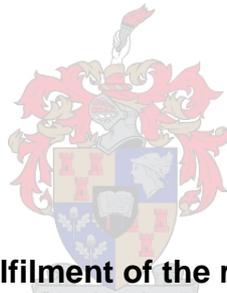


**IMPROVING COUPLE COMMUNICATION THROUGH THE  
IMAGO *GETTING THE LOVE YOU WANT* WORKSHOP FOR COUPLES**

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## DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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## SUMMARY

Although couples are often aware of the importance of communication, they are unable to implement effective communication skills. Couples can be assisted to improve their communication and the quality of their relationship by attending a marriage enrichment programme. While research shows that enrichment programmes do help couples to learn and maintain relationship skills, longer-term effectiveness seems limited, with effects dissipating over time. Researchers concerned with the long-term sustainability of improvements have recognised the value of post-intervention booster programmes.

The Imago *Getting The Love You Want Workshop for Couples (GTLYW Workshop)* is an enrichment programme for couples interested in improving the quality of their relationship. The workshop is based on the theory and principles of Imago Relationship Therapy. Imago theory provides a relational approach to and framework for understanding the dynamics and interaction of the couple dyad, as well as a dialogical process crucial for the deep communication and growth that are essential to achieve healing and wholeness. Couples learn crucial communication skills by means of a structured communication technique, the Couples Dialogue.

The *GTLYW Workshop* is under-researched when compared to other enrichment programmes. This research attempted to answer the question of whether or not couples who have attended the *GTLYW Workshop* experienced improvements in aspects of their communication and the quality of their relationship, and whether improvements were sustained over time.

Based on a philosophy of pragmatism, a mixed-methods research approach was adopted, including a dominant quantitative method and a nested qualitative method. A longitudinal design incorporated a pre-workshop, a three- to four-week post-workshop, and three-month follow-up measures. Repeated measures ANOVA procedures and Pearson product-moment correlations addressed quantitative objectives. Aspects of communication that were measured were perceptions of communication ability (Primary Communication Inventory), communication patterns (Communication Patterns Questionnaire), and relational awareness (Relational Awareness Scale). The quality of the relationship was assessed using the Dyadic Adjustment Scale. Thematic analysis, using a phenomenological approach, addressed qualitative objectives.

Within the limitations of this study, the findings provided: some evidence of short-term improvements in some aspects of communication and the relationship; some evidence for the dissipation of improvements three months later; some evidence for the need for follow-up or booster sessions after the workshop; and evidence of positive changes after the workshop. Although there is evidence of the short-term effectiveness of marriage enrichment programmes, it is the longer-term maintenance of improvements and skills that is paramount for the effectiveness and credibility of marriage enrichment programmes. Given what research has found with regard to the dissipating effects of marriage enrichment programmes, the need for booster programmes, difficulties in teaching communication skills, and the potential risk to couples (post-workshop) of deteriorating communication skills, it would be wise for practitioners and educators, as they plan and run enrichment programmes, to also place emphasis on “what happens after the workshop”. The results of this research offer an opportunity for Imago practitioners and educators to review ways of assisting couples to sustain improvements over the longer term after they have attended the *GTLYW Workshop*.

## OPSOMMING

Hoewel paartjies dikwels bewus is van die belang van kommunikasie, is hulle nie in staat daartoe om doeltreffende kommunikasievaardighede toe te pas nie. Paartjies kan gehelp word om hulle kommunikasie en die gehalte van hulle verhouding te verbeter deur 'n huweliksverrykingsprogram by te woon. Navorsing dui daarop dat ofskoon verrykingsprogramme paartjies help om verhoudingsvaardighede aan te leer en te onderhou, die doeltreffendheid daarvan op die langer termyn beperk blyk te wees, met die effek daarvan wat afneem met verloop van tyd. Navorsers wat navorsing oor die langtermyn volhoubaarheid van verbeteringe doen, het die waarde van post-ingrypingsopvolgprogramme erken.

Die Imago *Getting The Love You Want Workshop for Couples (GTLYW Werksessie)* is 'n verrykingsprogram vir paartjies wat daarin belangstel om die kwaliteit van hulle verhouding te verbeter. Die werksessie is gegrond op die teorie en beginsels van Imago-verhoudingsterapie. Imago-teorie verskaf 'n verhoudingsbenadering en -raamwerk om die dinamiek en die interaksie tussen die twee lede van 'n paartjie te verstaan, asook 'n dialogiese proses wat deurslaggewend is vir diep kommunikasie en groei, wat onontbeerlik is om heling en heelheid te bereik. Paartjies leer kritieke kommunikasievaardighede aan deur middel van 'n gestruktureerde kommunikasietegniek, naamlik die *Couples Dialogue*.

Daar bestaan minder navorsing oor die *GTLYW Werksessie* as oor ander verrykingsprogramme. Bestaande navorsing het gepoog om die vraag te beantwoord of paartjies wat die *GTLYW Werksessie* bygewoon, verbeteringe ten opsigte van aspekte van hulle kommunikasie en die kwaliteit van hulle verhouding ondervind het, en of verbeteringe volgehou is oor 'n verloop van tyd.

Gegrond op 'n filosofie van pragmatisme, is 'n mengsel van navorsingsmetodes gevolg, insluitende 'n dominante kwantitatiewe metode en 'n *nested* kwalitatiewe metode. 'n Longitudinale ontwerp het 'n pre-werksessie, drie tot vier wekelijkse post-werksessies, en drie maandelikse opvolgsessies ingesluit. Herhaalde-metings ANOVA-prosedures en Pearson produk-moment-korrelasies het voorsiening gemaak vir kwantitatiewe doelwitte. Aspekte van kommunikasie wat gemeet is, was persepsies van kommunikasievermoë (*Primary Communication Inventory*), kommunikasiepatrone (*Communication Patterns Questionnaire*), en verhoudingsbewustheid (*Relational Awareness Scale*). Die kwaliteit van die verhouding is ge-evalueer met behulp van die *Dyadic Adjustment Scale*.

Tematiese analise en die gebruik van 'n fenomenologiese benadering het voorsiening gemaak vir kwalitatiewe doelwitte.

Binne die beperkinge van hierdie studie is die volgende bevindings gemaak: enkele aanduidings van korttermyn verbeteringe ten opsigte van sommige aspekte van kommunikasie en die verhouding; enkele aanduidings van die verlies van verbeteringe drie maande later; enkele aanduidings van die behoefte vir opvolg- of versterkersessies ná die werksessie; en aanduidings van positiewe veranderinge ná die werksessie. Hoewel daar aanduidings is van die korttermyn doeltreffendheid van huweliksverrykingsprogramme, is dit die onderhoud van verbeteringe en vaardighede op die langer termyn wat van deurslaggewende belang is vir die doeltreffendheid en geloofwaardigheid van huweliksverrykingsprogramme.

Gegewe navorsingsbevindings rakende die hulpeffek van huweliksverrykingsprogramme, die behoefte aan opvolgprogramme, probleme met die aanleer van kommunikasievaardighede, en die potensiële risiko vir paartjies (post-werksessie) van agteruitgaande kommunikasievaardighede, sou dit wys wees vir praktisyns en opvoeders, wanneer hulle verrykingsprogramme beplan en aanbied, om ook klem te plaas op “dit wat ná die werksessie gebeur”. Die uitkoms van hierdie navorsing bied 'n geleentheid vir Imago-praktisyns en -opvoeders om maniere waarop paartjies bygestaan kan word, te heroorweeg om sodoende verbeteringe vol te hou oor die langer termyn nadat hulle die *GTL YW Werksessie* bygewoon het.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION, AIMS AND MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

### 1.1 Introduction

Although divorce rates and break-ups of committed relationships continue unabated, individuals continue to seek close, intimate relationships (Walsh, 2003a). Devito (1989) reported that a close relationship with another person is the most important contributor to personal happiness. In his influential work, *I and Thou*, Martin Buber (1958) posits that our individual wellbeing is intimately connected with that of others. He puts forward that it is the dialogical nature of the communication between two people in a relationship that determines the quality of that relationship. The way information is given, received, perceived, used and interpreted influences the form and content of relationships (Galvin, Bylund & Brommel, 2004; Satir, 1972). Communication is viewed as the largest single factor determining the kinds of relationships we form with others (Satir, 1972).

There is no doubt about the crucial role of effective communication in relationships (Galvin et al., 2004; Hendrix, 1993; Luquet & Hannah, 1996; Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1990; Satir, 1972). Numerous studies have been done on the relationship between communication, aspects of the relationship and marital satisfaction (Acitelli, 1988; Alexander, 1973; Boyd & Roach, 1977; Gottman, 1982; Gottman & Porterfield, 1981; Miller, Yorgason, Sandberg & White, 2003; Navran, 1967; Noller & Venardos, 1986; Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1990; Perlmutter & Hatfield, 1980; Schaap, Buunk & Kerkstra, 1988). Kelly, Fincham and Beach (2003) reported that, at any given time, 20% of all married couples report dissatisfaction with their relationship, and many couples whose relationships do survive the test of time seem to exist in a parallel fashion, with little connection (Hendrix, 1993; Robinson & Blanton, 1993). Communication is therefore crucial in helping couples maintain or enhance their connectedness. Although communication is reported as a key strength in enduring long-term relationships (Robinson & Blanton, 1993), it is also the most common presenting problem for couples seeking help for struggling or dissolving relationships (Geiss & O'Leary, 1981; Miller et al., 2003). Communication is both a protective factor that influences the sustainability of a happy relationship over time and a risk factor that influences the demise of the relationship over time (Halford, Markman, Kline & Stanley,

2003). Noller and Fitzpatrick (1990) report on a number of longitudinal studies highlighting poor communication skills preceding the onset of marital distress.

## **1.2 Research problem**

Barriers develop between partners, which makes it difficult, and sometimes impossible, for a couple to communicate effectively (Driver, Tabares, Shapiro, Nahm & Gottman, 2003; Hendrix, 1993; Jurgens, 2006; Kelly et al., 2003). Individuals experiencing distress are often affected by perceptual and interpretive distortion (Yelsma, 1984). Spouses in unhappy relationships may be unaware that they misunderstand one another (Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1990). One of the biggest communication hurdles is when partners make assumptions that each one knows what the other means (Satir, 1972). Hendrix (1993, 1995) states that even though partners are communicating through the same verbal language, once they assign their own meanings and assumptions to what is said, it becomes distorted communication, resulting in defensive, negative reactions such as denial, threats and projections. Counsellors reported that the most frequently voted communication problems involved failing to take the other's perspective when listening; blaming and criticising (Vangelista, 1994). The Gottman Laboratory Studies (Driver et al., 2003) identified criticism, contempt, defensiveness and stonewalling as the four negative interaction behaviours that, if occurring simultaneously, are predictive of the demise of the relationship with 94% accuracy. Over time, couples seem to settle into destructive patterns of communicating and interacting, such as the demand-withdraw pattern, which slowly erode the relationship (Galvin et al., 2004; Hendrix, 1993; Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1990; Satir, 1972; Sullaway & Christensen, 1983). Miscommunication during times of conflict often leads to further negative escalation and erosion of the relationship (Driver et al., 2003). Kelly et al. (2003) reviewed other key factors that influence and affect couple communication, including enduring vulnerabilities, such as experiences partners bring into their marital relationship that affect the way they communicate; how personality traits influence communication; and the reciprocal influence of communication and stressful events. They conclude that there is no simple formula for functional communication by couples.

Even though couples seem to be aware of the value of communication, they are often unable to implement effective communication skills in their relationship (Brown, 1999; Robinson & Blanton, 1993). Satir (1972) believes all communication is learned, starting just after birth, through interactions with caretakers and experiences of the social world.

Once a person realises that communication is learned, it is possible to set about changing it. Stanley, Bradbury and Markham (2000) state that couples can and should be helped to learn to engage in more gentle styles of dealing with conflicts and differences.

Numerous approaches to improving communication have emerged over the past few decades. Galvin et al. (2004) present three approaches/levels available for couples, ranging from personal approaches (including self-help education through books, conscious discussions and attempts to improve communication and make time for interactions, and creating support networks), through instructional approaches (including marriage enrichment programmes/psycho-educational approaches), to various therapeutic approaches (including couple and family therapy).

### **1.3 Improving communication through marriage enrichment programmes**

Teaching couples to communicate effectively in order to improve their relationships forms a central part of many marriage enrichment programmes (Butler & Wampler, 1999; Galvin et al., 2004; Giblin, Sprenkle & Sheehan, 1985; Halford et al., 2003; Hendrix, 1993; Jakubowski, Milne, Brunner & Miller, 2004; Johnson & Lebow, 2000). Guerney and Maxson (1990) offer the following definition of enrichment:

Marital and family enrichment comprises psycho-educational programs designed to strengthen couples or families so as to promote a high level of present and future family harmony and strength, and hence the long-term psychological, emotional, and social well-being of family members. The programs are sufficiently structured, programmatic, replicable, and economical to serve a large segment of the general public. They are usually conducted in a time-limited, group format. (p. 1127)

Marriage enrichment programmes can be traced back as far as the 1930s and 1940s (Galvin et al., 2004). Over the past few decades, enrichment programmes have been developed to equip couples with the knowledge and skills needed to create satisfying relationships. Programmes have emerged from religious organisations, lay counsellors, family therapists and researchers/practitioners (Deacon & Sprenkle, 2001). Although the terms marriage education and enhancement are also used, research studies tend to use the words enrichment, enhancement and education interchangeably. The present study uses the term enrichment, which generally refers to programmes aimed at assisting couples with more functional relationships, focusing on prevention, education and

enhancement rather than on remediation (Jakubowski et al., 2004; Larson, 2004). Relationship enrichment is primarily concerned with the long-term maintenance of improvements and skills and the promotion of long-term relationship satisfaction (Galvin et al., 2004; Halford et al., 2003).

Marriage enrichment programmes offer benefits that can augment/complement the work of therapists. Larson (2004) reports on research that has found that most couples with marital problems never seek therapy, and that between 80% and 90% of divorcing couples have not consulted a therapist. Of those who did seek help, only about two thirds reported improvements in their marital satisfaction. Enrichment programmes can reach couples before they become distressed, and are less likely to provoke fears that treatment will do more harm, that it will not work, or that it will violate their privacy or stigmatise them as dysfunctional. Enrichment programmes may also help to reduce barriers to getting more intense professional help at a later stage if needed (Larson, 2004).

### 1.3.1 Effectiveness of marriage enrichment programmes

Jakubowski et al. (2004) reviewed the empirical support of enrichment programmes, and identified no less than 13 enrichment programmes eligible for their study. Three of the most established, most researched and most frequently attended enrichment programmes, all containing strong communication components, are the Couples Communication programme (CC), Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Programme (PREP), and Relationship Enhancement (RE) (Christensen & Heavey, 1999; Galvin et al., 2004; Jakubowski et al., 2004).

Giblin et al. (1985), in their meta-analysis of relationship interventions, conclude that programmes focusing on the practise of skills and behaviour are more effective than other types of programmes. Markman, Renick, Floyd, Stanley and Clements (1993) reported that couples who engaged in an intervention programme demonstrated greater positive and less negative communication and conflict management behaviours over a three- to five-year period. Although there is evidence that skills-based interventions help couples to learn and maintain relationship skills (Halford et al., 2003), research has noted a dissipation of effects over time (Christensen & Heavey, 1999; Butler & Wampler, 1999). Kelly et al. (2003) suggest that the limited effectiveness of communication skills training may be due to not adequately addressing existential fears underlying relationship conflict.

Hendrix (1993) states that there will only be limited growth unless insight into unconscious behaviours as well as behavioural changes are addressed.

#### **1.4 Imago Relationship Therapy**

One intervention that was included in the Jakubowski review (Jakubowski et al., 2004), appears to be gaining in popularity in South Africa, and that addresses both communication skills and underlying fears and insight, is Imago Relationship Therapy (Hendrix, 1993, 1995). Imago Relationship Therapy was developed by Harville Hendrix and Helen LaKelly Hunt (Hendrix, 1993, 2005; Hunt, 2005a), and was originally published in the popular press in 1988 as a best-selling book, "Getting The Love You Want: a Guide for Couples" (Hendrix, 1993).

Luquet (1998) encapsulates Imago Relationship Therapy as follows:

Imago Relationship Therapy is a relational paradigm approach that is designed to increase couple communication, correct developmental arrests, heal wounds from childhood, and promote differentiation of the partners while restoring connection between them. Many couples who engage in Imago therapy report finding a new purpose for their relationship, as well as a new spiritual life. (p. 13)

Imago Relationship Therapy is available to couples on all three levels presented by Galvin et al. (2004). It is available at a personal level in the form of Imago books and self-study DVDs (Imago Relationships International, 2006); at an instructional level couples may attend the Imago *Getting The Love You Want Workshop for Couples (GTLYW Workshop)* (Hendrix, 1999); and at the therapeutic level couples may engage in therapy or coaching sessions with a Certified Imago Therapist. This study was delimited to improving communication at the instructional level, through the *GTLYW Workshop*. The *GTLYW Workshop* is a 20-hour, weekend workshop for couples who are interested in improving the quality of their relationship. During the workshop, couples are introduced to the theory, principles and skills of Imago Relationship Therapy through a number of interpersonal techniques/processes (Hendrix, 1993; Luquet & Hannah, 1998).

Imago Relationship Therapy and its underlying theory of marriage and couplehood provide a relational approach and framework for understanding the dynamics and interaction of the couple dyad. Effective communication is viewed as crucial to unlocking deeper

connections with, acceptance of and empathy for one's partner (Hendrix, 1993). Couples learn crucial communication skills by means of a three-step communication process called "The Couples Dialogue" (Hendrix, 1993; Luquet & Hannah, 1998). According to Hendrix (1993), regular practise of the dialogue skill will lead to clearer and more effective communication, and over time will lead to a deeper emotional connection.

Imago Relationship Therapy has been practised in South Africa for over a decade and currently there is approximately one workshop per weekend during the course of a year (Imago Relationships International, 2006b; ImagoAfrica, 2007). As yet, there have been no outcomes-based studies on Imago Relationship Therapy interventions in this country. In their review of empirically-supported marriage enrichment programmes, Jakubowski et al. (2004) rated Imago Relationship Therapy as "empirically untested" because no studies had yet been done using randomised control groups, when compared to twelve other marriage enrichment programmes. Some outcomes-based research on Imago Relationship Therapy interventions has been undertaken in the USA (Beeton, 2006a; Hannah et al., 1997b; Heller, 1999; Hogan, Hunt, Emerson, Hayes & Ketterer, 1996; Luquet & Hannah 1996; Pitner & Bailey, 1998; Weigle, 2006).

## **1.5 Research question**

One way couples can be assisted to improve their communication and the quality of their relationship is at an instructional level, by attending a marriage enrichment programme such as the *GTLYW Workshop*. Given the tendency for the effects of enrichment programmes to dissipate over time, and that Imago Relationship Therapy interventions appear to be under-researched, this study was interested in answering the following research question: "Do couples who have attended the *GTLYW Workshop* experience improvements in aspects of their communication and quality of their relationship, and are improvements sustained over time?"

## **1.6 Aim and purpose of research**

The general aim of this research was to investigate and better understand whether couples improve aspects of their communication and the quality of their relationship by attending the *GTLYW Workshop*.

The purpose of this research was to provide evidence that aspects of couple communication and the quality of the relationship did improve after attending the *GTLYW*

*Workshop*. In addition, this study hoped to provide evidence that improvements were sustained over a three-month period.

Quantitative methods, using a repeated measures design, were used to measure aspects of couple communication and the relationship before, three to four weeks after, and three months after the workshop. However, by limiting the study to only quantitative methods, other information that could benefit the study of couple communication may not emerge. While the quantitative methods will give breadth to the investigation, they will not give any depth to the subjective experiences of participants at each of the time points. For this reason, open-ended questions were also included to form a more detailed view of the subjective experiences of couples who attended the *GTLYW Workshop*. Of particular interest was how participants experienced and perceived their own communication before and after the workshop, as well as their experiences of the *GTLYW Workshop*. Therefore, in order for the researcher to gain the broadest perspective of the improvement in couple communication through the *GTLYW Workshop*, a mixed-methods approach was adopted (Creswell, 1998).

It was hoped that this study of communication would provide further support for the Imago *GTLYW Workshop* as a credible marriage enrichment intervention through which couples can be helped to learn to communicate effectively and to engage in more gentle styles of dealing with conflict and differences (Stanley et al., 2000), and ultimately to enrich the quality of their relationships. Because up-to-date research is essential to inform the refinement and enhancements of marriage enrichment programmes, it was hoped that the results of this research would add to the limited empirical body of knowledge on Imago Relationship Therapy, as well as complete a study using a South African sample. From the results, the researcher hoped to gather and provide valuable feedback and learning to Imago workshop presenters and practitioners, so they may be better informed about their offerings and the outcomes thereof. It is hoped that the new insight and information gained will ultimately benefit the couples who choose to attend the *GTLYW Workshop* in order to improve their relationships.

## **1.7 Summary**

This chapter presented the introduction to and background for this study. Communication is essential in determining the quality of relationships we form with others (Buber, 1958; Satir, 1972). As well as being a protective factor influencing the satisfaction of

relationships over time, communication is also one of the leading risk factors in deteriorating relationships (Halford et al., 2003). Couples struggle to communicate effectively and often are aware of the importance of communication but are unable to implement communication skills in their relationships (Robinson & Blanton, 1993). There are a number of approaches to improving communication, one of which is by attending a marriage enrichment programme. Marriage enrichment programmes offer many benefits to couples. While research provides evidence that improvements do occur, there is also evidence that the effects dissipate over time. The Imago *GTLYW Workshop* is an enrichment programme with a strong communication component for couples interested in improving the quality of their relationship. Imago Relationship Therapy appears to be under-researched and this study was interested in whether couples who have attended the *GTLYW Workshop* experience improvements in aspects of their communication and the quality of their relationship, and whether these improvements were sustained over a three-month period. A mixed-methods approach was adopted for this study in order to gain a broad perspective of improving couple communication through the *GTLYW Workshop*.

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical issues that guided the study. Chapter 3 describes the literature reviewed and justification for this study. Chapter 4 explains the research design and methodology employed for this study, including ethical considerations, questionnaires, procedures and analysis techniques. Chapter 5 presents the results of the study, and Chapter 6 provides the interpretation, discussion and conclusion of the study.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL ISSUES

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical issues that guided the study. This study focused on improving aspects of couple communication and the relationship through a marriage enrichment programme, the Imago *Getting The Love You Want Workshop for Couples (GTLYW Workshop)*. The *GTLYW Workshop* is a 20-hour, weekend workshop for couples who are interested in improving the quality of their relationship. It is a psycho-educational application of the theory and principles of the Imago process and its sole claim is to “provide the theoretical perspective of Imago Relationship Therapy regarding primary relationships and, through a variety of procedures, to introduce couples to a process of relationship growth. The application and results thereof are the sole responsibility of the participants” (Hendrix, 1999, p. vii).

The *GTLYW Workshop* may be attended by couples who are at various stages of their relationships, whether they are wanting to enrich a good relationship, are starting a new relationship, are in a difficult relationship and want to resolve longstanding conflicts, or if they are near break-up or divorce and want to decide if the relationship can be saved (Imago Relationships International, 2005).

*GTLYW Workshops* are presented by certified Imago therapists, who have completed training and certification as workshop presenters. The format of the workshop includes a combination of lectures, written exercises, guided imagery and demonstrations. Couples also witness coached demonstrations of key communication skills and processes, and are given time to practise new skills during the course of the workshop. A key feature of the *GTLYW Workshop*, as with other major enrichment programmes, is the “learning context”, reflective of the relational paradigm, where participants learn and practise communication skills with those people with whom they have a relationship (Galvin et al., 2004).

According to Imago Relationships International (2005), from participating in this workshop participants can expect to:

- gain greater compassion for their partners,

- learn new communication skills to break cycles of relating and to channel energy from arguments to create passion and stability in their relationships,
- discover how unconscious forces that attract them to their partners are also a source of conflict,
- receive more information about themselves and their partners,
- learn new tools for re-romanticising relationships,
- help each other finish childhood, and
- learn how to use their relationships for emotional healing and spiritual evolution.

Imago Relationship Therapy (Hendrix, 1993), and its underlying relational theory of marriage and couplehood, formed the theoretical framework to guide this study. Imago Relationship Therapy was developed by Harville Hendrix and Helen LaKelly Hunt (Hendrix, 1993, 1995, 2005; Hunt, 2005a, 2005b), and originated as a clinical theory of marriage and marital therapy. Imago Relationship Therapy evolved as an integration of well-established psychodynamic, behavioural and interpersonal psychological approaches, as well as Western spiritual traditions. Included in the therapeutic processes are elements of transactional analysis, Gestalt psychology, systems theory and cognitive therapy (Hendrix, 1993). In addition to his research, Hendrix, together with Hunt, drew on their extensive work with and observation of thousands of couples attending therapy and/or workshops with them, as well as using their own relationship as a “laboratory” where they conceived, developed and practised behavioural processes. The evolution of Imago theory is expanded on in this chapter.

By applying Imago theory to this study of couple communication, it provides not only a relational approach and framework for understanding the dynamics and interaction of the couple dyad; but also provides a dialogical process, which is the “means not only of deep communication, but also of growth essential to achieving healing and wholeness” (Hendrix, 2005, p. 32). Within this relational framework, effective communication is viewed as crucial to unlocking deeper connections with, acceptance of and empathy for one’s partner (Hendrix, 1993). Imago Relationship Therapy develops communication skills for a very specific reason – to enable and enhance the couple’s connection, while creating safety, where defences can relax, differentiation can occur, developmental wounds can start healing and empathy can develop. Couples learn crucial communication skills by means of a structured communication technique called the “Couples Dialogue” (also known as the “Imago Dialogue” or the “Intentional Dialogue”) (Hendrix, 1993; Imago Relationships

International, 2006a, 2007; Luquet & Hannah, 1998). According to Hendrix (1993), regular practise of the dialogue skill will lead to clearer and effective communication, and over time will lead to a deeper emotional connection.

