Marriage and Family Enrichment Counseling in Pakistani Culture

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
INSTITUTE OF PASTORAL STUDIES

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY ENRICHMENT
COUNSELING IN PAKISTANI CULTURE

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF PASTORAL COUNSELING
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

BY
RAZIA SHAFI

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
JANUARY 1994
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I would like
to dedicate my thesis to my
family with whom I experienced
love, acceptance, understanding
and learned the basic
values.
I also dedicate
this thesis to the people of
Pakistan with whom I have been
privileged to work and
will work.
I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to all the people who have challenged, supported and accompanied me on my journey. It has not been an easy one but the support of understanding friends made it easier.

I am indebted to my readers, Paul Giblin, Ph.D. and Bernadette Veenemann, M.A. who guided and instructed me at different stages of this thesis. Their continued support and guidance helped me to accomplish this work.

My deep appreciation to IPS faculty and staff members, fellow students and faculty of the Pastoral Counseling program of Loyola University who challenged and supported me in many ways. I am grateful for the Assistantship during the second year of my study.

A very sincere thanks to Susan TePas and Elio Rossaro who so generously shared their time in editing my thesis and gave me their valuable insights, support and understanding.

A special thanks to my Religious community, the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Pakistan who made it possible for me to pursue Pastoral Counseling at Loyola University. It was not easy financially but their belief in me made it possible. I am very grateful to my family and friends who morally supported me during the time of my study in the USA.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The thesis I propose to develop here is about marriage and family enrichment in Pakistani culture. I feel an urgency to address this subject because of the unnecessary hardships and sufferings in families I have known. I hope to elaborate on this later.

My thesis is developed in two parts. Part one includes chapter one, the introduction, and chapter two. Chapter Two is subdivided into four sections containing a description and explanation of marriage and family life in Pakistan. Section A explains the traditional cultural rituals around marriage in order to preserve and value them. Section B looks into the sociology of marriage; while section C explores the strengths and growth areas of the extended family system. Section D explains the role of religion/faith in family life. Chapter Two also contains my understanding of how family systems theory highlights the nature and characteristics of family life in Pakistan. By presenting the issues clearly I hope in the future to invite Pakistani families to objectively reflect and discuss family life. I believe that people take for granted the systems they are part of and so it is difficult for them to look at them critically. Spelling out the systems dynamics for them may raise their awareness and help them to look at the family roles and rules differently. Part One also establishes the link between part one and two.
Part Two, contains chapters three, four and five. Chapter Three gives us the picture of counseling facilities in Pakistan and common attitudes towards professional help. It also presents a day's workshop to raise awareness of the need for marital and family enrichment education among parishes, Bradari, schools and families. This workshop will introduces them to the REFOCCUS program too. Chapter Four is devoted to the description of the REFOCCUS program and suggested necessary changes to accommodate this program to the Pakistani situation. REFOCCUS program was developed in the U.S.A. and I chose this program because of its universality in addressing the common concerns that couples have. I have combined it with some parts of the GROWING TOGETHER program in order to facilitate the process smoothly in the Pakistani situation. Chapter Five includes the conclusion of the thesis and some suggestions for future study. It also contains reflection on my pastoral identity.

I would like to explain how my personal life journey has led me to attempt this thesis. To be Christian in Pakistan is to be Western. To be Western means to be an alien in your own land. It is a sad reality but this is how Christians often feel. Christians are 2.65% of the population, generally poor, not educated and in menial jobs. They tend to be from the lower classes and are looked down upon. Things are improving, and Christians are making
progress in different fields of life. The educated Christians along with the others are fighting to be recognized as Pakistanis, and not as Westerners. Many Christians fought for the creation of Pakistan and are as native to the land as anyone else. Christians ought to have the same rights and responsibilities in the development of Pakistan as the Muslims, who claim to be the sole masters of the land. In his article Barket (1977) quotes Quaid-i-Azam,

He wanted a state where the Muslim majority determined its own fate but did not deny rights to other religious minorities. In his address to the Constitutional Assembly on 11 August 1947 he declared that, "Every citizen of Pakistan, no matter what his color, caste or creed...is first, second and last a citizen of this state with equal rights, privileges and obligations." He wanted to build a modern democratic state in which all citizens would have equal rights regardless of their religious faith (p. 47).

The historical fact is that the Christians were in the subcontinent before the Muslims came. So, Christians were in Pakistan before Pakistan ever came to be, or before our Muslim brothers and sisters came to this land. Wilber (1964) writes that Christianity was first preached in Pakistan by St. Thomas the Apostle. Islam on the other hand came in the eleventh century.

In present day Pakistan Christians are suffering and have suffered religious discrimination. They are not treated as Pakistanis but as aliens. Because most of the Christians are poor they can’t raise their voice for their
rights and the government takes advantage of this situation. Educated Christians suffer because they can't have the jobs they are qualified for, in contrast to the Muslims, who get jobs anyway.

Personally, it has been painful to see Christians suffer and be treated unjustly. I have both witnessed and experienced Christians being oppressed politically, culturally, socially, and religiously. It has been a challenge to hold this pain and still be accepting of the oppressors.

On the other hand, I have come to appreciate the strengths and values in our shared culture, Muslim and Christian as Pakistanis. Because of colonial rule by the English and missionary activity, both Muslims and Christians have learned not to value their unique Pakistani way of life. Instead, Pakistanis have adopted Western ways considering them better than their own. Often being educated means that a person loses his or her culture and becomes Westernized. Educated Pakistanis often leave Pakistan and use their qualifications in other countries. The rationale for leaving may be economic, but often it is shame about their culture. This is a sad reality.

Without judging those who leave Pakistan, we need to face the reality that colonial rule and missionary activity have robbed us, as a nation, of our dignity and pride. Many Pakistanis are running after "something", the pursuit of
which means that they are untrue to their Pakistani heritage.

I too was seduced. Now I have learned to look at our culture objectively. When I realized what I had lost in becoming Westernized, I felt a lot of anger, hurt and pain. My anger was often directed at non-Pakistani religious and clergy, who, it seemed to me, had played a part in stripping me and my country of its cultural heritage.

As a young girl I read English story books and I wanted to emulate the lifestyle of the characters I read about. Looking back now it may have been that being Pakistani was less than being Western. Somehow, very early in my life, I learned that my culture was second-rate. It was never said, but I learned it. Western ways were vaguely superior and Pakistani ways were vaguely inferior. As I grew older this desire to be like a Westerner in my eating habits, living arrangements and manners grew. Joining my religious community at eighteen fed this desire. I still struggle with it. I am still trying to find my identity as a Pakistani religious woman. The three years I have spent in the United States have challenged me to get in touch with the inner resources of my cultural heritage. In my opinion, a person needs to get away from his or her culture to look at it objectively. Coming to the United States has helped me to discern what it is to be Pakistani, and to value it deeply. Similar experiences, I presume, shape the
attitude of our young people towards their identity as Pakistanis.

When I started the pastoral counseling training program I wanted to focus on youth ministry and women's issues. However, in the back of my mind there was a little voice nudging me towards family counseling. I knew it was an area not explored in Pakistan, but somehow I considered myself incapable of being a family counselor. While discerning my topic for the Pastoral Counseling thesis, I felt restless and anxious. I prayed about what topic I should chose. I wanted to do something which would be helpful for the people of Pakistan. Finally, after much soul-searching, I knew what I was called to do, to develop a ministry to families. Why do I see family counseling as worthwhile and valuable?

Families are the primary place where children learn the values and the lessons upon which they will build their lives. That is not to blame parents when their children fall short of the ideal. Typically parents do the best they can. But the importance of families cannot be underestimated.

I believe that to help Pakistani people feel good about being Pakistanis, we need to start with the families. Parents, clergy, bradari, religious and children all need to work together to build a Pakistani nation. As a Presentation Sister I am particularly aware of this broad
mission, since my own congregation has an ideal of being available to all God's people.

I feel called, as a Pastoral counselor, to help people stand for their rights, to gain self-respect and respect for others, and to have a sense of honor and dignity in whatever they do. At the heart of Pastoral Counseling is the movement towards inner freedom. True freedom encompasses a sense of responsibility towards oneself and others. It involves give and take relationships and also learning to enjoy play and fun. These things need to be emphasized within the family. I believe if one reaches out to the family one reaches out to the nation.

When I was teaching ninth and tenth grade girls, I found that as my relationship with them developed, they began to trust me and shared their problems with me. I became aware of the big role that family dynamics played in shaping their lives. Working with youth and hearing their frustrations and their questions opened up a new door for me. Being involved in parish work, I visited families and listened to their stories of love and concern for their children. The parents would do anything for their children, and often felt frustrated that their children would not respond accordingly. I heard their pain but I was slow to respond. I thought, "This is not my area of expertise. Some educated couples, who are committed in their relationship, need to do something about that."
While visiting families I became aware of lack of communication between husbands and wives. Often most of their communication was through their children. Pakistani culture is male-dominated, but looking at the bigger picture it is dominated by the elders and bradari. Often young men do not have much say either. What is acceptable in a man is not acceptable in a woman. This creates a lot of conflict and problems for children. Many of my female students asked me, "Why is my brother allowed to do different things than I am? Why is my brother treated differently? Am I not my parents' child?" With their young minds they could not understand the difference. There are many stories of young girls who ran away and married the boys they loved. Often they are expelled from the family while their brothers who may have done the same thing were accepted back into the family.

In Pakistan marriage is not only between two people but between two families. Once married the couple lives in an extended family. The woman leaves her family and lives with her husband's family. She is expected to fit into the family system and forget her past and make the most of her married life. The fact is that she brings her own family system with her, and there are bound to be some clashes. The women who meet the expectations and adapt quickly are considered wise but those who struggle in the early years of their marriage are looked upon in the opposite way. The
demand and payment of a dowry is another custom that has affected married life. Although this is slowly changing, looking at the bigger picture it is still very common.

All these and many more memories have been very present to me while studying different theories of counseling. My struggles all along have been about how I can apply this in my culture. I want to be respectful of cultural values but certainly want to be true to myself, too. This a delicate balance and I do not know how it is going to work out. But, I feel this force within me to work with families. Studying family systems theory raised lot of interest in me. Also a course in marriage counseling helped me look into our marriages more closely. Attending some workshops in this area opened up new possibilities and that is when I felt the need to focus on the question of family ministry. I feel there is a lot of potential because this is a fairly untouched area in Pakistan. I am aware of the problems and difficulties I will face, but I am hopeful if it promotes the reign of God, God will open up possibilities and provide the necessary support.

What motivates me to answer this question? I feel it must have been an inner calling because the struggle I went through arranging the program for Pakistani couples, here in Chicago, persisted despite getting no positive responses. I was discouraged and disappointed then but I am
hopeful now. I still feel called to develop this ministry in Pakistan.
CHAPTER II

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE IN PAKISTAN
IN THE LIGHT OF FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY

Marriage and family life are far more demanding now than twenty years ago, and doubly so in Pakistan. In Pakistan there is still an arranged and exchanged marriage system among the different tribal groups. In exchanged marriage the bride's brother gets married to the groom's sister and the groom's sister gets married to the bride's brother. This is still very common in some parts of the country. Sometimes the bride is 15 years older or vice-versa. Normally they do not marry outside the tribe. So if there is a girl in the family and no boy, the next expected boy within the extended family is going to be her husband and vice-versa. Newly-married couples live in an extended family which has its strengths and weaknesses. More and more couples find it difficult to cope with this situation and families do not understand this. Often the family shares everything and the elders of the family let the younger members enjoy the comforts of life and do without themselves. Minuchin (1974) and Walsh (1991) discuss the importance of boundaries within the family system. These boundaries define the role family members are expected to play. For example the culture expects that the older son will care for aging parents.
It would be considered a disgrace for the parents to go and live with their daughter. While the purpose of the boundaries is to protect the different roles of the system, roles need to be flexible for healthy family functioning.

The clear/flexible boundaries allow two way communication and activity between the family members and the outside world. If the boundaries are rigid then the communication within the family becomes difficult and it inhibits the protective function of the family system. The diffuse boundaries give little protection from the outside forces while the dysfunctional boundaries create over-involvement or enmeshment with the extended family members and outsiders.

In Pakistani families decision-making is usually the prerogative of the elders and younger members often have no say. When this happens younger members do not understand how their parents who can sacrifice so much for their children at the material level, cannot be similarly generous about decision-making powers and will not give them the chance to make their own choices. Parents do not understand their children’s attitude when as parents they sacrifice their life for the children who only need to obey. Where expectations are so rigid, complications develop in family life. It is not bad will on either side but it seems misunderstanding, lack of communication and
some cultural beliefs, rooted in tradition, play a significant role.

Family values are changing rapidly and parents find it hard to cope with the challenge of modernity. They cannot understand their children not valuing the same realities that were significant for them, for example respect and obedience to elders. These are good values but if they deprive one of the right to think critically and come to one's own personhood, then there can be a conflict. There is not one party solely responsible for this conflict as each is part of the problem and part of the solution too. In this chapter I will address this issue.

Today's human beings are searching for truth and freedom, not in half measures, but the full truth and true freedom. This truth and freedom are born when one learns to accept oneself as one is, and only then, can one accept others as they are. It is not an easy journey but it is a valuable journey to make. The most difficult journey becomes bearable and easy when one has loving support and the family can help to provide that if each member is open and committed to this process. Today's family is called on this journey, because the family is where children learn their basic values upon which they will build their future life. Children are great imitators as they learn to do what they see adults do. Therefore it is a big responsibility for older family members to offer good role
models. What values do they want to give to their children, their brothers and sisters? Or what values do they as a family want to learn and build their lives on?

According to Bradshaw (1988), Kerr and Bowen (1988), the family is a system and each member in the family affects the health or dysfunction of the whole system. This seems to be the key to understanding the family's health or dysfunction, and once one knows and accepts this one can do something about it. Each member plays a role, for example, caretaker, savior, or scapegoat in maintaining the family system and until these roles are addressed and changed, the family system remains unhealthy. To understand this one needs to look at the family genogram, triangulation, multigenerational transmission process, sibling position, relationship patterns and roles within the family. An example of the multigenerational process in the Pakistani extended family is the issue of female suppression, the consequence of which is triangulation with her sons or children against her husband or the elders in the family or vice-versa. Being a patriarchal society the sibling position is not as significant as gender although younger members are expected to respect the older siblings.

In a healthy system, the parents know who they are in relation to themselves and their children, and they are able to treat their children for who they are as human beings, rather than as objects for their own satisfaction.
In this system children are allowed to be children and not expected to be adults.

Parents are adults with their wants and needs, which they need to address and resolve in a healthy way. In this respect they need to look to their competent peers for support, and not to their children. Parents need to respond to their children in appropriate ways. The children’s needs also need to be defined clearly and parents need to understand and respect these. Understanding the above helps clarify boundaries between parents and children.

In an unhealthy system the parents themselves still are "adult" children of their parents, since they had become the object of their parents’ needs. This is what they have internalized, and it is what they express in their relationships with their own children. They have learned this lesson well from their parents, and know no other way. They are not to be blamed but it is a problem that needs addressing and resolving if they are to be adequate parents themselves. Parents like this often relate to and treat their children as adults. Soon children learn to do things just to please their parents because this gives them the assurance of their love. Then the children’s own needs are put aside and they live for affirmation and approval from their parents. In other words, they become emotionally the caretakers of their parents. They have no sense of self except what they have received from their parents. So all
their energies go into pleasing their parents. In this system boundaries are blurred and need to be redefined.

By expressing it this way I am pointing out that parents do their best with the knowledge they have received from their own experiences. They fall into these roles because they do not know any other way. It is not that they relate consciously in this way, but it seems they are unconsciously meeting their own unmet needs through their children. Therefore it is important to look into marriage and family life patterns in Pakistan, in order to change our present family system. Self awareness needs to be challenged in order to create an environment where children can learn to grow to be fully human, capable, mature and responsible human beings. This will help them to face life and the world with confidence.

Since most marriages in Pakistan are arranged, it is important to keep a few questions in mind when arranging marriages. Some of the following would be important to address. Why arrange marriages? What do we expect from a marriage? When two families decide to have their daughter/son given into marriage, what are their expectations? How is the son/daughter involved in arranging this marriage? What do the rituals and traditions around the marriage mean? Do they promote one's identity and personhood? Or do they give all the rights and privileges to one and overlook the other? What are the expectations of
the bride/groom after the marriage? Have we prepared them for this?
A. Cultural/Traditional Marriage and Western Influence.

There are beautiful ritual ceremonies for Pakistani marriages, but very few young people really understand the meanings behind them. Perhaps the meanings behind the traditions are not understood or articulated, and as a result the true values in the traditional ceremonies are being replaced by monetary values. While there are some traditions that need to be challenged, there are others which need to be cherished. There is a need to look into this seriously, because sometimes the value of persons can get lost to the rituals, customs and traditions. Without overlooking our values in the use of traditions, perhaps there is a need to ask, why do we follow these customs? What do they mean to us? What/who is important in all these ceremonies?

In some cases it seems people are less important than customs and traditions. I believe a lot of these traditional rituals were for the love, honor and protection of the individual and it is sad if true meanings are replaced by material values. For example the dowry was to give protection, honor, and help to start new life but now it seems to be primary while the person becomes secondary. It is sad because traditions are made for people not people for tradition/customs. Another custom we have is that young people should not have a say in choosing their life partner. It has served us well in the past but now with the
education and changes, it is not working as well as it did. So there is a need to challenge this custom of not involving the young people in choosing their life partner because there is enough evidence to show that people have suffered because of this. (Arlidge, 1993; Chang, 1990; Elliott, 1987; Gilmore, 1990; Lalonde, 1993; Sarwar, 1992; Goodspeed, 1992; Schork, 1990). These are some references from different newspapers of stories of forced marriages that did not work out. By no means do I want to prove that arranged marriages are no good. However, I think it is important to take into consideration the wishes of the young people regarding their choice of a life partner. Although this is not the accepted practice in Pakistan and if the boy/girl expresses her/his choice it is considered a disgrace to the family in the bradari. Yet in my opinion listening to the young people and respecting their wishes may lead to the avoidance of a greater disgrace, which is the break-up of the marriage. This tradition shows the hierarchical and rigid structure of family system within an extended family. The spouse subsystem is under-valued and the parental subsystem is over-valued.

It seems in Pakistan instead of understanding and appreciating our present customs and values and updating them to meet the needs of the young people, we seem to have a need to add some western customs. This increases expenses for the bride’s parents and is not helping family
life. For example, when the bride/groom dress in western style and engage in western ritual, this must be followed by the traditional ritual ceremonies before the celebration can be completed. The western wedding dress is not complete without eastern jewelry for the bride and head dress for the groom. In addition to this the red traditional dress with all the trimmings must be worn by the bride. In western weddings the only important piece of jewelry is the wedding ring. Westerns do not have a dowry system as do the Asians. The western bride/groom start life with the gifts that the family and friends have given toward their wedding, which are often household things. Pakistani families can give 21 to 71 dresses to a bride and not only that but everything needed to start a new home (dowry). The Pakistani family incurs these expenses not all of which are necessary to start family life.

In adopting western style wedding ceremonies, we need to ask, does it raise the dignity of family life in our culture so far? We also need to ask, do our own traditional rituals enhance the dignity of the person? Women and men still seem to be as oppressed as they were twenty years ago within the marriage and family.

I wonder what we are looking for and what we are trying to prove. In our present practices we are neither Pakistani nor Western. It is time we appreciated our identity at a
deeper level and became proud of it. It is a gift to be open to new things and ideas, but another reality to be able to assimilate these in our culture without losing our identity. It is a gift to understand what we are adapting and know its value and benefit for our people and to be sure that it does not rob us of our identity. I do believe each culture has its own strengths and growth areas. What I want to say is that whatever culture one belongs to is valuable and no other culture can replace it. No matter how superior or inferior we may consider the other cultures to be, one needs to appreciate one’s own cultural values and heritage.

When a daughter is born to a Pakistani family, parents start getting ready for her wedding. They start collecting things for her dowry. She is told from a very early age that she is given to her parents’ care by God until the day she goes to her own home. This psychologically prepares her to leave her parents’ home, and hopefully will help her to adjust in her future extended family. She is trained to be a good housekeeper by her mother and to care for her brothers and sisters so that she will know how to take care of her own family.

On the other hand when a boy is born, there is great celebration because he is the name bearer of the family. The boy is considered a young man from his birth and
therefore power is added to the family (Maron, 1957). Pakistani culture gives far more value to the boy than to the girl. The boy is spoiled by being made to feel superior to the girls. For example, education is a priority for the boy over and above the girls. In some families boys are given preference in food, education, clothing, social treatment and expectations (Rauf, 1987). The boy is taught to take care of the physical needs of the family. Often they are married with this little understanding of marriage. Walsh (1991), writes that the marital subunit is composed of adult family members who are bonded together by emotional, sexual or economic factors. In Pakistan where the female is negated, how one can have a marital subsystem? It seems other relationships are more important than marital relationships. Also most of the family decision making power stays with the elders in the family while the young couple does not have much say. According to Kerr and Bowen (1988), when two people who do not have a sufficiently differentiated sense of self marry each other then there is tension and conflict in the marriage. So in the effort to create some stability, spouses may project their emotional needs on to their children.

I hope to capture the spirit and heart of our traditional marriage and family life. I will do this step by step by looking at strengths and growth points that can be developed to promote family life.
Matchmaking

This is a special, valuable, and meaningful tradition in Pakistani culture because initially the good of the person is taken into consideration. It is the family’s responsibility to find a suitable partner for their daughter/son. However there is always a third person involved in the process of matchmaking but family members take the ultimate responsibility for the investigating. They invest a lot of time, energy, and money into making the necessary inquiries about the family into which they hope to give their son/daughter in marriage. When they are satisfied with the family status, background, and achievements of the prospective son/daughter-in-law, then the official visiting and asking for (rishata) the hand of boy/girl takes place. Another important element in this process is the dialogue that takes place between the two families. They are expected to be true to their word. Traditionally there is a blessing and a monetary gift given by an elderly member of the family to the boy/girl. This means that he/she now belongs to that family and the formal engagement ceremonies will take place later.

Originally the engagement consisted in placing a rupee and sweets in the girl’s hand. However at the present time there is an exchange of large amounts of money which seems to equate the person’s value with the amount of money given, and both men and women are victims of this.
Traditionally the word of mouth was considered more valuable than the money given. Unfortunately some couples judge their love for each other by the amounts given, and this becomes a source of conflict later within their relationship and the extended family.

Walsh (1991), discusses three issues that are relevant to Pakistani culture; the ascribing individual roles, and labeling of individual family members and scapegoating of family members. All of these issues are the result of the lack of consent on the part of the individual. The roles and expectations are given to an individual without choice or input and the person is expected meet these expectations. If one fails negative consequences will result. In Pakistani arranged marriages, where personal choice and opinion are lacking, the individual is expected to live up to the expectations. When one fails, the person is considered to bring disgrace to the family. On the positive side when one meets the expectations that is valued by the extended family.

**Engagement ceremonies**

These ceremonies are an official recognition that the two families are bonded in a new relationship. The boy’s family is considered superior, and the girl’s parents are expected to give his family due respect because they are their daughter’s in-laws (Rauf, 1987). The girl’s family,
rich and poor alike seem to have a great need to impress their new in-laws so that their daughter’s place in that family will be secure. Walsh (1991) talks about the important of the marital subunit, as the adult support unit. However in Pakistan the couple start their new life with the culture giving superiority to the husband.

The engagement ceremony is initiated by the boy’s family. They bring a dress, a ring, and sweets to declare the engagement. But nowadays it is almost a mini marriage. Originally only close members of the family used to come for the ceremony because the girl’s family has to provide all the meals for the time the in-laws are present and they also have to give a suit piece to every attending member. The boy’s family observes the girl’s family status, respect and honor they are given within their society, family beliefs, attitudes, and economic status. This gives them an idea of how much the girl’s family will give in the dowry. This is not verbally expressed but quietly observed.

The next step is when the girl’s family goes to the boy’s home to declare the engagement. In the past the girl’s family brought a big silk handkerchief, dry dates, sweets and fruits, but now it has to be a suit, a gold ring, sweets and a gift of money to be given to the groom. After this it is the boy’s family’s turn to provide a good meal and a suit piece for each member of girl’s family who have come to participate in the ceremony. During this time
the girl's family also observes the boy's family but for different reasons. In interpersonal relating in the boy's family, the girl's family will be able to perceive how their daughter will be accepted, welcomed, loved, and treated in that family. To this point the boy or the girl have not yet seen each other and there is not much hope for this until their wedding day.

When the marriage is arranged between close relatives, and the girl knows the person she is marrying, once the engagement is made she is not supposed to come in front of the boy until they are getting married. However there are some families who are changing this by allowing their children to express their opinions in making the decision about a life partner.

It is a common belief that whatever decisions the parents make, they are made in the best interest of their children. While this is true and accepted within the culture, there is a need to involve the young people in the decision making process. It is important for them to get to know each other and learn how to interrelate before making a final decision towards a life commitment. On the basis of Walsh's (1991) discussion of role responsibility, I question the lack of personal input on such an important decision. He would consider the lack of personal input "role irresponsibility."
Arranging the marriage date

This is a critical and expensive time for the girl’s family. The boy’s family will be asking for a dowry through the match maker. In order to fulfill their demands for a dowry the girl’s family will go into great debt, but the extended family are always willing to help by purchasing one of the big items in the dowry. Through the match maker the girl’s family request some jewelry to be brought for the girl because of its symbolism in the marriage.

Traditionally the male members in the boy’s family come to fix the date for the wedding and bring sweets, yellow suit, red veil, mhendi (dried leaves of a plant made into powder) and batana (turmeric mixture) for the bride to be used in the ceremonies that will follow. The elders of both families meet and fix a date for the wedding. Serious preparations for the wedding now begin.

Pre-wedding rituals (three to seven days): oiling, mhendi, khara (ritual bath), welcome the groom’s party.

Wedding ceremonies: giving of (jehaze) dowry, rukshati (sending off the bride)

Traditionally both the boy/girl’s families engage in celebrations for three to seven days each in his/her own home before the wedding takes place. This is considered a time of preparation for married life. It is also a spiritual time for the bride/groom, because of the
discernment process and the transformational elements within all the rituals. These days are spent with close friends who explain the mysteries of married life in a humorous way. At night all the extended family and friends come together to dance, sing, clown around and celebrate. It is through this means that the bride and groom are introduced to the elements of romantic and sexual life. In fact this is the first time that romantic and sexual concepts are expressed publicly and it is done in a humorous way.

During these three to seven days the bride stays in her home with her close friends. She is not allowed to participate in the household chores. She is given special food and is treated in a special way. It is similar for the groom but he may go out with his close friends. If this time together is limited to three days the oiling rituals begins immediately. This is a very emotional time. It starts in the afternoon of the first day with the girl’s hair (Yousaf, 1979; Webner, 1986;). Her long hair is braided into tiny braids. She wears a yellow dress and is led by her friends to a low decorated stool in the middle of the yard where there is an odd number of married women (the suhagans) holding a red veil over the stool where the bride is being seated. As her braids are being opened by her friends and family members, they put some oil in her hair and give some money for alms. While this ritual is
happening the women sing traditional songs, asking the permission of her parents to let her go. The opening up of the braids symbolize her life is going to be different and changed. This ritual is slightly different for the groom. It is more of a celebration, while for the bride and her family it is a mixture of celebration and tears.

The oiling ceremony is followed by the *ubtan ritual* (mixture of turmeric, grain, scented oil). In this ceremony the bride’s body is massaged with this mixture for three days by her girl friends. After the symbolic *ubtan ritual* the sister-in-law comes to tie the *gaana* (strings of thread decorated with different colored pieces of cloth) to the bride’s wrist. The same ritual takes place for the groom in his home by his sister-in-law. After the ritual both are given sweets symbolizing their joy; then these sweets are shared with everybody present.

Three days before the wedding the *mhendi rite* (a mixture put on hands and feet for color, a special symbol for marriage) takes place in both families. It used to be quite simple, in fact it was only among the extended families because *mhendi* was brought on the day when the date for the marriage was fixed. But now it is almost another mini marriage ceremony. The bride’s family prepares a reception for the groom’s family who brings *mhendi* with great pomp and show. As the singing and dancing go on seven married women (*shuhagans*), usually sisters-in-law, perform
the traditional ritual of putting the mhendi on the hands of the bride who is still in her yellow dress with a red veil. After this her friends escort her to her room and decorate the bride’s hands and feet with this colorful mhendi. As they do this they tease and joke with her about her future life. The women who have no children and/or who are not happy in their marriage life are expected not to participate in the rituals, as it is considered bad luck.

The next day the bride’s family takes mhendi to the groom’s house and they give a reception to her family. As the ritual goes on his sisters-in-law put mhendi on his hands and feet. It is a common belief the color of mhendi symbolizes their emotions, wishes, desires and dreams. It is also believed if the color is strong, that the mother-in-law will love the bride/groom very much. I believe this symbolizes the measure of hope that the families have for the bride/groom that they will love each other very much.

All these ceremonies and rituals are the beginning of symbolic transformations. The clothes she wears for these ceremonies are given to poor women who usually help with the cooking and preparation during those days. In fact all her other clothes are distributed among her sisters and friends or given to the poor. After the marriage she must wear only new clothes, which itself symbolizes that she now has to leave behind her own family systems and adapt to her new family situation.
According to family systems theory this process would be considered an emotional "cut-off" since the bride is expected to emotionally cut herself off from her family of origin and build new emotional ties with her new extended family. Kerr and Bowen (1988) write that emotional "cut-offs" may result in the formation of fused relationships outside the family in a fruitless effort to regain what was lost by cutting-off. I believe this emotional "cut-off" creates pain that is carried down the generations by the women in addition to the problems that it may create within the marriage.

On the second day at dusk the khara (ritual bath) for the groom takes place in which the elder brother and his wife dress up in their best colorful clothes. The elder brother's head dress and his wife's veil are tied to each other as the wife carries a decorated pitcher which the husband fills with water from a nearby pump. While they are fetching the water for the ritual bath, they are accompanied by music and dancing. When they return with the water the ritual bath takes place in the courtyard. After the bath there are seven earthenware plates placed in his way for him to break before leaving the bath ritual place. The groom jumps on them and is expected to break them in one go. This symbolizes that he will be able to overcome any obstacles in his new life. After this he leaves his home to stay either with a neighbor or a friend until the
wedding party leaves for the bride’s home. Early next morning the groom, family, friends and relatives go to the bride’s home for the marriage ceremony. Before they arrive the bride has been given a quiet ritual bath.

It is considered good luck for the bride to see her wedding party arrive without them seeing her. As the wedding party is arriving, they are welcomed warmly by the family, friends and relatives of the bride. The bride’s sisters and friends block the doorway to the groom until the groom or his father gives them a gift of money. In this interaction they are discovering his qualities in order to be able to relate them to the bride.

As the wedding party is seated the bride’s mother goes and lifts the groom’s sherah (golden head dress with long trimming covering his face). As she does this she blesses him and slips some money (salami) in his hands. After this they are served breakfast. The bride’s sisters and friends bring a glass of milk for the groom to drink. This time again is used as a means of getting to know him better in order to tell the bride.

Meanwhile the bride is being prepared for the nikah (wedding ceremony). The bride traditionally dresses in a red and gold dress with jewelry and the ceremony takes place in the same dress. But now with western influence the bride dresses in a white dress for the wedding ceremony and
later in the traditional red dress. After the wedding ceremony a three course dinner is served.

It is important to note that marriage in Islam is not a sacrament but a civil contract between two families and *mehr*, (a sum of money the groom agreed to pay), is an important part of the "*nikhanama*" marriage contract (Korson & Sabzwari, 1984). This is not part of the Christian marriage ceremony but all other rituals we share in common.

After the meal the packing of the dowry takes place. The dowry is almost everything they need to start a new home and everything in the dowry is new, nothing old, not even her favorite dress. Sometimes just at the last moment further demands are made which were not part of the original agreement. Often the bride's family are in debt for the rest of their life in order to pay off the wedding expenses. Sears (1992) reflects that one only recognizes social sin gradually. As I have reflected on these customs I wonder if social sin is not involved in the amount given and expected in dowry. In talking about healing of social sin Sears stresses envisioning a better way.

*Ruksatti* (sending off the bride) is the most emotional time for the bride's family and everybody present. The wedding band plays the traditional sending off tunes as the bride is being hugged and blessed by her family members, friends and relatives. Then the couple is brought
into the house and pass under the Bible or the Quran which is considered a religious blessing for their marriage and also a call to their religious responsibilities to each other and their families. A handful of rice is given to the bride/groom and, before they step outside, they throw the rice backwards which symbolizes their wish that her parents home will always have enough of everything. The wedding party leaves with joy but there are mixed feelings in the bride’s home. There are tears and at the same time a sense of relief that they have fulfilled their religious and civic duty.

**Wedding reception at groom’s house (valima).** For a month or two bride/groom’s ritual visiting between two families.

As the wedding party arrives at the groom’s home they are welcomed with great joy and as the bride and groom enter the home a member of the family pours oil at the door post. This symbolic action implies a desire to let go of all that is evil and trust in a future that will be blessed (Yousaf 1979). The groom’s sister takes off his head dress which is the symbol of family honor and respect. In preforming this ritual she reminds him of his responsibility towards her and he assures her of his commitment by giving her a gift of money. She in turn must protect and honor the integrity of the family.
The bride, who is all covered up, is brought into the room and seated on a decorated low stool. The mother-in-law comes and lifts her veil from her face and gives her many blessings. She then hands her some money (salami). Then everybody comes forward to greet the bride and gifts her with blessings for her future life. She is also given money which is recorded in a book. Now the bride and groom are brought together and they try to open the gaana (at mhendi ritual it was tied to bride/groom's wrists by their sisters-in-law). It is fun time for all as the bride and the groom get to know each other as they wrestle to untie their gaana (Yousaf 1979).

The bride is brought to a decorated bed and her sisters-in-law feed her with butter and sugar. As they do this they tease and joke with her. This is a time to get to know the family she is going to be part of. As this is still happening the youngest brother of the groom comes and sits on her lap and refuses to move until she gives him some money. This ritual means that she consents to be available to care for him in time of need.

Late that night the bride and groom are left alone in each other's presence for the very first time. It may happen to be the first time they are seeing each other face to face. The groom unveils her face and gives her a special family gift (often a piece of jewelry) which symbolizes the
respect and honor his family has for her and in turn she will be responsible to honor the integrity of her new family.

The next day a great celebration is given to honor the bride and groom. It is important for the bride's family to see that she looks happy because this is a confirmation for them that their choice for her was good. But if it is otherwise, they become worried and try to support her in any way they can to help her to fulfill her commitment.

After a few days the bride's brother and his wife come to take her to her parent's home. She stays with them for a few days; then her husband comes to collect her. For over a period of five weeks the newly weds visit both their families and are treated royally. This is a time they get to know each other better and develop further their relationship. It is also a time to gently let go of her family bonds and build the new. Each time they visit her parents will give them something for themselves. It is a common belief that the daughter never leaves her father's house empty-handed.

After those five weeks there is a special celebration in which the new daughter-in-law is introduced to the kitchen. She cooks a big meal for the whole family and everybody admires and praises her domestic skills and wisdom. From now on she is fully part of the family with household responsibilities and her life becomes ordinary.
Usually life for them is like a dream for a year or so but when the first baby arrives her in-laws' attitudes toward her change; it is either positive or negative. If the baby is a boy there is great celebration and rejoicing in the family, but if the baby is a girl then there is a problem. Within the culture a girl child is considered a responsibility and a worry for the family and this can create problems for the couple. Within the culture not only men but women themselves measure their value and worth in terms of giving birth to a male child. Walsh (1991) talks about communication and perception. Communication may be verbal or nonverbal while perception is the act of receiving that message. In Pakistani culture the message of valuing boys and giving birth to a male child is passed from generation to generation both verbally and nonverbally. The women still perceive their value lies in giving birth to male children. Sometimes because of this communication and perception the women treat their female children differently. I am not judging but believe this hurts them on some level because they are carrying the generational message of male being important and females not. I do understand it is difficult to break this circle but not impossible. Sears (1992) discusses the need for healing the unhealthy attitudes within the family and culture which are blocking God's work. I would like to
challenge this cultural social sin that is crying for our attention for healing.
B. Sociology of Marriage: Cultural and Social Expectations, Male and Female Roles in the Family.

The patriarchal nature of Pakistani society influences the roles and the expectations of male and female members of the family. Some characteristics of a typical family are respect and obligation to the elder members, clear cut sex roles, with men handling the outside world and women maintaining the family and caring for children's education and success (Robert, 1993; Maron, 1957; Valentine, 1992). It is the mothers' responsibility to teach manners to their children, and to "keep face" within the community. This ensures that family secrets are kept within the extended family. Minuchin (1974) might consider these boundaries to be rigid. The boundaries do provide some protection because everyone in the family knows what her/his role is and there is a certain amount of security in it. However this shuts off influence from outside the family and bradari.

The children are taught to obey their parents and elders, be dependent on them and never question their mistakes or behavior. Usually children are expected not to raise their voice and eyes while talking to their elders. To do so would be a sign of disrespect. The warmest relationship within the family during the childhood is of brothers and sisters. They trust and confide in each other. Sisters are friends from childhood and that relationship
grows after marriage. In the case of brothers they can be good friends, but after the marriage brothers may compete with each other (Wilber, 1964).

In general the children in a Pakistani home are spoiled while they are young. Everybody loves, cuddles and picks up the child and plays with him/her. In a Pakistani family children get lots of positive strokes which help to establish a good self image in the children. But as the children grow older they are expected to behave differently, almost like "mini-adults" (eg suppressing childhood characteristics and qualities of playfulness and curiosity). McGoldrick's (1987) research on ethnic families shows that Asian parents indulge their babies by constantly picking them up, cuddling, and allowing them to sleep with them. Parents show great concern about their children's education and express a lot of anxiety when they don't do well in school. Children's behavior is taken as a reflection of the family's status within the bradari (brotherhood, lineage or community) and so parents feel responsible when children fall short of the ideal. The most important thing for the parents is that their children do well and be successful in life. When they do that, the children bring honor and respect to their families. When they fall short of the ideal they are blamed as the cause of disgrace to the family.
Once children reach puberty, it is expected that boys and girls do not play together or mingle with each other. Girls are expected to be modest in their dress, movement, attitude and expression at all times, so as not to give the impression that they are trying to attract the opposite sex (Rauf, 1987). There is often very little communication between male members of the family and the young female children. Girls are expected to cover their heads and do not leave the house without somebody accompanying them. Boys are allowed to play outside the house and can go out with friends. Walsh (1991), says roles in the family can be temporary or permanent. Each individual is expected to fulfill certain duties, certain ways of behaving with others etc. The completion of tasks is essential for a family to fulfil its different functions and expectations. It is true in Pakistan that each family member is expected to carry out his/her role and responsibility. When one meets those expectations there is positive emotional, physical response but when one fails to do so there is negative feedback.

Girls are expected to observe purdah (seclusion of women by wearing burga, veil, chaddar or dupatta) as she reaches puberty. According to Rauf (1987) 83% of household women observe purdah and occasionally they use chaddar or dupatta while visiting friends in the neighborhood. In the villages women work side by side with men in the fields,
but in the cities the rules are different. Rauf says that even though the women in the village are less constrained by purdah, they are not better off than urban women. The urban women have benefited from education but they still are not given equal rights nor do they try to claim them. In the same article Rauf reports that the purdah system is to promote sex segregation and female dependency on men with regard to economic and legal rights.

Women are expected to be supportive of their husbands, care for them, and sacrifice themselves for the sake of their families. They are also expected to obey the authority of their male relatives. They must also pay respect to the elder female members of their own and their husbands' families. Before a woman gets married her father has the authority for making decisions that affect her life. When she marries, her husband, and later her son, assumes the responsibility for making decisions which she and the rest of the family are expected to obey. (Iqbal & Khan, 1975).

In some families female children are treated differently. They begin their life with less access to food, care, clothing and education. This is because male children in the family are considered bearers of the family name and bread winners, while female children are considered an economic burden (Rauf, 1987). In light of this, women are indirectly prepared to measure their worth
by giving birth to male children in the family. This is like a vicious cycle which is hard to break, as they live in extended families, cut off from the outside world and the majority of them are illiterate. According to Robert (1993), at present of the female educated workforce, 30% of women serve as teachers, 20% doctors, and a large percentage are nurses. Even with this percentage of educated women, it is a fact that women are still not recognized as capable and as valuable as men. Minuchin (1974) identifies these sub-systems within the family: spouse, parental, sibling sub-systems. In the Pakistani culture the grandparent sub-system and the uncle and aunt subsystem are equally important. In the Pakistani extended family system the spouse sub-system and to a lesser degree parental sub-system do not hold much value since most of the decisions and choices are made by the elders. The importance of the parental sub-system depends on the size of the extended family. Maybe what is challenging for a Pakistani family is to draw some boundaries around these sub-systems so that the spouse/parental sub-system does have some authority. The elders/bradari would share responsibilities, privileges and decision-making within the family. I do not wish to be disrespectful in any way. I have experienced some families where elders give the rights to their sons/daughters to make decisions for themselves
and also support them. This is done in a mutual loving and caring way.

Women on the whole and especially in the villages are not appreciated for what they do at home, in the fields, and at their work places. There are many tasks which women do but go unrecognized (eg, household jobs, taking care of children, washing, cleaning, collection of water and fuel, care of animals, cooking, helping in the fields, taking care of family needs and pleasing her husband). Working women in the cities are also in the same boat. If women are part of an extended family, work is often shared among the female members of the family. Men hardly ever share household work or take care of children. Sometimes because of this children grow up without knowing their father. Physically the father is there but not emotionally so children have absent fathers. The training of children is the domain of women. If children do anything wrong, the mother is the one who is responsible. Generally children are taught to fear their fathers and fathers take little responsibility in training and nurturing their children. On the other hand there are fathers who will make time to be with their families, not only fulfilling their physical needs, but being there for them emotionally. Some will take part in the family events, attend school events and take children shopping or on an outing.
Ahmed (1991) says that women suffer more because of the social roles forced on them. As a housewife a woman does monotonous, unpaid and unrewarded work every day of her life. In the case of a working mother the responsibility is doubled. When one looks at the bigger picture, this is the predominant pattern but there are many parents who share the responsibility for raising their children and performing household duties.

Generally in Pakistani family life, another symbol of respect is that a wife never eats until her husband has eaten. In an ideal eating pattern men are served first, then children, while the wife eats last because she is expected to serve their needs first. If the husband has not returned by meal time it is considered improper for the wife to eat, though she may feed the children (Rauf, 1987). Nowadays the eating patterns are changing and most of the families eat together and at the same time. Sharing a meal is very symbolic ritual within the families. This is a time to enjoy and relax with each other and share the daily experience.

When men return home from work, they become the focus of attention. The females are expected to stop and serve the men's needs. Children are made to keep quiet because the father is resting (Naheed, 1991). At night if a child wakes up the mother is the one who looks after the child and the father may say angrily, "take him/her out side. He
is disturbing my sleep". These practices are still common and education has not made much difference. I wonder why there is resistance to change? Every culture is resistant to change when one group fears that it will lose power. Perhaps the men in Pakistani culture do not see any advantages in changing. It is going to be a challenge for me to present change in a win/win context.

