your husband find it hard to disagree with one another without losing your tempers?	____	____	____	____
25. Do the two of you argue a lot over money?	____	____	____	____

	USUALLY	SOME-TIMES	SELDOM	NEVER
26. When a problem arises that needs to be solved are you and your husband able to discuss it together (in a calm manner)?	____	____	____	____
27. Do you find it difficult to express your true feelings to him?	____	____	____	____
28. Does he offer you cooperation, encouragement and emotional support in your role (duties) as a wife?	____	____	____	____
29. Does your husband insult you when angry with you?	____	____	____	____
30. Do you and your husband engage in outside interests and activities together?	____	____	____	____
31. Does your husband accuse you of not listening to what he says?	____	____	____	____
32. Does he let you know that you are important to him?	____	____	____	____
33. Is it easier to confide in a friend rather than your husband?	____	____	____	____
34. Does he confide in others rather than in you?	____	____	____	____
35. Do you feel that in most matters your husband knows what you are trying to say?	____	____	____	____
36. Does he monopolize the conversation very much?	____	____	____	____
37. Do you and your husband talk about things which are of interest to both of you?	____	____	____	____

	USUALLY	SOME-TIMES	SELDOM	NEVER
38. Does your husband sulk or pout very much?	____	____	____	____
39. Do you discuss intimate matters with him?	____	____	____	____
40. Do you and your husband discuss your personal problems with each other?	____	____	____	____
41. Can your husband tell what kind of day you have had without asking?	____	____	____	____
42. Does he fail to express feelings of respect and admiration for you?	____	____	____	____
43. Do you and your husband talk over pleasant things that happen during the day?	____	____	____	____
44. Do you hesitate to discuss certain things with your husband because you are afraid he might hurt your feelings?	____	____	____	____
45. Do you pretend you are listening to him when actually you are not really listening?	____	____	____	____
46. Do the two of you ever sit down just to talk things over?	____	____	____	____

Please make sure you have answered all the questions.

The following will help your counselor better understand the information you have given him:

Your Age _____ Husband's Age _____ Length of Present Marriage _____

Your Religious Preference _____ Your Husband's Preference _____

Have you Ever Been Married, Divorced, or Widowed Before? Yes No

(Circle One)

If Yes, Please Explain _____

Your Education _____ Occupation _____

Husband's Education _____ His Occupation _____

The Main Source of Family Income is: _____

(Choose one of the following)

a) Savings and Investments.

b) Profits and Fees from a Business or Profession.

c) Salary, Commissions or Regular Income Paid on a Monthly or Semi-Monthly Basis.

d) Wages; Hourly Wages, Piece Work, or Weekly Pay Check.

e) Odd Jobs or Seasonal Work.

f) Social Security, Welfare or Unemployment Insurance.

Your Children: Ages of Boys _____ Ages of Girls _____

The Main Fault of American Husbands is _____

_____

Form M

	USUALLY	SOME-TIMES	SELDOM	NEVER
1. Do you and your wife discuss the manner in which the family income should be spent?	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Does she discuss her work and interests with you?	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Do you have a tendency to keep your feelings to yourself?	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Is your wife's tone of voice irritating?	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. Does she have a tendency to say things which would be better left unsaid?	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. Are your mealtime conversations easy and pleasant?	_____	_____	_____	_____

	USUALLY	SOME-TIMES	SELDOM	NEVER
7. Do you find it necessary to keep after her about her faults?	____	____	____	____
8. Does she seem to understand your feelings?	____	____	____	____
9. Does your wife nag you?	____	____	____	____
10. Does she listen to what you have to say?	____	____	____	____
11. Does it upset you to a great extent when your wife is angry with you?	____	____	____	____
12. Does she pay you compliments and say nice things to you?	____	____	____	____
13. Is it hard to understand your wife's feelings and attitudes?	____	____	____	____
14. Is she affectionate toward you?	____	____	____	____
15. Does she let you finish talking before responding to what you are saying?	____	____	____	____
16. Do you and your wife remain silent for long periods when you are angry with one another?	____	____	____	____
17. Does she allow you to pursue your own interests and activities even if they are different from hers?	____	____	____	____
18. Does she try to lift your spirits when you are depressed or discouraged?	____	____	____	____
19. Do you fail to express disagreement with her because you are afraid she will get angry?	____	____	____	____
20. Does your wife complain that you don't understand her?	____	____	____	____

	USUALLY	SOME-TIMES	SELDOM	NEVER
21. Do you let your wife know when you are displeased with her?	____	____	____	____
22. Do you feel she says one thing but really means another?	____	____	____	____
23. Do you help her understand you by saying how you think, feel, and believe?	____	____	____	____
24. Do you and your wife find it hard to disagree with one another without losing your tempers?	____	____	____	____
25. Do the two of you argue a lot over money?	____	____	____	____
26. When a problem arises that needs to be solved are you and your wife able to discuss it together (in a calm manner)?	____	____	____	____
27. Do you find it difficult to express your true feelings to her?	____	____	____	____
28. Does she offer you cooperation, encouragement and emotional support in your role (duties) as a husband?	____	____	____	____
29. Does your wife insult you when angry with you?	____	____	____	____
30. Do you and your wife engage in outside interests and activities together?	____	____	____	____
31. Does your wife accuse you of not listening to what she says?	____	____	____	____

	USUALLY	SOME-TIMES	SELDOM	NEVER
32. Does she let you know that you are important to her?	____	____	____	____
33. Is it easier to confide in a friend rather than your wife?	____	____	____	____
34. Does she confide in others rather than in you?	____	____	____	____
35. Do you feel that in most matters your wife knows what you are trying to say?	____	____	____	____
36. Does she monopolize the conversation very much?	____	____	____	____
37. Do you and your wife talk about things which are of interest to both of you?	____	____	____	____
38. Does your wife sulk or pout very much?	____	____	____	____
39. Do you discuss intimate matters with her?	____	____	____	____
40. Do you and your wife discuss your personal problems with each other?	____	____	____	____
41. Can your wife tell what kind of day you have had without asking?	____	____	____	____
42. Does she fail to express feelings of respect and admiration for you?	____	____	____	____
43. Do you and your wife talk over pleasant things that happen during the day?	____	____	____	____
44. Do you hesitate to discuss certain things with your wife because you are afraid she might hurt your feelings?	____	____	____	____

	USUALLY	SOME-TIMES	SELDOM	NEVER
45. Do you pretend you are listening to her when actually you are not really listening?	____	____	____	____
46. Do the two of you ever sit down just to talk things over?	____	____	____	____

Please make sure you have answered all the questions.

The following will help your counselor better understand the information you have given him:

Your Age _____ Wife's Age _____ Length of Present Marriage _____

Your Religious Preference _____ Your Wife's Preference _____

Have You Ever Been Married, Divorced, or Widowed Before? Yes No

(Circle One)

If Yes, Please Explain _____

Your Education _____ Occupation _____

Wife's Education _____ Her Occupation _____

The Main Source of Family Income is: _____

(Choose one of the following)

a) Savings and Investments.

b) Profits and Fees from a Business or Profession.

c) Salary, Commissions or Regular Income Paid on a Monthly or Semi-Monthly Basis.

d) Wages; Hourly Wages, Piece Work, or Weekly Pay Check.

e) Odd Jobs or Seasonal Work.

f) Social Security, Welfare or Unemployment Insurance.

Your Children: Ages of Boys _____ Ages of Girls _____

The Main Fault of American Wives is _____

Validity and Reliability

Bienvenu reported on the procedure used to establish validity and reliability. The Marital Communication Inventory was administered to 176 married couples in early 1969. Residing primarily in two North Louisiana communities, one urban and one small college town, they ranged in ages from 18 to 60 with the majority of couples being in their late twenties. They were predominantly Protestant in religious orientation. Their level of education generally ranged from high school graduate to four years of college. The group could be described as being primarily from middle-class backgrounds.

To determine the nature of the communication differences between couples with good communication, and those with poor communication, a quartile comparison was made. The chi-square test was used in an item analysis to determine those items showing a significant difference in the number of favorable and unfavorable responses, between the upper and lower quartiles of the inventory. In computing the chi-squares, the responses of "usually" and "sometimes" were conbined into one category and the responses of "seldom" and "never" combined into another thus forming a 2 x 2 contingency table.