This chapter presents an overview of Imago theory as it is applied to this study, of the role of communication within the Imago framework, and of how this relates to the aspects of communication and the relationship measured in this study.

## **2.2 Meta-theory overview**

The theoretical focus of Imago Relationship Therapy is on the unconscious dynamics in marital interactions (unconscious influences of childhood experiences on partner selection and the unconscious desire of adults in relationships for personal healing and self-completion) (Brown, 1999). Imago theory is based on a set of assumptions about the nature of the universe and of human nature, based on physics, anthropology and cosmology (Brown, 1999; Hendrix, 2005; Imago Relationships International, 2007). The assumptions are summarised as follows:

- We are essentially pulsating energy, connected to all forms of energy, and the natural state of this energy is relaxation and joyfulness.
- Our original state of relaxed joyfulness has been disturbed, and this disturbance has blocked our awareness of our essential unity and our connection to the whole. This disturbance is experienced as a threat to our existence. The distress caused diminishes our vitality and sense of aliveness.
- Our primary goal is to restore our original state of relaxed joyfulness, and this becomes active in the choice of a primary love partner.
- The purpose of the unconscious in a relationship is to restore us to wholeness, and to achieve this goal we must consciously co-operate with the purpose of our unconscious.
- Co-operation means stretching through acts of agapic love to guarantee the security of our partner in our presence, commitment to their psychological healing and support of their spiritual evolution.
- These acts of self-transcendence secure our own existence. Our own original state of wholeness is restored as we stretch to meet the needs of the intimate partner. This

stretching activates the parts of ourselves we lost during childhood, allowing us to reintegrate them.

These underlying assumptions of Imago meta-theory are presented as four “journeys of the self” (cosmic, evolutionary, psychological and social journeys), which form the basis of understanding the unconscious dynamics in marital/couple interaction.

The *Cosmic Journey* addresses the fundamental nature of human essence, viewing humans as essentially pulsating energy, who are “embedded in the universe, are radically interdependent with each other and all of nature, and are open systems, continually influencing and are influenced by each other” (Imago Relationships International, 2007, p. 16). Human relationships are seen to develop and operate much the same as broader cosmogenic processes, constantly evolving into higher levels of consciousness, with specific needs of achieving subjectivity, differentiation, and communion/connectedness with others (Hendrix, 2005). Based on an ontology of connection, rather than one of separation, Imago Relationship Therapy shifts from a focus on an individual or a systems paradigm to a focus on the relationship/connection as the unit of analysis (Hendrix, 2005). The relational paradigm evolved as a paradigm for understanding couple dynamics, which views the relationship as the vehicle for growth, with individual healing and growth able to take place within the context of the relationship. Long-term relationships are thus viewed as an emanation of the broader cosmogenic process (Brown, 1999; Hunt, 2005b; Luquet, 1998, 2005), with the quality of a marriage therefore viewed as a “function of the couple’s actual interactive relationship” (Hendrix, 2005, p. 26). In developing this view of human nature, Hendrix was influenced by relativity theory, quantum mechanics and the philosophical work of Martin Buber (1958), but his view was largely based on the psychological work of Core Energetics, developed by John Pierrakos, which views entities as open, essentially connected, mutually influencing of each other, and in constant motion (Hendrix, 2005).

The *Evolutionary Journey* addresses how the human brain has evolved and responds to incoming stimuli, and how this functioning impacts on human relationships. This view of the human brain was based on Paul MacLean’s view of the “triune brain”, which describes three separate, yet interconnected, parts: the deep, brain-stem area and middle, limbic system, also known as the “old brain”; and the higher, neocortex area, known as the “new brain”. The “old brain” is regarded as the unconscious, reactive brain, responsible for autonomic processes, responding to bodily responses and instincts, and unable to

distinguish between past and present. If an individual experiences the environment as unsafe, the “old brain” responds to danger by triggering defence mechanisms, resulting in either exploding energy through fighting or fleeing, or constricting energy through freezing or submitting (Imago Relationships International, 2007). The processes of the “new brain” enable flexible thought, abstract reasoning, the ability to distinguish between past and present and to apply words/language to communicate with others, and the ability to create conscious relationships (Siegel, 1999). More recently, Imago theory has also embraced the neuroscientific work of the psychiatrist Daniel Siegel (Siegel, 1999), who emphasises neural functioning and the integration necessary between different areas of the brain for self-reflection and healthy interpersonal relationships. Hendrix believes that if partners can develop safety and experience their relationship as safe, they will experience impulses to play, nurture and mate, and ultimately experience the original state of relaxed joyfulness (Brown, 1999).

The *Psychological Journey* addresses the view that individual wounding occurs as a result of nurturing deficits that arise from interaction with caretakers during different phases of development. These woundings lead to specific defensive and character adaptations, which require healthy nurturing to heal (Hendrix, 1993, 1995). Hendrix (2005) believes this healing will be most effective when individuals are in a committed, conscious partnership. Drawing largely on Attachment Theory and the work of Mary Ainsworth, and integrating the theories of Margaret Mahler, Daniel Stern, Harry Stack Sullivan and Erik Eriksson, Hendrix formulated six systematic stages of human, relational development, each of which will manifest as a “connectional impulse” in a specific order and time throughout childhood and adolescence (Imago Relationships International, 2007). For each stage, he defined the development task, the patterns of healthy nurturing and the consequences thereof, as well as patterns of deficient nurturing and the consequences thereof. Hendrix hypothesised that wounding occurring along the development continuum results in defensive strategies, where individuals either minimise/constrict their energy flow, manifesting in patterns of withdrawal, or maximise/expand their energy flow, manifesting in patterns of outward expressiveness. As adult partners unconsciously form romantic partnerships, the relationship will probably be composed of one minimising and one maximising partner. In addition, individuals tend to be attracted to partners who were wounded at similar developmental stages (Hendrix 1995; Imago Relationships International, 2007).

The *Social Journey* addresses additional wounding that occurs as a result of repressing or inhibiting functions of the self during the socialisation process (Imago Relationships International, 2007). Developing this view, Hendrix drew largely from psychoanalytical theory and object-relations theory (Lipthrott, 1994). Imago theory views the core of an individual as essential energy, which is expressed through the four functions of thinking, feeling, sensing and acting/moving. If children receive appropriate social messages from caretakers about how they think, feel, sense and act, they will be more likely to retain their original wholeness. But, as children are socialised, they may also receive negative, repressive messages, such as “don’t run”, “don’t think” or “don’t cry”. If they receive repeated “don’t” messages in any one of the four functions, they may unconsciously split off that function, which then constitutes the “lost self”. As the child develops, s/he develops a presentational self and projects denied traits onto others so as to cope with the yearning of re-connecting with missing pieces of the self and, as an adult, will unconsciously search for a mate whose complementary functions were impaired. The unconscious tries to get back parts of the self that were lost during the development stages. A goal of the committed relationship of an adult is to reclaim those lost functions in order to unblock energy that can be made available to the relationship (Hendrix, 1993, 1995).

### **2.3 Overview of clinical theory**

Imago Relationship Therapy is a theory and therapy of committed partnership. The theory and therapy of Imago have evolved and developed since the late 1970s, when, after the failure of his first marriage, Hendrix tried to address the question of “Why men and women struggle so much in relationships?” Drawing on the functions of projection, transference and unconscious perception in the selection process, Hendrix’s basic tenet was that “we tend to marry people who are similar to our parents, with whom we struggle over issues that were unfinished with in childhood” (Hendrix, 2005, p. 15). Hendrix was influenced by the work of Freud, Carl Jung, Eric Berne and Frits Perls. Of specific interest was their writings on love and marriage, where they viewed marriage as a “transference experience of infantile expectations, directed at one’s spouse, which had to be resolved” (Hendrix, 2005, p. 18). Freud, Jung, Berne and Perls viewed resolution as gaining insight, differentiating the spouse from one’s parents and surrendering the childhood expectations. Hendrix noticed that this did not seem to work with couples in practice. He set about reframing the wish of partners for need satisfaction as an indicator of what they truly needed and a re-enactment of the childhood scene in the adult relationship as an attempt

to heal the childhood wounding – not a repetition compulsion of the familiar. Applied to couples, Hendrix found that this process seemed to restart arrested childhood development and helped couples achieve emotional adulthood (Hendrix, 2005).

The major thesis of Imago Relationship Therapy is “that the purpose of the unconscious in partner choice is to finish childhood” (Imago Relationships International, 2007, p. 5). Imago theory posits that childhood experiences, especially with caretakers, unconsciously influence the selection of a partner. Hendrix (1993) uses the word “Imago” as an unconscious image that was “forged in the interaction between how we attempted to get our childhood needs met and how our caretakers responded to those needs” (p. 21). Imago theory thus views the chemistry attracting two people as “our unconscious attraction to someone who we feel will meet our particular emotional needs, someone who has both the positive and negative traits of early caretakers” (Hendrix, 1993, p. 21).

The dynamics and frustrations experienced between partners in their adult relationships are related to unfulfilled needs and longings that develop from those childhood experiences, and also to the unconscious desire for personal healing and self-completion (Brown, 1999; Hendrix, 1993). Imago theory views marriage/committed relationships as having a mission to help each partner heal childhood wounding that is carried unconsciously into their adult relationships, and as a path to wholeness, as each partner adapts, grows and stretches to meet the emotional needs of the other (Zielinski, 1999).

## **2.4 Therapeutic focus of Imago Relationship Therapy**

The primary goal of Imago Relationship Therapy is to help couples recapture and maintain safety and passion in the relationship (Hendrix, 2005). Practically, couples are assisted in creating a “conscious” marriage where their partners become “self-reflectively conscious, consciously intentional, differentiated, and accepting of one’s dependency” (Brown, 1999; Hendrix, 2005, p. 26). The therapeutic focus of Imago Relationship Therapy is to facilitate couples, using a dialogical process, through five procedures of re-imaging, re-structuring frustrations, re-solving rage, re-romanticising and re-visioning the relationship. Couples are introduced to the theory, principles and exercises through these procedures, with the aim of improving the quality of their relationship (Hendrix, 1993, 2005; Luquet & Hannah, 1998).

## 2.5 The Couples Dialogue – a core communication process

The Couples Dialogue is the core therapeutic process of Imago Relationship Therapy, and plays a central, underlying communicative function in the five Imago procedures (Hendrix, 2005; Imago Relationships International, 2007). The Couples Dialogue is a three-step, structured communication process, through which partners are taught how to create safety for each other and share their own subjectivity about issues, and it enables them to start connecting at a deeper level. By doing this, each partner is able to develop and maintain their own individuality within the safety and connection of the relationship (Hendrix, 2005), thus meeting a goal of therapy in the relational paradigm of differentiating while remaining in connection (Hendrix, 1993, 2005). The three steps of the dialogue are:

*Mirroring*, which is the first step in the communication process. Partners are taught how to effectively listen to each other (Hendrix, 1993, 2005; Luquet & Hannah, 1998). On the basis of the Rogerian reflective listening technique and Martin Buber's dialogical principles, the receiving partner paraphrases and reflects back what the sending partner has said, until the sender feels understood (Hendrix, 2005). Bailey (1998, p. 270) says of mirroring that, "As we open ourselves to mirroring the other's communication accurately, we begin to hear the others perceptions, assumptions, and interpretations, which differ from our own, sometimes strikingly".

*Validation* is the second step in the process of dialogue. Couples are taught to move beyond listening and reflecting, to communicating genuine validation in order to deepen their connection (Hendrix, 1993, 1999; Luquet & Hannah, 1998). Drawing largely on Martin Buber's I-Thou view of partner interaction, Hendrix developed this process, which facilitates understanding of the sender's subjective world and communicates to the sender that his/her point of view makes sense. This process affirms to the sender that what s/he is saying makes sense. Through this process, safety and trust are increased and a deeper connection begins.

*Empathy*, the third step in the dialogue process, was based by Hendrix on the works of Heinz Kohut, Martin Hoffman, and Carl Rogers and his students Truax and Carkhuff. During this step, couples are taught how to communicate an affective, empathic response to each other and so facilitate empathy in the relationship (Hendrix, 1993; Luquet & Hannah, 1998). This deep level of communication attempts to "recognise, reach into and, on some level, experience the emotions of the sending partner" (Hendrix, 1999, p. 23).

Here the receiver reflects back the sender's feelings. As partners begin to empathise with each other, emotional safety develops, which enables the couple to start communicating about deeper and more difficult issues (Luquet & Hannah, 1998).

Hendrix noticed that by using all three steps of the dialogue, a change in perception, attitude and affect became evident, as well as an increase in connection and bonding (Hendrix, 2005). In the present study, open-ended questions were used to explore the use by couples and their experience of the Couples Dialogue after the workshop.

## **2.5 Imago Relationship Therapy and communication**

### **2.5.1 Communication**

In positioning communication within the Imago framework, the researcher draws on Imago theory, which views the quality of a marriage as a “function of the couple's actual interactive relationship” (Hendrix, 2005, p. 26). The following definitions are presented to define communication for this study and to reflect the interactive nature of the couple's relationship: “a functional, dynamic and transactional process whereby two or more individuals deliberately try to share meaning and to promote understanding by sending and interpreting verbal and non-verbal messages” (Louw & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003, p. 9); and “a symbolic, transactional process of creating and sharing meanings” (Galvin et al., 2004, p. 23). In their discussions of these definitions, the authors highlight key aspects that are not only relevant to the study of communication, but also position the definitions within the framework of Imago theory:

- When two people participate in sending and receiving messages, they have a mutual impact on each other, i.e. they both affect and are affected by each other through their communication. Their context for communication, in this case the “relationship”, is important and becomes the focus, rather than the individuals.
- Communication is a continually changing, mutually interactive process between two partners in a relationship. As the relationship also changes and develops, communication both affects and is affected by the changes in the relationship.
- Communication is a deliberate, intentional attempt to share commonly understood meanings. If meanings are not mutually understood, for example the congruence between verbal and non-verbal messages/symbols, misunderstandings develop.

The Primary Communication Inventory (Locke, Sabagh & Thomes, 1956) and the Communications Patterns Questionnaire (Christensen, 1988) were used in this study to measure aspects of a couple's communication before and after the *GTLYW Workshop*. Open-ended questions were also used to further explore, through the words of the participants, how they viewed their communication before and after the workshop.

Because of the reciprocal association between communication and the quality of the relationship, a measure of the quality of the relationship was included in this study. The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976) was used to measure the satisfaction of the couple relationship before and after the workshop. In addition to an *overall relationship satisfaction* score, four aspects of the relationship were also measured. These were *dyadic satisfaction*, an indication of issues relating to positive feeling in the relationship; *dyadic cohesion*, an indication of common interests and activities shared by the couple; *dyadic consensus*, an indication of the extent of agreement on issues such as money, household tasks and recreation; and *affectional expression*, an indication of expressions of sex and affection in the relationship.

#### 2.5.2 The development of conscious relationships in Imago Relationship Therapy through effective communication

After initial periods of high relationship satisfaction, satisfaction tends to decline over time (Halford et al., 2003; Hendrix, 1993). Imago theory relates this decline to the transition from a romantic phase, where partners are "blind" to incompatibilities, to a phase of power struggle in the relationship, characterised by reactive behaviours arising from emerging, unmet needs and longings (Hendrix, 1993; Marrone, Hannah, Bause, Long & Luquet, 1998). People at these stages exist in what Imago Relationship Therapy terms "unconscious" relationships (Hendrix, 1993; Liphrott, 2003; Robinson & Blanton, 1993). A goal of Imago Relationship Therapy is to prevent reactivity from dominating by assisting partners to contain their reactivity and become more conscious and intentional in their relationship (Hendrix, 2005).

Effective communication is necessary to facilitate this shift from an unconscious relationship, based on reactive behaviours and misunderstandings, to a conscious relationship, based on awareness, understanding and intimacy (Hendrix, 1993). Effective communication is essential for creating an emotionally safe environment from where couples can gain insight into their lack of awareness (Noller & Venardos, 1986), and their

unconscious and reactive behaviours (Lipthrott, 2003). Noller and Fitzpatrick (1990) report that spouses in unhappy relationships are unaware that they misunderstand one another. The Gottman Laboratories found in their research that happy spouses show an awareness of each other and their relationships, as well as being intimately familiar with their partner's world (Driver et al., 2003). By learning and applying the Couples Dialogue, couples will start to develop more awareness, more understanding and greater compassion for their partners, thus enabling them to form deeper, more conscious connections. The Relational Awareness Scale (Snell, 2002) was used in this study to measure *relational consciousness*, the awareness of interaction with an intimate partner, before and after the *GTLYW Workshop*.

### 2.5.3 The development of accurate perceptions in Imago Relationship Therapy through effective communication

Effective communication enables congruent perceptions by helping partners to accurately communicate their needs and frustrations (Hendrix, 1993; Kirby, Baucom & Peterman, 2005; Lipthrott, 2003; Robinson & Blanton, 1993). Some partners are overconfident of their ability to understand each other and others make assumptions about the partner's perceptions of the relationship (Hendrix, 1993; Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1990). The perceptions of the partners become frozen (Hendrix, 1993). Hendrix (1993) states that partners need to learn how to communicate more effectively in order to deepen their understanding of each other's subjective reality. During the workshop, couples receive information about themselves and their partners. By applying the Couples Dialogue, partners are able to develop an accurate perception of each other. Through this improved channel of communication they are able to increase their knowledge of their partner's inner world and develop more accurate perceptions. Being intimately familiar with their partner's world is a key aspect of "happy" couples, as found in Gottman's research (Driver et al., 2003). The Primary Communication Inventory (Locke et al., 1956) was used in this study to gain an overall measure of communication ability, as well as to measure an individual's perception or *self-rating* of his or her own communication ability and the partner's perception or *spouse-rating* of the individual's communication ability. Open-ended questions further explored how partners perceived their communication and relationship interaction before and after the workshop.

#### 2.5.4 Breaking destructive patterns of interaction in Imago Relationship Therapy through effective communication

During the power struggle phase of relationships (Hendrix, 1993), defensiveness, denial and reactive behaviours dominate and couples seem to settle into destructive patterns of interacting (Driver et al., 2003; Hendrix, 1993; Kelly et al., 2003; Satir, 1972). Communication remains an area of high conflict, with distressed couples reporting more destructive communication behaviours and conflict avoidance (Luquet & Hannah, 1996; Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1990). The 1980s saw a surge of research on understanding different communication and interaction patterns in couples, such as the demand-withdraw pattern (Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1990). Stonewalling (Driver et al., 2003), in particular, appears after a demand-withdraw pattern emerges in the relationship. During the *GTLYW Workshop*, participants learn new communication skills to break destructive cycles of relating (Imago Relationships International, 2005). The Communication Patterns Questionnaire (Christensen, 1988) was used in this study to measure negative and positive patterns of communication during couple interaction. Five patterns of communication were assessed: *constructive communication*, an indication of mutual discussion of problems, expression of feelings, negotiation of solutions, understanding of views and resolution of problems; *mutual avoidance and withholding*, an indication of whether both partners withdraw after the discussion of a problem; *demand-withdraw communication*, an indication of one partner's efforts to discuss a problem and the other partner's efforts to avoid discussion, both when a problem arises and during the discussion of a problem; *man demand-woman withdraw communication*, an indication of the male partner pressurising the female partner to discuss a problem, and criticising, nagging and making demands on her, while she tries to avoid discussion and defends herself, withdraws, becomes silent, or refuses to discuss matters further; *woman demand-man withdraw communication*, which is the same as the previous measure, except that the female partner is in the pressurising role and the male partner avoids and withdraws.

## 2.6 Summary

This chapter presented Imago Relationship Therapy and its underlying relational theory of marriage and couplehood as the theoretical framework to guide this study. Imago theory provides a relational approach and framework for understanding the dynamics and interaction of the couple dyad, as well as a dialogical process crucial for deep communication and growth that is essential to achieve healing and wholeness (Hendrix,

2005). Imago theory is based on the premise that childhood experiences, especially with caretakers, unconsciously influence the selection of romantic partners, and that dynamics and frustrations experienced between partners in their adult relationships are related to unfulfilled needs and longings that develop from those childhood experiences. The underlying assumptions of Imago meta-theory are presented as the cosmic, evolutionary, psychological and social journeys of the self, which form the basis of understanding the unconscious dynamics in marital/couple interaction.

Because Imago theory views the quality of a marriage as a function of the couple's interactive relationship, effective communication plays a central role in unlocking the potential of the relationship by facilitating deeper connections, acceptance and empathy for one's partner. Couples learn crucial communication skills by means of a structured communication technique, the Couples Dialogue.

The Imago *GTLYW Workshop* was presented as the enrichment programme used to enhance couple communication and aspects of the relationship. By applying Imago theory to this study, the researcher expected the *GTLYW Workshop* to influence aspects of communication and the relationship because of the strong psycho-educational approach to achieve attitudinal, cognitive and behavioural changes (Hannah et al., 1997b; Luquet, 2005). Principles, techniques and processes taught to couples during the *GTLYW Workshop* provide couples with both insight and tools for increasing awareness, developing more conscious relationships, developing more accurate perceptions, and breaking down destructive patterns of interaction. Both insight and tools are considered necessary to enable positive change in the relationship (Galvin et al., 2004; Hendrix, 1993). As couples learn more about their unconscious motivations and begin to use dialogical processes to transform these new insights into supportive behaviours, they will start to create a more conscious, empathic and, ultimately, more rewarding relationship. The learning context in which both partners participate in the workshop is fundamental to the relational paradigm underpinning Imago Relationship Therapy, where individual healing and growth can develop within the context of the relationship.

The following chapter will present the literature reviewed, followed by the design and methodology used for this study.

## CHAPTER 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the literature reviewed for this study. The review begins with an overview of the research done on marital communication and interaction over the past couple of decades. It then focuses on research on improving couple communication through marriage enrichment programmes, followed by research on Imago Relationship Therapy, and specifically on the Imago *Getting The Love You Want Workshop for Couples (GTLYW Workshop)* as the enrichment intervention. The chapter is concluded with the justification for this study.

#### 3.2 Review of research on marital communication and interaction

In their review of research on marital communication in the 1980s, Noller and Fitzpatrick (1990) highlighted trends or focused areas that emerged in research on marital communication, as well as suggesting possible future directions. Research throughout that decade saw researchers moving from relying on an outsider's view (researcher) to a greater reliance on taking the perspectives of both partners in the marriage. Research gained greater understanding of differences in communication patterns, such as demand-withdraw communication, between partners in distressed and non-distressed marriages, including accuracy of spousal perception and differences between husbands and wives. Research on couple types saw a movement away from the individual to using the couple type/entity as the unit of analysis, and found that the couple type, rather than individual assignment, regulates marital interaction. Longitudinal studies emerged showing that poor communication skills precede the onset of marital distress. Noller and Fitzpatrick (1990) also emphasised the context in which interaction takes place, where both spouses are interacting in a context that includes the cognitions, beliefs, intentions and affect of both spouses.

In their review article, Noller and Fitzpatrick (1990) suggested that possible directions for future research on marital communication and interaction should focus on increasing theoretical work on marital interaction, searching for causal mechanisms that explain

patterns of interacting, more longitudinal studies, emphasis on issues of sex and gender, and work on mental models of self and relationships, such as adult attachment styles.

In Gottman and Notarius's (2000, 2002) extensive reviews of research on marital interaction in the 1990s, which focused mainly on advances in observational research, they highlight two primary advances in the research of marital interaction. The first is advancements provided by using cross-sectional, hypothesis-generating descriptive research and tested models for predicting the longitudinal course of relationships over time. The second is advances from empirical developments in areas of the study of power, the study of marital interactions as determinants of family well-being, and the study of interactional behaviour, perception and physiology. They highlighted the pioneering work of Christensen and associates on patterns of interactions and the importance of these patterns in predicting a decline in marital satisfaction and even divorce in certain couples. In looking ahead, Gottman and Notarius (2000, 2002) suggested that research should continue to focus on these patterns of communication and interaction.

### **3.3 Improving couple communication through marriage enrichment programmes**

Giblin et al. (1985), in their extensive meta-analysis of relationship intervention studies (n = 85), reported that programmes focusing on skills and behavioural practices were more effective than other types of programmes. Although there is evidence that skills-based interventions help couples to learn and maintain relationship skills (Cole & Cole, 1999; Halford et al., 2003), Kelly et al. (2003) suggest that the limited effectiveness of communication skills training may be due to not adequately addressing existential fears underlying relationship conflict. Hendrix (1993) echoes this view and states that there will only be limited growth unless insight into unconscious behaviours as well as behavioural changes are addressed.

In Christensen and Heavey's (1999) review of interventions for couples, they looked at research on the durability and effectiveness of enrichment programmes, and found that the effects of these programmes tend to dissipate over time. Even well-established programmes, such as the Couple Communication programme (CC), Relationship Enhancement (RE) and the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Programme (PREP), which all include substantial amounts of research, show a deterioration in effects from post-test to follow-up. Christensen and Heavey (1999) suggested that a challenge for

future research would be to better understand this dissipation of effects. Researchers have recognised the need for implementing some type of booster programme or booster sessions in an attempt to maintain improvements from enrichment programmes (Butler & Wampler, 1999; Christensen & Heavey, 1999; Guerney & Maxson, 1990; Stanley, Markman, St Peters & Leber, 1995). Cole and Cole (1999) recommend that both process and outcome research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of enrichment programmes, as well as skills retention over time, building on existing successful programmes.

Christensen and Heavey (1999) also highlighted the need for researchers to use longer-term follow-ups, which they consider essential to evaluate whether there has been a true prevention effect. Although Christensen and Heavey (1999) consider a three-month follow-up to be very short, there is evidence that a deterioration in effects occurs in this timeframe.

### **3.4 Review of research on Imago Relationship Therapy**

#### **3.4.1 South African research**

Although Imago Relationship Therapy was introduced to South Africa more than a decade ago, no outcomes-related research on Imago Relationship Therapy interventions has been done as yet. One South African study was found that incorporated Imago developmental stages into the development of a new theory (Opperman, 2005).

#### **3.4.2 International research**

Internationally, Imago Relationship Therapy is in its third decade of practice, with some research that has been done. In their review of empirically-supported marriage enrichment programmes, Jakubowski et al. (2004) rated Imago Relationship Therapy as “empirically untested” when compared to twelve other marriage enrichment programmes, because no studies had yet been done using randomised control groups. Using criteria established for determining Empirically Supported Treatments (ESTs), Jakubowski et al. (2004) provided a comprehensive review of the outcomes research on 13 marriage enrichment programmes. The EST approach, which evolved out of the work of task teams in the American Psychological Association, uses a standardised set of criteria based on two principles to evaluate the empirical effectiveness of specific interventions. The two principles used to establish the effectiveness of a programme are 1) the use of randomised clinical trials, using control groups and the random assignment of subjects;

and 2) replication, where treatment manuals exist and treatments could be replicated by different teams of researchers. Programmes were rated as “efficacious” if supported by two or more published outcomes studies (in peer-reviewed format) by separate research teams, and if they used control groups and random assignment. “Possibly efficacious” ratings were given to programmes if they had one controlled, randomised published study or more than one study by the same researchers. Programmes such as Imago Relationship Therapy, with some outcomes research but no published, controlled randomised studies, were rated as “empirically untested”. Jakubowski et al. (2004) also acknowledged criticism of the EST approach from other scholars, such as that this approach subordinated some enrichment programmes, implying that they were not valid, rather than just untested.

### 3.4.3 Specific studies of outcomes/effectiveness of *GTLYW Workshops*

No outcomes studies using randomised control groups have been done on Imago Relationship Therapy, hence the “empirically untested” rating from Jakubowski et al. (2004). However, there is some support from research, including pre- and post-treatment comparisons, but not including control groups.

A comprehensive report on the existing research on Imago Relationship Therapy was done by Beeton (2006b). In her report, Beeton (2006b) includes research done on Imago constructs, the use of Imago Relationship Therapy skills, and the outcomes and efficacy of Imago Relationship Therapy workshops. The results of two studies regarding aspects of the relationship experience of people completing a short-term course of Imago Therapy showed improvements in relationship interactions (Hannah, Luquet & McCormick, 1997a; Luquet & Hannah, 1996), as did a study by Hannah et al. (1997b) on the dyadic adjustment and the practice of Imago Relationship skills by Imago therapists.

Research on the outcomes of the *GTLYW Workshop* was of particular interest to this study. A doctoral study by Heller (1999), which was not included in the Beeton (2006b) report, utilised a one-group pretest-posttest design with a three-month follow-up to evaluate the impact of the GTLYW weekend workshop on the behaviour, attitudes and perceptions of 60 participants. The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), Dyadic Trust Scale (DTS) and the Waring Intimacy Questionnaire (WAQ) were used to gain measures of dyadic adjustment, dyadic trust and intimacy. The Marital Satisfaction Inventory was used to measure variables such as global distress, affective communication and problem-

solving communication. The study used both quantitative and qualitative methods. Using paired *t*-tests, the analysis showed that both male and female groups made significant pre-post and pre-follow-up changes, in a positive direction, on all the dependent variables, and that participants at all levels of distress made significant gains on all dependent variables. No significant differences were noted from post to follow-up measures. Limitations of the study, acknowledged by the author, included the lack of a control group, which limited the conclusions and cause and effect assumptions one can draw from the study, reliance on only self-reporting by the participants, and the attrition rate. Even though 30 couples took part in the Heller (1999) study, the results reflected individual functioning and did not reflect the relationship functioning by using the couple as the unit of analysis. The strength of this study was the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the *GTLYW Workshop*.

Pitner and Bailey (1998) investigated whether the *GTLYW Workshop* had an impact on the quality of the marital relationship, using the Marital Satisfaction Scale (MSS) and the Relationship Change Scale. They surveyed 110 participants (55 couples) who attended nine different workshops across the USA before, immediately after and six weeks after attending the *GTLYW Workshop*. The primary purpose was to measure the overall satisfaction level of the participants. The results showed significant increases in scores on the MSS from pre- to post-test measure. Although mean scores continued to rise at the follow-up measure, they were not significantly higher. Limitations to this study included the very short follow-up period (six weeks), which limits the ability to assess the longer-term sustainability of improvements. The lack of control group again limits the conclusions that one can make from this study. An advantage of the study is that it used couples from a broader geographic area, rather than volunteers recruited from university populations.

Hogan et al. (1996) explored demographic characteristics, overall satisfaction, and levels of couple conflict following a *GTLYW Workshop*. A total of 268 participants attending workshops in Chicago, Los Angeles and New York City were surveyed with three self-report questionnaires, including the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS). The results suggested that, overall, the participants were satisfied with the workshop, with the highest levels of satisfaction from women participants from the Chicago area. Education levels showed no relationship to levels of satisfaction. The study also revealed that participants who had a high score on the CTS were more likely to find the structure of the workshop enjoyable. A number of limitations restrict drawing conclusions from this study, including no random

assignment of participants and no control group. It is uncertain whether the relatively high satisfaction ratings were due to extraneous variables. As this study focused on individual satisfaction, it is uncertain what the satisfaction level of the couple relationship would be if the couple entity was used as the unit of analysis.

Beeton (2006a), in her doctoral study, used a mixed model approach to explore the use of Imago skills, such as dialogue skills, intentionality and stretching skills, expressing anger and behaviour change skills, as well as dyadic adjustments by past attendees of the *GTLYW Workshop*. Participants were accessed through ten workshop presenters in various regions around the United States. Beeton found that 102 participants who attended the *GTLYW Workshop* at least a year previously indicated average levels of dyadic adjustment and also indicated an average use of Imago skills. By including open-ended questions, which allowed the participants to provide their own unique views on their use of Imago skills, the participants indicated that although Imago skills made a significantly positive impact on their relationship dynamics, they had difficulty in relinquishing negative relationship patterns. A strength of Beeton's (2006a) research was that it conducted the follow-up assessment after a period of more than 12 months. As no pre-test assessment was done on the dyadic adjustment of workshop attendees before the workshop, it was difficult to assess the actual impact of the workshop on the dyadic adjustment of the participants. Although the results of this research reflect individual functioning, views and adjustment, it did not reflect the functioning of the couple relationship by using the couple as the unit of analysis.

Weigle (2006), also in a doctoral study and using a qualitative design, researched the lived experience of *GTLYW Workshop* participants (n = 12) and how it affected their marital satisfaction. The phenomenological study also asked questions regarding family-of-origin issues, communication skills and conflict resolution. She found that participants who attended the *GTLYW Workshop* at least a year previously reported increased marital satisfaction, with specific reference to the ability to listen empathically and to ways of resolving conflict. Because of the qualitative nature of the study, Weigle (2006) was able to understand and gain insight from the subjective experiences of past participants. Although the small sample size is typical for a phenomenological study, it presents a possible limiting factor in that it is not representative of a broader population.

Although the intervention in the study by Luquet and Hannah (1996) was a structured six-week programme of Imago Relationship Therapy, as opposed to the *GTLYW Workshop*,

their study is included in this review. The Luquet and Hannah study was the first study to document the efficacy of the short-term Imago Therapy intervention. Using a one-group pretest-posttest design, 18 participants (9 couples) were assessed before and after the intervention, using three subscales of the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI), including Global Distress, Affective Communication and Problem-solving Communication Skills. Although post-measure improvements were reported in these three areas of relationship functioning, a number of limitations were noted. Using a one-group pretest-posttest design, without a control group or random assignment, limits the conclusions that can be drawn from the results. In addition, even though individual subjects showed statistically significant improvements in the measured variables, the improvements did not reflect the relationship functioning of the couple as the unit of analysis, which is fundamental to the relational paradigm that Imago Relationship theory is based on. A further limitation was that even though there were improvements in scores from the pre- to post-measure, it did not provide a follow-up measure to assess whether the improvements persisted over a longer period of time.

### **3.5 Summary of literature reviewed**

Important aspects for research on marital communication and interaction include using the perspectives of both partners, gaining greater understanding of communication patterns and using the context of the couple relationship as the unit of analysis. Research should continue to focus on patterns of communication, look for causal mechanisms of patterns of interacting, and emphasise longitudinal studies (Gottman & Notarius, 2000; Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1990).

Enrichment programmes that focus on skills and behaviour practise seem to be more effective (Giblin et al., 1985). Although there is evidence that skills-based interventions help couples learn and maintain relationship skills, the effectiveness of enrichment programmes seems limited, with their effects dissipating over time (Christensen & Heavey, 1999; Kelly et al., 2003). In trying to understand the dissipation of effects, Hendrix (1993) and Kelly et al. (2003) suggest that the limited effectiveness may be due to not addressing unconscious influences and fears underlying conflict and interaction in the relationship. Christensen and Heavey (1999) also highlight the need for researchers to use longer-term follow-ups, which are considered essential to evaluate the effectiveness of enrichment interventions. Researchers concerned with the long-term sustainability of improvements have recognised the value of booster programmes or sessions post-intervention.

Some research was found on Imago Relationship Therapy, but as yet there have been no South African outcomes-related studies. Most of the international research done on Imago Relationship Therapy was published in the Imago in-house journal, the *Journal of Imago Relationship Therapy*. Three of the studies were unpublished doctoral dissertations. Three studies were published in broader, peer-reviewed journals (Hannah et al., 1997a; Robbins, 2005; Zielinski, 1999). When compared to other enrichment programmes for empirical evidence, Imago Relationship Therapy is under-researched (Jakubowski et al., 2004).

The biggest limitation to research done on Imago Relationship Therapy interventions, and specifically the *GTLYW Workshop*, is that there has been no use of control groups and random assignment of participants. This means that limited conclusions could be drawn from the studies. Other limitations noted were a very short follow-up period (Pitner & Bailey, 1998), a lack of pre-test data (Beeton, 2006a), or a lack of follow-up data (Hogan et al., 1996; Luquet & Hannah, 1996).

An important observation from most of the studies was that even though individual subjects showed significant improvements in various studies, these improvements did not reflect the functioning of the relationship with the couple as the unit of analysis, which is fundamental to the relational paradigm that Imago Relationship theory is based on.

Accepting their limitations, all the studies provided some valuable support for the credibility and effectiveness of Imago Relationship interventions. A key strength from two of the studies (Beeton, 2006a; Heller, 1999) was the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a more comprehensive, supported view of their research problems.

### **3.6 Justification for this study**

It is clear that more research on the Imago *GTLYW Workshop* is needed. Larson (2004), in his recommendations for the future direction of marriage enrichment programmes, suggests that the effectiveness of most of the programmes remains unclear until they are subjected to greater scrutiny. Because empirically-based interventions are likely to be more effective, it is important that couple interventions are better informed by ongoing research (Stanley et al., 2000).

In studying the improvement of couple communication through the *GTLYW Workshop*, this study is the first South African outcomes-based study on an Imago Relationship Therapy intervention. This study attempted to improve on the limitations of previous studies, while

taking into consideration important aspects for continuing research on couple interaction, in order to provide further support for the effectiveness of using an Imago Relationship Therapy intervention to improve the communication of couples.

### **3.7 Summary**

This chapter presented the literature that was reviewed and the justification for this study. The following chapter describes the research design and methodology used for this study, followed by the results and discussion of this research.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the design and methodology of this study. A mixed-methods approach (Creswell, 2003), which incorporates both quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study, was adopted for this research. The concept of mixing different methods can be traced back to the late 1950s, when researchers Campbell and Fiske collected and analysed both quantitative and qualitative data in their 'multimethod matrix' study of psychological traits. This prompted other researchers to incorporate multimethods of data collection and analysis. It was felt that, because all methods have limitations, biases in a single method could cancel or neutralise biases in another method. Different reasons for converging quantitative and qualitative methods evolved, including using results from one method to help inform the other method; nesting one method in the other method in order to provide insight into different levels of analysis; or seeking to extend the breadth and range of enquiry by using different methods (Creswell, 2003; Greene, Caracelli & Graham, 1989). This chapter begins with the rationale for using a mixed-methods approach, followed by a discussion of the purpose and objectives of the study, specific methodologies used, and the questionnaires, procedures and analysis procedures used.

#### 4.2 Mixed-methods approach

Three elements of inquiry contributed to the researcher deciding on a mixed-methods approach for this study:

The first element is using the philosophy or knowledge claim of *pragmatism* (Cherryholmes, 1992; Creswell, 2003). Pragmatic research seeks to clarify meanings based on anticipated consequences of actions and situations. Pragmatism originated from the works of Peirce, James, Mead and Dewey (Cherryholmes, 1992) and, more recently, includes writers such as Rorty, Murphy, Patton and Cherryholmes (Creswell, 2003). The focus is on "what works" and solutions to problems. The problem is considered more important than the methods, and researchers use all approaches to understand the problem (Creswell, 2003). Using pragmatism as a philosophical foundation for mixed-methods studies emphasises the importance of focussing attention on the research

problem and using different approaches to gain knowledge about the problem. Pragmatism is not committed to any one system of philosophy and reality, and researchers have a choice of what methodologies best meet their needs. The world is not seen as an absolute entity and truth is what works best at the time. Emphasis is placed on the context that people find themselves in. A pragmatic view provides the opportunity for multiple methods, different worldviews and assumptions, as well as different forms of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2003).

A *concurrent* strategy of inquiry allows the researcher to provide a comprehensive analysis and the best understanding of the research problem. This strategy allows for quantitative and qualitative data to be collected simultaneously during the research process, and then integrates the information during the interpretation of the overall results. A concurrent strategy allows for one method of data collection to be *nested* within another method in order to analyse the situation and provide insight into different levels of analysis (Creswell, 2003).

A mixed-methods approach allows for a *mix of research methods*, which includes both predetermined and emerging designs, multiple forms of data collection, and both statistical and text analysis (Creswell, 2003). The researcher should mix or combine methods that have complementary strengths and no overlapping weaknesses (Sydenstricker-Neto, 2007). A greater priority may also be placed on one of the methods, allowing for a dominant and less dominant method for the study. The quantitative method was the dominant method in this study.

Therefore, the rationale for using the mixed-methods approach was based on the assumption that collecting different types of data will provide a more comprehensive analysis and a greater understanding of the research problem, as well as capturing the best of both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Creswell, 2003).

### **4.3 Research problem**

Barriers to effective communication (see Chapter 1) develop between partners, and this hinders their ability to communicate effectively. Even though couples seem to be aware of the value of effective communication, many are unable to implement effective communication skills in their relationships. Kelly et al. (2003), after reviewing a number of factors that influence and affect couple communication, conclude that there is no simple formula for functional communication in couples. One way couples can be helped to

improve their communication and the quality of their relationship is at an instructional level, by attending a marriage enrichment programme, such as the Imago *Getting The Love You Want Workshop for Couples (GTLYW Workshop)*. By gaining insight into the interactive dynamics of their relationship, and learning and applying procedures underpinned by the core communication process (Couples Dialogue), couples can unlock opportunities to communicate effectively, engage safely in conflict, foster mutual growth and healing, create understanding and empathy for each other, and ultimately deepen their connection and improve the quality of their relationship.

Given the research problem, the research question for this study was: “Do couples who have attended the *GTLYW Workshop* experience improvements in aspects of their communication and quality of their relationship, and are improvements sustained over time?”

#### **4.4 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to investigate and better understand whether couples improve aspects of their communication and the quality of their relationship after attending the *GTLYW Workshop*. The mixed-methods approach presented the opportunity to attempt to generalise findings to a population, and to develop a more detailed view of the meaning of communication for individuals. In this study, quantitative questionnaires were used to investigate whether improvements occurred in aspects of communication and the relationship after the workshop, and whether these improvements were sustained over a three-month period. At the same time, the participants’ subjective experiences of their own communication and of the workshop were explored further, using open-ended questions.

#### **4.5 Objectives**

The primary objective of this study was to investigate whether improvements occurred in aspects of a couple’s communication and the quality of their relationship after engaging in the *GTLYW Workshop*. Aspects of communication measured were overall communication ability, self-perception of communication ability, spouse’s perception of communication ability, relational consciousness, patterns of communication, including constructive communication, total demand-withdraw, man demand-woman withdraw, woman demand-man withdraw, and mutual avoidance and withholding. Aspects of the relationship that

were measured were overall relationship satisfaction, dyadic satisfaction, dyadic consensus, dyadic cohesion and affectional expression.

Secondary objectives of this study were to:

- Investigate whether improvements in a couple's communication and the relationship were still evident at a three-month follow-up measure
- Investigate possible communication differences between males and females
- Investigate possible influences on communication and the relationship, of demographic variables such as length of relationship, age of participants, and education level
- Explore and gain insight into and understanding of how participants experienced their communication before and after the *GTLYW Workshop*
- Explore and gain insight into the participants' expectations before and their learning after the *GTLYW Workshop*, with specific focus on their use of the Couples Dialogue

Because priority was given to the quantitative method, this study was governed by the hypothesis that, by engaging in the *GTLYW Workshop*, couples will improve aspects of their communication and the quality of their relationship, and that improvements will still be evident after a three-month period. It was hoped to reject the null hypothesis that stated that there would be no differences between group means at the three time points.

## **4.6 Research design**

A mixed-methods approach may prioritise one dominant method, which in this study was the quantitative method. The qualitative method was nested within the dominant approach. This did not mean that the nested method was less valuable, but rather that the nested method could address either a different question to the dominant method, or seek information from a different level (Creswell, 2003). The nested approach allows the researcher to gain perspectives from different types of data and different levels of data. In the present study, the couple was the unit of analysis for the quantitative method and the individual participant the unit of analysis for the qualitative method.

### **4.6.1 Quantitative method**

A longitudinal approach, using a repeated-measures design, was chosen as the quantitative method for this study. Three time points were utilised, namely a pre-workshop

measure (before the workshop), a post-workshop measure (three to four weeks after the workshop), and a follow-up measure (three months after the workshop). Using a repeated-measures design allows for each participant to be measured and data to be gathered at all three time points.

A quasi-experimental design, including a non-equivalent control group, was planned for the quantitative method (Shadish, Cook & Campbell, 2002). It was envisaged that couples on the waiting list could be used as a non-equivalent control group, as they would be of a similar profile to the couples who attended the workshop. In planning the control group, workshop presenters/organisers were emailed by the researcher, explaining the need for the control group. Two presenters responded, and they provided a list of email addresses of people who had contacted them with regard to the *GTLYW Workshop*, had shown interest in the workshop, but had not yet committed to attending. An invitation to participate in the research and a set of questionnaires were emailed to 49 people. Nine (18%) people responded that they would participate, but only five (10%) actually returned the questionnaires. Taking into account attrition rates in longitudinal studies, this number was considered too small to constitute a control group. Although this weakened the research design possible for this study, Cook and Campbell (1979) suggest that careful analysis of the design and results may still allow the researcher to draw useful conclusions, even with a weaker design.

#### 4.6.2 Qualitative method

A phenomenological approach was adopted for the qualitative method of this study. A phenomenological approach focuses on the *essence* or “understanding the meaning of the *lived experiences* of several individuals about a concept or the *phenomenon*” (Creswell, 1998, p. 51). In this study, open-ended questions were used to gain an understanding of the subjective experiences of participants with regard to their communication before and after the *GTLYW Workshop*, as well as their expectations and experiences of the *GTLYW Workshop*. Analysing the actual words used by the participants to describe their experiences allows the researcher to identify patterns and relationships of meanings.

Because the qualitative method was the less dominant method in this research, it allowed for an exploration of data at a different level.

#### **4.7 Ethical considerations**

Participation in the study was voluntary. There were no anticipated risks to participating in this study. All the participants who agreed to participate in the research were asked to read and sign an informed consent form (see Appendix A). The consent form explained the purpose of the research, what was expected of the participants, the procedures for completing questionnaires, potential risks/discomfort and confidentiality issues. Participants were given the option to withdraw from the study at any stage if they experienced any stress or anxiety while participating. They were encouraged to ask questions or raise concerns they had about the research, and were given the contact details of the researcher and her supervisor.

Completed questionnaires were kept private and locked away and only the researcher had access to the records. As the completed questionnaires were returned, they were immediately allocated a couple code and a participant code for each partner. All data and information were processed anonymously, using the participant codes to link partners to a couple. The contact details of the participants were only accessed in order to email or post the post-workshop and follow-up questionnaires.

The researcher was mindful about the emphasis that Imago Relationship Therapy places on the concept of “safety” for partners in a relationship. This was also re-emphasised by the *GTLYW Workshop* presenters. The researcher took great care to respect and maintain this safety for the participants during the course of the research.

#### **4.8 Participants**

The participants were drawn from 147 couples ( $n = 294$ ) who attended one of fourteen *GTLYW Workshops* that were held in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town, Stellenbosch and Worcester during 2006. A total of 159 participants agreed to take part in the study and completed the pre-workshop questionnaires. These participants included 77 couples, where both the male and female partners completed the questionnaires (154 participants), and an additional five participants where only one partner participated in the study.

Of the participants, 120 (75%) were Afrikaans speaking and 39 (25%) were English speaking. One hundred and twenty-nine (81%) participants were married and living together, 12 (8%) were unmarried but cohabitating, 12 (8%) were unmarried and living separately, four (3%) participants were separated and two (1%) were divorced. The mean

length of relationship was 12.83 years (SD = 22.17, median = 12), with a minimum length of 0.75 years and a maximum length of 35 years. A total of 129 (82%) participants were in their first marriage, 18 (11%) were in their second marriage, 10 (8%) never been married, and one (1%) participant was already in her third marriage. The mean number of children per couple was 1.7 (median = 2). The mean age of the first child was 11.8 years (SD = 23.19, median = 10). One hundred and fifty (96%) of the participants were white, two (1%) were black, one (1%) was Coloured, and four (3%) were Indian. The mean age of the participants was 38.9 years (SD = 23.55, median = 39.0). The mean age of the males was 40 years (SD = 8.5), and the mean age of females was 37.9 years (SD = 8.1). Education levels were high, with six (4%) participants having a higher/postgraduate degree, 90 (57%) participants having a tertiary degree, 36 (23%) having a tertiary diploma, and 26 (16%) having completed their high school education. One hundred and thirty-five (85%) participants were permanently employed, with eight (5%) in temporary employment and 16 (10%) not employed. One hundred and forty (89%) participants reported a gross annual family income of more than R200 000.

In summary, the typical participating couple was white, in their late thirties, in their first marriage of about 12 years, parents of about two children, having completed tertiary-level education, and were employed, earning over R200 000 per annum.

At the post-workshop measure, which took place between three to four weeks after the workshop, 56 participants completed the questionnaires. These participants included 21 couples of which both partners responded, and 14 others, where only one of the partners responded. The respondents represented 35% of the pre-workshop participants, which indicates an attrition rate of 65% between the pre-workshop and post-workshop measures. The researcher could account for the loss of 18 (11%) participants. Eight (5%) participants communicated that they had separated or would be separating during this three- to four-week period. Six (3.7%) participants provided no follow-up contact details. The researcher was able to obtain contact details for four out of the six, but subsequently got no response from them and assumed they did not want to continue with the study. Four (2.5%) participants withdrew due to illnesses in their families.

At the three-month follow-up measure, 41 participants completed the questionnaires. These included 16 couples (32 individuals) and nine others, where only one partner responded. These respondents represented 73% of the post-workshop group, which indicated a much smaller attrition rate of 27% from post-workshop to three-month follow-

up. Apart from the drop-offs that the researcher could account for, some participants had commented that their partners had dropped out because the questionnaires took “too long” to complete, or that they “didn’t have time”. Shadish et al. (2002) attribute this type of drop-off to the research process, where a trade-off needs to be made between the researcher’s desire to measure many relevant constructs and the respondent’s desire to minimise time taken to complete questionnaires.

#### 4.9 Subject attrition

It is not uncommon for participant drop-off to occur in longitudinal studies and, where possible, attempts should be made to minimise attrition rates and analyse why the drop-off occurred (Goodman & Blum, 1996; Shadish et al., 2002). In an effort to minimise the attrition rate during the data-collection phase of this study, the participants were contacted either by email or post up to three times about completing and returning their questionnaires timeously. The following figure shows the attrition rates for this study:

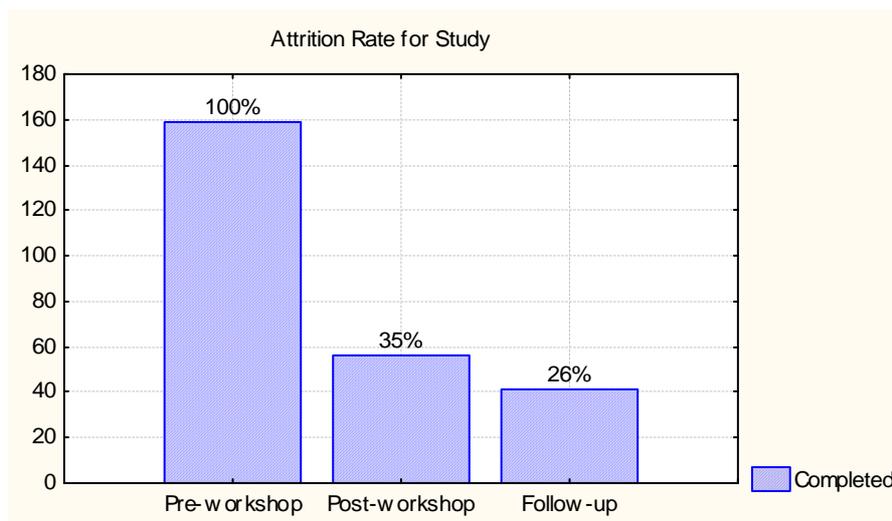


Figure 1. Attrition rates indicated by percentage of completed questionnaires

#### 4.10 Questionnaires

Self-report questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data on aspects of communication, relationship awareness and quality of the relationship. Open-ended questions were also included to gain insight into and a subjective view of how the participants perceived aspects of their own communication and of their experiences of the *GTLYW Workshop*.

#### 4.10.1 Demographic questionnaire

The demographic questionnaire was used to gather information regarding the relationship, including variables such as relationship status, length of the relationship, number of times been married, family composition, levels of education, employment, income, language, race and religious denomination.

#### 4.10.2 Quantitative questionnaires

##### 4.10.2.1 Dyadic Adjustment Scale

The *Dyadic Adjustment Scale*, a 32-item questionnaire developed by Graham Spanier (1976), was used to measure the quality of the couple relationship as perceived by each partner. The scale is widely used for assessing relationship adjustment in marital and other dyads (Christensen, 1988; Christensen & Heavey, 1999; L'Abate & Bagarozzi, 1993; Noller, 1980; Spanier, 1976). Most items are rated on a five- or six-point Likert-type response format, indicating the amount of agreement (ranging from always agree to always disagree) or frequency of an event (ranging from all the time to never). The total score is used as a measure of satisfaction with the relationship. A total score of 97 is generally accepted as a cut-off point to distinguish between dissatisfaction and satisfaction with the relationship (Christensen & Heavey, 1999). The total scale internal reliability (Cronbach Alpha) is .96 (Spanier, 1976). In this study, the mean total scale internal reliability (Cronbach Alpha) was .95. In addition to an *overall relationship satisfaction* score, four subscales assessing differing aspects of the relationship were also used: 1) *Dyadic satisfaction* (internal reliability of .94) provides a measure on issues relating to positive feeling in the relationship. In this study, the mean *Dyadic satisfaction* internal reliability (Cronbach Alpha) was .89. 2) *Dyadic cohesion* (internal reliability of .81) provides a measure on common interests and activities shared by the couple. In this study, the mean internal reliability (Cronbach Alpha) was .81. 3) *Dyadic consensus* (internal reliability of .90) measures the extent of agreement on issues such as money, household tasks and recreation. In this study, the mean internal reliability (Cronbach Alpha) was .89. 4) *Affectional expression* (internal-reliability of .73) measures satisfaction with expressions of sex and affection in the relationship. In this study, the mean internal reliability (Cronbach Alpha) was .78.

Content validity was confirmed using three independent judges (Spanier, 1976). Known-groups validity was established, distinguishing between married and divorced couples.

Correlations between married and divorced samples were significant at the .001 level (Spanier, 1976). Construct validity was tested by correlating the measure with other similar measures (Spanier, 1976).

#### 4.10.2.2 Communications Patterns Questionnaire

The *Communications Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ)*, developed by Andrew Christensen and Megan Sullaway (Christensen, 1988), was used to measure negative and positive patterns of communication as a couple interacts. The CPQ assesses spousal perceptions of communication during three phases of interaction: when a problem arises; during the discussion of a problem; and after the discussion of a problem. The CPQ is a 35-item questionnaire that uses a nine-point Likert-type response format, ranging from very unlikely to very likely. Five subscales assessing differing aspects of interaction were used in this study: 1) The *Mutual constructive communication (MCC)* subscale has five items which assess mutual discussion of problems, expression of feelings, negotiation of solutions, understanding of views and resolution of problems. The authors suggest also using a newer subscale for *Constructive communication (CC)*, based on the study by Heavey, Larson and Zumtobel (1996), who provide strong evidence for the newer CC subscale providing a more complete measure of the quality of a couple's communicative behaviour. Both the older MCC and the newer CC subscales were used in this study. In this study, the mean internal reliability (Cronbach Alpha) for the MCC subscale was .86 and for the CC it was .75. 2) The *Demand-withdraw communication (DWC)* subscale has six items that assess one partner's efforts to discuss a problem and the other partner's efforts to avoid discussion, both when a problem arises and during the discussion of a problem. In this study, the mean internal reliability (Cronbach Alpha) for the DWC subscale was .64. 3) The *Man demand-woman withdraw communication (MDWW)* subscale has three items that assess asymmetrical behaviours, where the man presses the woman to discuss a problem, criticises, nags and makes demands on her, while the woman tries to avoid discussion of the problem and defends herself, withdraws, becomes silent, or refuses to discuss matters further. In this study, the mean internal reliability (Cronbach Alpha) for the MDWW subscale was .68. 4) The *Woman demand-man withdraw communication (WDMW)* subscale has three items identical to the MDWW subscale, except that the man and the woman are in opposite roles. In this study, the mean internal reliability (Cronbach Alpha) for the WDMW subscale was .64. 5) The *Mutual avoidance and withholding (MAW)* subscale has three items that assess if both partners withdraw

after the discussion of a problem. In this study, the mean internal reliability (Cronbach Alpha) for the MAW subscale was .77.

Christensen and Shenk (1991) report a mean internal reliability (Cronbach Alpha) of .71 for each subscale, with several other studies reporting mean alpha reliability coefficients for the subscales ranging from .50 to .85, with a mean of .75 for the WDMW and .66 for the MDWW (Eldridge & Christensen, 2002). Moderate to high inter-partner agreement is reported (Eldridge & Christensen, 2002; Noller & White, 1990). Support for discriminant validity of the CPQ is provided, finding that the questionnaire clearly discriminates between happy and unhappy couples (Christensen & Shenk, 1991; Noller & White, 1990). The CPQ is widely used as a measure of communication patterns, with other studies providing further support for the validity and reliability of this questionnaire (Christensen, 1988; Christensen & Heavey, 1990).

#### 4.10.2.3 Primary Communication Inventory

The *Primary Communication Inventory (PCI)*, developed by Locke et al. (1956), was used to assess the perception of communication ability between the two members of a couple. The total score gives a measure of communication ability. The PCI was revised by Navran (1967), and is the more widely used version of this scale. Both partners are required to complete the questionnaire. The PCI is a 25-item questionnaire that uses a five-point Likert-type response format, ranging from very frequently to never. Nine items, which involve making a judgement about the spouse, are transposed for the two partners, so that the total score can more accurately be viewed as a measure of *overall communication ability*. Beach and Arias (1983) determined two subscales by factor analysis, and these were used in this study: 1) the individual's perception of his/her own communication ability (*Self-rating of communication ability*); and 2) the spouse's perception of the individual's communication ability (*Spouse-rating of communication ability*). The correlation between the two subscales is .61 ( $p < .001$ ), indicating that an individual's perception of his/her own ability to communicate is significantly related to how his/her partner perceives the individual's ability to communicate (Beach & Arias, 1983).

In this study, the mean internal reliability for *overall communication ability* (Cronbach Alpha) was .89, the mean internal reliability for *self-rating of communication ability* (Cronbach Alpha) was .86 and the mean internal reliability for *spouse-rating of communication ability* (Cronbach Alpha) was .71. Excellent concurrent validity, correlating

strongly with the Lock Wallace Marital Relationship Inventory (ranging from .36 to .72, all significant at .01 level) (Beach & Arias, 1983) and with the Marital Relationship Inventory ( $r = .82$ ) (Locke et al., 1956), was found. Excellent known-groups validity was established, distinguishing between distressed and non-distressed couples (Beach & Arias, 1983; Navran, 1967). A later study by Yelsma (1984) provides evidence of the reliability and validity of the PCI, reporting alpha coefficients of .85 and .56. The PCI has also been found to be sensitive to therapeutic interventions.

#### 4.10.2.4 Relationship Awareness Scale

The *Relationship Awareness Scale (RAS)*, developed by William Snell Jr. (2002), was used to measure awareness of interactions with an intimate partner. The RAS is a 30-item scale that uses a five-point Likert-type response format, ranging from not at all characteristic of me to very characteristic of me. Although three subscales are defined in this scale, only the subscale of *relational consciousness*, the tendency to be aware of and to think (introspect) about the nature and internal dynamics of one's relationship, was used in this study. Higher scores reflect those who are more introspective about their close relationship, who examine their moods and motives, and who in general are reflective about the nature and dynamic features of their intimate relationship. Permission was granted by the author (W.E. Snell, personal communication, February 28, 2006) for the wording of the scale to be changed slightly to reflect the person's current intimate relationship. Reported internal reliability (Cronbach Alpha) was .81 and test-retest reliability was .71 (Snell, 2002). A factor analysis confirmed the clusters of items for the subscales. Preliminary evidence provided evidence of strong convergent, discriminant and predictive validity, correlating the RAS subscales with several instruments/variables (Snell, 2002). In this study, the mean internal reliability for *relational consciousness* (Cronbach Alpha) was .93.

#### 4.10.3 Qualitative questions

##### 4.10.3.1 Pre-workshop questions

The following open-ended questions were included in the pre-workshop questionnaires:

- “What aspects of communication between yourself and your partner do you consider to be strengths?”

- “What aspects of communication between yourself and your partner can be improved on?”
- “What are your expectations of the *GTLYW Workshop*?”

#### 4.10.3.2 Post-workshop questions

As part of the post-workshop questionnaires, the following open-ended questions were asked:

- “In what ways, if any, has communication with your partner changed since the workshop?”
- “Have you started using the Dialogue technique? Please expand:”

#### 4.10.3.3 Follow-up questions

In the follow-up questionnaires, the following open-ended questions were asked:

- “What are the most important learning/insights that you remember from the *GTLYW Workshop*?”
- “With regard to your communication: In what ways, if any, has *your* interaction with your partner changed?”
- “With regard to your communication: In what ways, if any, has *your partner’s* interaction with you changed?”
- “Have you applied the Dialogue technique in situations where effective communication has been difficult?”
- “Will you recommend Imago Relationship Therapy to other people?”

### 4.11 Procedures

The chairman of Imago Africa, the governing body of Imago Relationship Therapy in South Africa, was contacted by the researcher to explain the aim and purpose of this study and to gain support for the research. The proposed study was presented at a board meeting, where support was given for the research.

In preparing the questionnaires, it was anticipated that the participants may want to complete questionnaires electronically, so the original questionnaires were typed into a format that would be easy to complete either on paper or electronically. It was also anticipated that both English and Afrikaans couples would attend the workshops, so all questionnaires were translated into Afrikaans. Afrikaans questionnaires were then

translated back into English by a psychologist to ensure the original meanings were not lost during the translation process. Couples could then complete the questionnaires in the language of their choice. Pre-workshop questionnaire packs were printed and collated, including two sets of the demographic questionnaire, the quantitative questionnaires, the open-ended questions, and a stamped, self-addressed envelope for easy return to the researcher.

The participants were sourced from couples who attended the *Imago GTLYW Workshop* with various workshop presenters around the country. The researcher emailed roughly 65 Imago therapists, of which 12 are accredited *GTLYW Workshop* presenters in South Africa. The aim and purpose of the research was explained, with specific reference to getting permission to gain access to couples who would be attending their workshops. Nine workshop presenters expressed interest by replying to the researcher, and six participated actively. Those who expressed interest were followed up telephonically to discuss the research further. Where the workshops were within driving distance for the researcher, she went to the workshops to introduce herself and the study and invite couples to participate. Where the workshops were in cities/towns beyond driving distance, questionnaire packs were either emailed or couriered to the workshop presenters before the workshops, and the presenters introduced the study and invited the couples to participate. Time was given before the workshops to allow the couples to complete the questionnaires. Where questionnaires were emailed to workshop presenters/organisers, the couples were asked if they would be willing to participate once they had registered and were then emailed questionnaires to complete before attending the workshop. These couples emailed their completed questionnaires directly back to the researcher.

The couple entity, rather than individual participants, was the primary unit of analysis for this study, therefore it was important for both partners in the relationship to complete the questionnaires. All the couples who agreed to participate in the research were asked to read and sign an informed consent form (see Appendix A). They were asked to independently complete the questionnaires and then seal their completed pre-workshop questionnaires in the envelopes provided so they could be returned to the researcher. The questionnaires could be posted directly to the researcher or returned via the workshop presenter, who then posted or couriered the completed questionnaires to the researcher. Each couple who returned pre-workshop questionnaires was allocated a couple code and a participant code for each partner so that the data could be processed anonymously.

The participants could choose to complete the post-workshop and follow-up questionnaires on paper and return them to the researcher in the stamped, addressed envelopes provided, or complete them electronically and return them via email. The researcher tracked the participants using a database and set specific reminders in order to email or post the post-workshop and follow-up questionnaires to the participants at the appropriate time. Post-workshop and follow-up questionnaire packs were similar to the pre-workshop packs, except that they did not contain the demographic questionnaire and the open-ended questions were slightly different. Email correspondence became the preferred method of communication for the majority of participants. Reminders were emailed or posted up to three times to remind the participants to complete their questionnaires timeously. The researcher stopped reminding participants if more than four weeks had past without participants returning the post-workshop questionnaires and if more than three months had past for the follow-up questionnaires.

Once the three data-collection phases were complete, all demographic, quantitative and qualitative data was captured in Excel spreadsheets in preparation for the analyses.

## **4.12 Data analysis**

### **4.12.1 Quantitative analysis**

All quantitative data for each time point was captured in Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. The data was then converted, loaded and analysed using STATISTICA (data analysis software system) (StatSoft, Inc., 2007). All data was processed anonymously using couple and participant codes to link partners to a couple. Quantitative data was primarily analysed using repeated measures Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) procedures (Graziano & Raulin, 2004). The repeated measures ANOVA compares the means of three or more matched groups and tests the null hypothesis that there are no differences between the groups. The F-ratio was expected to provide evidence that the experimental manipulation had some effect and that at least one of the group means was different to the others. If the F-ratio was significant, post-hoc procedures were used to determine which means were different. The advantage of using the repeated measures ANOVA is that it minimises error variance by using the same participants in each group, and is more sensitive to small group mean differences (Graziano & Raulin, 2004). Various repeated measures ANOVAs were performed using Time and Gender as grouping variables, as well as an interaction

analysis on Time \* Gender. The couple was the unit of analysis at this level, and a couple score was composed from the scores of the male and female partners.

Correlation analyses were performed using Pearson product-moment procedures to explore the relationships between some demographic variables (Length of relationship, Age of participants and Education level) and the measured aspects of communication and the relationship. Correlations were also calculated to explore the relationships between aspects of the relationship and aspects of communication.

All empirical analysis was planned and executed in collaboration with a senior statistician at the Statistical Consultation Service of the University of Stellenbosch.

Although a 5% significance level ( $p < .05$ ) was used as a guideline for determining significant results (rejecting the null hypothesis), due to the small sample size, a less strict criterion ( $p < .10$ ) was used in a few instances.

#### 4.12.2 Qualitative analysis

All qualitative data for each time point was captured in and analysed using Microsoft Excel. All data was captured and processed anonymously using the couple and participant codes. The responses of the participants to each question were typed and captured word for word. The following process, based on steps suggested by Creswell (1998), was used to analyse the qualitative data for each question:

- The researcher first read all responses to get an overall feel of possible themes or clusters of meanings in the data and then separated (horizontalised) responses into smaller statements.
- A number of themes/clusters of meanings were identified by looking for similar words or patterns of words in the statements.
- Statements were then clustered into the identified themes, after which themes were reviewed to see if they could be combined into fewer “meta-themes”.
- Statements were quantified and, for each question, themes were presented in table form. Each table is followed by a short description of what themes emerged and how they were experienced by the participants.

The process was checked and re-checked by the researcher.

#### **4.13 Limitations of the study**

The biggest limitation of this study was the loss of the planned control group. This meant that the design of the research had to be adjusted and that it would be difficult to draw conclusions from the empirical evidence, as there was no basis for comparison.

A further limitation was the high attrition rate over the three time periods, resulting in a small follow-up sample size, which would impact on the generalisability of the results.

Using the couple as the unit of analysis for the quantitative method required using the scores of both partners. If one partner did not complete a set of questionnaires or had missing data, then the records for both partners were discarded. This had an impact on sample sizes.

#### **4.14 Assumptions**

An assumption was made that participants attending *GTLYW Workshops* with different workshop presenters received the same content and skills practise. Although the workshop presenters are trained in the same content, they all present using their own unique styles and interpretations.

#### **4.15 Summary**

This chapter presented the research design and methodology for this study. On the basis of the philosophy of pragmatism, this research adopted a mixed-methods approach. The rationale for using the mixed-methods approach was based on the assumption that collecting different types of data would provide a more comprehensive analysis and a greater understanding of improving couple communication through the *GTLYW Workshop*. The quantitative method was the dominant method. The qualitative method was nested within the dominant quantitative method. Quantitative objectives were addressed using a repeated measures design, and used repeated measures Analysis of Variance procedures for the analysis of couple data over three time points. Some correlation analysis was done. Qualitative objectives were addressed using a phenomenological approach, where the actual words used by the participants to describe their experiences were analysed in order for the researcher to develop themes and relationships of meanings. Demographic, self-report and open-ended questionnaires were used to gather data from 159 participants at

the pre-workshop measure, 56 participants at the post-workshop measure and 41 participants at the follow-up measure. Some limitations to the study emerged.

The following chapter will present the results of this study, followed by the discussion and conclusion of this research.

## CHAPTER 5

### RESULTS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of this research. The primary objective of this mixed-methods study was to investigate whether improvements occurred in aspects of communication and the quality of the relationship of those couples who participated in the *Imago Getting The Love You Want Workshop for Couples (GTLYW Workshop)*. Measurements were taken at three time points, namely pre-workshop, post-workshop (three to four weeks after the workshop), and at follow-up (three months after the workshop). Secondary objectives included investigating whether improvements were evident after three months; whether communication differences emerged between male and female partners; and whether demographic variables such as length of relationship, age of participants and education level had any influence on a couple's communication and the quality of their relationship.

Qualitative measures, obtained through open-ended questions, were used to address further secondary objectives of gaining insight into the communication and personal experiences of the couples who participated in the *GTLYW workshop*. An attempt was made to gain an understanding of how the participants, in their own words, perceived their communication before and after the workshop, as well as their experiences of the workshop, with a focus on their usage of the Couples Dialogue. This chapter presents the quantitative results, followed by the qualitative results.

#### 5.2 Quantitative results

Repeated measures Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was primarily used to analyse the quantitative data in order to compare the means of scores at the three time points. Correlation analysis was performed using the Pearson product-moment procedure.

Table 5.1 shows the means of and standard deviations for all the measured variables at each time point in the study:

Table 5.1

*Means and Standard Deviations for measured variables at each time point*

Variable		Pre-workshop			Post-workshop			Three-month follow-up		
		n	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	M	SD
Relationship quality										
Overall relationship satisfaction	F	78	100.9	21.9	29	99.8	20.9	23	104.6	20.5
	M	76	104.1	19.2	26	103.8	15.3	18	103.3	21.6
Affectional expression	F	78	8.4	2.9	29	7.6	2.8	23	8.5	2.7
	M	74	8.6	3.0	26	8.0	2.9	18	8.6	3.2
Dyadic cohesion	F	80	15.7	4.0	30	15.5	3.1	23	15.1	3.6
	M	78	15.9	3.9	26	15.5	3.7	18	15.6	3.6
Dyadic consensus	F	75	43.4	8.9	30	42.1	10.4	23	45.6	7.7
	M	74	44.1	7.8	26	42.7	6.7	18	43.2	9.3
Dyadic satisfaction	F	75	33.7	8.9	30	35.1	7.9	23	35.3	9.1
	M	71	35.9	7.3	26	37.5	5.8	18	35.9	8.6
Communication patterns										
Constructive communication (new)	F	80	-.2	11.4	30	5.7	9.9	23	3.2	10.0
	M	79	2.3	9.0	26	7.3	8.7	18	3.7	9.4
Mutual constructive comm. (old)	F	80	26.3	8.9	30	29.6	8.9	23	28.4	7.8
	M	79	28.0	7.6	26	30.1	7.8	18	28.6	7.6
Mutual avoidance & withholding	F	80	13.3	5.8	30	11.7	5.6	23	12.0	5.6
	M	79	14.1	5.2	26	11.7	5.2	18	12.0	5.1
Man demand-woman withdraw	F	80	12.6	5.5	30	12.5	5.1	23	11.8	5.8
	M	79	12.4	5.3	26	11.1	5.0	18	12.2	4.7
Woman demand-man withdraw	F	80	16.2	5.5	30	14.3	5.3	23	15.0	6.5
	M	79	16.2	4.7	26	13.1	5.2	18	12.7	5.1
Total demand-withdraw comm.	F	80	28.8	8.3	30	26.8	7.4	23	26.9	9.3
	M	79	28.6	7.8	26	24.3	8.2	18	24.9	9.1
Communication ability										
Overall communication ability	F	75	86.6	13.1	21	89.0	12.9	16	85.7	13.5
	M	75	86.4	12.8	21	86.9	10.0	16	85.6	10.1
Self-rating of comm. ability	F	78	56.8	9.9	28	58.0	9.7	22	57.4	8.5
	M	78	57.4	8.8	25	57.2	6.4	18	57.5	6.5
Spouse-rating of comm. ability	F	78	28.7	5.6	30	28.9	4.6	22	28.1	4.7
	M	78	29.4	4.6	26	29.9	3.9	18	28.2	4.7
Relational consciousness	F	80	26.9	7.7	30	26.0	7.9	23	26.0	9.1
	M	79	23.9	7.8	26	23.6	8.1	18	27.7	6.9

The average overall relationship satisfaction score was 102.5 (males = 104.1, females = 100.9), which indicates that the participants were above the average score of 97, which is used to differentiate between dissatisfaction and satisfaction with the relationship.

### 5.2.1 Subject attrition

Given the attrition rates (see Chapter 4) in this study, a comparison using a one-way ANOVA was done between participants who completed questionnaires at all three time points and those who dropped off. This analysis was done to identify whether the participants differed in any of the measured variables, as well as in demographic variables

of “length of relationship” and “age of participant”. The results of this comparison are shown in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2

*One-way ANOVA: “Completed” vs. “Not completed” groups*

<i>Variable</i>	Completed		Not completed		One-way ANOVA
	n	M (stderr)	n	M (stderr)	f-value
Length of relationship	37	12.98 (1.35)	118	12.77 (0.75)	.0178
Age of participants	39	38.64 (1.33)	114	39.84 (0.77)	.6024
Relationship quality					
Overall relationship satisfaction	41	99.03 (3.22)	113	103.79 (1.94)	1.6002
Affectional expression	41	7.56 (0.46)	111	8.89 (0.28)	6.0322*
Dyadic cohesion	41	14.85 (0.61)	117	16.17 (0.36)	3.3494
Dyadic consensus	40	42.45 (1.33)	109	44.24 (0.80)	1.3341
Dyadic satisfaction	39	33.79 (1.32)	107	35.18 (0.79)	.8090
Communication patterns					
Constructive comm. (new)	41	1.64 (1.62)	118	.89 (0.95)	.1608
Mutual constructive comm. (old)	41	28.81 (1.30)	118	26.61 (0.76)	2.1302
Mutual avoidance & withholding	41	13.42 (0.87)	118	13.83 (0.51)	.1623
Man demand-woman withdraw	41	13.90 (0.83)	118	12.08 (0.49)	3.5010
Woman demand-man withdraw	41	16.39 (0.80)	118	16.15 (0.47)	.0615
Total demand-withdraw comm.	41	30.29 (1.25)	118	28.23 (0.74)	1.9880
Communication ability					
Overall communication ability	37	85.86 (2.14)	113	86.77 (1.22)	.1364
Self-rating of comm. ability	39	56.67 (1.50)	117	57.28 (0.87)	.1219
Spouse-rating of comm. ability	38	28.75 (0.84)	113	29.32 (0.48)	.3409
Relational consciousness	41	25.74 (1.23)	118	25.30 (0.72)	.9146

Notes: \*  $p < .05$

The results showed that for all variables, except one, there were no significant differences between those participants who completed the study and those who dropped off. This indicates that no substantial differences could be found between those participants who completed the study and those who dropped off.

### 5.2.2 Hypothesis testing

Repeated measures ANOVAs were performed to test the hypothesis that couples will improve their communication and the quality of their relationship by attending the *GTLYW Workshop*, and that these improvements would still be evident after a three-month period. The following analyses were done to determine whether any differences occurred in the mean scores of the measured variables from the pre-workshop to the post-workshop and

follow-up measures. As the couple was the unit of analysis at this level, the couple score was composed from the scores of the male and female partners.

#### 5.2.2.1 Imputed missing values

Because of the small sample size at the follow-up measure, it was important to retain as many couples as possible in the analysis and to avoid losing couples due to missing data points. It was decided to impute values for the missing data points before the analysis was done. The missing data points were replaced by the mean scores of the respondents. This was done to avoid the loss of a couple record when both the male and female partner records were dropped if a missing data point was found. Table 5.3 presents the variables measured and the results of the analysis:

Table 5.3

*Repeated measure ANOVAs including couples with imputed missing values*

Variable	Pre-workshop		Post-workshop	Follow-up	F-ratio	Tukey HSD Post-hoc test
	n	M	M	M		
Relationship quality						
Overall relationship satisfaction	13	98.09	101.69	100.03	.6815	
Affectional expression	13	7.15	7.65	8.15	1.5705	
Dyadic cohesion	13	15.30	15.53	15.03	.4243	
Dyadic consensus	12	41.95	43.33	43.12	.6899	
Dyadic satisfaction	11	32.22	34.63	31.50	2.2966	
Communication patterns						
Constructive communication (new)	13	1.67	7.07	1.87	<b>7.9174***</b>	Pre- to post-workshop ( $p < 0.01$ ) Post to follow-up ( $p < 0.01$ )
Mutual constructive comm. (old)	13	29.98	32.19	28.02	<b>6.8776***</b>	Post to follow-up ( $p < 0.01$ )
Mutual avoidance & withholding	13	13.40	11.34	13.71	2.5255	
Man demand-woman withdraw	13	14.19	12.03	12.61	2.2701	
Woman demand-man withdraw	13	15.61	13.19	14.69	<b>2.4915*</b>	Pre- to post-workshop ( $p = 0.08$ )
Total demand-withdraw comm.	13	29.80	25.23	27.30	<b>2.8809*</b>	Pre- to post-workshop ( $p = 0.06$ )
Communication ability						
Overall communication ability	12	85.91	89.21	85.62	2.1107	
Self-rating of comm. ability	12	57.17	59.00	57.25	1.0710	
Spouse-rating of comm. ability	12	28.73	30.20	28.38	<b>3.2091*</b>	Post to follow-up ( $p = 0.07$ )
Relational consciousness	13	27.71	26.92	27.84	.2679	

Notes : \*  $p < .10$ ; \*\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .01$

The F-ratio tested the null hypothesis that the means of the three groups were all equal. Some significant changes were found that rejected the null hypothesis. Tukey HSD Post-hoc tests were done to identify between which two time points the changes occurred. Constructive communication (new) showed a significant increase in scores from pre- to post-workshop, as well as a significant decrease from post-workshop to follow-up. This is a key variable in this study, as it assesses mutual discussion of problems, expression of feelings, negotiation of solutions, understanding of views and resolution of problems in the couple relationship. Constructive communication (new), Mutual constructive communication (old) and Spouse-rating of communication ability showed a significant decrease in scores from post-workshop to follow-up.

Mutual avoidance and withholding and Demand-withdraw variables, the negative communication patterns which one expects to decrease as communication improves, showed the same pattern, with initial decreases in scores at the post-workshop measure and then increases in scores at the follow-up measure. The variables Woman demand-man withdraw and Total demand-withdraw communication both showed significant decreases in scores from pre- to post-workshop. Mutual avoidance and withholding, although not significant, showed that the follow-up means had risen higher than the pre-workshop means.

The results of the other variables also showed a similar pattern or direction, with initial increases in scores at the post-workshop measure, followed by a tapering off by the follow-up measure. This suggests that, over the three time periods, there seems to be a trend, although not strictly significant, showing an initial improvement in mean scores from pre-workshop to post-workshop, followed by a decrease in mean scores from post-workshop to follow-up.

Affectional expression, an indication of satisfaction with expressions of affection and sex in the relationship, is the only variable that showed an increase in scores from pre- through post- to follow-up measure. Although not part of the main analysis, for completeness a further repeated measures ANOVAs was done between the pre-workshop and follow-up time points. This analysis revealed a significant increase in scores for Affectional expression ( $F(1,15) = 6.2950, p = .02$ ), and a significant decrease in scores for Man demand-woman withdraw ( $F(1,15) = 6.2215, p = .03$ ), and Total demand-withdraw communication ( $F(1,15) = 4.5666, p = .05$ ). The following figures show the direction of changes for some of the relevant measured variables:

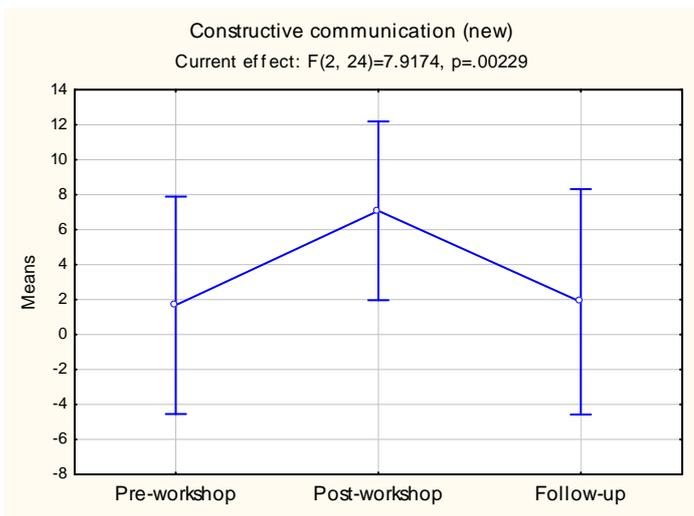


Figure 2. Constructive communication (new)

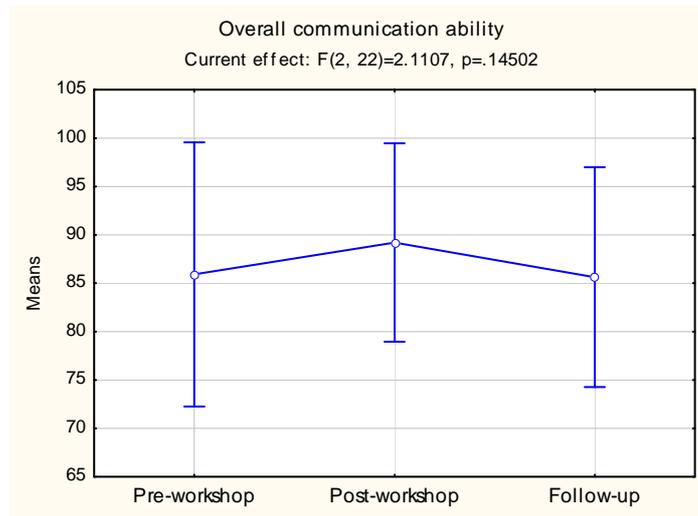


Figure 3. Overall communication ability

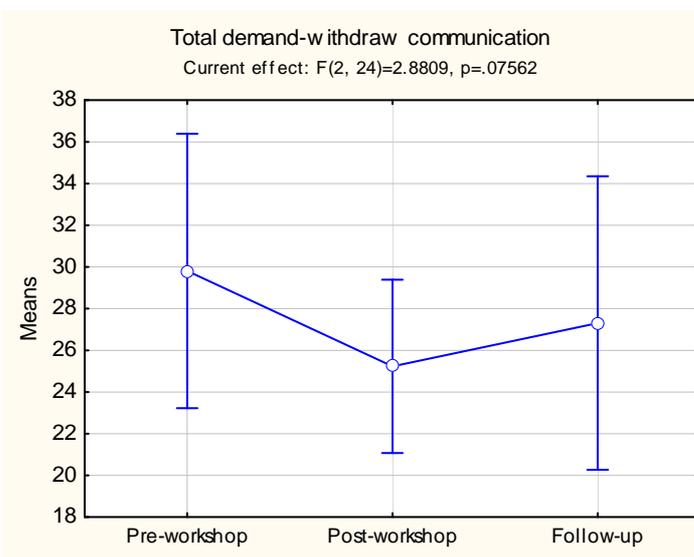


Figure 4. Total demand-withdraw communication

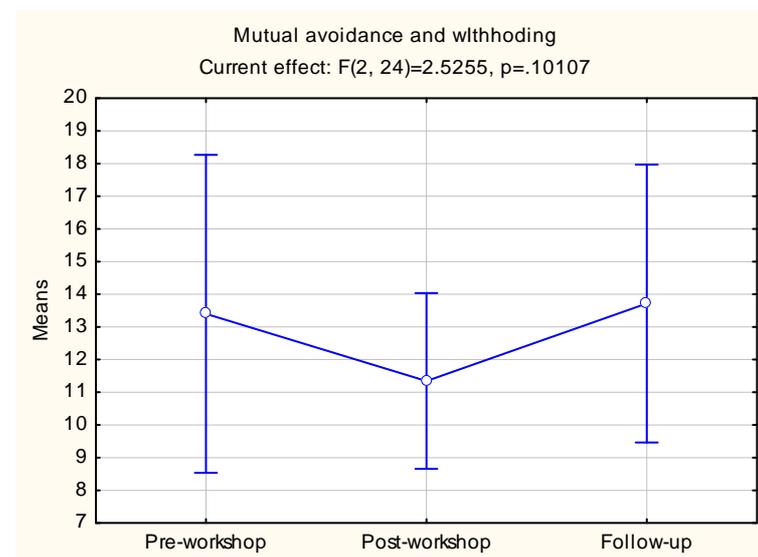


Figure 5. Mutual avoidance and withholding

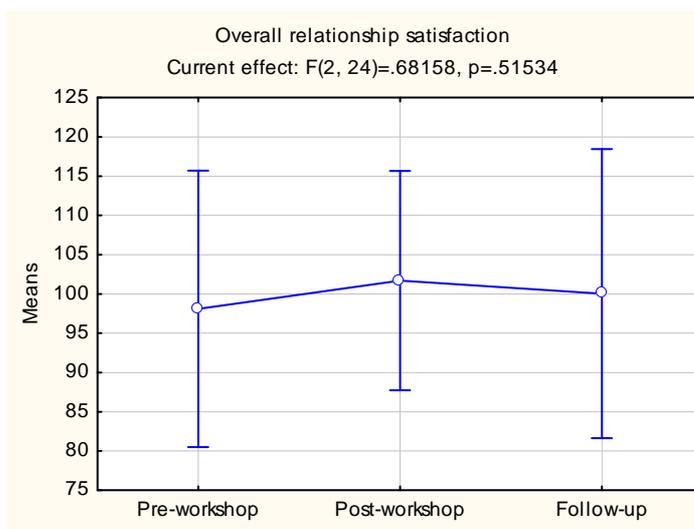


Figure 6. Overall relationship satisfaction

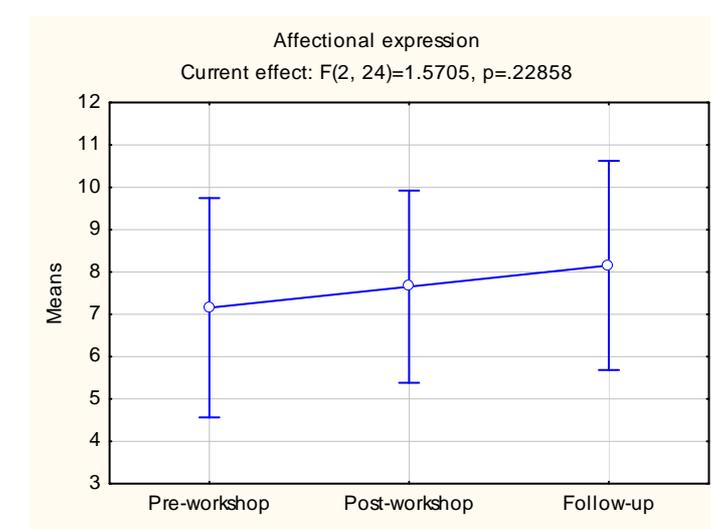


Figure 7. Affectional expression

### 5.2.2.2 Excluding missing values

The same repeated measures ANOVAs analysis was repeated, excluding those couples for whom missing values were found. The results of this analysis appear in Table 5.4:

Table 5.4

*Repeated measure ANOVAs excluding couples with missing values*

Variable	n	Pre-workshop	Post-workshop	Follow-up	F-ratio	Tukey HSD Post-hoc test
		M	M	M		
Relationship quality						
Overall relationship satisfaction	9	89.67	98.33	90.78	<b>4.4817**</b>	Pre- to post-workshop (p = 0.04)
Affectional expression	13	7.15	7.65	8.15	1.5705	
Dyadic cohesion	13	15.30	15.53	15.03	.4243	
Dyadic consensus	12	41.95	43.33	43.12	.6899	
Dyadic satisfaction	9	30.50	34.56	30.17	<b>4.8796**</b>	Pre- to post-workshop (p = 0.05) Post to follow-up (p = 0.03)
Communication patterns						
Constructive communication (new)	11	1.86	6.86	2.00	<b>5.1626**</b>	Pre- to post-workshop (p = 0.02) Post to follow-up (p = 0.03)
Mutual constructive comm. (old)	11	30.81	33.00	28.68	<b>5.4282**</b>	Post to follow-up (p < 0.01)
Mutual avoidance & withholding	10	14.5	11.8	14.6	<b>3.0821*</b>	
Man demand-woman withdraw	13	14.19	12.03	12.61	2.2701	
Woman demand-man withdraw	13	15.61	13.19	14.69	2.4915	
Total demand-withdraw comm.	13	29.80	25.23	27.30	<b>2.8809*</b>	Pre- to post-workshop (p = 0.06)
Communication ability						
Overall communication ability	5	84.10	85.50	83.10	.1888	
Self-rating of comm. ability	8	57.68	58.25	56.68	.4923	
Spouse-rating of comm. ability	8	27.13	29.19	27.43	2.1271	
Relational consciousness	11	26.8	25.6	27.0	.4673	

Notes: \* p &lt; .10; \*\* p &lt; .05; \*\*\* p &lt; .01

The results show that even with fewer couples, some significant changes emerged. As with the previous analysis (see Table 5.3), Constructive communication (new) as well as Dyadic satisfaction showed significant increases from pre- to post-workshop, as well as a significant decrease in scores from post-workshop to follow-up. Mutual constructive communication (old) showed a significant decrease in scores from post-workshop to follow-up. Overall relationship satisfaction and Total demand-withdraw communication also showed significant changes from pre- to post-workshop. Mutual avoidance and withholding also showed significant changes. The following figures show some of the measured variables over time:

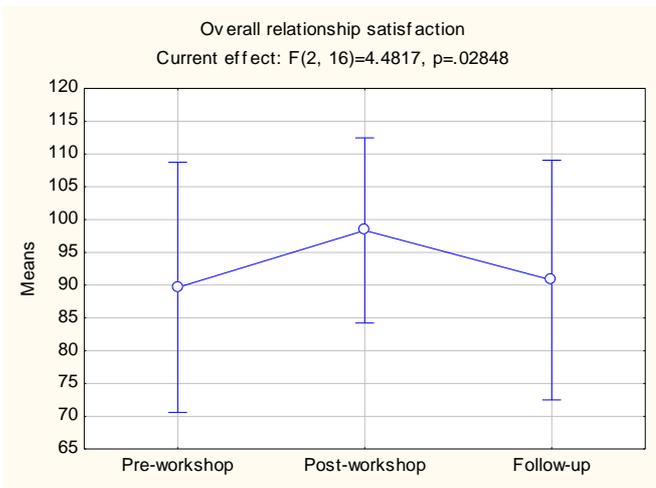


Figure 8. Overall relationship satisfaction



Figure 9. Dyadic satisfaction

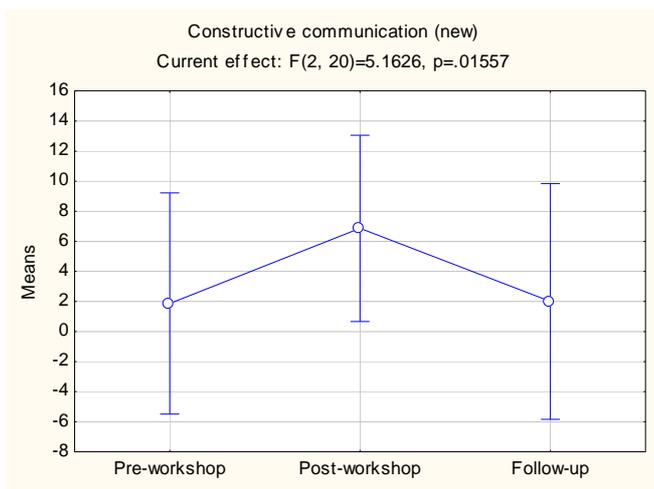


Figure 10. Constructive communication(new)

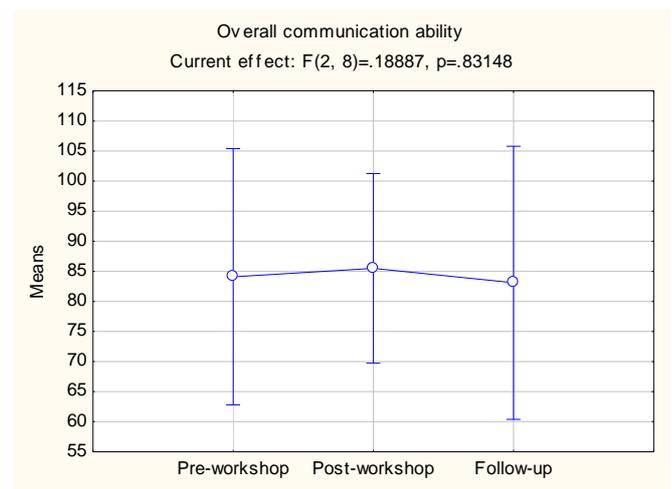


Figure 11. Overall communication ability

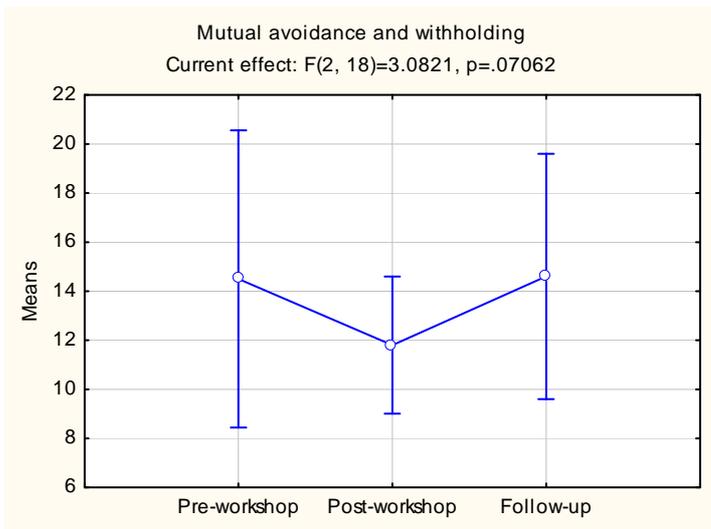


Figure 12. Mutual avoidance and withholding

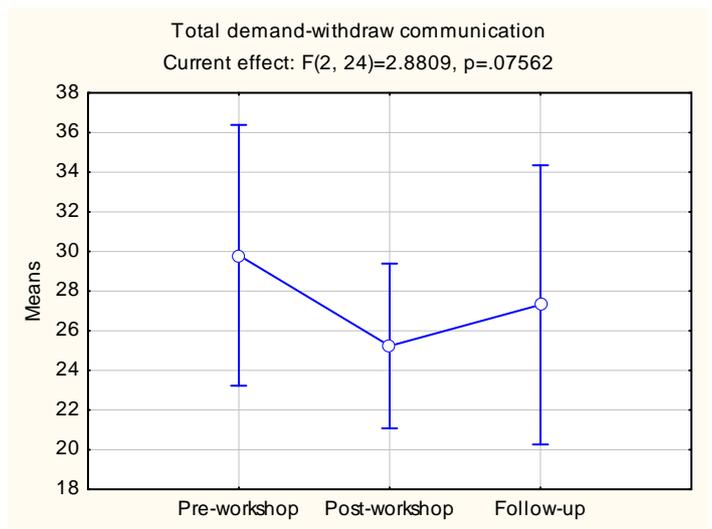


Figure 13. Total demand-withdraw communication

### 5.2.3 Gender analysis

To address the secondary objective of investigating possible communication differences between males and females, a comparison was done using repeated measures ANOVAs, with Gender as the grouping variable. This analysis was done to establish whether there were differences between the mean scores of the male and female partners who took part in all three measures. The results are presented in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5

*Repeated measure ANOVAs on main effect Gender*

Variable	n	Females	Males	F-ratio
		M	M	
Relationship quality				
Overall relationship satisfaction	13	101.36	98.52	0.5590
Affectional expression	13	8.07	7.23	4.2374
Dyadic cohesion	13	15.02	15.56	0.5293
Dyadic consensus	12	44.58	41.02	6.0739*
Dyadic satisfaction	11	32.52	33.06	0.0955
Communication patterns				
Constructive communication (new)	13	3.11	3.96	0.0512
Mutual constructive comm. (old)	13	30.45	29.68	0.1236
Mutual avoidance & withholding	13	12.39	13.24	0.5425
Man demand-woman withdraw	13	13.48	12.41	0.6440
Woman demand-man withdraw	13	14.84	14.15	0.1682
Total demand-withdraw comm.	13	28.33	26.56	0.5248
Communication ability				
Overall communication ability	12	87.00	86.83	0.0138
Self-rating of comm. ability	12	57.63	57.98	0.0363
Spouse-rating of comm. ability	12	29.36	28.84	0.3877
Relational consciousness	13	26.53	28.45	0.4432

Notes: \*  $p < .05$ 

The results indicate that, apart from dyadic consensus, there were no significant differences between the mean scores of the males and females in the study. The female mean scores for dyadic consensus, the extent of agreement on issues such as money, household tasks and recreation, were significantly higher than those of their male partners. Apart from that variable, there were no substantial differences between female and male mean scores.

## 5.2.3.1 Time \* Gender interaction analysis

A repeated measures ANOVA was used for a Time \* Gender interaction analysis. This was done to identify any interaction effects between male and female scores over the three time periods. The results are presented in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6

*Repeated measure ANOVAs on Time \* Gender interaction*

Variable	n	Pre-workshop		Post-workshop		Follow-up		F-ratio	Tukey HSD Post-hoc tests
		M		M		M			
		Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males		
Relationship quality									
Overall relationship satisfaction	13	99.06	97.12	102.08	101.30	102.93	97.13	0.6912	
Affectional expression	13	7.61	6.69	7.92	7.38	8.69	7.61	<b>0.2857</b>	Difference between Pre-workshop male scores & Follow-up female scores (p < 0.01)
Dyadic cohesion	13	14.84	15.76	15.23	15.84	15.00	15.07	0.4909	
Dyadic consensus	12	42.91	41.00	45.58	41.08	45.20	41.00	0.5641	
Dyadic satisfaction	11	31.81	32.63	33.82	35.45	31.92	31.09	<b>1.2728</b>	Difference between Pre-workshop female scores & Post-workshop male scores (p = 0.03) Difference between Post-workshop male scores & Follow-up female scores (p = 0.04) Difference between Post-workshop & Follow-up male scores (p < 0.01)
Communication patterns									
Constructive communication(new)	13	0.30	3.04	6.45	7.69	2.58	1.15	<b>.7008</b>	Difference between Pre-workshop female scores & Post-workshop male scores (p = 0.07)
Mutual constructive comm. (old)	13	29.61	30.34	32.61	31.76	29.12	26.92	<b>.7917</b>	Difference between Post-workshop female scores & Follow-up male scores (p = 0.02)
Mutual avoidance & withholding	13	11.38	15.41	11.61	11.07	14.19	13.23	<b>3.8764*</b>	Difference between Pre-workshop & Post-workshop male scores (p = 0.05) Difference between Pre-workshop male scores & Pre-workshop female scores (p = 0.08)
Man demand-woman withdraw	13	14.15	14.23	13.07	11.00	13.23	12.00	.6471	
Woman demand-man withdraw	13	15.00	16.23	13.53	12.84	16.00	13.38	1.6791	
Total demand-withdraw comm.	13	29.15	30.46	16.61	23.84	29.23	25.38	1.2112	
Communication ability									
Overall communication ability	12	85.17	86.64	89.75	88.67	86.08	85.17	<b>1.2264</b>	Difference between Pre-workshop & Post-workshop female scores (p = 0.01) Difference between Post-workshop female scores & Follow-up male scores (p = 0.01)
Self-rating of comm. ability	12	55.73	58.62	59.58	58.42	57.58	56.91	2.1276	
Spouse-rating of comm. ability	12	29.43	28.02	30.16	30.25	28.50	28.25	0.8726	
Relational consciousness	13	26.36	29.05	27.15	26.69	29.07	29.61	1.9044	

Notes: \* p &lt; .05; \*\* p &lt; .01

The F-ratio tested the null hypothesis that there was no interaction effect between Time and Gender. The results show that Mutual avoidance and withholding was the only variable that rejected the null hypothesis, showing a significant interaction effect between Time and Gender ( $F(2,22) = 3.8764, p = .03$ ). There was a significant drop in male scores from pre- to post-workshop compared to the female scores. Although no other significant interaction effects were found, Tukey HSD Post-hoc comparisons revealed some significant changes at certain time points between male and female scores, as indicated in Table 5.6. The following figures highlight the differences between the male and female scores on some of the variables over the three time points.

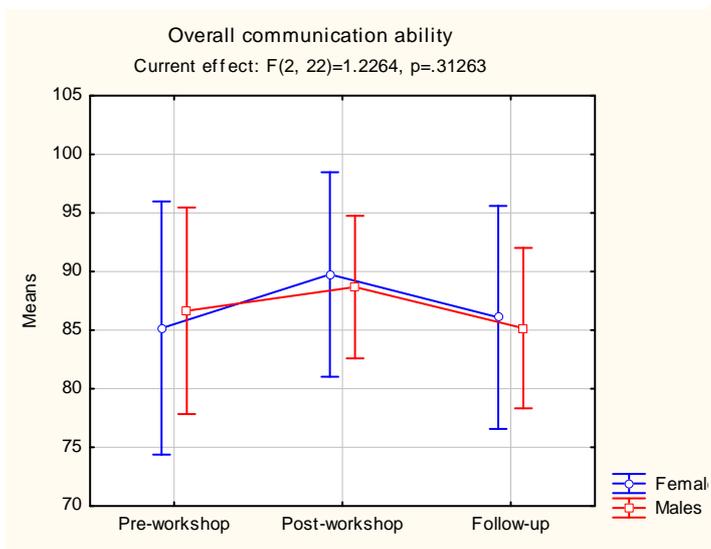


Figure 14. Overall communication ability

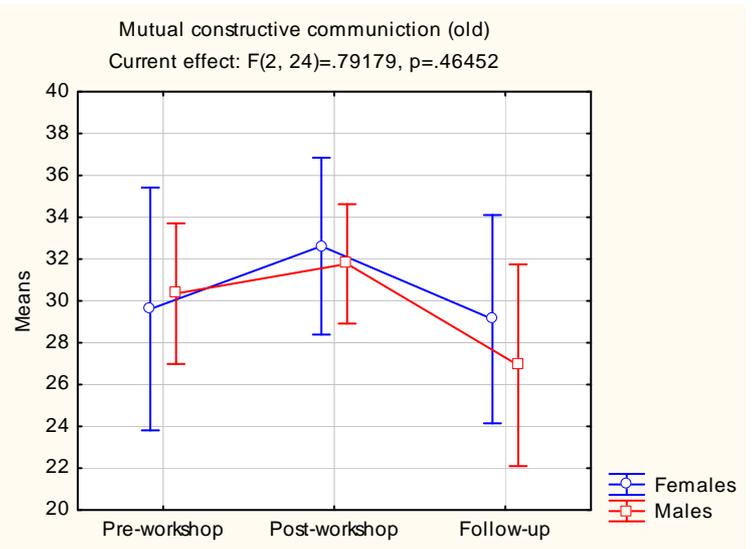


Figure 15. Mutual constructive communication(old)

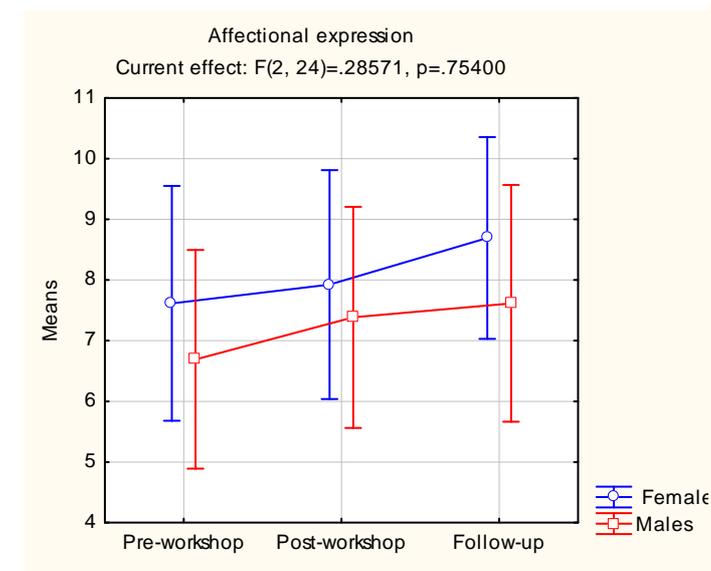


Figure 16. Affectional expression

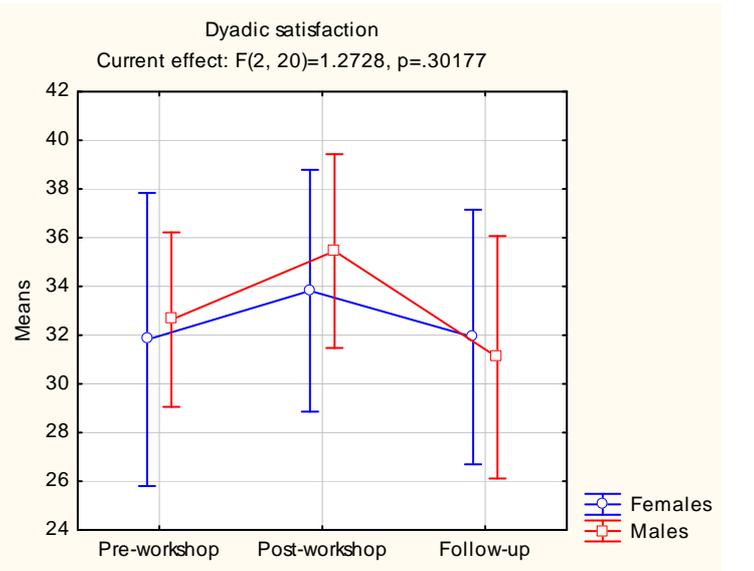


Figure 17. Dyadic satisfaction

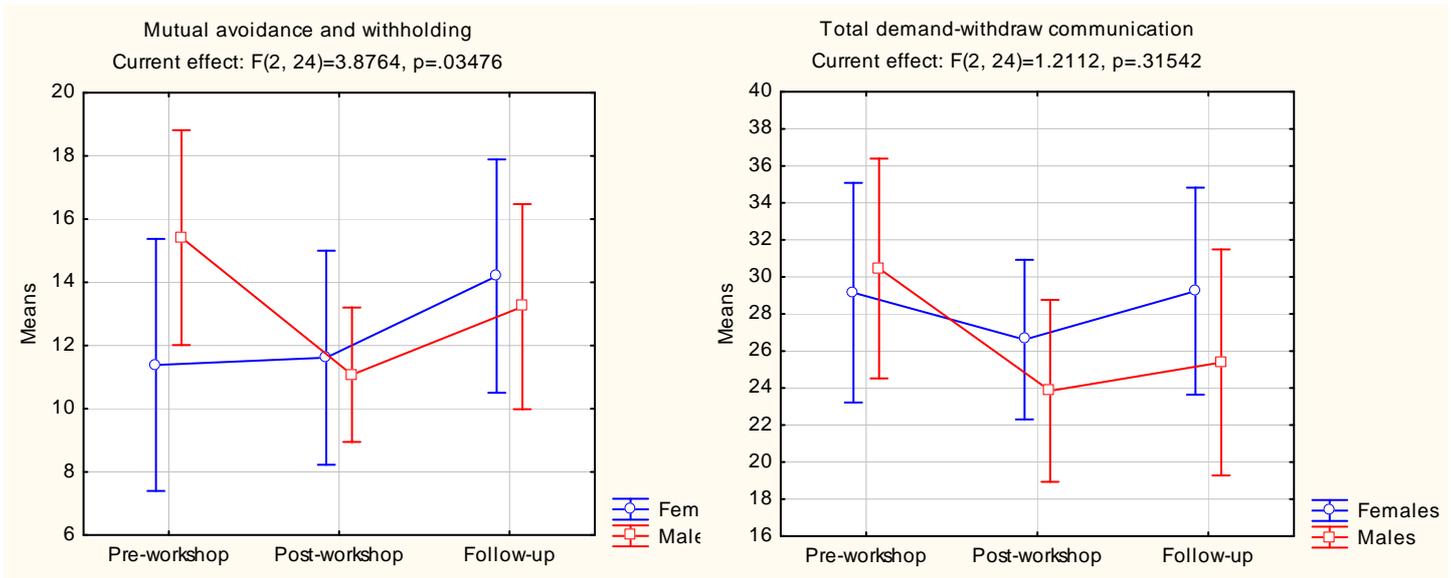


Figure 18. Mutual avoidance and withholding

Figure 19. Total demand-withdraw communication

### 5.2.3.2 Female-only analysis

Because there were more female than male participants at all three time points, an additional repeated measures ANOVA analysis was done on the females only. This enabled the same analysis to be performed, but on a larger sample. The results follow in Table 5.7.

Table 5.7

*Repeated measure ANOVAs of female-only group*

Variable	n	Pre-workshop	Post-workshop	Follow-up	F-ratio	Tukey HSD Post-hoc test
		M	M	M		
<b>Relationship quality</b>						
Overall relationship satisfaction	22	97.49	101.75	103.96	<b>2.6694*</b>	Pre to follow-up (p = 0.07)
Affectional expression	22	7.4	8.0	8.4	<b>2.3619*</b>	Pre to follow-up (p = 0.08)
Dyadic cohesion	22	14.36	15.45	15.09	1.5347	
Dyadic consensus	22	42.45	42.77	45.50	1.8827	
Dyadic satisfaction	21	32.85	35.26	34.38	2.0449	
<b>Communication patterns</b>						
Constructive communication (new)	22	-0.36	5.55	2.71	<b>6.7945***</b>	Pre- to post-workshop (p < 0.01)
Mutual constructive comm. (old)	22	27.36	30.59	28.12	<b>3.444**</b>	Pre- to post-workshop (p = 0.04)
Mutual avoidance & withholding	22	12.31	11.39	14.20	<b>3.3235**</b>	Post to follow-up (p = 0.04)
Man demand-woman withdraw	22	13.04	12.24	11.86	.9499	
Woman demand-man withdraw	22	16.50	14.39	15.39	1.7401	
Total demand-withdraw comm.	22	29.54	26.64	27.22	1.7096	
<b>Communication ability</b>						
Overall communication ability	12	85.17	89.75	86.08	<b>2.7107*</b>	Pre- to post-workshop (p = 0.09)
Self-rating of comm. Ability	20	55.74	59.00	57.90	<b>3.7156**</b>	Pre- to post-workshop (p = 0.02)
Spouse-rating of comm. Ability	20	27.31	29.15	28.15	2.2143	
Relational consciousness	22	25.66	26.86	26.22	.5070	

Notes: \* p &lt; .10; \*\* p &lt; .05; \*\*\* p &lt; .01

The results of this analysis show similar results to the couple-based ANOVAs (see Tables 5.3 and 5.4), with some significant changes. Constructive communication (new), Mutual constructive communication (old), Overall communication ability, and Self-rating of communication ability showed significant increases in scores from pre- to post-workshop. Mutual avoidance and withholding showed a decrease in scores from pre- to post-workshop, but a significant increase from post-workshop to follow-up. Females also showed a significant improvement in scores from pre-workshop to follow-up for Overall relationship satisfaction and Affectional expression. The following figures show graphs for some significant results.

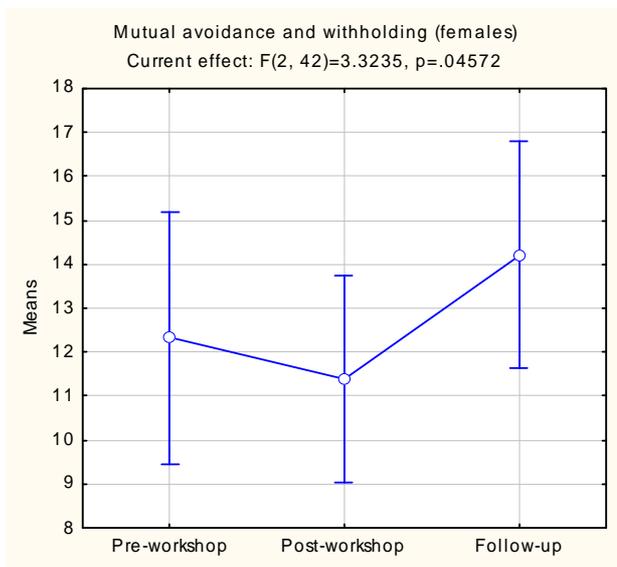


Figure 20. Mutual avoidance and withholding (females)

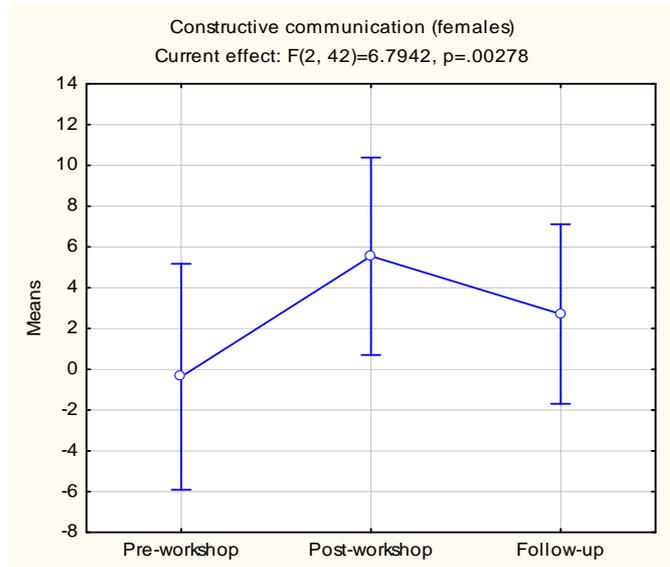


Figure 21. Constructive communication (new) (females)



Figure 22. Self-rating of communication ability (females)

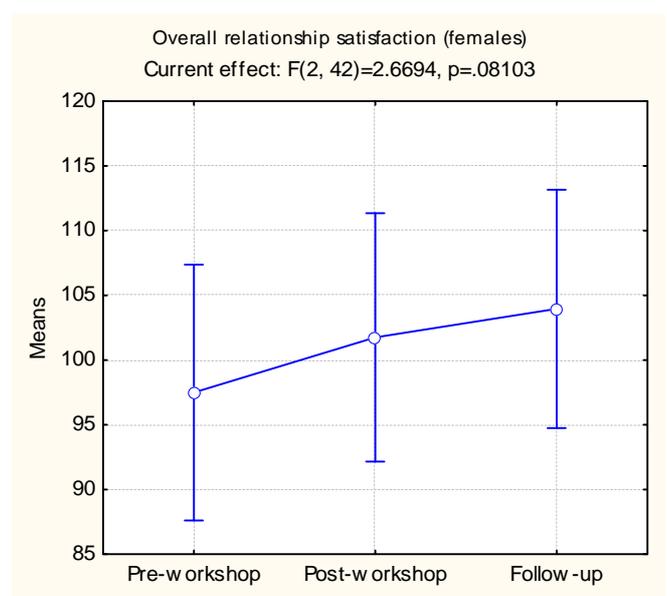


Figure 23. Overall relationship satisfaction (females)

### 5.2.3.3 Perception of communication ability

One of the secondary objectives of this study was to explore communication differences between the male and female partners. A comparison was done to investigate perceptual differences between how a partner rates his/her own communication ability and how their spouse rates them. A repeated measures ANOVA was done using Self-rating (the individual's perception of their own communication ability) and Spouse-rating (their spouse's perception of the individual's communication ability) as the dependent variables. Because the number of items in the two subscales differed, namely sixteen for Self-rating and nine for Spouse-rating, average scores were calculated to do the comparisons.

Over the three time periods there were no significant main effects on Time, either for female self-rating and the rating by her male spouse ( $F(2,22) = 2.6853, p = .09$ ), or for male self-rating and the rating by his female spouse ( $F(2,22) = 1.7874, p = .19$ ). This suggests that there were no real differences in these scores from pre-workshop to post-workshop to follow-up measures.

Significant main effects were found on Gender, both for females ( $F(1,11) = 7.0483, p = .02$ ) and males ( $F(1,11) = 17.205, p = .001$ ). This suggests that both the female and the male partners perceived their own communication ability as being higher than how their spouses rated them.

No significant interaction effects between Time and Gender were found for female self-rating and the rating by her male spouse ( $F(2,22) = 1.4789, p = .25$ ), or for male self-rating and the rating by his female spouse ( $F(2,22) = 1.4490, p = .25$ ). Figures 24 and 25 show the differences in average scores between the female and male self-ratings and their respective spouse-ratings and show that the Spouse-ratings are consistently lower than the Self-ratings.

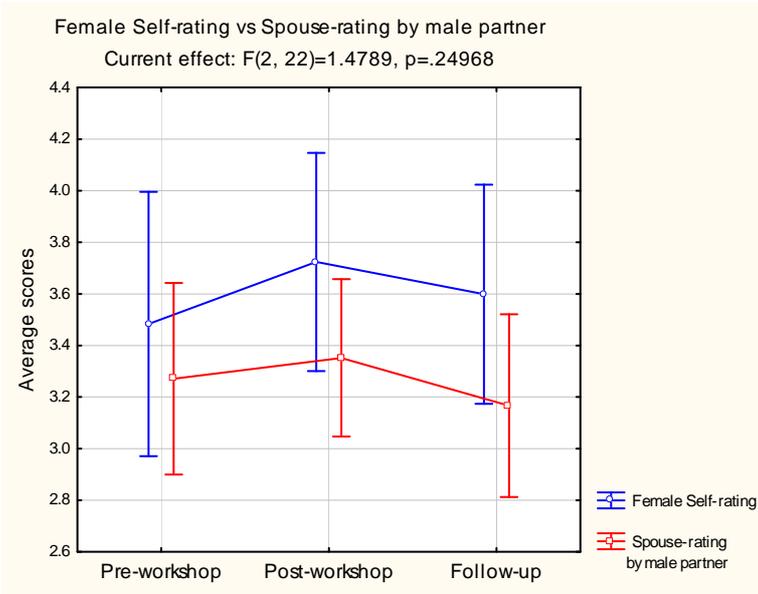


Figure 24. Female self-rating vs. spouse rating

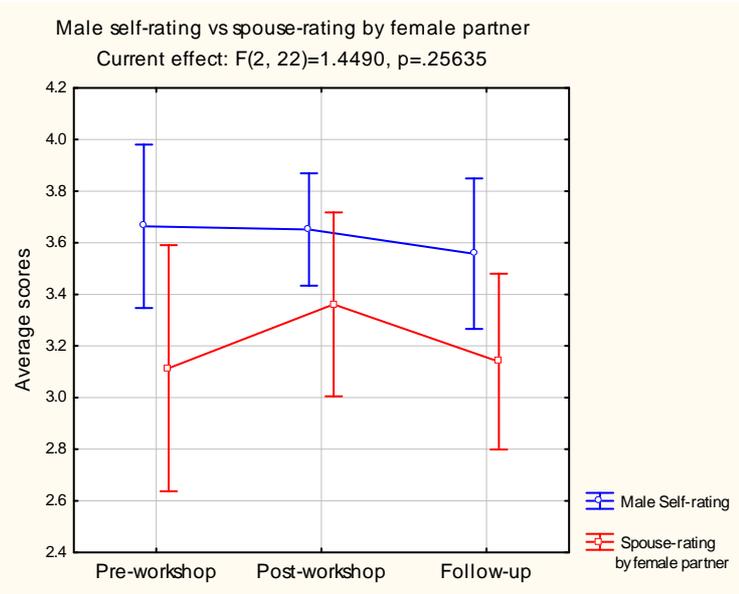


Figure 25. Male self-rating vs. spouse rating

At each time point, Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated to determine the relationships between the Self-ratings and Spouse-ratings. The results are presented in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8

*Pearson product-moment correlations between Self-ratings and Spouse-ratings*

	Spouse-ratings		
	Pre (n = 75)	Post (n = 21)	Follow-up (n = 16)
Female self-rating	.57***	.67***	.75***
Male self-rating	.56***	.41	.59*

Notes: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

The results show that there were moderate to strong significantly positive correlations between female self-ratings and her partner's rating of her communication ability (spouse-rating), increasing in strength at each time point. This suggests that, as the females rate themselves better at communication, so too do their spouses. Although there were moderate positive correlations between male self-ratings and his partner's rating of his communication ability, they were not all significant and did not vary as much in strength over the three time points as did the females scores.

#### 5.2.4 Correlation analysis

Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated to explore the relationships between some demographic variables (Length of relationship, Age of participants and Education level) and the measured aspects of communication and the relationship. The results are shown in Table 5.9 and Table 5.10.

Table 5.9

*Pearson correlations between Length of relationship, Age of participants and the measured variables*

	Length of relationship						Age of participants					
	n	Pre	n	Post	n	Follow-up	n	Pre	n	Post	n	Follow-up
Relationship quality												
Overall relationship satisfaction	150	-.16	51	-.20	37	-.06	148	-.11	53	.17	39	.27
Affectional expression	148	-.14	51	-.06	37	.06	146	-.05	53	.26	39	.23
Dyadic cohesion	154	<b>-.23**</b>	52	-.27	37	-.18	152	-.14	54	.13	39	<b>.35*</b>
Dyadic consensus	146	<b>-.20*</b>	52	-.18	37	-.07	143	-.13	54	.08	39	.21
Dyadic satisfaction	142	-.08	52	-.16	37	-.04	140	<b>-.17*</b>	54	.07	39	.20
Communication patterns												
Constructive communication (new)	155	<b>-.17*</b>	52	-.03	37	.06	153	<b>-.18*</b>	54	.13	39	.31
Mutual constructive comm. (old)	155	<b>-.16*</b>	52	-.21	37	.03	153	-.15	54	.05	39	.27
Mutual avoidance & withholding	155	.04	52	.18	37	-.26	153	.11	54	-.08	39	-.29
Man demand-woman withdraw	155	<b>.16*</b>	52	-.13	37	.09	153	<b>.17*</b>	54	<b>-.35**</b>	39	-.25
Woman demand-man withdraw	155	.04	52	.09	37	0	153	-.01	54	-.18	39	<b>-.49**</b>
Total demand-withdraw comm.	155	.13	52	-.02	37	.04	153	.10	54	<b>-.35*</b>	39	<b>-.46**</b>
Communication ability												
Overall communication ability	146	<b>-.19*</b>	38	<b>-.52**</b>	28	-.29	144	-.9	40	.17	30	<b>.4*</b>
Self-rating of comm. ability	152	<b>-.18*</b>	49	<b>-.31*</b>	36	-.11	150	-.15	51	.06	38	.26
Spouse-rating of comm. ability	147	<b>-.17*</b>	50	<b>-.34*</b>	35	-.16	145	-.03	52	.12	37	.31
Relational consciousness	155	<b>-.16*</b>	52	-.20	37	-.32	153	-.04	54	-.04	39	.10

Notes: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

Table 5.10

*Pearson correlations between Education level and the measured variables*

	Education level					
	n	Pre	n	Post	n	Follow-up
Relationship quality						
Overall relationship satisfaction	153	.01	55	.11	41	.21
Affectional expression	151	.02	55	.11	41	.14
Dyadic cohesion	157	-.02	56	.02	41	.13
Dyadic consensus	148	.07	56	.17	41	.21
Dyadic satisfaction	145	.01	56	-.04	41	.20
Communication patterns						
Constructive communication (new)	158	.05	56	.12	41	.28
Mutual constructive comm. (old)	158	.01	56	.04	41	.18
Mutual avoidance & withholding	158	-.09	56	-.15	41	-.24
Man demand-woman withdraw	158	-.13	56	<b>-.33*</b>	41	-.26
Woman demand-man withdraw	158	.09	56	.02	41	-.13
Total demand-withdraw comm.	158	-.03	56	-.20	41	-.24
Communication ability						
Overall communication ability	149	.10	42	.17	32	.24
Self-rating of comm. ability	155	.12	53	.17	40	.28
Spouse-rating of comm. ability	150	.06	54	-.002	39	.16
Relational consciousness	158	0	56	.06	41	.07

Notes: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

The results in Table 5.9 and Table 5.10 show some significant correlations between Length of relationship and the measured variables at the pre- and post-workshop measures, with no significant correlations at follow-up. Some weak, negative significant correlations were found at the pre-workshop measure between Length of relationship and Dyadic cohesion, Dyadic consensus, Constructive communication (new), Mutual constructive communication (old), and Relational consciousness. Man demand-woman withdraw showed a weak positive correlation with Length of relationship at pre-workshop. The three variables relating to communication ability show weak negative significant correlations at pre-workshop, with moderate negative significant correlations at post-workshop ( $p < .01$  and  $p < .05$ ). This may suggest that, even after the workshop, those participants who have been in their relationships longer showed less of an ability to communicate.

The relationship between Age of participants and the measured variables produced a few significant correlations at all three time points. At the follow-up measure, there were moderate positive significant correlations between Age of participant and both Dyadic cohesion and Overall communication ability ( $p < .05$ ). Of note were the significant negative correlations between Age of participants and the three demand-withdraw variables at the post-workshop and follow-up measures ( $p < .01$ ). This suggests that, after the workshop, the amount of demand-withdraw communication decreased with an increase in the age of the participants.

There was little to no relationship between Education level of participants and the measured variables at any of the three time points.

Further Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated to explore the relationship between aspects of the relationship and the measured aspects of communication over the three time periods. These results are presented in Table 5.11, Table 5.12, Table 5.13 and Table 5.14.

Table 5.11

*Pearson correlations between Overall relationship satisfaction and the measured variables*

	Overall relationship satisfaction					
	n	Pre	n	Post	n	Follow-up
Relationship aspects						
Affectional expression	152	.83***	55	.82***	41	.83***
Dyadic cohesion	154	.81***	55	.63***	41	.75***
Dyadic consensus	144	.90***	55	.85***	41	.88***
Dyadic satisfaction	143	.92***	55	.87***	41	.92***
Communication patterns						
Constructive communication (new)	154	.70***	55	.58***	41	.62***
Mutual constructive comm. (old)	154	.75***	55	.71***	41	.72***
Mutual avoidance & withholding	154	-.59***	55	-.72***	41	-.63***
Man demand-woman withdraw	154	-.27**	55	-.32*	41	-.65***
Woman demand-man withdraw	154	-.51***	55	-.31*	41	-.47**
Total demand-withdraw comm.	154	-.50***	55	-.42**	41	-.70***
Communication ability						
Overall communication ability	146	.74***	42	.78***	32	.83***
Self-rating of comm. ability	152	.75***	52	.81***	40	.84***
Spouse-rating of comm. ability	147	.51***	42	.41**	32	.63***
Relational consciousness	154	.21*	55	.04	41	-.005

Notes: \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001

Table 5.12

*Pearson correlations between Affectional expression, Dyadic cohesion and the measured communication variables*

	Affectional expression						Dyadic cohesion					
	n	Pre	n	Post	n	Follow-up	n	Pre	n	Post	n	Follow-up
Communication patterns												
Constructive communication (new)	152	.52***	55	.49***	41	.39*	158	.60***	56	.42**	41	.39*
Mutual constructive comm. (old)	152	.59***	55	.60***	41	.62***	158	.68***	56	.61***	41	.60***
Mutual avoidance & withholding	152	-.53***	55	-.59***	41	-.55***	158	-.56***	56	-.54***	41	-.58***
Man demand-woman withdraw	152	-.17*	55	-.21	41	-.45**	158	-.27**	56	-.27*	41	-.52***
Woman demand-man withdraw	152	-.43***	55	-.37**	41	-.46**	158	-.46***	56	-.31*	41	-.34*
Total demand-withdraw comm.	152	-.39***	55	-.39**	41	-.56***	158	-.47***	56	-.39**	41	-.52***
Communication ability												
Overall communication ability	144	.57***	42	.63***	32	.66***	150	.74***	42	.69***	32	.85***
Self-rating of comm. ability	150	.56***	52	.58***	40	.60***	156	.76***	53	.66***	40	.80***
Spouse-rating of comm. ability	145	.43***	42	.38*	32	.60***	151	.48***	42	.40**	32	.66***
Relational consciousness	152	.13	55	.09	41	-.10	158	.27**	56	-.09	41	.25

Notes: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 5.13

*Pearson correlations between Dyadic consensus, Dyadic satisfaction and the measured communication variables*

	Dyadic consensus						Dyadic satisfaction					
	n	Pre	n	Post	n	Follow-up	n	Pre	n	Post	n	Follow-up
Communication patterns												
Constructive communication (new)	149	.58***	56	.43**	41	.63***	146	.72***	56	.58***	41	.57***
Mutual constructive comm. (old)	149	.61***	56	.48***	41	.61***	146	.75***	56	.71***	41	.64***
Mutual avoidance & withholding	149	-.46***	56	-.53***	41	-.48**	146	-.59***	56	.69***	41	-.62***
Man demand-woman withdraw	149	-.27**	56	-.28*	41	-.64***	146	-.24**	56	-.17	41	-.57***
Woman demand-man withdraw	149	-.47***	56	-.15	41	-.45**	146	-.49***	56	-.32*	41	-.40*
Total demand-withdraw comm.	149	-.47***	56	-.28*	41	-.66***	146	-.47***	56	-.33*	41	-.59***
Communication ability												
Overall communication ability	141	.61***	42	.51***	32	.64***	139	.70***	42	.77***	32	.80***
Self-rating of comm. ability	146	.63***	53	.60***	40	.68***	144	.70***	53	.77***	40	.80***
Spouse-rating of comm. ability	142	.40***	42	.17	32	.44*	140	.50***	42	.49**	32	.61***
Relational consciousness	149	.19*	56	.13	41	-.06	146	.18*	56	-.04	41	-.02

Notes: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 5.14

*Correlations between Overall communication ability and Constructive communication*

	Overall communication ability		
	Pre (n = 150)	Post (n = 42)	Follow-up (n = 32)
Communication patterns			
Constructive communication (new)	.61***	.52***	.49**

Notes: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

The results in Table 5.11, Table 5.12, Table 5.13 and Table 5.14 show that apart from Relational consciousness, aspects of the relationship were strongly correlated with aspects of communication.

### 5.2.5 Summary of quantitative results

The quantitative analyses revealed some significant differences in mean scores over the three time points. The results suggest that, while there was an initial improvement in the communication and relationship aspects from the pre-workshop to post-workshop measures, this was followed by a decrease/slipping back towards pre-workshop scores by the three-month follow-up measure. Some follow-up scores even dropped slightly lower than the pre-workshop scores. Overall relationship satisfaction, Affectional expression (females only), Dyadic satisfaction, Constructive communication (new), Mutual constructive communication (old), Mutual avoidance and withholding, Woman demand-man withdraw, Total demand-withdraw communication, Overall communication ability (females only), Self-rating of communication ability (females only) and Spouse-rating of communication ability all showed some statistically significant differences over the three time points. Affectional expression was the only variable that showed an improvement in mean scores from the pre- to post- to follow-up measures, with a significant increase from pre-workshop to follow-up. There was a significant decrease in scores from pre-workshop to follow-up of the Man demand-woman withdraw and Total demand-withdraw communication.

Some significant differences were found between male and female scores over the three time points, with the scores of the females generally being higher than those of their male partners. Both the male and female partners perceived their own communication abilities as being better than what their spouses rated them. The females-only analysis showed

significant improvements over the three time points for both Overall relationship satisfaction and Affectional expression.

Some weak to moderate significant correlations were found between Length of relationship and the measured variables in the pre- and post-workshop measures. It appears from the post-workshop measure that the longer the length of the relationship, the poorer the ability of the participants to communicate. Some moderate significant correlations were found between Age of participant and the measured variables in the post-workshop and follow-up measures. After the workshop, the three demand-withdraw variables showed moderately significant negative correlations with Age of participants, suggesting that the older the participants, the lower the demand-withdraw pattern. There was no relationship between Education level and the measured variables.

Apart from Affectional expression, no significant differences were found between those couples who completed the study and those that dropped off.

The general pattern of results from the ANOVA analyses, showing an initial increment in post-workshop scores, followed by a decrement in follow-up scores, warrants further attention.

### **5.3 Qualitative results**

Because a concurrent, nested strategy was used in this study, it allowed for data to be collected and analysed at a different level to the quantitative analysis. The qualitative analysis was done using individual participants as the unit of analysis in order to discover the subjective experiences of the individual participants. Open-ended questions were used to address the following secondary objectives:

- to explore and gain insight into how participants experienced their communication before and after the *GTLYW Workshop*
- to explore and gain insight into the participants' expectations before, and their learning after, the *GTLYW Workshop*, with specific focus on their use of the Couples Dialogue

At the three time points, the participants were also asked to complete open-ended questions. While there were between two and five questions per time point, not all the respondents answered all the questions. At the pre-workshop measure, 151 out of 159 (95%) participants responded to the open-ended questions, with 54 out of 56 (96%)

responding to questions at the post-workshop measure, and 37 out of 41 (90%) responding to questions at the follow-up measure. The results are presented as pre-workshop insights, post-workshop insights and follow-up insights.

### 5.3.1 Pre-workshop insights

Three pre-workshop questions were asked in an attempt to obtain a view of how the participants experienced their communication just before the workshop and what their expectations were of the workshop. Table 5.15 contains the themes that emerged from responses to the question, “What aspects of communication between yourself and your partner do you consider to be strengths?”

Table 5.15

*Summary of responses to question, “What aspects of communication between yourself and your partner do you consider to be strengths?” (n = 144)*

Themes that emerged	Freq	%
Talking	53	37%
Resolving conflict	31	22%
Understanding	28	19%
No communication strengths	27	19%
Listening	20	14%
Togetherness	18	13%
Honesty	14	10%
Non-verbal communication	9	6%
Humour	5	3%

From the responses of the participants, it emerged that *Talking* was the aspect of communication they rated the strongest, with 53 (37%) responses. The participants experienced *Talking* as “we both have a chance to talk”, “openness to talk”, “no fear to talk”, “can talk about deep issues”, “time to talk”, and “able to express feelings”. The second highest strength that emerged was *Resolving conflict*, with 31 (22%) responses. This was experienced by the participants as “able to communicate in difficult situations”, “able to solve problems” and “can communicate calmly and well”. Twenty-eight (19%) also rated their *Understanding* as a key strength, which they experienced as having “good

understanding of each other”, “able to see each other’s point of view” and “interest, care, respect for each other”. *Listening* also emerged as a key strength, which 20 (14%) of the participants experienced as the “ability to listen well”.

Although this question asked about communication strengths, a theme of *No communication strengths* emerged from the responses. Twenty-seven (19%) participants experienced this as “communication has broken down”, “no strengths”, “weak communication”, “few strong points”, and “there are problems”.

Table 5.16 contains the themes that emerged from the responses to the question, “What aspects of communication between yourself and your partner can be improved on?”

Table 5.16

*Summary of responses to the question, “What aspects of communication between yourself and your partner can be improved on?” (n = 146)*

Themes that emerged	Freq	%
Listening	38	26%
Talking	35	24%
Safe, two-way interaction	31	21%
Resolving conflict	24	16%
Negative/destructive patterns	23	16%
Time	20	14%
Everything	18	12%
Not to make assumptions	16	11%
Understanding	16	11%
Express emotions	11	8%
Other aspects	9	6%

Even though *Listening* and *Talking* emerged as key strengths, they also emerged as the aspects of communication that the participants experienced as needing the most improvement. *Listening* (n = 38, 26%) emerged from experiences such as “need to listen better” and “need to really listen”. Twenty-three (16%) participants experienced *Talking* as “need to be more open”, “need to be free to talk”, “not be scared to talk” or “needing more talking”, while 12 (8%) participants expressed the need “to discuss deeper issues”, “to talk

about sex”, and “for more intimate, personal, spiritual communication”. The themes of *Talking* and *Listening* collectively represented 50% of the responses. Thirty-one (21%) participants indicated the need to improve *Safe, two-way interaction*, which emerged from experiences such as “More effective verbal and emotional/non-verbal communication”, “more effective interpersonal”, “improve manner, tone of conversations”, “ability to create safety” and “sincerity”. For 20 (14%) participants, *Time* issues emerged, which they experienced either as “needing to communicate more often” or “making time to communicate”. Eighteen (12%) participants indicated that they needed to improve all aspects of communication.

Table 5.17 contains the themes that emerged from responses to the question, “What are your expectations of the workshop?”

Table 5.17

*Summary of responses to “What are your expectations of the workshop?” (n = 148)*

Themes that emerged	Freq	%
To improve how we communicate	62	42%
To gain understanding and insight	61	41%
To deepen our connection	38	26%
To improve/strengthen our relationship	24	16%
To improve resolving conflict	24	16%
To improve other aspects of the relationship	15	10%
High expectations	8	5%
Hope for the relationship	8	5%
Little/no expectations	7	5%
To help us prepare for marriage	2	1%

*To Improve ‘how’ we communicate* emerged as the highest expectation of the workshop, with 62 (42%) responses. Thirty-three (22%) participants expressed this as “learn communication skills”, “techniques” or “tools”, and 29 (20%) as “learning how to communicate better”. The theme of to *Gain understanding and insight* (n = 61, 41%) emerged from two sub-themes: *Gaining understanding of each other* (partner views) (n = 38, 26%), from statements such as “gain better understanding of each other”, “gain better understanding of myself”, and “gain better understanding of my partner”; and to *Gain*

*insight into the relationship* (relationship views), with 23 (16%) responses, which included statements with specific reference to the relationship, such as “to gain understanding of the relationship”, “to gain better understanding of childhood and previous relationship issues”, and to “understand relationship baggage”. While *To deepen our connection* and *To improve/strengthen our relationship* may appear to be the same, *To deepen our connection* (n = 38, 26%) emerged from responses relating to adding more depth/richness to the relationship, such as “to grow closer again”, “improve intimacy”, “rediscover each other”, and “grow our love for each other”. In contrast, *Improve/strengthen our relationship* (n = 24, 16%) emerged from more general statements, such as “to improve the relationship”. *To improve resolving conflict* (n = 24, 16%) emerged from statements such as “to overcome differences” and “improve managing/resolving conflict”. Eight (5%) participants indicated that the workshop offered *Hope for the relationship*, which was expressed as “the last hope”, or “is the relationship salvageable?”

### 5.3.2 Post-workshop insights

At the post-workshop measure, two questions were asked to explore whether the participants had experienced any changes in their communication since the workshop, and whether they had started using the Dialogue technique. Table 5.18 contains the themes that emerged from responses to the question, “In what ways, if any, has your communication with your partner changed since the workshop?”

Table 5.18

*Summary of responses to question, “In what ways, if any, has your communication with your partner changed since the workshop?” (n = 54)*

Themes that emerged	Freq	%
Increased understanding and insight	20	37%
Improved talking	17	31%
Safer, more meaningful communication	13	24%
Improved listening	10	19%
No changes	9	17%
Improved conflict resolution	9	17%
Deepened connection	7	13%
Assistance from therapist	2	4%

The results show that *Increased understanding and insight, Improved talking, Safer, more meaningful communication* and *Improved listening* emerged as key themes, suggesting positive changes in the participants' communication with their partner since the workshop. These themes emerged from the participants experiencing improvements such as "increased awareness of each other", "less threatened/easier to talk", "communication is calmer/safer/more careful", and "learnt how to really listen". Nine (17%) participants experienced little or *No change* to their communication since the workshop.

Table 5.19 contains the themes that emerged from responses to the question, "Have you started using the Dialogue technique?"

Table 5.19

*Summary of responses to "Have you started using the Dialogue technique?" (n = 54)*

Response	Freq	%	Experience of participant	Freq	%
Yes	22	41%	Positive, constructive experience	8	15%
			With difficulty	6	11%
			With assistance of Imago therapist	6	11%
Initially – not since	9	17%			
No/not really	23	43%	Avoiding discussions, resistance	6	11%
			Not used actual technique, but have more insight and apply principles	5	9%
			Time issues	5	9%
			No reason given	4	7%
			Difficulty with the technique	3	6%

From Table 5.19 it follows that, at the post-workshop measure, 22 (41%) of the participants indicated that they were using the Couples Dialogue, although some experienced difficulty with it (11%), while others used it with the assistance of a therapist (11%). Fifteen percent of the participants had positive experiences with the Couples Dialogue, such as "improves communication", "I feel heard", "I feel listened to", "being understood for first time", "get good results", "creates an intimate atmosphere", and "process very successful". Of the 32 (60%) participants that were not using the Couples Dialogue at the post-workshop measure, nine (17%) indicated that they used it "only for a short time", "once or twice", "initially then back to old habits", or "first week only". Twenty-

three (43%) indicated that that were not using the Dialogue technique. Of those who expanded why they were not using the technique, 11% indicated that they “still avoid discussions”, “partner was not keen” or “no interest”. Nine percent indicated that, while they have not used the actual technique as it was taught to them, they do “have more insight”, “apply principles” and “are more sensitive to each other”. A further nine percent indicated that they were either “too busy”, “have no time”, or “it needs time to practise and there is no time”. Six percent of the participants found the Couples Dialogue “unnatural” or “difficult to begin”.

### 5.3.3 Follow-up insights

At the follow-up measure three months after the workshop, the participants were again asked to complete open-ended questions with regard to changes in their communication with their partners, learning from the workshop and their use of the Couples Dialogue. The participants were asked about changes they had perceived in their own communication with their partners, as well as changes they perceived in their partner’s communication with them. The following questions were asked: “With regard to your communication: In what ways, if any, has YOUR interaction with your partner changed?”, and “In what ways, if any, has YOUR PARTNER’S interaction with you changed?” The responses to these two questions appear in Table 5.20.

Table 5.20

*Summary of responses to questions regarding perceived changes in communication*

Themes that emerged	Perception of own communication changes (n = 37)		Perception of partner’s communication changes (n = 36)	
	Freq	%	Freq	%
Increased understanding and insight	11	30%	8	22%
Nothing – back to old ways	10	27%	14	39%
Less negative patterns	10	27%	5	14%
Improved, relaxed talking/communicating	9	24%	8	22%
Improved conflict resolution	6	16%	0	0%
Improved listening	6	16%	3	8%
More intentional	5	14%	10	28%

The results show that the same themes emerged from the responses to both the questions. Thirty percent of the participants experienced an increase in their understanding and insight, while 22% experienced their partners as having increased their understanding and insight. Twenty-seven percent perceived themselves as using less negative patterns, compared to 14% who perceived their partners as using less negative patterns. Twenty-seven percent of the participants experienced no changes in the way they interact with their partner and found themselves slipping back into old ways, whereas 39% experienced their partners as not changing and slipping back into old ways. Being *More intentional* was the only theme to emerge where the participants perceived their partner's communication more favourably than their own. The theme of *Improved conflict resolution* did not emerge from the participants' perceptions of their partner's communication.

Table 5.21 contains the themes that emerged from responses to the question, "What are the most important learning/insights that you remember from the Imago Workshop?"

Table 5.21

*Summary of responses to question, "What are the most important learning/insights that you remember from the Imago Workshop?" (n = 36)*

Themes that emerged	Freq	%
Importance of communication skills (aspects of Couples Dialogue)	29	81%
Understanding and insight	21	58%
Ability to repair and heal in relationship	6	17%
Deepening the connection	6	17%
To be conscious and intentional	5	14%
Safe relationship space	3	8%

From Table 5.21 it follows that the most important learning that emerged from the workshop was the *Importance of communication skills (aspects of Couples Dialogue)*, with 81% of the participants experiencing this as "importance of talking/dialogues", "importance of open, honest discussions", "importance of listening/mirroring", "honouring/validating partner", "validate, empathise with each other", "importance of eye-contact/non-verbal communication", and "making time to communicate". *Understanding and insight* emerged as the second key aspect learned, with 58% of the participants experiencing this as

“understand partner’s world/needs/point of view”, “understand our differences/ourselves”, “understand childhood wounding/triggers/defences”, and “understand how we choose our partners”.

Table 5.22 contains the themes that emerged from responses to the question, “Have you applied the Dialogue technique in situations where effective communication has been difficult?”

Table 5.22

*Summary of responses to question, “Have you applied the Dialogue technique in situations where effective communication has been difficult?” (n = 37)*

Response	Freq	%	Explanation	Freq	%
Yes	11	30%	Used when needed	6	16%
			Used in other contexts	3	8%
			Needed assistance of Imago therapist	1	3%
Initially yes, not since	7	19%			
No/not really	19	51%	No explanation given	8	22%
			Not used actual technique, but have more insight & apply principles	8	22%
			Time issues	6	16%
			Difficulty with the technique	4	11%
			Needed/would like assistance/guidance of therapist	2	5%

The results showed that, three months after the workshop, 30% of the participants indicated that they were making use of the Couples Dialogue (compared to 41% at post-workshop), while 70% indicated that they were not using the technique (compared to 60% at post-workshop). Of those who offered explanations as to why they had not used the technique, 22% of the participants indicated that although they “had not used the actual technique”, they had “applied principles in discussions”, with the workshop having created an “awareness and understanding”. Seven (19%) participants indicated that they had “no continuity”, are “falling back into old ways”, or only used the Couples Dialogue “at or just after the workshop and not used it since”. Six (16%) participants indicated that the Dialogue “takes too much time”, that they tend to “put it off till later”, or “don’t make time” to

practise the skill. Four (11%) participants experienced difficulty with the technique, indicating that they “battle with it”, and found it “difficult”, “emotionally draining” or even “unnatural”.

At the follow-up measure, the participants were asked whether they would recommend Imago Relationship Therapy to other people. Thirty-seven (95%) participants responded “yes” and two (5%) responded “no”.

#### 5.3.4 Summary of qualitative results

Pre-workshop Overview: The ability to talk, resolve conflict, have a shared understanding and to listen emerged as the aspects of communication that the participants experienced as key strengths in their relationships. Almost 20% of the participants indicated that their communication was weak, had either broken down or that there were no strengths at that time. Both the ability to listen and the ability to talk were experienced as the aspects of communication most needing improvement, followed closely by a need for safer, more effective two-way communication. Time issues also emerged, with participants indicating that they needed to make more time to communicate or needed to communicate more often. Twelve percent of the participants indicated that all aspects of their communication needed improvement. When asked about their expectations of the workshop, 42% of the participants indicated that they expected to improve ‘how’ they communicate by learning new skills, techniques and tools. Forty-one percent of the participants expected to gain greater understanding and insight, both of themselves and of their partners, as well as of their relationship. A small percentage of the participants indicated that the workshop was their last hope for the relationship or was being attended to see if the relationship was salvageable.

Post-workshop Overview: A number of positive changes were reported by the participants at the post-workshop measure. Increased understanding and insight, improved talking, safer, more meaningful communication, improved listening, improved conflict resolution and a deepened connection emerged as aspects of communication in which the participants had experienced positive changes. Seventeen percent of the participants experienced little or no change in their communication, while 41% of the participants were using the Couples Dialogue and experienced it as positive, although some experienced difficulty with it and others used it with the assistance of a therapist. Sixty percent of the participants were not using the Couples Dialogue at the post-workshop measure.

Seventeen percent indicated that they had used it initially, but not since, and 43% had not used it at all. Reasons given for the lack of use included time issues, difficulties with the technique, avoidance/resistance, or lack of interest. Some participants indicated that, although they were not using the actual technique, they had more insight and could apply the principles of the technique.

Follow-up Overview: The participants were asked what changes they had perceived in their own communication and in their partner's communication since the workshop. Similar themes emerged, with more participants perceiving changes in their own communication than in that of their partners. Positive themes that emerged were those of increased understanding and insight, less negative patterns, improved, relaxed talking, listening better, and more intentional communication. Twenty-seven percent of the participants experienced no changes in their own communication, while 39% experienced no changes in their partner's communication. These participants felt that they had slipped back into old ways. Two dominant themes that emerged as key learning/insights from the workshop were the importance of communication skills (aspects of Couples Dialogue) and understanding and insight. Although the importance of communication skills did not give an indication of usage, it suggests that the participants had an increased awareness of the value of communication. Use of the Couples Dialogue dropped to 30%, with 70% of the participants indicating that they were not using the skill. Nineteen percent indicated that they had used the Couples Dialogue for only a while, felt they had no continuity or were falling back into old ways. Twenty-two percent of the participants claimed to have more awareness and understanding and that they could apply the principles of the technique, although they were not using the actual technique. Other reasons for not using the Couples Dialogue included time issues, difficulty with the technique or needing the assistance of a therapist.

#### **5.4 Summary**

This chapter presented the results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses. A general pattern emerged from the ANOVA results, with some significant changes, showing initial improvements in the measured aspects of communication and the relationship, followed by a decrease in scores by the follow-up measure. By asking qualitative questions that the quantitative analyses could not address, the researcher was able to discover some of the subjective experiences of the participants and gain a broader perspective on the communication of the couples who attended the *GTLYW Workshop*. Key learning that

arose from the workshop corresponded with the expectations of the workshop, which included learning how to communicate effectively and gaining understanding and insight. Themes that emerged from the qualitative analysis suggest that positive changes were experienced by a large portion of participants. However, the percentage of participants who experienced little or no change in their communication after the workshop increased over the three-month period. The results also indicated that the usage of the communication skills (Couples Dialogue) taught at the workshop seemed to drop over the three-month period. The results from the qualitative analyses provide some insight into the decreases noted in the quantitative results and go some way to provide reasons for the decrement in scores.

The next chapter will present a discussion of the results and an interpretation of the research findings. It will also highlight limitations of the study, along with recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

#### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the discussion and conclusion of this research. The study was interested in the research question: “Do couples who have attended the Imago *Getting The Love You Want Workshop for Couples (GTLYW Workshop)* experience improvements in aspects of their communication and the quality of their relationship, and are improvements sustained over time?” A mixed-methods approach was used to investigate and better understand whether couples improved their communication and the quality of their relationship after attending a *GTLYW Workshop*. A longitudinal design was used, with both quantitative and qualitative data collected at three time points: pre-workshop (before the workshop), post-workshop (three to four weeks after the workshop), and at follow-up (three months after the workshop).

The primary objective of this study was to determine whether improvements occurred in aspects of a couple’s communication and the quality of their relationship after they attended the workshop. The secondary objectives were whether improvements were evident after three months; whether communication differences emerged between males and females; and whether demographic variables such as length of relationship, age of participants and education level were associated with a couple’s communication and the quality of their relationship.

Qualitative analysis was included to further explore and gain insight into how the participants experienced their communication before and after the *GTLYW Workshop*, as well as to gain insight into their expectations before and their learning after the *GTLYW Workshop*, with specific focus on their use of the Couples Dialogue.

This chapter presents a discussion and summary of the findings, followed by a look at the limitations of the study, recommendations for future research and the conclusion of this research project.

## 6.2 Discussion

The sample for this study consisted predominantly of white couples in their late thirties who had been married for an average of 12 years. The majority of the participants had completed tertiary-level education and reflected an above-average socioeconomic status. Although the attrition rate was quite high, no substantial differences were found between participants who dropped off and those who completed the study. There was little to no relationship between the measured variables and the education level of the participants. Three to four weeks after the workshop there seemed to be a negative relationship between the length of the couple's relationship and their ability to communicate (see Table 5.9), suggesting that those participants in longer relationships showed less ability to communicate. This negative relationship could be an indication that, over time, dysfunctional communication and conflict patterns become entrenched in the ways couples interact, and they become resistant to change and less willing to modify their behaviour (Halford, 2004; Stanley et al., 1995). After the workshop, the amount of demand-withdraw communication seemed to decrease as the age of the participants increased (see Table 5.9).

The sample in this study not only reflects a similar population to that of previous Imago research, showing a homogeneous population attending the *GTLYW Workshops*, but more generally reflects sampling profiles of broader prevention programmes (Christensen & Heavey, 1999). Christensen and Heavey (1999) suggest caution in generalising results, and highlight the need to apply this type of intervention to more diverse samples of couples.

Looking at gender alone, no substantial differences were found between males and females, although some significant differences emerged when assessing gender differences across the three time points. Generally, the scores of the females were higher than those of their male partners. Both the males and the females perceived their own communication abilities as being better than how their spouses rated them. When an analysis was done using only the female group, some significant improvements were found over the three time points (see Table 5.7).

### 6.2.1 Communication and relationship changes

The overall pattern of the measured communication and relationship variables suggests initial improvements at the post-workshop measure, followed by a dissipation of

improvements at the three-month follow-up measure. This trend was observed from the quantitative, repeated measures ANOVA results, which showed improvements in mean scores at post-workshop, followed by decreases in mean scores at follow-up, with some significant differences noted (see Tables 5.3, 5.4, 5.6 and 5.7). A key communication pattern assessed in this study was *constructive communication* (using both an older and newer scale), relating to the ability to discuss problems, express feelings, negotiate solutions, understand views and resolve issues. This ability to communicate constructively showed significant improvements post-workshop, as well as significant decreases in scores at follow-up. Issues related to positive feelings in the relationship (*dyadic satisfaction*) also saw initial significant improvements for the couples, followed by significant decrements. For males alone there was a significant decrease in positive feeling in the relationship after three months. A similar pattern of results emerged from Heller's (1999) study, which saw significant improvements for all measured variables, including some communication variables, from pre- to post-measures. Although there were no significant changes from post-workshop to follow-up in Heller's (1999) study, by the follow-up measure the majority of mean scores were tapering off.

From a qualitative perspective in the present study, the participants were able to describe how they experienced their communication and their experiences of the workshop. The qualitative results provided insight into and confirmed the pattern of dissipated quantitative scores, with the percentage of participants experiencing no change in their communication increasing from post-workshop to follow-up (see Tables 5.18 and 5.20), and a large portion of participants perceiving no changes in the way their partners communicated with them (see Table 5.20). This pattern further emerged from the responses of the participants to questions regarding the use of the Couples Dialogue, with percentages of use decreasing from post-workshop to follow-up (see Tables 5.19 and 5.22). The results also provided a better understanding by drawing from the participants' own words, with them indicating that they had "no continuity", had "slipped back into old ways" or had "used the Dialogue too long ago".

These findings correspond with Christensen and Heavey's (1999) review of interventions for couples, in which they report that, after short-term improvements, the effects of prevention programmes tend to dissipate over time. Although they consider a three-month follow-up to be very short, there is evidence that there is a deterioration in effects within this timeframe. Even the gains of well-established, well-researched programmes, such as

PREP and the Couple Communication programme, seem to deteriorate over time (Butler & Wampler, 1999; Markman et al., 1993).

The need for some type of follow-up sessions after the *GTLYW Workshop* also emerged as a key theme from Beeton's (2006a) research on the use of Imago skills by participants who had previously attended a *GTLYW Workshop*, as well as from Weigle's (2006) study. Researchers have recognised the value of implementing some type of booster programme or booster sessions as an attempt to maintain improvements from enrichment programmes (Christensen & Heavey, 1999; Guerney & Maxson, 1990; Stanley et al., 1995). Butler and Wampler (1999) suggest booster sessions three, six and possibly 12 months after an intervention. Markman et al. (1993) suggest that booster sessions could be included on a systematic basis, maybe annually, as and when needed or at relevant developmental points in the couple's relationship. From the present study, the significant negative changes from post-workshop to follow-up, as well as themes emerging from the qualitative results, would suggest that some type of booster programme is needed within three months of the *GTLYW Workshop*.

#### 6.2.2 Increased awareness

Although the ability to be aware of and introspect the nature and dynamics of one's relationship (*relational consciousness*) did not reveal any significant changes over the three time points (see Tables 5.3, 5.4, 5.6 and 5.7), changes in awareness and understanding emerged strongly as a dominant theme from the qualitative results. Increasing insight and understanding emerged as the second highest expectation of the workshop (see Table 5.17) and, at both the post-workshop and follow-up measures, emerged as the aspect of communication that the participants experienced as having changed the most (see Tables 5.18 and 5.20). After three months, increased insight and understanding was also experienced as the second most important aspect learnt during the workshop (see Table 5.21). This finding corresponds with previous Imago research, in which similar themes of increased awareness and understanding emerged (Beeton, 2006a; Heller, 1999; Weigle, 2006). According to Imago theory, increasing awareness is the first step to creating a conscious relationship (Hendrix, 1993, 1995). While Imago theory states that effective communication is necessary to facilitate a shift to a conscious relationship, it is unclear from this study whether the increased insight and understanding emerged only from improved communication or from other aspects learnt at the workshop.

### 6.2.3 Use of Couples Dialogue

One of the secondary objectives of this study was to explore the couples' use of the core communication technique, the Couples Dialogue (see Tables 5.19 and 5.22). The results suggest a decrease in the use of this communication technique from post-workshop to follow-up, with almost three-quarters of the participants not using the core skills three months after the workshop. Greater insight into this decrease was drawn from participants indicating that they experienced difficulties with the Couples Dialogue and found it "unnatural" or "difficult", while others referred to time issues, such as how long it takes, putting it off until later and not making time to practise. Some participants indicated that, although they were not using the skill as it was taught, they did have "more insight". While Imago theory states that insight/awareness are the first steps to creating conscious relationships, insight and information alone are not enough for change to occur (Galvin et al., 2004; Hendrix, 1995).

Hendrix (1993) acknowledges that, although mirroring (the first step used in the Couples Dialogue) is a relatively straightforward process and used in many approaches to couples therapy, it is contrary to the way couples normally communicate and requires a great deal of practise and commitment. Hendrix (2005) states that all three steps of the dialogue are required for changes in perception, attitude and affect to become evident. In their appraisal of enrichment programmes, Galvin et al. (2004) highlight that there are difficulties associated with trying to teach communication principles and skills without the mutual commitment of both partners, and suggest that without mutual commitment, results may be contrary to the expected outcomes. Galvin et al. (2004) suggest that skills should be combined with the motivation to use them, with Kelly et al. (2003) noting that, while distressed couples are able to communicate effectively, they may be unmotivated to use the skills. As the *GTLYW Workshop* may be attended by couples at various stages of their relationship (see section 2.1), it is likely that there may be some distressed couples at each workshop. It was evident from the completed questionnaires that there were some distressed couples taking part in this research. Although the couples reported average levels of relationship satisfaction before the workshop, almost 20% of the participants reported that "there were no communication strengths" or "communication had broken down" (see Table 5.15). For some, "everything needed improvement" (see Table 5.16), while for others "the workshop was the last hope for the relationship" (see Table 5.17).

Kelly et al. (2003) suggest that it may be unrealistic to hope that training in communication skills would have discernable, long-term effects. Important findings from two key studies on marital enrichment suggest that the longer the duration of training and the more emphasis placed on the development of skills taught and practised under qualified supervision, the greater the chance that the programme would have a positive impact on the couples that could be sustained over time (Giblin et al., 1985; Guerney & Maxson, 1990). Butler and Wampler (1999) noted that if communication changes had deteriorated by the time of the follow-up measures, some couples may find themselves in the difficult situation of having opened up issues during the workshop, but not having the ability to bring about resolution after the workshop. Their findings support their recommendation of implementing one or more booster sessions. The above discussion of couples' use of the Imago core communication skills provides further support for some type of follow-up sessions after the workshop to assist couples in implementing and sustaining new skills.

#### 6.2.4 Positive changes

Although some of the qualitative results lend support to and give further insight into the pattern of dissipated quantitative results, other results suggest a number of positive experiences and positive changes by the participants. The couples' satisfaction with expressions of sex and affection in the relationship (*affectional expression*) significantly increased from pre-workshop to follow-up. They also experienced a significant decrease in the pattern of man demand-woman withdraw communication, as well as a significant decrease in the total demand-withdraw pattern of communication from pre-workshop to follow-up.

Insight into the significant short-term improvements in constructive communication emerged from how the participants perceived changes in their communication after the workshop. Improvements in the communication skills of talking, listening, understanding and resolving conflict all emerged as key themes, both three to four weeks and three months after the workshop (see Tables 5.18 and 5.20). Similar themes emerged from Weigle's (2006) study. Such learnt communication skills are key to functional couple processes (Walsh, 2003b). The success of a relationship is predicted not by the absence of conflict, but by an understanding and acceptance of differences, the way in which conflict is managed and how miscommunications are repaired (Driver et al., 2003; Markman et al., 1993; Siegel, 2007; Walsh 2003b). *Understanding and insight* and the

*ability to repair and heal in relationship* emerged as key aspects learnt from the workshop (see Table 5.21).

Three months after the workshop, a large majority of the participants experienced the *importance of communication skills (aspects of Couples Dialogue)* (see Table 5.21) as the most important element learnt during the workshop. This key learning corresponded with the highest-rated expectation of the workshop, which was *to improve how we communicate* (see Table 5.17). This was an interesting finding, given that the majority of the participants were not actively using the dialogue skills three months after the workshop. This finding is similar to Robinson and Blanton's (1993) finding that although couples seemed to realise the value of communication, they do not fully understand or are unable to implement communication skills effectively. However, Cole and Cole (1999) suggest that, if couples decide to become more intentional by learning new skills and increasing their awareness, they can selectively use the skills, as and when they need them, and modify the techniques and processes to meet their individual and situational preferences and needs. To be *conscious and intentional* also emerged as a key learning from the workshop (see Table 5.21).

The overwhelming majority of participants indicated that they would recommend Imago Relationship Therapy as an intervention to other people.

### **6.3 Summary of discussion**

A mixed-methods approach was used to investigate and better understand whether couples improved their communication and the quality of their relationship after attending a *GTLYW Workshop*. A longitudinal design with three time points was used, including both quantitative and qualitative methods. The findings from the study highlight that, because the two research methods were combined, a deeper understanding of how the communication of couples can be improved through the *GTLYW Workshop* was generated than would have been possible using only one of the methods.

Short-term improvements were noted in some aspects of communication and the relationship. The discussion showed that the pattern of dissipated improvements in some aspects of communication and the relationship at follow-up was also evident from some of the qualitative results. The qualitative results, drawn from the subjective experiences of the participants, provided insight into and an understanding of how the participants experienced their communication before and after the workshop. Research has recognised

the need for some type of follow-up sessions as an attempt to sustain longer-term improvements from marriage enrichment programmes. The findings of this study point out the possible need to implement some type of follow-up session within three months of the *GTLYW Workshop*.

The discussion also highlighted a number of positive changes in the participants, including a significant decrease in the negative communication pattern of demand-withdraw over the three months. Significant short-term improvements in constructive communication were supported by the participants experiencing improvements in their communication skills, such as talking, listening, understanding and resolving conflict. The importance of communication skills emerged as the most important element learnt from the workshop.

For growth and change to take place in relationships, an increase in awareness and insight, as well as the implementation of the necessary skills to let go of negative behaviour patterns, is necessary (Hendrix, 1993, 1995). The findings from this research indicate that there were improvements in the participants' awareness, understanding and insight, which are important communication skills. There also were short-term improvements in constructive communication patterns. However, the results showed a decline in usage of the core communication skills over three months. In addition, the discussion pointed out some difficulties in teaching communication skills, with research suggesting that it may be unrealistic to hope that communication skills training has discernable long-term effects (Kelly et al., 2003), and marriage enrichment researchers suggesting approaches to skills training that enable positive effects to be sustained over time (Giblin et al., 1985; Guerney & Maxson, 1990). Butler and Wampler (1999) emphasise that if changes in communication have deteriorated by the time of the follow-up measures, the couples may be facing a further risk. They caution that temporary gains in communication skills may end up being more problematic than beneficial if the result is heightened awareness combined with a deteriorating ability to resolve problems.

Overall, the results showed some significant short-term improvements in aspects of communication and the relationship, with the qualitative findings providing evidence for a number of positive changes in and experiences of the participants. Some of the results of this study were consistent with the findings of other key Imago studies (Beeton, 2006a; Heller, 1999; Weigle, 2006), providing further support for the credibility of the *GTLYW Workshop* as an intervention for couples to improve their relationship. However, as relationship enrichment is concerned with the longer-term maintenance of improvements

and skills (Galvin et al., 2004; Halford et al., 2003), it would be wise for practitioners, presenters and educators, as they plan and run enrichment programmes, to also place emphasis on “what happens after the workshop”. The findings from the present study could provide an opportunity for Imago practitioners to look at practical ways of implementing follow-up sessions aimed at assisting couples to sustain improvements after attending the *GTLYW Workshop*.

#### **6.4 Limitations of this research**

The biggest limitation of this study was the loss of the planned control group. This meant that the design of the research had to be adjusted, limiting the ability to draw conclusions from the empirical evidence, as there was no basis for comparison.

A further limitation was the high attrition rate over the three time periods. The attrition rate could have been a confounding factor. However, further analysis of the data revealed that there were no substantial differences in scores of those participants who completed the study and those who dropped off. The consequence of the attrition rate was a small follow-up sample size, which would impact on the generalisability of these results.

Using the couple as the unit of analysis for the quantitative analysis required using the scores of both partners. If one partner did not complete a set of questionnaires or had missing data, then the records for both partners were discarded. This also had an impact on sample size.

Although the findings were based on self-report data, which is vulnerable to bias and distortion, the quantitative results were based on the scores of both partners. For the most part, their independent scores were similar. Christensen and Shenk (1991) argue that the data then reflects an objective interaction of the couples. Noller and Fitzpatrick (1990) found that self-reports are useful for some research questions, particularly for gaining the partners’ perceptions of their typical interactions.

The sample used for this study not only represents a similar population to that in previous Imago research, but more generally reflects the sampling profiles of broader prevention programmes (Christensen & Heavey, 1999). Caution should be applied in generalising the results of this study, and it highlights the pressing need to use more diverse samples, such as including couples from different cultures and different socio-economic statuses.

Accepting these limitations, the results of this study provide some evidence for initial improvements in aspects of communication and the relationship of couples who attended the *GTLYW Workshop*. The findings offer an opportunity for practitioners, workshop presenters and educators to review ways in which to assist couples to sustain improvements over longer periods after the workshop. The findings also provide insight into the difficulties experienced by couples with the dialogue technique, which could be useful for workshop presenters to incorporate into their presentation of the skills.

## **6.5 Recommendations for future research**

Up-to-date research is crucial to inform the refinement and enhancement of marital enrichment programmes (Stanley et al., 1995). Well-researched interventions have the potential for greater positive impact. Using systematic research to inform enrichment and prevention programmes allows practitioners to evaluate why and under what circumstances the intervention works (Cole & Cole, 1999).

It is recommended that Imago Relationship interventions are subjected to more longitudinal studies, including both pre-testing and longer-term follow-up measures. Christensen and Heavey (1999) suggest that studies should assess outcomes for at least two years after the intervention. They also recommend that longitudinal researchers experiment with the use of booster programmes in order for improvements to be sustained over the longer term. Stanley et al. (1995) suggest that the development and evaluation of booster programmes should be a priority for future research.

While there is provisional support for Imago Relationship interventions, it is essential that future research studies on Imago Relationship Therapy interventions include the use of randomised control groups in order to strengthen their empirically-supported standing.

In the study of communication, and specifically of improving communication through a marriage enrichment programme, it is important to assess and reflect not only on individual functioning, but on that of the couple as an entity. Therefore, it is recommended that future research focuses on the couple as the unit of analysis, as this is fundamental to the relational paradigm on which Imago theory is based. It is also recommended that studies continue to draw from both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Because the sample of this study was not representative of the broader population of South Africa, it is recommended that future research on Imago Relationship Therapy interventions include more diverse population groups.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

This research attempted to answer the question whether or not couples who have attended the *GTYW Workshop* experience changes in aspects of their communication and the quality of their relationship. In order to answer this question, a longitudinal design was employed, using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Within the limitations of this study, the findings provided some evidence for short-term improvements in certain aspects of communication and the relationship; some evidence for the dissipation of improvements three months later; some evidence for the need for follow-up or booster sessions after the workshop; evidence of positive changes after the workshop, including improvements in demand-withdraw patterns; increased awareness and understanding; depth in the understanding of the subjective experiences of participants; and insight into the lack of use of the Couples Dialogue.

Although evidence exists for the short-term effectiveness of marriage enrichment programmes, and specifically skills-based programmes, it is the longer-term maintenance of improvements and skills that is paramount for the effectiveness and credibility of marriage enrichment programmes. Given what research has found with regard to the dissipating effects of marriage enrichment programmes, the need for booster programmes, difficulties experienced in teaching communication skills, and the potential risks to couples of deteriorating communication skills, the results of this research offer an opportunity for practitioners and educators to review ways of better supporting couples to sustain improvements over longer periods of time after they have attended a workshop.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

#### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

#### Improving Couple Communication through the *Imago Getting The Love You Want Workshop for Couples*

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Wendy Lawson, a Masters student from the Psychology Department at Stellenbosch University. You are selected as a possible participant in this study because you are attending a *Getting The Love You Want Workshop for Couples (GTLYW Workshop)*. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have. This research has the support of ImagoAfrica and your workshop presenter.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate and better understand whether couples improve aspects of their communication and the quality of their relationship after attending the *GTLYW Workshop*. Those participants who attend the workshop will be compared to a group who do not attend the workshop.

#### Procedure

If you volunteer to participate in this study you will be asked to complete a set of questionnaires, which will include a demographic questionnaire, 4 multiple-choice type questionnaires and 3-4 open-ended questions. You will be asked to complete the same set of questionnaires 1) before the workshop, 2) three-four weeks after, and 3) 3 months after the *GTLYW Workshop*. Questionnaires may be completed electronically and emailed to the researcher or completed on paper and returned by fax or post.

#### Potential risks or discomfort

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study other than the time it will take to fill out the questionnaires. If you experience stress or anxiety you are under no obligation to continue participating in the study.

#### Confidentiality

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Your contact details will only be accessed to post or e-mail questionnaires to you and will not be kept by the researcher. Completed questionnaires will be kept private and locked away and only the researcher will have access to the records. All information will be processed anonymously.

If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

Mrs Wendy Lawson (Researcher)	083-387-1502 021-423-5964	wendyL@global.co.za 19 Glen Crescent, Oranjezicht, Cape Town, 8001
Prof Awie Greeff (Supervisor)	021-808-3464	apg@sun.ac.za

#### Consent:

I have read the above information. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and received answers. I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study.

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Name

---

Signature of Participant

---

Date

## Appendix B: Demographic Questionnaire

All information in this questionnaire is strictly confidential and your information will be anonymously processed. Please answer all the questions.

**Suburb or town where you live** : .....

**Home language**                      English                      Afrikaans                      Other.....

**Current relationship status**        :                                                                                           

Not married –    Not married -    Married -        Married -    Divorced

live apart        live together    live together    separated

**Length of current relationship** : ..... (years)

**In total, how many times have you**                        **Spouse/**               

**been married? (Including current)**    0    1    2    3        **partner:**    0    1    2    3

**Religious denomination – Self**        : ..... **Spouse/partner:** .....

**Race – Self**                                    : ..... **Spouse/partner:** .....

**Family composition:**

	Self	Spouse/ partner	Child 1	Child 2	Child 3	Child 4	Child 5
Age							
Gender							

**Highest level of education received:**

Self                                                                                                                                   

Primary school    High school    Diploma    Degree    None    Other.....

Spouse/  
partner                                                                                                                             

Primary school    High school    Diploma    Degree    None    Other.....

**Employment:**

	Currently Employed? (Y/N)	Occupation	Temporary/ Permanent? (T/P)
<b>Self</b>			
<b>Spouse/ partner</b>			

**Estimated gross family income per**                                                                                           

**year:**                      Less than    R81 000 –    R121 000 –    R161 000 –    R201 000

R80 000        R120 000        R160 000        R200 000        or more

## Appendix C: Dyadic Adjustment Scale

We are interested in how you view the quality of your marriage/relationship. Please complete as accurately as possible.

Most persons have disagreements with their relationships. Indicate below the appropriate extent of the agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list:

	Always Agree	Almost always agree	Occasionally disagree	Frequently disagree	Almost always disagree	Always disagree
1. Handling Family finances						
2. Matters of recreation						
3. Religious matters						
4. Demonstration of affection						
5. Friends						
6. Sex relations						
7. Conventionality (correct or proper behaviour)						
8. Philosophy of life						
9. Ways of dealing with in-laws						
10. Aims, goals, and things believed important						
11. Amount of time spent together						
12. Making major decisions						
13. Household tasks						
14. Leisure time interests						
15. Career decisions						

Please indicate below approximately how often the following items occur between you and your partner:

	All the time	Most of the time	More often than not	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
16. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating the relationship?						
17. How often do you or your mate leave the house after a fight?						
18. In general, how often do you think things between you and your partner are going well?						
19. Do you confide in your mate?						
20. Do you ever regret that you married? (or lived together)						
21. How often do you and your partner quarrel?						
22. How often do you and your mate "get on each other's nerves?"						

23. Do you kiss your mate?

Every day	Almost Every day	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
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24. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?

All of them	Most of them	Some of them	Very few of them	None of them
-------------	--------------	--------------	------------------	--------------

How often would you say the following events occur between you and your mate?

	Never	Less than once a month	Once or twice a month	Once a day	More often
25. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas					
26. Laugh together					
27. Calmly discuss something					
28. Work together on a project					

There are some things about which couples sometimes agree and sometimes disagree. Indicate if either item below caused differences of opinions or problems in your relationship during the past few weeks: (Circle yes or no)

29. Being too tired for sex	Yes	No
30. Not showing love	Yes	No

31. The numbers on the following line represent different degrees of happiness in your relationship. The middle point, "happy", represents the degree of happiness of most relationships. Please circle the number that best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship:

<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
Extremely unhappy	Fairly Unhappy	A little unhappy	Happy	Very happy	Extremely happy	Perfect

32. Please circle the number of **ONE** of the following statements that best describes how you feel about the future of your relationship:

<b>5</b>	I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and <i>would go to almost any length</i> to see that it does.
<b>4</b>	I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and <i>will do all that I can</i> to see that it does.
<b>3</b>	I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and <i>will do my fair share</i> to see that it does.
<b>2</b>	It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but <i>I can't do much more than I am doing now</i> to make it succeed.
<b>1</b>	It would be nice if it succeeded, but <i>I refuse to do any more than I am doing now</i> to keep the relationship going.
<b>0</b>	My relationship can never succeed, and <i>there is no more that I can do</i> to keep the relationship going.

## Appendix D: Primary Communication Inventory

Below is a list of items on communication between you and your spouse/partner. Read each item carefully and decide which option best represents the extent to which you and your spouse/partner behave in the specified way:

	Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Frequently	Very frequently
1. How often do you and your spouse/partner talk over pleasant things that happen during the day?					
2. How often do you and your spouse/partner talk over unpleasant things that happen during the day?					
3. Do you and your spouse/partner talk over things you disagree about or have difficulties over?					
4. Do you and your spouse/partner talk about things in which you are both interested?					
5. Does your spouse/partner adjust what he/she says and how he/she says it to the way you seem to feel at the moment?					
6. When you start to ask a question, does your spouse/partner know what it is before you ask it?					
7. Do you know the feelings of your spouse/partner from his/her facial and bodily gestures?					
8. Do you and your spouse/partner avoid certain subjects in conversation?					
9. Does your spouse/partner explain or express himself/herself to you through a glance or gesture?					
10. Do you and your spouse/partner discuss things together before making an important decision?					
11. Can your spouse/partner tell what kind of day you have had without asking?					
12. Your spouse/partner wants to visit some close friends or relatives. You don't particularly enjoy their company. Would you tell him/her this?					
13. Does your spouse/partner discuss matters of sex with you?					
14. Do you and your spouse/partner use words which have a special meaning not understood by outsiders?					
15. How often does your spouse/partner sulk or pout?					
16. Can you and your spouse/partner discuss your most sacred beliefs without feelings of restraint or embarrassment?					
17. Do you avoid telling your spouse/partner things that put you in a bad light?					
18. You and your spouse/partner are visiting friends. Something is said by the friends which cause you to glance at each other. Would you understand each other?					

	<b>Never</b>	<b>Seldom</b>	<b>Occasionally</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Very frequently</b>
19. How often can you tell as much from the tone of voice of your spouse/partner from what he/she actually says?					
20. How often do you and your spouse/partner talk with each other about personal problems?					
21. Do you feel that in most matters your spouse/partner knows what you are trying to say?					
22. Would you rather talk about intimate matters with your spouse/partner than with some other person?					
23. Do you understand the meaning of your spouse/partner's facial expressions?					
24. If you and your spouse/partner are visiting friends or relatives and one of you starts to say something, does the other take over the conversation without the feeling of interrupting?					
25. During marriage/the relationship, have you and your spouse/partner, in general, talked most things over together?					

## Appendix E: Communication Patterns Questionnaire

We are interested in how you and your partner typically deal with problems in your relationship. Please rate **each item** on a scale of **1** (= very unlikely) to **9** (= very likely).

### A. WHEN SOME PROBLEM IN THE RELATIONSHIP ARISES:

	Very Unlikely					Very Likely			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. <b>Mutual Avoidance:</b> Both members avoid discussing the problem									
2. <b>Mutual Discussion:</b> Both members try to discuss the problem.									
3. <b>Discussion/Avoidance:</b> a) Man tries to start a discussion while Woman tries to avoid a discussion.									
b) Woman tries to start a discussion while Man tries to avoid a discussion.									

### B. DURING A DISCUSSION OF A RELATIONSHIP PROBLEM:

	Very Unlikely					Very Likely			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. <b>Mutual Blame:</b> Both members blame, accuse, and criticize each other.									
2. <b>Mutual Expression:</b> Both members express their feelings to each other.									
3. <b>Mutual Threat:</b> Both members threaten each other with negative consequences.									
4. <b>Mutual Negotiation:</b> Both members suggest possible solutions and compromises.									
5. <b>Demand / Withdraw:</b> a) Man nags and demands while Woman withdraws, becomes silent, or refuses to discuss the matter further.									
b) Woman nags and demands while Man withdraws, becomes silent, or refuses to discuss the matter further.									
6. <b>Criticize / Defend:</b> a) Man criticizes while Woman defends herself.									
b) Woman criticizes while Man defends himself.									
7. <b>Pressure / Resist:</b> a) Man pressures Woman to take action or stop some action, while Woman resists.									
b) Woman pressures Man to take some action or stop some action, while Man resists.									
8. <b>Emotional / Logical:</b> a) Man expresses feelings, while Woman offers reasons and solutions.									
b) Woman expresses feelings, while Man offers reasons and solutions.									

	Very Unlikely								Very Likely
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
9. <b>Threat / Back down:</b> a) Man threatens negative consequences and Woman gives in or backs down.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
b) Woman threatens negative consequences and Man gives in or backs down.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10. <b>Verbal Aggression:</b> a) Man calls Woman names, swears at her, or attacks her character.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
b) Woman calls Man names, swears at him, or attacks his character.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
11. <b>Physical Aggression:</b> a) Man pushes, shoves, slaps, hits, or kicks Woman.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
b) Woman pushes, shoves, slaps, hits, or kicks Man.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

**C. AFTER A DISCUSSION OF A RELATIONSHIP PROBLEM:**

	Very Unlikely								Very Likely
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. <b>Mutual Understanding:</b> Both feel each other has understood his / her position.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2. <b>Mutual Withdrawal:</b> Both withdraw from each other after the discussion.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
3. <b>Mutual Resolution:</b> Both feel that the problem has been solved.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
4. <b>Mutual Withholding:</b> Neither partner is giving to the other after the discussion.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
5. <b>Mutual Reconciliation:</b> After the discussion, both try to be especially nice to each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
6. <b>Guilt / Hurt:</b> a) Man feels guilty for what he said or did while Woman feels hurt.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
b) Woman feels guilty for what she said or did while Man feels hurt.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
7. <b>Reconcile / Withdraw:</b> a) Man tries to be especially nice, acts as if things are back to normal, while Woman acts distant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
b) Woman tries to be especially nice, acts as if things are back to normal, while Man acts distant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
8. <b>Pressure / Resist:</b> a) Man pressures Woman to apologize or promise to do better, while Woman resists.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
b) Woman pressures Man to apologize or promise to do better, while Man resists.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
9. <b>Support Seeking:</b> a) Man seeks support from others (parent, friend, child)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
b) Woman seeks support from others (parent, friend, child)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

## Appendix F: The Relationship Awareness Scale

The items listed below refer to the **awareness** of one's interactions with your intimate partner. Please read each item carefully and decide to what extent it is characteristic of your feelings and behaviours.

	Not at all characteristic of me	Slightly characteristic of me	Somewhat characteristic of me	Moderately characteristic of me	Very characteristic of me
1. I am very aware of what goes on in my close relationship.					
2. I reflect about my intimate relationship a lot.					
1. In general, I'm attentive to the nature of my close relationship.					
2. I'm always trying to understand my close relationship.					
3. I'm alert to changes in my intimate relationship.					
4. I'm very aware of changes in my intimate relationship.					
5. My thoughts sometimes drift toward the nature of my close relationship.					
6. I think about my close relationship more than most people do.					
7. I usually spend time thinking about my close relationship.					