According to Rauf’s (1987) research, Punjabi women have certain privileges to make decisions in family kinship matters, independently or jointly with their husbands. They can purchase clothing, food and household items. About 47% of women responded that the husband makes independent decisions, 48% said the couple decide together, and about 5% said these decisions are made by the wife alone. Concerning social visits, the decisions are often made by the husband. Sometimes visiting the in-laws is determined by the couple. Women are considered influential in some matters, for example, mate selection, marriage rituals and gift exchange. The final say remains with the male head of the family. In the same article Rauf shows that when the male members were asked to talk about women’s status, about 80% responded that women have the inferior status and could not be involved in decision making. About 87% said women are born to be ruled by men. At the same time 63% of the men reported that if a man treats a woman badly, she
should leave him. But in reality social and cultural pressure would make it impossible for her to leave.

According to the latest amendments to Islamic law, the place of a woman is in the home and she is expected not to go out alone, and when she is out she should be covered from head to toe (Robert, 1993). With regard to being a witness in court, the validity of the testimony of two women is only equal to that of one man's testimony. Consequently in the case of sexual abuse, it is impossible for a woman to bring the perpetrator to justice. Men are never punished because the woman has to provide another witness in order to validate her testimony which she can rarely do. So if she brings this case to court, she would be accused of committing the sin of adultery and the punishment for this is death by stoning (Naheed, 1991).

At the time of marriage the virginity of the girl is considered important while no one ever questions the man's virginity. If the girl is not a virgin then she is looked down upon and her life is made miserable. If she had been raped before marriage the family will keep it secret because if people know then no one would want to marry that girl because of the disgrace involved. This outlook creates an unjust situation in which a man will never be held accountable for a rape. Women are always blamed for bringing it upon themselves. The burden of secrets is born
by the women in the family. The girl who is raped suffers in silence physically and emotionally.

Men are expected to provide for their family's needs and are responsible for bringing honor and respect to the family. Younger men in the family are expected to respect their elders and once an elder person enters the younger men are expected to give away the best place to him/her. They are expected to be loyal to their families, especially to their mothers, who brought them to life. Honor means to do well academically and financially, thereby earning a good name for the family. It also means forming rigid boundaries of privacy to conceal the conflict and suffering within the family.

The population of Pakistan is 110 million and women are 50% of the population. The social setup is a bradari system (brotherhood, lineage) consisting of all the families in the patriarchal line, caste, ethnic group or religion (Robert, 1993; Maron, 1957;). This system gives all the authority to the elders, especially the men. Bradari gives people a sense of belonging and status in the society. It provides a sense of security in times of crisis and celebration. It promotes a sense of solidarity, sacrifice, sharing of mutual gifts and tolerance of each other. In spite of the positive qualities of bradari, it is indifferent to the female members of its society. This promotes the male-dominated nature of the society, where
everything is considered from the man’s point of view while the women and children are ignored and looked upon as always in need of guardianship (Robert, 1993). Bowen (1988) believes that the wider society (bradari) operates in much the same way as the family system. Like the family, a society can handle situational stress but on-going stress is intolerable and members of society (bradari) like the members of the family look for short term relief. So surface advice and emotionally manipulative responses tend to be given for problems which are deep and destructive, rather than spending time and resources on exploring the causes. Honestly looking at the situation may demand a much more radical solution which may not be politically acceptable. This is often the case when there are severe marital problems.

Another important notion in Pakistani culture is izzat (prestige, honor, respect and dignity), a quality that each member in the family and the bradari is expected to possess. Each individual is obliged not to do or say anything that may cause beizzati (shame, disrespect) to one’s family and bradari. When this happens, the family of the guilty party suffers humiliation and in some cases the family is ex-communicated from the bradari. Even though it applies to each member, women are especially singled out because their smallest offense can cause the greatest shame to the family.
in the bradari, and cause the family to lose its social status. This creates problems for a family when a girl is born because they feel their izzat is more at risk (Maron, 1957). Because there is so much concern about saving face within the bradari, feelings are denied and selfhood is undermined.

The question of izzat is crucial in respect to the arrangement of marriage. The female members must uphold izzat in order to remain worthy candidates for marriage. Often an individual’s (man/woman) wishes, desires and personhood are crushed because the family and bradari determine who they must marry. To go against the family’s wishes brings beizzati (disrespect) to the family.

Husbands believe they have every right to abuse their wives physically, mentally, emotionally and psychologically. Husbands have the right to beat their wives whenever they are not pleased with the cooking, or for any dispute in the extended family without any regard for the nature of the problem. There could be mental and emotional torture if she isn’t able to give birth to a male child and/or is not able to bring a big dowry. On the other hand a wife who does bring a large dowry and/or gives birth to male children, may rule the house. The husband may be like a "puppet" and she may not treat his family with respect. In any case there is no equality between husband and wife at the beginning of family life and this may be
the source of many problems later. The Pakistani male dominance and devaluing of the female happens by what Bowen (1988) calls multigenerational transmission.

It is important to acknowledge the families who try their best to make the most of their married life. They try to live up to the commitment they have made to each other and to their families. There are families, such as my own, who have more female children than male where the husband and his family do not make life difficult for the wife. They treat all their children equally and take an interest in what they are doing. They also make an effort to enrich their relationships in different ways that are available within the culture. For example, they look for support and guidance not only from the elders but from peers who are also struggling to do their best.

In Pakistan an individual's own well-being is secondary to the welfare of the family. One is made to feel guilty when the family loses face because of the individual's unacceptable behavior. Often no attempt is made to understand what the individual is going through, rather the focus is on the shame brought upon the family. Because of strong emphasis on the family, often there is limited differentiation of the individual. Becvar (1988) observes that lack of individuation actually increases with each generation.

...each subsequent generation tends to move toward a lower level of differentiation...[so that] if we were to give a family an undifferentiation score of ten, we would predict that the next generation would....have score of nine, eight, seven, and so on down the
line...Thus, emotional problems, which are at the base interpersonal problems, are the result of a multigenerational sequence in which all members are actors (p. 135).

Minuchin (1974) says that the lack of sub-system differentiation discourages autonomous exploration and mastery of problems. Because members of enmeshed or diffuse sub-systems may be handicapped by a heightened sense of belonging there is a need for more autonomy. Selflessness is considered a valuable quality in a Pakistani family. When someone is not considered to be acting selflessly, he/she is then made to take the full burden of the shame they bring on the family. This person is expected to make accommodations to the family’s priorities, rather than expressing his/her wishes, wants and desires. Unfortunately, this often leads to a loss of one’s self worth and of feeling powerless to change one’s life. The individual suffers due to systemic and cultural expectations. These expectations help to develop the behaviors and attitudes necessary for survival and also to uphold the family rules and to keep roles intact. The family from outside may appear to be well functioning but in reality each member performs a role to maintain the family homeostasis rather than deal with family problems.

In Islam divorce laws differ for men and women. If a woman wants a divorce she has to make an appeal for it in court while a man does not (Naheed, 1991). It is much easier for a man to obtain a divorce. For example, he only
needs to say three times, "I divorce you" in the presence of three witnesses (Wilber, 1964; p135), or to approach the union council/union committee. If the woman asks for divorce she loses her hack maher (money put aside for her at the wedding), but if the man divorces her she can demand it. However in many cases it is never given. All children of divorced parents legally belong to the father and the mother must give them up, usually at the age of seven for boys and at the age of fourteen if they are girls. The father must support them while in her custody (Wilber, 1964).

Christians believe marriage is a sacrament and they consider it gravely sinful to divorce. That is the reason why there are so few Christian divorces.

According to Muslim belief a woman is considered weak, a temptation for men, the source of sin, easily put down and always in need of protection. At the same time she is believed to be innocent, respectable, loving and caring. The man is the owner of the house and the women in the family are subject to him. As soon as the man enters the house the women cover their heads, lower their eyes and should speak softly (Naheed, 1991). They are not considered good women if they speak up and have eye contact while speaking to the man.
Concerning marriage, divorce and inheritance, family law goes back to sharia (Islamic law) where women are considered to have a right to choose their partner. In reality it is only done at the marriage ceremony just to fulfill the legal obligation because the marriage is already arranged. If during the ceremony she were to withhold her consent, she would be considered as having totally dishonored her parents. Qamar (1972) writes that at the marriage ceremony the bride remains in a separate room. She is represented by her father, brother or the nearest male relative.

A husband can divorce his wife at anytime, even at the time of child birth, if she produces a daughter rather than a son. The birth of a son is an occasion for rejoicing because the boy is considered to be a young man from birth therefore power is added to the family. The mothers who can not give birth to a son or childless women may suffer divorce or the disgrace of another wife. A woman is not really accepted in the family until she bears a child especially a son. As I have discussed earlier marital sub-system in Pakistan is not given much stature. Within the marital sub-system equality is lacking. This not only has a negative effect on women but also on the family as a whole. Wilber (1964) reports that the wife’s participation in the Pakistani family is through her children. Another example of inequality is that women do have a right to inherit a
certain part of the property, but in many cases it is not given to them. Rauf (1987) writes:

In many cases, where as women have received legal title of their inherited land, possession remains with their brothers, who, for all practical purposes, enjoy the returns from the land. In some cases, women are compensated in cash for their share in the patrimony by their brothers. In other instances they have forfeited their rights to patrimony by signing their rights over to their brothers. In other cases women are outrightly denied any share of inheritance on the grounds that they received it in the form of dowry at the time of their wedding (p. 404).
C. *Strengths and Growth Areas of Extended Family*

The Pakistani extended family has its strengths and growth areas. It is important for us to look into the strengths so that we may try to continue to promote a healthy, enriched marriage and family life. It is also valuable to look into the growth areas/limitations so as to modify them to meet the needs of our young people today. By addressing the stress-producing concerns rather than setting them aside, they can be used as challenges to meet the needs of the present time.

Family identity is a very strong value for a Pakistani, so consequently loyalty to the family and interdependence among family members is stressed. Therefore each member tries to cooperate rather than to compete. There is more interdependence than independent or dependent behavior. Family union is a great value and each member is required to support family traditions at any cost. Although the nuclear family is becoming more common in the cities due to increased education, the majority still live within the extended family.

The extended family provides a major source of support to all the family members in time of crisis and need. On the positive side the extended family helps to stabilize the family system. For example, if the father is alcoholic often the male members in the extended family provide fathering to the children. The physical needs are taken
care of by the extended family if the husband dies. The emotional needs are over-looked but support and sympathy is given to the person. On the negative side, the extended family can interfere too much in the lives of the young couples and that may inhibit the personal growth and lack of decision-making powers. The extended family system gives too much responsibility and power in the hands of the bradari. The decisions made for the family members need to be acceptable to the bradari, not to the individual. By doing this the system keeps denying the importance of the spouse/marital sub-system.

**Unity and Fidelity**

Important strengths of the Pakistani family are unity and fidelity. In times of joy and pain everybody stands by and provides the necessary support. The concern for the family comes first. At the family celebration days each family member contributes to making that day a happy one. If it is a sad experience, everyone tries to share that pain and provides physical and emotional support. These are the moments that make the family bonds stronger and help individuals to be selfless and develop the sense of "us" not "me". Augsburger's (1986) research on ethnic families show that in the times of crisis or conflict a third party is involved. In Pakistan it is an elder or trusted person within the community (bradari). This triangulation serves to save face for both parties and reduces shame and
disgrace. Since the culture uses an elder to mediate in the time of crisis this may pave the way towards accepting a counselor working with couples and families.

Pakistani couples marry at a young age so the family plays a supportive role in providing them with guidance and nurturing. The young wife is helped by her mother-in-law to manage the household, maintain the social connections, take care of the children and maintain a good relationship with her husband and extended family members. The son receives guidance from his father/elder brothers on how to be a good provider, how to keep up with family and friends and bring honor to the family. This has its flip side. On the one hand if the mother-in-law is domineering, then she may try to overly control the daughter-in-law and check her unnecessarily for everything and anything. This may cause a conflict between husband and wife. When this happens the new couple may not find the support that they need in starting their new life. On the other hand if the daughter-in-law does not try to adjust and cooperate with the mother-in-law this can effect the family unity too. For example, it can scatter and divide the family because family members will begin to take sides. Triangulation is an important concept in systems theory (Bowen, 1988). In an attempt to gain support in the spousal conflict, one spouse may look to another family member for emotional support against the other. If the conflict increases other members
can be drawn in to form interlocking triangles. These others could be family members or outsiders.

When there is a conflict between the wife and her mother-in-law and sisters-in-law then the husband is caught in the middle. It is difficult for him to be loyal to both. In this situation men are oppressed by the system and find themselves in a no-win situation. Often what the men do is to let the women deal with their problems. The son who sides with his wife as opposed to his mother or sisters is considered not to be caring and respectful. Since he is the provider and care taker for the family, he is expected to be neutral. Augsburger (1986) says that the relationship between mother-in-law and wife in India is anxiety-provoking because the wife is responsible for doing household tasks while the mother-in-law supervises. This creates the most active triangle in the family. Augsburger further writes that the mother son relationship is the central axis of the family while the husband and wife subsystem is secondary. He quotes Channabasavanna & Bhatti;

Those who strive for separation and individuation try to break way from the family of orientation, often it is the father who helps the son to do so, but it is not acceptable to the mother because she needs him more than the husband (p. 195).

If there is a mentally ill person, the family is the primary source of support for her/his well being. The family takes care of the person without putting him/her in
an institution but does provide local treatment (Lee, Oh, & Mountcastle 1992). The care of the mentally ill person is the responsibility of the women in the family. It is commonly believed that a respectful family would care for its elders, sick and needy. If the family does not do that it loses respect in bradari (society or community). This is one of the strengths of the emphasis on togetherness in the Pakistani family system. It does not distance members who are mentally ill by putting them in an institution but continues to provide them with a sense of belonging. Minuchin (1974) writes that the extended family model is well adapted to situations of stress and scarcity. Functions are shared. One member can care for the children and sick members while all the other adults work to support the family. Household chores and other tasks are shared. Companionship as well as multiple sources of help and support are available within the extended family.

**Commitment and Loyalty**

Research on Asian families shows that the families are committed to the welfare of their members. If any member experiences a problem he/she is expected to deal with it within the extended family. The extended family tries to solve and "heal" the individual’s problem (Lee, Oh, & Mountcastle, 1992). So each member of the family becomes an active problem solver and decision maker in the times of crisis. Family and bradari support is important in
providing resolution to both situational and developmental problems related to education, career planning, marital and child care.

Because the extended family is committed to promote marital welfare, when there is a fight between husband and wife, the elders often get together and patch things up. This has both a positive and a negative side. The positive is that they try to calm down the young couple and remind them of their commitment. Negatively, in some cases continual patching up does not work but creates more problems. However the cultural and religious norm is that they stay together for the sake of the children and the family honor even though one/both spouse's heart may not be in the relationship.

From the systems perspective (Minuchin 1974), there are positive and negative elements in this structure/process. Positively, family members have the support and resources of the extended family to deal with marriage and family problems. Negatively, family members can develop resentment, consciously or unconsciously, if they are forced to meet unwanted family expectations. My speculation is that this resentment can be transmitted down to succeeding generations.

Hospitality and Leisure Time

Hospitality is a gift that all Pakistanis take pride in but in some parts of the country many take it very
seriously. Visitors are treated as if they are sent by God. Families may not have much to give but they never let a visitor go unattended, especially strangers. In the North West Frontier province, hospitality is associated with men. They provide food, drink, tobacco, conversation, lodging and protection for other males of their rank or status (Maron 1957). It is common practice that when somebody comes under their roof, they take it as a personal duty to protect that person from any harm as long as he is in the area. Generally speaking this highlights the open and fluid boundaries of the family system which allows the family to welcome and interact with strangers and non-family members (Minuchin 1974).

The pace of life is far slower compared to western life style. People take time to talk and exchange greetings. As a visitor, the guest becomes the focus of attention and daily activities (even one’s job!) are put aside. At parties talking comes first and eating follows. The preparation of food takes considerable time and seems unhurried because socializing is more important. This custom has its virtue because it allows time for the guest to be late. There is a sense of comfort and peace in the unhurried nature of this ritual. This highlights the cultural strength of the importance of the person as the guest of the family.
There are Christian, Muslim and Hindu feast day celebrations. Also there are national celebrations and local melas (fairs) are held during the year, especially in the spring. These melas are often held in honor of religious figures, eg Our Lady, or death anniversary of the local pir. These are the occasions when people enjoy social activities, especially the women as there are very few times when women participate in public events beside marriages and family celebrations. The women are restricted in their social life. They can only visit their family and friends, watch TV and movies, or spend free time doing embroidery. Men are allowed more outdoor social activities such as horse back riding, polo playing, wrestling and kabadi, a form of wrestling. There are games and outdoor activities for women but because of Islamic belief they can not participate in them. Those who do take the risk are considered to be improper. At school girls are allowed to take part but once they grow older they are no longer allowed to. At present there are some changes and women do participate in some public social activities. This highlights another form of inequality.

Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Forgiveness is not easy and to be reconciled with someone who seems to be the enemy is difficult. Pakistanis find it difficult but when they do forgive, they try to start anew. One of the ritual or symbolic ways of doing
this, is to share a meal with the person/family one is angry with. The sharing of a meal is not just a celebration of unity but a time to put an end to tension, heal the wounds of the past and start a new relationship with a renewed sense of cooperation. It is also a public display of the reconciliation between families (Francis, 1986).

During certain events such as deaths in the family, marriages, or any other family celebrations, families will take the opportunity to bring about the reconciliations. During the happy occasions a family will expect the celebrating family to reach out to bring about forgiveness. One of the crucial times for reconciliation is a death within the family. There is a saying, "one can miss the happy moments but cannot miss the sad moments." Often family conflicts are settled within the family but if there are long lasting hurts or family enmity then a third party tries to bring about reconciliation. The third party tries to talk with the families separately and when they are ready to face each other, they are brought together to talk it out. This is one of the strengths which can be used to introduce the marriage and family counseling in Pakistani culture. If the reconciliation takes place then both families share a meal and if anybody refuses to do so it is taken as meaning that the person is not ready to forgive. Celebrating reconciliation is common in Pakistan. This practice has its deep roots within the culture and blends
well with the Christian understanding of reconciliation and Eucharist. McAll (1986) writes of the power of Eucharist to bring generational healing to families. Because the Pakistani culture already values reconciliations, the ground is prepared for introducing McAll's concept of spiritual healing. It could be a combined cultural, religious and therapeutic process for and between families, which promotes the wholeness of the family system.

Interdependence

They have taken the culturally relativist stance that a lack of autonomy is not a weakness. But these anthropologists have affirmed the South Asians, in their concern for hierarchy and community, value interdependence and a relative lack of boundaries between persons rather than individuality and autonomy (Ewing, 1991, p. 132).

This thinking is something which may not be understood by Westerners. South Asians often appear to them to be dependent, but in reality it is more interdependent than dependent. In Pakistan, as in the other south Asian countries, there is great emphasis on family bondedness and needing to belong to a family, tribe, clan or community. Each person gets his/her identity by belonging, rather than by being an individual. The family and tribe play a major role in forming each individual. The family shares pride in what the individual does and also the shame as they feel responsible for that too. This may be beyond the understanding of Westerners, because Western culture
stresses individuality and an independent style of life. In the West the individual has full responsibility for his/her actions as an adult. Ewing (1991) points out;

...interpersonal autonomy must be distinguished from intrapsychic autonomy... interpsychic autonomy is the ability to maintain enduring mental representation of source of self esteem and comfort, permitting a more flexible adaptation to the vicissitudes of the immediate environment. The significance of this distinction between intrapsychic and interpersonal autonomy is clearly demonstrated by the situation of the Pakistani woman, who typically spends her whole life firmly embedded in interpersonal dependency relationships (p. 132).

In a Pakistani family the women are the ones who have to make considerable adjustments and in most of the cases the women adjust well. In her article Ewing (1991) explains that a woman with a well-developed interapsychic autonomy and a good sense of self can face the stresses of a new household when she marries. Her inner world and self remains intact and unthreatened. In spite of the woman’s involvement in the extended family she remains in tune to her own needs as well as the needs of the extended family. However, women who do not have a developed sense of self and are deeply insecure, find it difficult to do so. The woman who is secure within herself can have a sense of belonging to her new extended family without loosing the sense of self. In the effort to create and maintain a cohesive family structure each person tries to adjust to the needs of the other members. This may appear as a co-
dependent situation to a Westerner, but it is the strength of the Asian family in the times of celebration and crisis, when the extended family pulls together. On the other hand it may be a weakness when the family tries to save a relationship which is abusive.

In contrast to women the men do not have to go through the transition of leaving their family at the time of marriage. They also retain more authority in marriage. When it comes to decision-making men are interdependent with other men in the family but very independent of women as they usually do not consult women. Their sense of self depends on their unquestioned exercise of authority and leadership.

The structure of the Pakistani family system could be diagrammed thusly (Minuchin, 1974):

```
  Father
    — — — — —
  Mother
    — — — — —
   Children
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This diagram reflects the strong position of authority of a Pakistani male and a less equal position of the female. It creates hierarchical marital subunit.

**Growth Areas or Weaknesses**

Like any other family, the Pakistani family has its growth areas. I believe that for a healthy growth to take place it is important to name these limitations/growth
areas and to begin to modify them in order to meet the needs of the present time. If families want their young ones to grow and prosper, there is a call to be flexible. If the society is rigid then we cannot expect our young ones to appreciate and to be faithful to their tradition and culture. Rigidity does lead to young ones learning to hate their heritage and with this comes the danger of losing it. If there is more flexibility they will learn to value and appreciate their culture and tradition. I will address some of these areas in which we can work to build healthy marriages and family life.

**Lack of Individuation**

In most of the Asian families the individual comes second while family comes first. This is true in Pakistan also. The good of the family always comes before the needs and desires of the individual. The emphasis is on belonging to a family, clan, tribe or a group (Jaya & Berg, 1993). Because family or tribe is so important, each individual has to try to save the face of the family. Therefore, if an individual does not agree with the elders, he/she cannot express it openly because that will disgrace the family. The decisions are not made by the individual when it comes to choosing a partner in marriage, choosing a career, or choosing the course of study one will follow. Walsh (1991) diagnoses what themes are recurrent within a family. He defines theme as any issue that takes place within the
family and demands significant attention of the family members. These issues can be negative or positive. In a Pakistani family the major theme is putting the good of the family first. The positive side is the family's willingness to forget past hurts and pool resources to help out the extended family in the time of need. Negatively the family can be caught in rigid patterns which inhibit individuation.

Elders of the family are considered wisdom figures who know and want the best for their children. The education and brilliance of young ones is not considered as valuable as the lived experience of the elders. That is why when children speak up and want to do their own will, often family elders feel offended and they feel they have not trained the children well.

In extended families children receive much love and nurturing but they are often confused by so many opinions and guiding forces around them. One member of the family may approve of one thing while another member may not approve. This creates stress and insecurity for the individual. The child is further confused if parents say one thing but do another. Minuchin (1974) explains that an extended family may run into problems because of the difficulty of not making the responsibilities clear. Because the extended family is a complex unit, it is quite
easy to have a number of vague boundaries which can create confusion and stress.

It is normal or expected that the mother-in-law intrude in her son's marital relationship. This could be a potential source of unresolved tension if the mother relies on her son to satisfy her own unmet needs. In this case the daughter-in-law may stay attached to her own family of origin, which may or may not help her to settle into her new home.

From a structural family systems perspective (Minuchin, 1974) the Pakistani family is far more complicated than the western family. It does not consist merely of father, mother and children but also includes grand parents, uncles and aunts as part of family. Also boundaries and roles at times can be very rigid while at other times they can be defuse. For example the system is rigid when authority is never questioned and always expected to be obeyed. It is diffuse when parental authority is undermined by grand parents or uncles and aunts. The Pakistani family system does not value individuation but a high level of loyalty to the extended family.

Now due to Western influence the structure of the family system is beginning to change. There are more families which are like nuclear families of the West. From my limited experience I have seen that these families can
be more rigid than the extended families. Parental authority is not questioned and there are no extended family members to initiate reconciliation or bring objectivity into the situation. This highlights one of the important advantages of structure of the extended family system. It provides reconciliation and objectivity that can be lacking in a the nuclear family system.

The main advantage of nuclear family system is that the spousal sub-system is valued (Minuchin, 1974). It gives the couple more time, freedom and opportunity to develop their relationship. They have more freedom to raise their children according to their own wishes because there is not much interference from the extended family system.

**Lack of Shared Power and Responsibility: Decision Making, Child Rearing.**

Decision making in a Pakistani family is often done by the elders of the family. Serious discernment by the elders occurs around choosing a life partner. Once a decision is made for the couple, the couple is expected to live by that decision. But when problems arise within the marriage, the couples are not consulted by the elders. The elders simply patch up the situation without really addressing the problem. The couple is expected to compromise, in order to cope with the original decision and preserve the family honor in the bradari.
Women in the families are most oppressed and almost expected to have no rights and desires at all. Both before and after marriage, women are expected to learn to live for the good of their extended family and children. The woman is also not considered to have as much wisdom as the man. These attitudes prevent an atmosphere of equality and shared decision-making in the Pakistani family.

Social and cultural expectations are high for newly married Pakistani couples. They are under a lot of pressure, usually from their parents, to start child bearing without any delay. The couple does not seem to have any choice to decide when and how many children they want. If there are girls and no boys as often happens, the couple has to keep producing children till they have a son. I know personally some couples who had ten to twelve children in the hope the next child will be a son.

The exercise of power in the Pakistani family system is hierarchical in nature. At the top is bradari, then come the elders, and then parents. This means the leadership roles are very clear and definite, and yet these roles can also be very rigid and inflexible.

The parental sub-system is valued more than the spousal sub-system (Minuchin, 1974). More attention is given to raising children than to the welfare of the marriage.
The growth area for a Pakistani family system is to promote not only the relationship between the couples but the couples' relationship with the other sub-systems of the extended family and society.

**Conflict Management or Dealing with Stress**

In the time of crisis the family stands together. Problems do not belong to the individual but to the family as a whole. Often a problem is dealt with within the extended family and is not expected to be talked about outside the family, because it can spoil the good name of the family and bring disgrace to it. When the problem becomes unmanageable only then will the family seek outside advice.

Among Pakistani families the generational boundaries are very clear around problem solving. In certain situations the adult males are allowed to give opinions on solving problems. Children are not allowed to get involved, as it would be disrespectful to speak up in the presence of their elders. The problem solving is not a process of negotiation, but a matter of the family saving face within the **bradari**. For example, if a young girl becomes pregnant outside of marriage, the women in the family either will try to arrange a quick marriage or an abortion. The young girl has no say in any of these decisions. The women do this to preserve the family honor and prevent further problems. Should the men come to know, there could be blood
shed and in some cases the family might be ostracized from the bradari. In the case of abortion there seems to be no thought about the effect of abortion on the individual and the family. British psychiatrist McAll (1986) believes that a dead child who has not been lovingly accepted by his/her family and committed to God cries out for prayers to a living family member, often the one who is the most sensitive. In his work with women he found that 84% of those with anorexia had an ungrieved death in the family tree.

In the extended family the display of negative emotions is acceptable for male members of the family while it considered unacceptable for the females. In her article Ewing (1991) quotes Metcalf, who says, in the most difficult family situations, the women have learned to control their passions, particularly anger, and to act according to their wisdom or reason rather than their emotions. The women who seem powerless before their in-laws can gain power through the strength of their ability to control their emotions. While controlling their emotions has the advantage of reducing family conflict, the effect of repressed anger is not healthy in the long run. Women have learned to check and control their anger by withdrawing from the person they are angry with. This would be what Bowen (1988) calls emotional cut-offs, a way of
dealing with unsatisfactory relationships in which one simply closes oneself off from the other.

In some parts of the country where the marriages are exchanged, the common belief is that conflicts and problems are easily settled because the exchange of spouses plays a significant role in maintaining the checks and balances in the behaviors of the members of both families (Kamil, 1984). In the same article Kamil quotes Eglar (1960) who in contrast highlights another study in a Punjabi village, which shows that the exchanged marriage is not valued because it is seen as a source of many problems. For example, if one of the two couples do not get along well, the other couple is expected to treat each other in the same manner! This form of restructuring does not deal with the problem but creates more problems by leaving it unresolved.
D. Role of Religion/Faith in Marriage and Family Life

Religious beliefs, values, attitudes, and ways of relating to each other are an important part of Pakistani family life. They are reflected through the social patterns in family life and through the ways of communicating. Thus, religion is not just a family belief but it is an important part of the structure, order and dynamic in family life. Religion/faith is one source of strength and hope for people to hold on to in time of crisis. The main role of religion is to provide an agreement among family members about roles, behaviors and goals. This helps the family to stay together, cope and support each other in times of crisis in an effective way. It is somewhat the same in American family systems (Pattison, 1982). It is quite common to talk about family conflicts in such a way that they appear to be religious issues (fate). This is so because it is much easier and less conflictual to address the issue in this way rather than addressing the real family dynamics. Pattison quotes Draper as saying that "religious ideas, beliefs, values and concepts reflect the psychodynamics in the family" (1982).

Because Pakistan is a Muslim state, the economic distribution of wealth is politically controlled creating an unjust society. The poor who are the majority of the population have no voice in this system. About three quarters of the wealth is owned by a small majority leaving
the masses of people poor and barely meeting their daily needs. In this situation when people are not free to raise their voices for justice and for their rights, it is far easier to leave everything in the hands of God, be it for good or bad. It is a matter of survival, so whatever happens in life is considered as *khuda ki marzi*, which means God's will. By saying this the people put all responsibility on God and deny or disown their own God given power to make a difference by their efforts. It is common in some families to feel the need to use religious language in communicating, especially in conflictual situations. That inhibits one from looking into oneself and facilitates placing the blame on another while giving the responsibility to God to punish the wrong doer. Taylor (1991) writes;

No world peace without peace among religions, no peace among religions without dialogue between religions, no dialogue between religions without accurate knowledge of one another (p. 162).

It is a common religious belief in Pakistan that whatever happens in life is in God's plan and we can not change it. We accept it as God's will for the family and provide support in any way we can. For example, if a big crisis, accident, death, loss in business or separation in the family occurs, the extended family takes it as a religious duty to support the family in any way they can. An other example is at the marriage ceremony, as the couple
makes a commitment to each other by placing their hands on the Bible/Quran, the family feels responsible to support them to live this commitment. It is also a common belief that these matched marriages are made in heaven and we do our best to protect them.

The people have a deep and simple faith, consisting in daily prayers, alms giving, fasting, visiting holy places, making offerings on the graves of the holy men (pirs and fakirs), and making physical and material sacrifices. The family reveres supernatural figures, good/evil spirits, black magic, traditional healers, and spiritual healers which help them to gain more strength, power and control in the times of family crisis. If anybody is mentally ill, she/he is usually taken to the traditional or spiritual healers. The common belief is that the person is possessed by the spirit of her/his ancestors and such possession is taken as punishment by the dead. This belief is deeply rooted in Asian culture and nobody seems to be free from it, even those who are so-called "modern" or "westernized".

McAll (1986) writes that it is important to know and cut the bond with a controlling person, living or dead, forgive the person and submit the person to God’s care. He further says that the controlling bond may skip a generation and if this bond is with a dead person who is unknown it may be difficult to identify the controlling bond. To do this he suggests drawing a family tree as a way
of gathering information. When the bond is cut, no matter with whom or how long lasting, the possession-void must be transferred to God to allow God to take complete control. He suggests doing this through Eucharistic celebration. The rite of Eucharist involves double forgiveness; through Jesus Christ we not only forgive the dead but ask their forgiveness. Fabricant & Linns (1985) support this by saying that when spirits of ancestors come to the living, it's not that they want to harm but are crying for our prayers. When healing love is offered to them in Eucharist, this healing echoes across many generations.

The traditional healers, called pirs and fakirs are quite common. They are religious men most often from the Muslim faith to whom everybody goes for healing. The most common practice is that the pirs and fakirs will write the Quranic verses on a piece of paper and the ill person will wear it around his/her neck or wrist. Another way of healing is for the fakir or pir to read the verses and blow them on the person. Yet another practice is that the person will be given pieces of paper with verses written on them and they will be asked to burn them. While the verses burn the patient inhales the smoke. These practices may be healing people, but they have their dark side, when in the name of spiritual healing, young girls have been raped or families lose almost every possession they have in order to make offerings to these pirs and fakirs.
Nowadays there are Christian healers who follow the same pattern but instead of using Quranic verses they use verses from the Bible.

Black magic is another common practice in which a large number of families in the villages and in the cities are involved. The black magic experts claim to have extraordinary power and with this power they can harm or help a person. Any mental illness is considered to be under the spell of evil spirits and the families go to these experts to break the spell. They give them special words written on a piece of paper to wear or ask them to keep it in their room to expel the spirits. Besides this, the individual has to make weekly visits and at each visit he/she has to make an offering to the spirits. If he/she does not make this offering the spirits will not be pleased with them. This is a kind of occult practice and McAll (1986) says that if in the family tree somebody has been involved in this practice it often affects the living members. He also says it seems unfair that a child should suffer the effects of a father's occult involvement but the evil one causes suffering to any who may have inherited such interest. He suggests deliverance prayer which involves confession, absolution and building up spiritual life with the help of a loving community, prayer and Eucharist. He further suggests that the community needs to
pray together for the deliverance. Deliverance is not one step healing but brings freedom to choose new ways.

Sufis are known as spiritual healers in Pakistan. They are not as common as the other two groups. Sufis were influenced by the Hindu and Arab traditions. They emphasize that God and creation are one reality and because they are one there is no need to treat anyone with disdain (Saeed 1990). They use several ways to heal or treat mental illness. One of the methods they use is very close to music therapy, called "Ouwali" which is spiritual poetry. Most of the Sufis are known to be poets and musicians. They use music as part of the mystical experience. Traditionally these sessions were accompanied by dancing in which the patient was encouraged to let her/his hair down, swing and dance with the music. The music therapy is used for hysteria and depression, especially if the person and family believe in the healing power of music and dance therapy (Lee, Oh, & Mountcastle, 1992).

Within the culture these sources provide psychological help. The religious and spiritual leaders are expected not only to provide for the spiritual needs of their people but also for their emotional, physical, relational and mental needs. The disadvantage of these practices is keeping the responsibility with the traditional/spiritual healers and inhibiting the personal responsibility of looking into the family roles and relationship patterns. Going to these
healers, with all due respect, creates dependency and one doesn’t learn to take responsibility for changing behavior patterns and trusting oneself.

McAll (1986) suggests that it is important that a person take responsibility for his/her action and make reparation. He further says that a dependent person will not admit he/she has power to change but will continue to blame. One needs to learn to have trust in God and to use God-given freedom to make a difference. McAll (1986) quotes William James saying,

We and God have business together; in opening ourselves to his influence our deepest destiny is fulfilled. God is real because he produces real effects (p. 45).

The Pakistani tradition has its value and by no means do I suggest doing away with it. However, we, as Pakistanis, do a lot of things in the name of religion/spirits without recognizing their negative aspects. In the name of religion and spirits innocent lives are wasted. Pattison (1982) quotes Regina giving a different picture of religious power and freedom within the family.

The family that lives for the sake of great things itself becomes great...complete commitment to the creativity of God is the great source of security, of freedom, of richness and of meaning for the family (p. 146).

Pakistani children from an early age are taught to fear God, because God watches them even when parents can
not and God wants them to do better in life. It is God's command to obey, to not question authority, to take care of the old and the young, to be honest and faithful to their religion. The paradox is when we expect our children to do the above in the name of religion but we fail to do it ourselves. Then we are surprised that the children will not do what they are told to do. For example, a father may teach the son to be respectful to the elders because if you are not God punishes, but he may speak rudely to his own mother. A mother may teach the child to tell the truth because people who don't tell the truth go to hell, but she might tell lies to her husband about family fights. The children get conflicting messages and they are caught in a bind because they want to be loyal both to their parents and to their religious beliefs. Griffith (1986) says that in religious families, the God and family relationship is like a myth. That is why it is important for the therapist to help to bring about changes in the family system which will bring about the changes in each individual's relationship with God and others.

Bergin (1991) supports this idea. He says that the spiritual values and spiritual experience make a difference in the behavior, personal identity and life style of the individual. That is why spiritual values help to create moral values. In a highly patriarchal culture Pakistani
women can find recognition through religious accomplishment. Such is the case in the story of "Hawkes Bay case". Ahmed (1986) gives the description of the young woman, Naseem, who is supposed to have received religious revelation and how people trusted her without question. The differences in her physical appearances depended on whether or not she had received a message. He writes,

Naseem's physical condition now began to correspond with the revelation: she lost weight and her color became dark when she was not receiving them; she glowed with health when she was. People freely equated her physical appearance with her spiritual condition. She lost noor (divine luminosity) in the periods of despondency and regained it when receiving revelation (p. 125).

Bergin (1991) talks about healthy and unhealthy religion. He says there are different kinds of religiosity. The extrinsically religious person uses religion as a way to gain security and status while, on the other hand, the intrinsically religious person internalizes beliefs and lives by them regardless of social pressure. Later in the article he says that troubled personal development and troubled religiosity seem to go together, but most of these people find healing in deep religious experience. Robert (1989) supports this idea by saying that a lovable person perceives God as lovable, the demanding person perceives God as demanding. He raises an interesting question: who creates whom and in whose image? My concern is that the
name of God may be used in unhealthy ways, and that it does not always reflect the reality/totality of God.
The spirituality of the people is deeply rooted in individual and communal prayer and in the reading of the Bible/Quran. The teaching/sayings of Jesus and Muhammed the prophet are part of their daily life. Older people often have learned the passages from the Bible by heart and sing them as their way of praying. The singing of the scripture is very common while Muslims do the same with their Quranic verses. On happy and sad occasions people visit each others' homes and pray with each other and sometimes they arrange singing of sacred songs. In times of sickness, death, marriage or birth of a child people pray with each other. Anointing with oil, holy water and burning of incense is common practice among Pakistanis. When anything happens within the family, people begin with prayer so that God can be present and bless whatever they are doing. Since prayer is already part of the culture McAll’s (1986) idea of praying for miscarried and stillborn babies may be easy to introduce. When babies are named and prayed for their spirits are at rest and need not bother the living. When a child dies, not only mothers and fathers but the whole family/system is affected (Linn, Linn & Fabricant, 1985).

In a Muslim family men are allowed to go to the mosque for prayer while women stay home and pray. Fridays are considered sacred days for Muslims. Many women are devoted
to one or many pirs whose tombs they visit and pray at. Sunday is sacred to Christians and families go to church together for the celebration of Eucharist. If there is no priest, which often happens in the villages, families get together in somebody’s home to pray. The catechist leads the prayer and often elder members of the group, who know the scripture, sing with the whole congregation. There are spontaneous prayers by the people. The catechist might give a reflection on the scripture. It is a little different when there is a priest for the Eucharistic celebration. The people have great respect and reverence for the religious celebration, places of prayers and religious articles.

Since religion is the central part of the Pakistani culture and it impacts the family system, there are several issues to be considered. The following questions are important to reflect on (Breunlin et al, 1992):

How do the religious beliefs enrich the family?

How do they constrain the family(for example, in fundamentalist religions or religions that object to treatment)?

What is the value of religiosity within the family?

Do all the members of the family hold the same beliefs or are there differences between them?

If there are differences, are these recognized and respected within the family? (p. 220).

One of the highest or deepest desires one has is to reach spiritual closeness with God. Reaching God is
possible by contemplation, through prayer and love. Love is symbolized in most popular folk poetry. Hir Ranja, one of the most famous epics, describes the love of man and of woman as symbolic of the love of God. The hardships the lover goes through are the hardships one faces when seeking God. When the folk singer sings Hir, the spiritual seeker recognizes the stages of spiritual advancement which he/she has reached. Those who are at the early stages of their faith feel sad because, for them, there is still a long way to go. The spiritual path to God is long and difficult and few attain it. Those who seek to follow this path need guidance which is given by pirs or spiritual guides. Pirs themselves are seekers and only a few are able to unite with the whole (Maron, 1957). As St. Augustin said, "Our souls are restless till they find rest in you."

Nature plays a significant role in the local spirituality whether it be Hindu, Muslim, or Christian. The Punjabi folk poetry describes the changing seasons as a reflection of changing moods in the people who hope for new life. With every change of season, when the new fruit of the earth is produced, people pray before eating and thank God for counting them worthy to taste the new fruit. They also remember those who have died and will never taste the fruit again. People have great attachment to the moon. It is closely connected to religion and various lunar months have religious connotations. Muslim feasts associated with
the moon are Ramadan which is the month of fasting and Shab-e-barat during which the people pray the whole night. It is common belief that destinies of people are decided in heaven that night. People try to make up and heal broken relationships before that night (Maron, 1957). The moon is not only special to Muslims but to all people in Pakistan. Every month, people look for the moon in the sky. At the first sight of the new moon, people greet each other, pray and make their wishes when looking at the new moon.

**SUMMARY**

In this chapter I have described the rituals around marriage, roles within the extended family, strengths and growth areas of extended family and the role of religion in marriage and family life. I also integrated the family systems theory in relation to Pakistani culture. This effort has been a challenge but essential for my work with couples and families when I return to Pakistan.

From this description of Pakistani marriage and family life it is obvious that there is need for some modification. I am also aware that any attempt to change or challenge will not be welcomed. But I am strongly convinced of the need for modification. Therefore I propose a workshop for Bradari, clergy, school principals and staff, parish councils, and couples to convince them of the need for this education. The workshop will also serve the
purpose of introducing the REFOCCUS program to the key people. When I have their support then the REFOCCUS program can be implemented. I hope it will address, if not all, at least some of the issues that families struggle with.
CHAPTER III
INTRODUCING THE REFOCCUS PROGRAM IN PAKISTAN

The local cultural traditions in Pakistan are opposed to formal counseling. Individual counseling services are not easily available and there are fewer facilities for marriage and family counseling. In general the extended family attends to all the needs of the young members, especially in the areas where a person may need individual counseling.

The need for counseling and guidance was first felt by the Pakistani educators when they found people not making right choices for jobs. In the case of women it became obvious as they started formal education and took jobs outside their homes. So far the Institute of Educational and Vocational Guidance and Counseling for Women is available in the secondary schools of Peshawar in Pakistan (Almas & Ibrahim, 1983).

At present psychological help is available but not accessible to everybody. It is only accessible in big cities and the masses can not benefit from it. There is very limited help available to young parents who, with assistance, could learn to manage the small problems that often grow into bigger issues.

A. Pre-program Considerations
In Pakistan, once a couple marry and have children, the focus of their attention is the children. They will do
anything to fulfill the needs of the younger members and invest time, money and energy in this. They believe their time is to be spent for their children and that the time for enjoyment or personal development is over. In reality this is not true because one keeps learning new things as long as one lives. It is falsely believed that once a couple gets married all the skills emerge and one learns naturally how to relate and develop these relationships within the extended family. In Growing Together, Dyer and Dyer (1990) describe the myth of naturalism:

People just naturally know how to have good relationships and consequently good marriages. Whatever knowledge and skills relationships require are naturally accumulated in the process of growing up and living everyday lives; there is no need to work at acquiring additional help (p.5).

Because of the cultural expectation of saving face, family secrets are kept within the family. The couples are expected not to share their concerns with other couples but to cover them up and not let anybody know about the struggles. The same idea is supported by Dyer and Dyer (1990):

The intermarital taboo is an unwritten rule implying that couples should never talk to other couples about what is happening in their own relationship. This rule often results in partners believing they are the only ones in the world struggling with a particular issue. The intermarital taboo prevents them from discovering options for resolving their difficulties (p. 5).
In Pakistan, because of the extended family system, the young couple does get support and guidance from the older and experienced family members as explained in Chapter One. But now through education, the influence of the media, modern technology, etc., couples do not find the support they need because of the generational gap and different life experiences. A program like this is designed to help the couples find a support group so that they know they are not alone in their struggle.

Since this is something out of the ordinary for couples/families, it is likely to meet with cultural opposition. An ideal place to introduce the program would be in the parishes and in the schools. To do so I need to plan a day’s workshop for bradari members, clergy, catechists, parish councils, principals & staffs to convince them of the need for this education and to enlist their support. The same workshop would be held on a separate day for couples who are committed to improving their relationships. Hopefully these couples, would become assistant program facilitators in the future. I believe families, Church, school and bradari need to work together to ensure a healthy and happy future for our youth.

While meeting with key people I will explore which of these options will be suitable for couples. The choices might be: a weekend workshop, a two and a half hour session
daily for a week or one session a week for six weeks. As this is a process orientated program, it will be valuable if it is spread over six weeks and couples experience the process and work through some relationship patterns to bring about change. The flyer will have a brief description of purpose, goals and objectives of this program.

Corey and Corey (1992) write that often in the institutions the power issues and political realities play a big role. In order to get the group off the ground I need to be in on-going dialogue with the sponsoring institution I work with. They further suggest that it is helpful to have a written proposal which is a key to getting your ideas translated into the reality of a group action.

B. Workshop Outline to Raise the Awareness for the Need of Marriage and Family Enrichment.

1. Participants assemble in the Pastoral Center at 8:30 AM.
   a. Welcome address by the facilitator (3 mins.)
   b. Introduction: purpose and format of the workshop (3 mins.)

2. Prayer Ritual (4 mins.)

3. Introduction of communication skills by the facilitator (15 mins.)
   a. Introduction of communication skills (15 mins.).
Facilitator invites the couples to recall for a moment a time recently when each one had something important to say and the other person really put some effort into understanding the speaker's point of view. In that situation chances are that the speaker left feeling great. Then facilitator invites each one to recall an other experience when he/she was talking to a partner, parent, superior, teacher or boss, and had something important to say but left the situation feeling frustrated and discouraged. Chances are no one really understood what the speaker had to say (Miller et al, 1988).

Since everyone likes to be understood, much of our communication is aimed at getting others to see the world as we see it. The real problem comes when it is time to understand others; and, to reach out and attentively listen to what the other person is experiencing, especially when it does not match our experience. If we want to deal effectively with others and the issues we face together, then each of us must understand the other and be understood by him/her.

We do realize listening is a special gift and it is in interpersonal relationships that these skills can be developed. I do not mean we do not
know how to communicate but there is always a chance to learn and improve our communication skills. As we develop these skills we will experience the difference in ourselves and in our relationships.

Communication plays a big role in marriage and family life. Studies show that effective communication can be learned and once communication improves the marital adjustment increases too. Communication is a very important part of marriage and has significant effects on marriage satisfaction (Carter, 1980).

4. Simple role-play by the facilitator and co-facilitate demonstrating the basic interpersonal skills: Speaking, Listening, Responding. (10 mins.)

a. Speaking:
Think of something you want to share with your partner. Be clear what you want to say.

b. Listening:
While one partner speaks, pay attention to what she/he is saying, verbally or nonverbally. To make sure what the other person is really saying, perhaps repeat what the other person has said.

c. Responding:
When you have listened carefully, ask your partner if this is how it is for him/her. Your
partner (speaker) will know if he/she is listened to. The listener then responds to the partner.

5. Invite the couples to role play with their partner. As they practice, the facilitator goes around and encourages them. (20 mins.)

6. After the exercise ask the couples to share the experience with one another. (10 mins.)

7. All the couples assemble in a large group and the facilitator invites them to share this experience. Remind the group that "sharing is a decision" and they should feel free to share only whatever feels comfortable in the large group. (55 mins.)

8. Tea break 10:30 - 11:00

9. The group reassembles. The facilitator introduces the following questions and invites the participants to reflect on these questions individually. (15 mins)

   a. **Communication**

   - Do I feel comfortable to talk about my problems with my partner?
   - Do I express my feelings to my partner? If not, why not?
   - How do I know my partner listens to me?
b. **Problem solving**

- How do you resolve problems with each other and within the family?

1. The facilitator distributes a sheet illustrating the four strategies common within the animal kingdom for resolving conflict e.g.; fight, submit, flee, freeze. As human beings we have another way to resolve conflict because we have the power to reason. This process is called conflict resolution (Pruitt & Robin, 1986).

   The participants are invited to reflect on the strategies and their usual way of dealing with conflict.

   c. **Spirituality**

   - Do you view your marriage as a vocation?

   - How do you try to keep God first in your lives?

   - How does your shared faith transform the daily struggles of marriage life from disunity to unity? (Giblin, 1993)

10. After the personal reflection invite each one to share with their partner. (45 mins)

11. The large group reassembles and those who feel comfortable share their experience with the group. (30 mins.)
12. Lunch break 12:30-2:00

13. The facilitator distributes copies of the following questions asking individuals to reflect on them and make a note of anything they become aware of. (60 mins)

a. This exercise will help the couples to reflect on the family norms, roles and rules they have learned in their families of origin and how they have affected them. It will also help them to understand the sociology of marriage and family. These questions are taken from Penn & Sheinberg, 1991.

**Norms for being a man/woman**
- What do you think about being a man/woman?
- As a man/woman how do you believe you should behave towards women/men? How do you expect them to behave towards you?
- Do you believe men should feel sad, afraid, worried, unsure, in need of approval, dependent on their wives for comfort?
- Do you believe women should feel angry, assertive, entitled to put themselves first?

**Relational consequence of changing norms**
- If you were to show how really angry you feel, how do you think your husband would feel and react?
- If you were to show how much you need protection, how do you think your wife would feel and react?
- If a man is frightened and dependent, can he show it to his wife without risking the loss of her respect?
- If you show your real feelings that you generally keep silent about, will your husband/wife think less of you?

_Norms acquired from the family that affect the couple_
- Did your parents have a hard time meeting the expectations of their parents about being male/female?
- Do you think and feel these expectations have had an effect on your interaction as a couple?
- If your mother/father have different ideas about male/female behavior, how might it have changed your relationship?
- What effect did your parents’ norms have on your idea of female/male behavior?

_Potential for establishing new norms_
- If you have a daughter/son, would you like them to feel differently than you felt about male/femaleness?
- Would your parents disapprove if you raised your children differently?
- If there is a fight between your son and daughter, how would you resolve it?

14. Invite the individuals to form small groups and share as much or as little as they feel comfortable to share. (40 mins)

15. Feedback and evaluation. (10 mins)

16. Ritual closing prayer. (10 mins)
A. Why REFOCCUS?

The reason for choosing this program is to help Pakistani couples open up and gain confidence in sharing their concerns and not to be ashamed of them. By doing this they will experience the richness of each others' lives and find the support they need. The Pakistani tradition is to keep the secrets within the family so initially discussion would be difficult. I believe informal conversation at tea breaks will begin to help the couples develop trust and acceptance of each other and will lead to group participation. Informal sharing will encourage them to take the risk of contributing within the large group and so enrich each others' lives.

Another reason I chose this program is because it presents marital struggle as a universal phenomenon. I hope couples will realize that they are not the only ones experiencing struggles in their married life. There are other couples on the globe who experience the same process. There are ways that can lessen the stress and can prolong the joy of life. It is not God's will (Khuda ki marzi) that they should suffer nor is it "what they deserve" (fate). Life is God's gift and we can learn to enjoy it. I hope by getting involved in a program such as this, couples and families will reframe their thinking.
One of the main reasons for choosing REFOCCUS is that it is a comparatively simple program so it will be possible for me to train facilitators. This program will provide the opportunity for trained facilitators to reach a large number of people. The REFOCCUS materials indicate that it can be used by couples on their own. However, I think it should only be used by couples and individuals if they have facilitating and interpersonal skills training. Perhaps couples who are educated and who are trying to build their relationship could benefit from the manual without a facilitator’s help. In general I do not believe that the manual should be given to a Pakistani couple to use without any help. There are not many couples who can read and write so they might misuse it. For example, in Pakistani patriarchal culture it could be used as a power hold over women.

I hope the couples who attend this program and take it seriously will grow in their relationship. This will motivate other couples to participate in the program. I also hope and dream that some educated couples who find this program helpful in their own marriage life will volunteer to work as co-facilitators for the program.

Initially I am choosing not to make many changes. Through experimenting with the REFOCCUS program, I will discover what adjustments need to be made in using it with Pakistani couples. Only in time will one know what works
and what does not. However, I chose to integrate a few concepts from THE GROWING TOGETHER program to make the facilitation smoother.

B. Goals and Objectives

Some of the goals and objectives for this program are as follows:

- Although this program is designed for an individual couple, I hope the group experience will be enriching as the couples learn from each other. The goal is to promote communication not only between partners but with other couples. Hopefully the experience of communication within a group will result in better communication within the extended families.

- They will become aware that relationship does not just happen, but one needs to put effort and energy into it. This requires commitment because the relationship can not grow if the couple does not grow. The relationship needs to grow and change to accommodate the individual and family growth.

- This program will help each couple to set goals for themselves which will promote family unity, better communication and relationship as they become aware of each other's needs, wants, desires, feelings and wishes.

- It will give each couple a sense of identity, feeling of worth, skills in relating to others,
sensitivity to each other and to the extended family. It will help them to be genuine and honest in relationship, to develop self control, and to have a stronger commitment to marriage and family.

- Each partner will become aware of the capacity to forgive self and other, to learn to deal with stressful situations and to know that it is easier to deal with stress when faced together.
- The each couple will become aware that there are many ways one can show appreciation to the other and both can enjoy each other’s company.
- As the couple grows and learns to better their relationship the children will find a safe place where they can be who they are because parents are meeting each other’s needs, finding the support from the other couples, and communicating better in the extended family.

C. Facilitating the Program

As a facilitator of the program, it is necessary to know the size of the group one feels comfortable working with. I personally think four to five couples, not more than six, is a reasonable size. In a group of this size everybody will get enough attention and a chance to share and build relationships. I hope to facilitate this workshop on my own for a while until some couples are ready to work as co-facilitators. Then I would hope to provide them with
support and guidance by working closely together. Initially I hope to facilitate this program with five to six couples who are committed to develop their marriages. If this group finds the program helpful and believes other couples would benefit from it, these couples can be trained to facilitate also. For example I could ask one of the couples to help to facilitate the program with me and after six months or so, they will be ready to facilitate the program on their own. This process can continue till we have enough facilitators to reach out to the villages. I will meet frequently with them in order to facilitate their training, to help them gain confidence and to affirm their strengths. The supportive and safe environment will help them to process their problems and difficulties as they facilitate the program on their own.

This program is an educational instrument. Therefore screening is important. If a couple is having serious problems in their marital relationship they will not benefit from it. It is advisable for them to look for marital and family counseling. To screen couples for the program I will visit them in their homes over a period of time to gain a sense of the reality of their marriage. Part of the screening process will be to ensure that their goals are compatible with the goals of the program. Corey and Corey (1992) suggest keeping in mind these questions while screening:
Is this person motivated to change? Is this the choice of the individual or someone else? Does he/she understand the purpose of the group? (p.80).

In addition to private interview it will be helpful to have a group session for all the couples who are interested in participating in this program. The facilitator can also give an overview of the program and this will provide the couples with another opportunity to decide if they want to invest themselves in this process (Corey and Corey, 1992).

REFOCCUS is based on experiential learning, so behavioral change in interpersonal relationship will happen. The exercises will help the couples become aware of their relationship patterns. The couple will be encouraged to take risks as they see the result of their efforts. In sharing with their partner they may come to know each other for the first time in a very unique way and this will foster growth in the relationship. Even if a couple chooses not to share an awareness in the large group, the change will have taken place within the couple.

The discussions may be a problem because culturally men and women do not share family concerns with strangers or non-family members. I am also concerned that the men might take over the discussions. With more educated couples this might not be a problem but with the uneducated majority, women may not feel free to share. This is an area that will need experimentation. One will not know for sure until it is tried with a group of couples. It would be
crucial to discuss guidelines for discussion what it is and what it is not. In the REFOCCUS program the goals for discussion are explained. To promote an open discussion, a win-win process is suggested. Having a sense of humor and commitment to the process are key ingredients. REFOCCUS also makes it very clear that discussion is not to find a quick fix, to push growth or to measure how "good" or "bad" the relationship is (Becker at el, 1990).

It will be valuable to have a chart with ground rules written for the group. The ground rules give the group a sense of direction and sense of responsibility towards oneself and to the group. I will use these rules from Dyer & Dyer (1990):

- There is no confrontation.
- All participation in activities is voluntary.
- We are here to share experiences, not to exchange opinions.
- Each member speaks for self.
- Everything shared in the group is confidential.

(p. 21)

REFOCCUS does not require a group leader but a facilitator. The facilitator needs to know the REFOCCUS program, to be familiar with interpersonal skills, and to have clear sense of balance. The balance will help the facilitator to assist the couples not to overload themselves and to become discouraged with so many issues. The program does not stress facilitation by a couple, but I do see it as valuable. When the couple facilitates together they are modeling for the other couples, as done in the
GROWING TOGETHER program. Corey and Corey (1992) discuss the importance of modeling. They say one teaches more effectively through example. They further stress that as a facilitator one needs to trust in the group process and have faith in the members' capacity to make changes in themselves. It is important for the facilitating couple to accept each person in the group as he/she is and not to impose their own values on them. The group members will learn valuable lessons about accepting people's rights to differ and to be themselves. Corey and Corey stress that the level of trust is passed on to the group members through the facilitator's attitude and action. At the same time it also depends on the level of members' investment in the process. The attending couples will witness how the facilitating couple deals with different situations. They will learn directly and I believe that is long lasting learning.

The REFOCCUS process is basically for Christian couples but I believe couples from any faith can benefit from it as long as the prayer ritual is changed accordingly. This program can be offered in parishes as an Advent or Lenten program for couples. It can also be offered as a weekend retreat or as week-long educational workshop for parents.
D. Structure of the Program

This program consists of five sessions: Marriage as a process, Intimacy, Compatibility, Communication and Commitment. In this part I will give a brief summary of each session from the REFOCCUS program.

1. Marriage as a Process

Love manifests itself in efforts to make the other happy, in respect for the dignity of the other and in being a source of the emotional security for the other (Lauer & Lauer, 1986, p. 84).

Any healthy relationship is an ongoing process and even more so for a healthy marriage. This process begins the day the couple makes a commitment to each other. That is a starting point for building each new level in the relationship. In order to keep building a relationship, couples need strong trust in their ability to deal openly with any problem that they face. So marriage and family is not just a "state" but a process, one that is a never-ending opportunity to love once again, to forgive once again, to re-commit to one another again and again. This part of the REFOCCUS invites the couples to explore the process of their marriage.

2. Intimacy

Togetherness can lead to a shared history of intimacy that enriches both the individual spouses and their relationship (Lauer & Lauer, 1986, p. 106).
Intimacy involves loving and accepting another as he/she is, both good and bad. It also involves letting another love you as you are. True intimacy goes beyond disillusionment and infatuation. It avoids too much dependency and isolating independence. It always respects the uniqueness of the other person and leads to interdependence. To achieve this intimacy one needs to develop good communication. The couple needs to trust each other so that they can share feelings, thoughts, ideas without fear of misunderstanding or of misuse of what they have shared. It is an ongoing goal of couples who know that their marriage does not just get older but gets better. This part of the REFOCCUS invites the couples to explore the process of how their marriage grows in intimacy.

3. **Compatibility**

People, and therefore relationships inevitably change over time, but the change can be in the direction of enhanced compatibility and vitality (Lauer & Lauer, 1986, p. 138).

Compatibility in marriage is not magic but a process. An alive marriage between two people always requires the awareness of basic factors which each person brings to the marriage. It is a call to ongoing willingness to make a good match each day. When two people marry they bring to the relationship their unique qualities and individual differences. Early learned behavior from family-of-origin
and other past experiences emerge strongly in the day-to-day living. Acceptance of the other, willingness to compromise and the ability to own "my way" are some of the skills with which a couple builds a good match. Couples are called each day to make their match work. It's not magic but can be a delight. This part of the REFOCCUS invites the couples to explore similarities and differences that effect their relationships.

4. Communication

Communication skills can be developed in the course of marriage through mutual encouragement and a climate of trust that allows the partners to accept the risks and costs of both self-disclosure and listening (Lauer & Lauer, 1986, p. 96).

Communication is a skill that can be learned in order to enhance the quality of a relationship. Poor communication can drain and destroy almost any relationship and even more so a marriage relationship. Good communication skills can make healthy marriage possible. Every couple living together is communicating: they do it in words, in silences, by looks, gestures, tone of voice, touch, through action or lack of action. Communication skills are greatly influenced by one's personality style and by the behavior learned in one's family-of-origin. Sometimes couples develop patterns of communication which inhibit them from seeking reconciliation, from taking risks with each other, from being vulnerable and from making
adjustments in their relationship. Often these patterns are difficult to recognize and change. REFOCCUS invites the couples to look into their communication patterns which either strengthen or weaken their marriage.

5. **Commitment**

Commitment means the willingness and determination to work through troubled times (Lauer & Lauer, 1986, p. 57).

A marriage commitment is a promise to be faithful in the happy and sad moments. It is not a promise to always achieve a high level of intimacy but a promise to start again when the relationship seems to fall apart. A long term commitment means that a partner chooses to build twenty/thirty different marriages with the same person over a life time (that is to recommit oneself to the marriage over and over again). It is a call to make this commitment a priority and to enter into a covenant of mutual growth. The couple grow and change but they choose to grow and change together. Some factors that help to build a long-term commitment are: fidelity, forgiveness, good models of marriage, shared beliefs and values. REFOCCUS invites the couples to explore their commitment and develop ways to enhance it.

E. **Brief Review of the Components in Each Session**

Each of the above sessions contains, prayer, input, exercises and discussion. The goal of each session is to explore the future, discover what the couple have learned
from their family-of-origin, and how the couple is functioning now. I believe it is more appropriate to rearrange the components of each session; the couples begin by looking at the present state of their marriage, then reflect back to discover why they act or react in certain ways and finally they may be able to look at their marriage in a more realistic way. This includes an objective evaluation of the models of their family-of-origin in order to reconstruct their future life as they would like to have it.

F. Evaluation of the program

The REFOCCUS has its strengths and growth areas. Some of the strengths are:

a. It addresses the spiritual aspects of married life.

b. There are good guidelines for group discussion.

c. It is not purely Western but covers the issues that are faced by the couples and families across different cultures.

d. It is a very clear and simple instrument that couples can benefit from even without the help of a facilitator.

e. The instrument is easy to score and it is affordable for the majority of people in Pakistan.
f. It empowers couples because it encourages them to learn for themselves rather than relying on the leader or facilitator to give them all the answers.
g. It provides other resources for marriage enrichment; for example, prayer services for the renewal of marriage commitment, reconciliation services, scriptural resources and a Eucharistic liturgy for marriage enrichment.

Some of the limitations of this program are:
a. It is not made clear when the instrument should be given to the couple. Also it does not give clear instructions on how to complete the instrument.
b. REFOCCUS does not address conflict management.
c. This program lacks the ground rules for the formation of a group.
d. REFOCCUS does not state the clear aims and objectives of the program.
e. It does not state the underlying philosophy of the program.
f. It does not define the role and personal qualities of the facilitator. There is a lack of guidelines for the facilitator. My personal opinion is that if the facilitator does not possess the necessary skills and qualities, it could be a harmful rather than a beneficial experience for the couples.
g. There is a lack of consistency and predictability in each session. Not every session contains these three parts: the present situation, the backward glance and the plan for future. The compatibility, commitment and communication sessions contain these while the other two sessions do not.

h. The conclusion of the program seems abrupt. Possibly another session could be added to discuss and organize the possibility of an ongoing support group.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to look at the Pakistani marriage and family life objectively. This thesis has two parts. The first part includes Chapter One, the introduction. Chapter Two explains Pakistani marriage and family life and it also establishes the link between part one and two. Part two contains Chapters Three, Four and Five. Chapter Three includes a description of a day’s workshop to raise awareness of the need for marital and family enrichment education. It also introduces the REFOCCUS program. Chapter Four is devoted to the description of the REFOCCUS program with adaptations for use in Pakistan and for smoother facilitation.

The main purpose of this study was to look into Pakistani marriage and family life: the rituals around marriage, roles within the family, strengths and weakness of the extended family, religious and social effects on marriage and family life. I hope to raise the awareness of couples and families, to explore the traditional and cultural family values, to continue to cherish the good values and to modify the values that inhibit growth.

To do this I have planned a day’s workshop for couples to reflect on their married life. This includes discovering the roles/expectations they have learned and how these affect them and the lives of their children.
I hope the experience of the workshop will motivate the couples to join the REFOCCUS program. This program will provide them with support and a safe place where they can share their concerns and practise some of the skills they have learned. It may be threatening to couples in the beginning because it seems safer to keep the family secrets within the family. But hopefully they will realize that no family is perfect and that they can gain from sharing in order to enrich each other's lives with their experience. By doing this they will know they are not the only ones who go through struggles. I hope and dream that once awareness is raised, couples will see the value in marriage enrichment programs.

I also hope that those who face serious problems and see in others what can happen in the REFOCCUS program, will look for marital and/or family counseling. Because the changes in family life are so rapid in Pakistan, some of the experiences of the elders are becoming outdated. Thus marriage and family counseling is becoming more appropriate to deal with the problems of married/family life. Hardy (1980) quotes Mudd saying:

Marriage counseling is indeed an expression of our time. More and more individuals and families who might perhaps be able to work out their adjustment to their environment in a less complex society, find stresses and strains of modern day living too intense, too complicated and too demanding for them. They do not know how to use their potential inner strengths and resources to be able to cope adequately with the conflicting
and competitive demands for their attention and energies. Nor do they have the knowledge and experience needed for an objective analysis of the disturbing elements, an evaluation of the constructive and destructive factors at work and a marshaling of the positive forces for solving the problem or problems which face them. The individuals involved feel a deep need, therefore, to seek the aid of professionally skilled outsiders, uninvolved and more objective persons for help in their difficulties (p. 24).

In general Pakistani families like to keep family secrets within the family and so will not openly share with strangers. That was partly the reason why I could not get Pakistani couples here in Chicago involved in a marriage enrichment program for a research study. I can understand how threatening it could be for them but if this situation remains, the unnecessary suffering in the families will continue. Also such programs could help the younger generation learn to value the heritage we hold so dear. They will feel free to choose their heritage rather than feel resentment because it is imposed upon them.

The information about rituals surrounding marriage is in Chapter Two. This comes from my own observations of marriage ceremonies within my family and ministry. I have also included some information about rituals which I received from my grandparents and parents. This is an area needing further research to establish broader and deeper appreciation of the richness of these rituals. It was quite discouraging to find so little written information on this topic. So this study serves a dual purpose. One is to
preserve the cultural traditions around marriage and family because they are so meaningful. The other is to raise people's awareness of the amount of time dedicated to these rituals. I would like to propose that we would intertwine some marriage preparation programs for the couples into these rituals.

Chapter Two outlines the sociology of marriage, strengths and growth areas in extended family and the role of religion/faith in marriage and family life. The purpose of this was to give a realistic picture of the Pakistani family. Most of it is lived experience which I have witnessed in my ministry. Some of the material I found was idealistic and did not reflect lived experience. At the same time I also found material which was over-concentrated on negatives. It would be very much to the advantage of Pakistani families to find balance within the culture. I feel it is important to address these issues so that the quality of family life can be improved. The other purpose of this part was to give a picture of the present situation in order to prepare families to participate in the REFOCCUS enrichment program. This chapter also contains my understanding of family systems theory and highlights the nature and characteristics of family life in Pakistan. It has been challenging to integrate Family Systems theory with the Pakistani family life. I feel I am barely touching this area but hope to find further help and
understanding when I work with families and couples. I have used Family Systems theory to explain the psychological effects the extended family has on a person. I hope it will be a help in creating healthy extended families. I suggest that further study/research is needed to integrate Systems theory with marriage and family life in Pakistan.

Part Two of this thesis is practical. In Chapter Three I have planned a workshop to raise awareness among people of the need for marriage and family enrichment programs. This workshop is also a preparation and introduction to the REFOCCUS program. Chapter Four is a brief summary of the program and some changes to make the facilitation of the program smoother. In fact, there are very few changes because it is quite a simple and universal program. It is going to be trial and error learning so changes will come after it has been applied in Pakistan. In this chapter I have also tried to combine some ground rules and relevant insights from GROWING TOGETHER, a marriage enrichment program, in order to clarify the group process. The purpose of REFOCCUS is to help couples to grow in their relationship, to improve the communication among themselves and in extended families and to find some support in group sharing. This may help to break down some of the unwritten laws about family secrets and to unlock the richness in each other’s experience.
In Pakistan counseling is a new concept and there is very little research done on family life. In my research I did not find much written material on Pakistani families. There have been some studies done in India but few in Pakistan. Hopefully this research will be undertaken and some experiential research with families recorded. I have chosen the Family Systems theory but someone else might find it valuable to look at family life according to some other theories. It is worth noting that it is difficult to apply theories developed in the West to a non-Western culture like Pakistan. Perhaps the alternatives are:

1) to modify Western theories according to Pakistani culture and experience.

2) to develop new theories that will suit the cultural, social and psychological needs of Pakistani people.

We cannot make speculations about the appropriateness of any theory until further research and experiential studies are done. I hope to gain some positive and helpful data when I use this study in Pakistan.

Another question I need to keep in mind is, "What does it mean to be a pastoral counselor?" I understand a pastoral person to be someone who is aware of his/her spiritual journey and respects the journey of another person. To be pastoral means to be committed to prevention rather than waiting for the problem to develop. This also
means building on the strengths of a person and encouraging him/her to have faith in her/his own process.

To be pastoral means to be on a mission, a mission towards wholeness, completion and integration of body, mind and spirit. We human beings are called on this journey towards wholeness. We experience both a personal and cosmic longing for wholeness, wholeness in relationship with self, with our expanded world of others and with God. When a therapist relates to a client with unconditional positive regard, the client experiences the presence of God through the therapist (Whitlock, 1990). Hopefully this therapeutic relationship will help the client in her/his own journey to experience a movement towards wholeness.

As a pastoral counselor I need to re-educate myself in the verbal and non-verbal meanings of Pakistani culture to be effective in my ministry. Sue (1990) writes that it is important for counselors who work with a culturally different population, to ask themselves:

What is my counseling and communication style? What culturally and racially influenced communication styles cause me greatest difficulty or discomfort? Why?... Before the advent of western counseling and therapy approaches, how did members of a particular culture solve their problems? What were the instinctive, natural, help-giving network? Can we identify specific helping skills in the culture and use these as a frame of reference, rather than western concepts of mental health. Such an approach would allow counselors to eventually develop counseling theories different from practiced and learned today (p. 431).
As a pastoral counselor this is a challenge for me. I feel the need to learn more about my culture and the problem solving techniques that are already there. I feel the little knowledge I have is not enough and there is a need to explore more. I hope more people in this field will do some research and so consequently provide more adequate help for families and couples.

Part of my training here was to help the clients come to increased individuation and so make their own choices. In contrast I must remember that in the Pakistani culture, the family/community come first and the individual comes second. For example Berg and Jaya (1993) deal with this cultural difference in relation to a couple in a conflict situation by using certain questions:

When you are nice to your mother-in-law, what do you imagine your husband will notice you do differently? What do you think your husband will say is the main problem between you and him? What do you think he will say you could do to help him drink less? When he stops drinking what do you suppose he will notice you doing differently? ...Suppose you pretend that the problem is solved, what do you think your mother-in-law will notice you do to make her think you are more respectful of your husband? When your husband thinks you are respectful towards your mother-in-law, what do you suppose he will do to let you know that he notices it? When your son becomes more respectful of you, what do you suppose he will say he would like to see you do differently? (p. 35)

Questions like this will be a great help, as most of the Asian families are sensitive to the social consequences of their behaviors, so are Pakistani families.
My formation as Pastoral counselor here in Chicago is only a beginning. It has helped me to appreciate the unique characteristics of my Pakistani culture. Thus I will need to continue my journey of integrating the pastoral counseling skills I have learned here with the richness of my culture. This also means challenging some of the growth areas in my culture.
REFERENCES


VITA

The author, Razia Shafi, is the daughter of Husan-Bibi and Shafi Khokhar. She was born on December 2, 1958 in a small village of Gujranwala, Pakistan. She is the fourth daughter of seven children, two boys and five girls.

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September 27, 1983
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