At the .001 level of confidence ($p \leq .001$), 40 out of the 48 items in the inventory were found to be significantly discriminating between the upper and lower quartiles. At the .01 level of confidence ($p < .01$), 45 out of the 48 items differentiated thusly: 32 of the remaining 45 items showed a discrimination of 20% or better between the upper and lower quartiles. The mean scores for the group of 344 subjects was 105.78. This was compared to a comparable group of 60 subjects

whose mean score was 105.68, thus suggesting a very strong cross-validation of the instrument (Bienvenu, 1969).

Further validation was established in a concurrent study of marital communication in 23 couples receiving marriage counselling and 23 couples who were not known to be having marital difficulties. Both groups resided in an urban community and were comparable as to age, length of marriage, and education. The hypothesis was that there would be a significant difference in the degree of marital communication between the two groups. Using the Mann-Whitney U test, a significant difference between them was found ($U - 117$, $p < .01$).

To test reliability of the MCI, a split half correlation coefficient on scores of the sixty subjects mentioned above on the odd-numbered and on the even-numbered statements was computed. Using the Spearman-Brown Correction formula, a corrected coefficient of .93 was obtained (Counselor's Guide).

Content

Of the forty-six items in the test, twenty discriminated most powerfully between the upper and lower quartiles. Item 6, the most powerfully discriminating, seems relevent for destructive or damaging communication. Although the amount of communication is important, selective communication is preferable to sheer volume; some feelings and attitudes are destructive when communicated. Item 4 implies that tone of voice is important in verbal interchange. Happiness in couples was related to the absence of irritation in voice tone (Shipman, 1968).

The complaint of lack of understanding (Items 22, 9) frequently

heard from couples, suggests a common cause of breakdown in marital communication (Bernard, 1964; Ruesch, 1963). Insults and chronic nagging are usually seen as personal affronts rather than as healthy means of discussing an issue or a difference (Charney, 1969). Items 28 and 10 reflect these forms of destructive communication. According to Bernard (1964), Ferreira (1968), and Blood (1969), being able to verbalize what one feels is a prime requisite for good communication, and this is reflected in Items 3, 11, 27, 42, 44. Criticism, sarcasm, lack of honesty and trust, often cited as barriers to healthy communication, are reflected in Items 5, 7, 9, 16, 29, 38 and 39. The next two most powerfully discriminating Items (21, 13) along with Item 24, suggest the couple's difficulty in dealing with angry feelings and with their differences - factors which disrupt the communication process (Bach, 1968; Charney, 1969). Some persons avoid venting marital grievances, because they have great difficulty handling and tolerating the anger that may emerge from the other person (Lantz and Snyder, 1969). Items 46, 29, 36 and 26 have apparent relevance to expression (or lack of expression) of feelings. It would seem reasonable to assume then that a spouse might find it easier to confide in a friend if he has found it difficult to express his real feelings to his spouse (Item 36). A person cannot get to know, love and communicate with another person unless he talks truthfully and fully about himself, unless he discloses himself (Jourard, 1964). Confiding and sharing of information and of interest are reflected in Items 2, 34, 37, 40, and 43.

In contrast to Item 22, Item 23 deals with the individual's perception of the clarity (or ambiguity) of his spouse's messages.

Lack of clarity or double-level meaning messages are one of the common manifestations of disturbed communication (Jackson, 1967; Satir, 1967).

Items 47 and 33, very close in discriminatory power, would appear to complement each other. Pretending to listen, faking attention, is a bad listening habit. It seems reasonable to assume that most spouses sense when the other is not really listening. Deliberate and frequent efforts to listen and to converse (Items 10 and 45) have been found to promote good communication in marriage (Locke, 1951). Outside interests and activities (Item 32) have been found to be positively related to marital communication (Locke, 1951).

An examination of the remaining items reveals that they appear to deal more with variables supporting or enhancing the communication process such as the communication of affection, empathy, individuality, and consideration in conversation. They also concern themselves with nonverbal communication, the handling of money, and the problem of uncommunicativeness. Other deductions and inferences can be made from examining all of these items; however, these results seem conclusive in pinpointing some interesting correlates and patterns of marital communication.

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