

**Gábor Mihalec**

**Border issues of pastoral counseling and psychotherapy in marriage counseling**

Summary of content

*Abstract: The dissertation gives an overview on the reception of the major psychological trends (psychoanalysis, humanistic psychotherapy, cognitive behavior therapy and systemic psychotherapy) from the part of pastoral counseling. The focus of the research is on the couple and family therapy concepts of each trend, and also the pastoral counseling models they influence. The second unit examines the church services connected to marriage (marriage counseling, church wedding and marriage-enrichment). Finally an own integrative model is to be presented, which connects the traditions of pastoral counseling with the research results and techniques of different psychotherapy trends. The effectiveness of the 10-part relationship group session is proven by the results of a quantitative longitudinal research with a 54 couples test group and a 58 couples control group.*

**1. The dialogue of pastoral counseling with major trends of psychotherapy, with particular focus on their standpoints on marriage counseling**

The first chapter of the dissertation examines four trends of psychotherapy, introducing their reception in pastoral counseling and conceptions on couple therapy, and also the marriage counseling possibilities of the given methods that can be applied in a context of pastoral counseling.

1.1 The part dealing with psychoanalysis takes the Freudian psychoanalysis as its starting point and examines its relations to pastoral counseling and pastoral psychology authors. It involves the following authors in the examination: Oskar Pfister, Walther Buntzel, Eduard Thurneysen, Helmut Tacke, Paul Tillich, Hans-Joachim Thilo, Joachim Scharfenberg, Dietrich Stollberg and Endre Gyökössy. Among the couple counseling trends, those concepts, which are following classical psychoanalysis, which are based on the theory of object attachment theory and transgenerational models are presented in separate subchapters. From the side of pastoral psychology we especially highlight the significance of Hans-Joachim Thilo, who was the first to integrate the findings of psychoanalysis in a coherent marriage counseling concept of pastoral approach.

1.2 The part examining the humanistic psychological trends looks at the work of Carl R. Rogers as the dialog parameter of practical theology. We have

determined that the approach of Rogers had an outstanding impact on the literature and training order of pastoral counseling. On the side of practical theology, such authors are introduced as Howard Clinebell and Hans-Christoph Piper. Out of the couple and family therapy works inspired by humanistic psychology, we elaborate on the experience-based therapeutic approach of Virginia Satir and the emotion-focused approach of Susan M. Johnson. Out of the pastoral counseling models we take a look at the marriage counseling concepts of Howard Clinebell and Traugott Ulrich Schall.

1.3 After the general presentation of the cognitive behavior therapy trend we have concluded that this therapy trend is the least echoed in the literature of pastoral counseling, even though its approach and methods could enrich the work of the pastoral counselor significantly. Cognitive behavior therapy knowledge can mostly found in the works of Lawrence Crabb and Michael Dieterich out of those authors who are approaching from the field of pastoral counseling. We have highlighted the works of Bernhard Guerney, Arnold Lazarus, Neil Jacobson and Andrew Christensen, and John M. Gottman out of the couple therapy researches. Of the Christian authors, the works of Norman Wright and Andreas Bochmann were presented in details.

1.4 At last the longest section is dedicated to the systemic trend, which has produced the most couple and family therapy methods. In the latest literature of pastoral counseling this approach appears more powerfully, moreover it had a fertile effect on pastoral counseling as well as other practical theology disciplines (such as missiology). The particular concepts are presented in subchapters classical systems theory, social constructivist model, and trans generational pastoral therapy models based on the systems theory. We have dedicated a separate subchapter for David H. Olson's empirical-systemic concepts, whose investigations are involved in the efficiency test of the Connect program as well, with great weight.

## **2. Church services connected to marriage**

In the second part of the dissertation we analyze those church services, which are aimed at marriage. We present three service branches in depth:

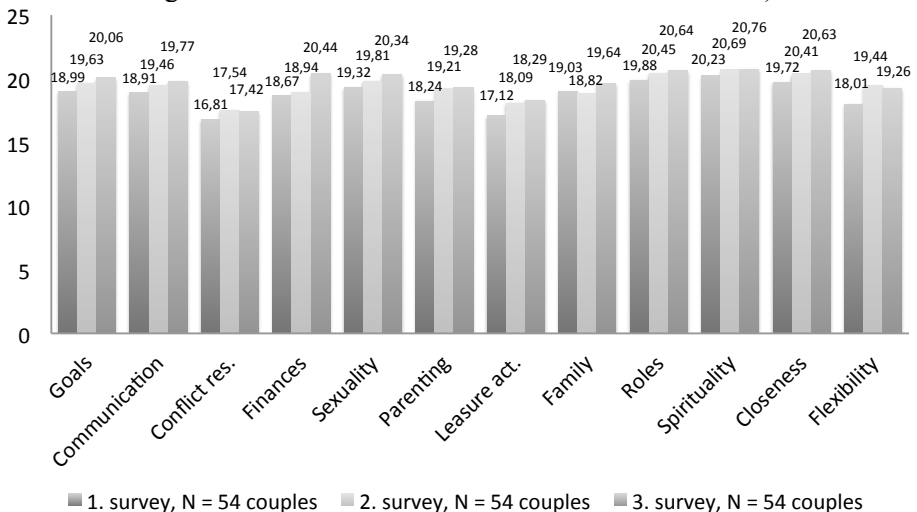
2.1 The marriage preparation (or premarital counseling), of which we show the church and secular roots as well. Amongst the church approaches we deal in depth with the practices and written sources of the Roman Catholic Church, the Hungarian Reformed Church and the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Out of the standardized procedures we examine the programs PREmarital Personal And Relationship Evaluation (PREPARE), Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP), and the Ein Partnerschaftliches Lernprogramm (EPL) and their efficiency investigation.

2.2 We especially highlight the church wedding, because during its organizing, the pastor can get closer to the couple and their families, than the representatives of any other profession. We interpret the wedding as a rite of passage and look at its different parts through this frame of reference (entrance, preaching, vows, rings, blessing, exit).

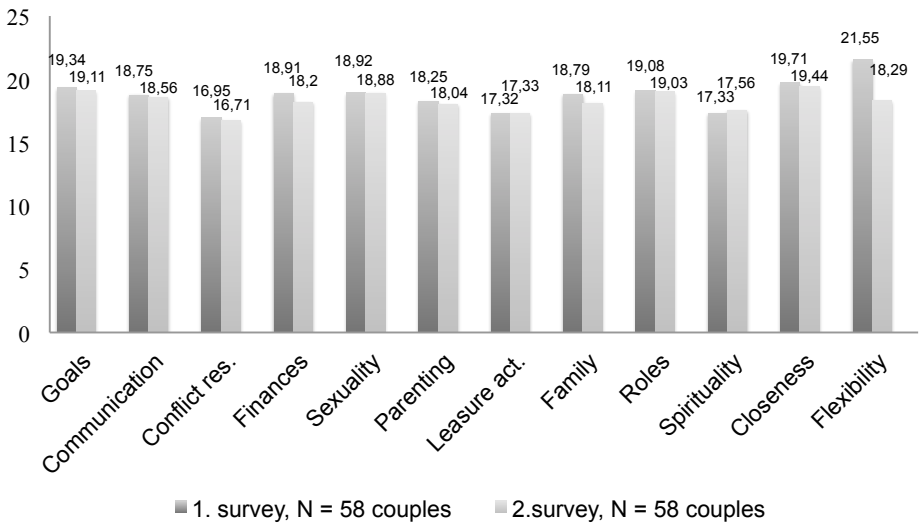
2.3 Marriage enrichment has become a widely known movement in the 1970s, which has resulted in empirically evincible changes in the quality of the partaking couples' marriages. Following the groundbreaking work of David and Vera Mace several authors and workshops have worked up their own method and thematic.

### 3. An integrative model: Connect

The dissertation is closed by the introduction of an own work; a marriage enrichment model, which involves the psychoanalytic, humanistic, cognitive behavioral therapy and systems theory couple therapy aspects integrated in practical and systematic theology aspects. The ten parts series is suitable as marriage preparation as well as marriage enrichment program (with some differences in content). The effectiveness of the program is justified by the shortened items of the PREPARE/ENRICH test program questions. The 54 partaking couples have completed the questionnaire before taking part in the Connect program, after the tenth session, and as an examination of the acquired knowledge and skills applied in the long-run, six months after finishing Connect. The cumulated results are shown in the diagram below (the measured categories are based on the PREPARE/ENRICH scales):



We have also examined a 58 couples control group by comparison, who did not take part in Connect (or any couple therapy intervention), and has completed the surveys two times, once in six months. Their results show what changes happen in a relationship in six months without Connect:



The following chart shows the differences between the two groups:

