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Traditional Oromo Marriage Counseling: Focus On North Showa/Salale

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Traditional Oromo Marriage Counseling: Focus On North Showa/Salale

A Thesis Submitted to School of Graduate Studies of Addis
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for the Degree of Masters of Arts in Counseling Psychology

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Table of Contents

Contents	page
<i>Acknowledgement</i> -----	<i>i</i>
<i>Table of contents</i> -----	<i>ii</i>
<i>Abstract</i> -----	<i>iv</i>
CHAPTER ONE	
Introduction -----	1
1.1. Statement of the problem-----	1
1.2. Objectives of the study-----	4
1.3. Rationale-----	5
1.4. Significance of the study-----	5
1.5. Scope of the study-----	6
1.6. Organization of the study-----	6
1.7 Definition of terms-----	6
CHAPTER TWO	
Theoretical framework and related studies	
2.1. Theoretical framework-----	8
2.1.1. The familytherapy model-----	8
2.1.2. Models of marriage counsleing-----	9
2.1.3. marriage counsleing-----	14
2.2. Related studies-----	23
2.2.1. Ethinographic background-----	23
2.2.2. Types and formalities of Oromo marriage-----	28
2.2.3. Common causes of divorce in Ehtiopia and arbitriation-----	30
2.3. The 'scientific' and the 'traditional'-----	32

CHAPTER THREE

Method of the study

3.1 Research design-----	36
3.2 Informants-----	36
3.3 Sample selection and size-----	37
3.4 Study area-----	37
3.5 Research instruments-----	38
3.6 Data recording-----	38
3.7 Data presentation and interpretation-----	39

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Presentation and Interpretation

4.1. Data presentation -----	40
4.1.1. Social organization, religion, social and moral thoughts-----	40
4.1.2. Marriage among the Salale Oromo-----	42
4.1.3 Traditional Oromo marriage counseling-----	43
4.1.3.1 Pre-marriage counseling-----	44
4.1.3.2 In-marriage-post-marriage counseling: themes and patterns-----	51
4.1.3.3 Techniques of traditional marriage counseling-----	60
4.1.3.4 Divorce counseling -----	65
4.2 Interpretation of the findings-----	71
4.2.1 Pre-marriage counseling-----	71
4.2.2 In-marriage/post marriage counseling-----	74
4.2.3 Divorce counseling -----	80

CHAPTER FIVE

Summery, Conclusion and Implication

5.1. Summary-----	83
5.2 Conclusion-----	83
5.3. Implications/Suggestions-----	85
References-----	87
Appendices-----	v

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Abstract

The traditional way of helping has been the source of support for society where modern counseling is at its infantile stage. The main objective of the present study is to examine closely the nature of traditional Oromo marriage counseling at pre-marriage, in/post marriage and at the divorce levels. The study follows a qualitative research paradigm. Moreover, it is viewed from the Oromo world-views. The data were collected from nineteen informants selected by purposive and 'snowball' method to be presented and interpreted based on the basic research questions. Consequently, the findings have showed that Traditional Oromo Marriage Counseling is still viable and effective in its goal, contents, and techniques. The study is interdisciplinary in its approach and so is the traditional Oromo marriage counseling inclusive and future-oriented. The study has shown that the counseling practice works in line with the socio-cultural and institutional needs of the society.

Key words of the study:

Traditional marriage counseling: inclusive, future-oriented, eclectic approach; counseling techniques, theories of family and marriage counseling, Oromo worldview

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter serves the purpose of setting background of the study. It states the nature of the problem, discusses the objectives, significance and the rationale of the study.

1.1 Statement of the problem

The subject of the present study is *traditional Oromo marriage counseling*. The purpose of the study will be to examine closely to what extent traditional counseling is effective among the Oromo of the area in focus, where access to professional counselor is thin on the ground or none. Almost all societies in the world recognize the significance of *marriage* as a major source of the foundation of society, namely, *family*, which in turn is the result of many institutions. Needless to say every society makes it compelling to pay attention to marriage regardless of the technological advancement it has achieved or the geographical location it is in—irrespective of its being rural or urban (Gemechu, 2006). The case of the Oromo is no exceptional.

Marriage is by nature a multifaceted institution defined as the emotional and legal commitment of two people who share emotional and physical intimacy, various chores and economic resources. It is as an institution where partners are committed to each other by contractual agreement to share intimacy, a lifelong relation that range from social to sexual companionship, resource-based decision-makings, and other responsibilities and values (Olson & Defrain 2000).

To obtain the approval of the society it is necessary that the union be formed and recognized in accordance with the unwritten customs, i.e., customary laws and taboos in traditional societies, or in accordance with established laws, as in more civilized ones (Westermarck, 1977). In this regard, the felt problem of the impediments to the homogeneous reality of life experienced among the Oromo, set in the present pluralistic

situation, demands serious attention. In former generations and cultures (sub-cultures), the situation of the young is quite different. There one grows into an existing (value) system which is in no way questioned by members of the respective community as long as the individual shows complete acceptance and identification. Traditionally moral and social order follows normal processes of nature, and value system binds into a single homogenous life reality, normal form of social and sexual companionship is maintained, religious convictions and religious practices are binding to enhance marriage and related cultural values. In Oromo tradition, one does not ask what is caused by what, but learn by observation. Explanations and interpretations are provided through stories, myths, proverbs; scientifically rational explanations are alien. The total growth, development and self-fulfillment of the individual is enhanced through traditional precepts and counseling to impart to the growing person useful cognitive, performative and affective skills and enable the person to live rewarding life and to be a useful member of the society. Hence, it will be the purpose of the present study to closely follow and scrutinize *who* counsels, *how*, *what* and *when* as regard to initiating the young and paving the way toward meeting the societal expectation and tackling the challenge of social and moral order.

According to the Oromia Regional State site, Oromia is the largest of the federal states. At present it comprises of 12 administrative zones and 180 *woredas*. Based on the 1996/97 Population and Housing Census, the projected population of the region is estimated at 25,098,000 in 2004, accounting for over 35 percent of the population of the country. Out of the population of the region about 12.8 percent is estimated to dwell in urban areas, whereas the remaining 87.2% resides in rural. Generally the level of urbanization is very low and found at an infant stage. The Oromo have vast and rich culture and varied traditional institutions fostered by the size of the population and large land area with diverse climatic conditions and different economic backgrounds.

Marriage is one of the most important institutions in the Oromo culture. Elders and members of the community have roles in initiating or preparing the young for the pre-marriage, while and after marriage responsibilities and chunks of events constantly

changing and continuing in time under those internally motivated and externally induced factors.

Traditional helping professions have always existed and been a source of support for ages. Guidance and counseling is no more a new phenomenon in the sense that parents, religious leaders, teachers, community leaders and responsible citizens have frequently used it as a major source of helping by giving advice to a subject, i.e., one in need. These individuals and the agencies they represented are the source of information and comfort for the confused and despaired (Yusuf, 1991).

By the same token, the Oromo have their own mechanisms for resolving problems and conflicts in human relations and maintaining harmony, peace and tranquility in the society. Regarding marriage, to help the couple to be more mature and productive, to grow in socialization and production, the family and other kinship members give advice at pre-, while and post-marital phases. Whenever serious problems occur in marriage, elders, religious and/or community leaders involve in settling the dispute and keeping the marriage intact and saving the family from breaking. These activities which involve moral, religious and social commitments to help the couples to have a better competence in handling their relationship in marriage and live in harmony up to the demands of the community are grouped under traditional marriage counseling.

Marriage counseling as a profession is young with focus on managing marital human interaction and the family unit. Its principal purpose is to avoid, eliminate, relieve, manage or resolve marital conflict or discord and, instead, to create, improve, restore marital harmony, or prepare couple for marriage (William 1973).

As one of the least developed nations in the world, Ethiopia has shortage of enough qualified professionals in every field, in general, and in (marriage) counseling in particular. Modern counseling is relatively a new phenomenon in the country with few professionals limited to working in the urban in most cases. The large portion of the society living in the rural area has no access to get modern professional counseling

services. They resort to the traditional counseling imparted through verbal arts, initiation ceremonies and various socializing mechanisms by religious and/or community elders, close kin at home, work places, ritual sites, churches, mosques.

The present study aims to tackle the following research questions:

- how* is the traditional way of Oromo marriage counseling imparted to prepare the individual(s) for the lifelong contract?
- to what extent* the service offered is helpful for the couple in having healthy social and sexual companionship?
- who* involves in the counseling?
- what* techniques are exactly put into the counseling processes? and
- at what stage* is such a counseling effective

1.2 Objectives of the study

1.2.1. General objective

The general objective of the research is to investigate *traditional Oromo marriage counseling* practiced among the Salalee Oromo in North Showa, Oromiya, and examine closely to what extent it is effective in helping the 'counselee'.

1.2.2. Specific objectives

The research intends:

- to assess the nature of traditional helping/counseling services delivered in the selected locale
- to identify to what extent the traditional way of helping is effective and helpful
- to pinpoint difficulties for practitioners and counselees in the counseling services being offered
- to ascertain what can certainly be profitably used, and what not, in the array of traditional counseling services
- to forward recommendations for the betterment of the services in absence of trained / professional counselor

1.3 Rationale

The rationale for this study relates closely to the curiosity the researcher developed as a young girl and that observation set in the past has evolved into an academic pursuit today. The researcher has come to believe that the nature of Oromo traditional marriage counseling offered before marriage, in marriage and post-marriage (e.g., counseling divorce case) is not researched at large, if not at all, and the field has got a lot to offer. The focus in the present study is, therefore, on marriage and marital interaction, sexual and social companionship between partners. In a society where modern counseling is at its elemental and emerging state of development, it is imperative to turn to what the tradition has to offer to live in harmony with Man, Nature and Waaqa / God. In marriage and marital interactions, when the couple or the individual is in problem, to whom can one go and for what kind of help demands a through investigation.

1.4 Significance of the study

In such a society where access to professional counseling is limited, research done on the area is also minimal. In addition, to the knowledge of the researcher, there is inadequate or no qualified marriage counselor except for the traditional helpers. Therefore, the researcher hopes that the present study will be helpful in the following ways:

- it casts light on the way traditional marriage counseling is offered
- it enables to evaluate the effectiveness of the services
- it gives opportunity to use traditional counselors in more improved ways by offering some intervention trainings
- it gives insight for further research in the fields of anthropology and counseling psychology

Students of counseling and researchers in the field of Oromo culture and the social and moral facets of Oromo culture can do more than what the present study has to offer using this study as a springboard.

1.5 Scope of the study

The major aim of the present study is to examine closely the nature of traditional Oromo marriage counseling. It would be relevant to scrutinize widely and deeply into the socio-cultural background of the traditional orientation of the counselors and counselees to come up with a wide range of *themes* and *patterns* of traditional Oromo marriage counseling, if it were not for time constraints. Such an academic feat necessitates anthropological and literary orientations along a long time reading and training to pin down the repertoire of techniques and strategies in such a cultural practices, which is not the case in the present study. That will be an academic pursuit the researcher will pick up sometime again in another study.

1.6 Organization of the study

Chapter I attempts to set the background of the study. It introduces the social organization and cultural (sub-cultural) settings of the Salale Oromo. Chapter II conceptualizes relevant theories and reviews related studies in an attempt to establishing a theoretical framework for interpreting data of the study. Chapter III singles out methods employed to collect, transcribe, organize and interpret the relevant data obtained. Chapter IV takes up the task of data presentation and interpretation. Finally, Chapter V, by way of synthesis looks back on the *themes* and *patterns* of traditional Oromo marriage counseling set within the traditions and worldviews of the society. The chapter also concludes by underscoring implications of the study focusing on the limitations of traditional marriage counseling and needed attention in line with modern counseling.

1.7. Definition of terms

Counseling - Counseling can be defined as a relatively short-term, interpersonal, theory-based process of helping persons who are fundamentally psychologically healthy resolve developmental and situational issues

Marriage counseling – counseling with focus on managing marital human interact and family unit. Purpose is to eliminate, relieve, manage, or resolve marital conflict or

discord and instead, to create, improve, restore marital harmony, or prepare couple for marriage

Counselee/client – individuals who visit and visited by traditional counselors in need of various helps including orientation, direction, advise counseling and information.

Traditional marriage counseling –activities which involve moral, religious and social commitments to help the couples to have a better competence in handling their relationship in marriage and live in harmony up to the demands of their community.

Oromo worldview – Oromo religious and socio-cultural view.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RELATED STUDIES

This chapter aims at surveying various models of counseling. It has three sections: in the first section of the chapter, western schools of thought and theories relevant to marriage and family counseling are surveyed. In the second section, research works conducted in Ethiopia on marriage and family counseling and the Oromo indigenous model of marriage counseling and conflict resolution are presented. Finally, an attempt is made to synthesize those theoretical nuances and form an eclectic approach to cater for the interdisciplinary nature of the problem of marriage counseling.

2.1 Theoretical framework

2.1.1 The family therapy model

Since the time of Freud, the field of psychotherapy has expanded at a rapid rate. It is estimated that there are now more than 200 therapy models and 400 techniques associated with these models (Karasu, 1986; Miller, Duncan, & Hubble, 1997). Since the 1960s, the number of psychotherapy approaches, and their respective techniques have grown by approximately 600% (Garfield & Bergin, 1994). Yet, this rapid proliferation of therapy models is not only a sign of rapid growth, but also a reflection of the splintered nature of the psychotherapy field as a whole.

Related to *therapy*, Stroup et al. (1959) state that the word 'therapy' has different meaning for different professions and to the lay public. Not only the psychiatrist, but many psychologists, social workers, recreation workers physical therapists, and marriage counselors believe they do 'therapy'. Roger (1961) as cited in Olu (1978) concludes that guidance counseling is an optimal helping relationship created by a person who is psychologically mature to facilitate the growth of others as separate persons. Perez (1965), as cited in Olu (1978), suggests that *therapy* is an interactive process co-joining the *counselee* who needs assistance and the counselor whose goal is to help the counselee to deal more effectively with himself and the reality of his environment. In other words, the all-pervading objective of guidance and counseling, as in all other helping professions

(e.g., clinical psychology, social work, service to the disadvantaged, psychoanalysis and psychotherapy), is to bring about a self-initiated behavior change through alternatives provided by professionals (Olu, 1978).

Jaffe & Segal (2007) citing Sprenkle et al (1999) further explain that the field of marriage and family therapy (MFT) has not escaped growth or theoretical fragmentation. From its early years, MFT has comprised of a group of distinct, competing theories each built largely around the ideas and personalities of charismatic theoreticians and gifted clinicians.

2.1.2 Models of marriage and family therapy

There are many types of therapy models. Generally, they all seek to help people improve their lives. How they go about that depends on their different philosophies, or “theoretical orientation”. Each type of orientation involves different ideas about what causes the pain in our lives and what will help us heal and move forward in happier and more productive ways. Among many focuses of different orientation some are:

- focus on the past – family origin, earlier life difficulties, how the present is rooted in the past experience
- focus more on the present – regardless of the past, what is happening in the here-and-now, what choices are being made, whether the results are satisfactory.
- focus on thoughts and behaviors – the ways we understand or interpret things that are happening in our lives, and what actions we take
- focus on the body itself - how the things happening in our lives show up as stress in physical armature and physical reactions.(Jaffe & Segal,2007).

Therapy sessions are usually 45-50 minutes in length, one or more times per week. The number of sessions depends on the types of difficulties experienced by the client – symptomatic relief can often be achieved in a few sessions, longer and more lasting changes in negative behavior patterns might take a year or longer, and depth life issues might require several years to overcome.

In what is to follow, we discuss different therapy models to lay a fertile ground for an eclectic model of marriage counseling fused with the indigenous model.

a) The social learning approach

This school of therapy has organized itself around the tenets of social learning theory. Vincent (1980a & b) as cited in Olson et al. (1980), makes it clear that social learning theory does not have a unified set of propositions. Rather the “theory” is an assembly of several models: most importantly, operant learning and social exchange theories, along with smatterings of general systems theories (Alexander and Barton, 1976) and attribution theory (Margolin and Weiss, 1978).

Social learning theory has a significant effect in counseling marriage and family because its basic tents are readily translatable into treatment modalities and techniques that can be tasted empirically. Although social learning conceptualizations of marital and family distress vary somewhat, all of these therapists stress that intervention is the most effective if it focuses on increasing positive acts and decreasing negative ones. These behavioral changes are hypothesized to produce positive changes in feelings and cognitions about relationships (Olson et al., 1980).

Scholars have done extensive studies (Weiss et al., 1972; Birchler et al., 1975; Vincent, 1980a and b as sited in Olson et al 1980) on the use of *social learning theory* for understanding and changing interaction patterns in marital systems.

b) Experiential family therapy

The leading proponents of this school are Whitaker (1977), Napier (1978) and Keith (1978). The term *experiential family therapy* is Whitaker’s label for what is essentially an *existential orientation*. This therapists emphasize personal and family growth through experiencing one’s own irrationality and “craziness”. Dysfunctional families are depicted as locked into their own rationality which must be blocked by “right brain” strategies such as use of metaphor, absurd overstatement of the clients’ problem, or the therapist discussing his own “craziness” (Olson et al., 1980).

Existential family therapy looks at the rules and roles played by family members and how family members struggle if those rules and roles are either poorly defined or inflexible, emphasis on communication patterns, treatment involves the entire family and often incorporates role playing or other drama or art (Jaffe & Segal, 2007).

c) Structural family therapy

This highly influential school of thought centers on Salvatore Minuchin and Child Guidance Center in Philadelphia. The structural approach to family therapy focuses on how the myriads of sub-systems, which encompass and comprise families are connected. Minuchin's key notion of "boundary" refers to the degree of permeability, which characterizes such systemic interfaces. By interacting with a family's various sub-systems, a structural family therapist assesses its structural viability. Therapeutic interventions follow based on rearranging the family's structure in a way that attempts to:

- (1) establish a clear generational hierarchy, and
- (2) promote semi-permeable boundaries (i.e., neither enmeshed nor disengaged)

(Olson, 1980).

Jaffe & Segal also point out that *structural family therapy* looks at the generational alliances in families; seeks to strengthen the parental dyad in its managerial role in the family; focus in treatment is the entire family, with shifts in the structure of the interactions.

In a *family system* each member plays a role that serves to sustain the balance (homeostasis), regardless of whether the family members are happy with the way things are, with the *status quo*. According to Jaffe & Segal, a change to any one member of the set will cause the entire system to have to change and readjust (Jaffe & Segal, 2007).

d) Bowenian family therapy model

The model looks at the generational patterns that are handed down in families; how family members often form "triangles" in their relationships by pulling others into a matter that actually concerns two people; focus in treatment is on the marital dyad,

regardless of the family's view about which child or adult is the "problem"(Jaffe & Segal, 2007).

In addition to the above *schools of family therapy*, any of the theoretical orientations described below might be adapted to working with couples, families or groups (Jaffe & Segal, 2007).

i) Psychodynamic psychotherapy model

Psychodynamic psychotherapy is used to help clients understand themselves more fully. The theory behind this approach is that our past-adverse childhood experiences or other unconscious conflicts- is the basis for problems that persist into adulthood, such as unusually low self-esteem, anxiety, or a feeling of being incomplete (Jaffe & Segal, 2007). Psychodynamic therapy presumes that some facets of our lives are hidden from us, in the subconscious mind, and that we use defenses to help keep us from experiencing the pain that would come from acknowledging elements from our past. Psychodynamic therapy can help to recognize and look behind these protective defense mechanisms, to bring the unconscious in to conscious awareness, and to uncover and deal more effectively neurotic conflicts (Jaffee & Segal)

ii) Interpersonal psychotherapy model

Interpersonal psychotherapy (IPT) is an approach based on the view that our current problems are maladaptive behaviors rooted in our previous interpersonal relationships. Personality is not a focus of this type of therapy, as it usually is with psychodynamic psychotherapy. Jaffe & Segal (2007) explained that interpersonal psychotherapy generally targets at:

- interpersonal disputes or difficulties*, that is, marital, family, work, or social relations;
- role transitions*, i.e., adapting to changes in social or occupational roles or other life circumstances.
- grief and loss issues*
- interpersonal deficits*

Bergin, 1994; Smith et al 1980). In an overview of psychotherapy outcome research, meta-analyses, and scholarly reviews of the last 40 years Hubble et al. (1999) report that psychotherapy has been shown to work: "regarding at least its general efficacy, few believe that therapy need be put to the test any longer (p. 2)." However, although it is well substantiated that therapy works, there is no clear indication as to exactly which therapy approach is most efficacious (Miller et al., 1997). The bulk of studies indicate that there are no meaningful differences among *therapy models* (Lambert & Bergin, 1994). Luborsky and others (1975) refer to this finding as the "dodo-bird verdict," which is taken from the children's book, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll, 1992), which proclaims that, "everyone has won and so all must have prizes" (p. 34).

2.1.3 Marriage counseling

2.1.3.1 Major forms of marriage counseling

Most counseling is conducted through two major treatment modalities or forms, those of individual interview and those of group sessions. Fitting this concept with the idea that there are three entities in a marriage: *two separate spouses*, and the *marriage* itself, results in a third formulation. That is, that there are six different major modalities by which marital difficulties can be treated. According to Cookerly, some modalities include: seeing one spouse in interviews or group sessions, seeing both spouses in separate interview or group sessions, seeing both spouses together in interviews or group sessions (Cockerly, 1973). Cookerly groups marriage counseling in the following six forms:

- individual interview marriage counseling
- individual group marriage counseling
- concurrent interview marriage counseling
- concurrent group marriage counseling
- conjoint interview marriage counseling
- conjoint group marriage counseling

Each of these forms may be a vehicle in which various techniques and the many therapeutic systems can be delivered.

Burton and Kaplan (1968) as cited in Cookerly (1973) found group counseling to be more successful than individual treatments in studying 179 couples in which alcoholism rather than marital problems was the main focus of the counseling. Numerous authorities such as Michaelson (1963), Alexander (1968), and Peterson as cited in Cookerly (ibid.) have found that there is a strong and growing trend away from using concurrent interviews toward using conjoint interviews. Gottlieb (1969), Dicks (1964), and Olson (1970) also found that *group methods* of marriage counseling are becoming somewhat popular. Cookerly found that different forms of marriage counseling tend to produce different outcomes and some forms, specially the conjoint ones, are superior to others.

The trend in the family therapy field appears to be toward specifying which mode of therapy is most effective for which group of clients presenting which sorts of problems. Frank (1979,p312) suggests:

“the focus should be on particular forms of therapy that seem to work exceptionally well with few patients and seek to define the characteristics of both the therapy and the patients that lead to happy result” (Olson et al.,1980).

An alternative to focusing on the presenting symptoms is to focus on the type of family system. Olson et al. (1980) have emphasized the importance of system diagnosis prior to intervention. A given symptom may serve multiple functions in a relationship system. The following implications for practice are supported by the empirical research and overlap with the recommendations Gurman and Kniskern (1978b) make for the training of marriage and family therapists:

- conjoint marital therapy appears more useful than individual therapy for improving marital relationships.
- family therapy appears more useful than individual therapy for a wide range of presenting problems. However, for most presenting problems, it is not possible to specify the best type of family treatment
- no one “school” of marital or family therapy has been demonstrated to be effective with a wide range of presenting problems.

-therapist relationship skills are important regardless of the conceptual orientation or “school” of the family therapist.

2.1.3.2 Marriage counselor

According to Olson, a successful counselor is someone who has a mature and balanced state of mind and disposition, who can place him/herself in the shoes of those s/he is counseling and the ability to respect their opinions, thoughts, feeling, and, more importantly, emotion (Olson et al., 1980).

Walter (1952) as cited in Jaffe & Segal (2007) states, it is important that the counselor possess within himself sufficient emotional maturity to promote warmth and empathy in the counseling relationship and at the same time not succumb to the pitfalls of infantile sentimental motives to overprotect the counselee or to shrink unduly from fear of his disapproval. The counselor may achieve this in somewhat the same way that the emotionally mature parent encourages emotionally maturing child through the steady influence of the child’s personal strength and by his balanced attitudes in providing the child with the hand and the granting of opportunity for independence.

Marriage and Family Therapists are trained to diagnose and treat mental and emotional disorders within the context of marriage, couples and family systems, as well as assist clients in achieving more adequate, satisfying and productive marriage, family, and social adjustment. The practice also includes premarital counseling, child counseling, divorce or separation counseling and other relationship counseling (Jaffe & Segal, 2007).

Jaffe & Segal point out that the therapist is usually someone trained to listen deeply, reflect empathically, offer insight, provide feedback, and help the person explore alternatives (2007).

Some therapists have specialized training in marriage counseling. A marriage counselor usually sees both members of the couple together, though some will occasionally also see

The goals of premarital counseling are:

- to test growth and growth potential of each partner
- to encourage the development of communication skills, and
- to expose areas of stress and develop the problem solving skills

(Rutledge, 1967).

Besides, beginning a new family is also emphasized. The orientation here is tradition of family life education than that of marriage counseling. In marriage counseling everything from the wedding and honeymoon through love, sex, and children, relations with parental families, finances, religion, and attitudes toward divorce and remarriage are covered (Rutledge, 1967). Lemessa (2007) reported that:

daballe learns of fundamental unit of human society about family. Through any means dabballee learns the types, basic criteria and goals of marriage. A girl is prepared to marry. She learns into being good wife. Before marriage, girls learn in-depth as no sex besides feminine roles. During marriage, a girl is thought how to live with her husband, parent-inlaw, and neighbors. Regarding to male, he is initiated to have own property. Thus, a boy understands what a matured person can do as individual and as a member of a community.

Step 2. In marriage/Post-marriage counseling

All couples have conflicts or disagreements at times. The difference between a happily married (or otherwise committed) couple and an unhappy union most frequently involves the ability to discuss and resolve those differences in a positive manner that respects the interests and needs of each individual.

In relationship, common unhealthy and damaging relationship communications usually include such interactions as hostility or verbal or physical attacks on the other person, put-downs, name-calling or other contempt for the partner, dragging old information or experiences into a current argument, defensive responses, withdrawal from a disagreement and escalating negativity in the relationship (Jaffe & Segal, 2007).

According to Habtamu(1998), the traditional view is that conflict is bad and avoidable. People who cause conflict are considered as deviants and troublemakers. Conflict is considered as evil, it should be avoided, or even be hidden. Scholars agree that resolving conflicts effectively is one of the hardest works in all human relations (Katz 1965; Coser 1967; Fisher1982 as cited in Habtamu 1998). However, at pre or in/post marriage, the most effective and psychologically satisfactory method is where differences are worked out to a mutually acceptable and optimal solution.

Step 3. Divorce counseling

Divorce, like marriage, is a complex process that proceeds in stages and work needs to be done to determine the intervention strategies most appropriate for particular families and circumstances.

Divorce is not universally approved or accepted as an institution in America, but is viewed as a solution for unbearable marital conflict. Emphasis tends to be placed on “happiness” in marriage while little is said of the unhappiness found in divorce (Fisher, 1973).

The 1970s witnessed the emergence of a new subspecialty, i.e. divorce therapy. It was stimulated in part by the large increase in the number of divorces during the past decade and the awareness that divorcing individuals need help uncoupling and dealing with this process. Brown (1976) as cited in Olson et al. (1980) state that while marital therapy often has operated on the implicit assumption of “saving marriages”, it is perhaps a sign of the times that divorce therapy “...does not focus on improving the husband-wife relationship but on decreasing the function of the relationship with the goal of eventual dissolution of that relationship”

Divorce counseling is an answer to the personal and cultural needs of the divorcing and divorced population. It is a therapeutic process by which those who experience and continue to experience the pain and humiliation of divorce can be helped toward personal growth and adjustment, enabling them to move away from egocentricity toward altruism

and desire to contribute to society. This process is divided into three phases: pre-divorce counseling, divorce counseling and post-divorce counseling (Fisher, *ibid.*).

In divorce counseling the focus is on the diminution and final dissolution of the marital relationship with concern for the intrapsychic needs of the individual spouses(s). The general goal of divorce counseling is for divorcing and divorced spouses to gain insight into and understanding of their personal and marital conflicts and difficulties, together with enough emotional strength to make decisions and deal more adequately and responsibly with the problems consequent to the dissolution of their marital relationship. Time and timing play an important role in the divorce process and therefore in the process of divorce counseling. Implications for the clients' needs in divorce counseling are in a large part dependent on where the clients are in the divorce process. Therefore, time distinctions must be made within the *emotional divorce, physical divorce, and legal divorce*.

The marriage and divorce counselor is not a protagonist for or against a divorce, any more than he is for one spouse against the other. Yet he cannot take a stance of neutrality in which he assumes no responsibility for the decision. To do so is to permit inferences and implications by clients that the counselor does not intend. Rather, he is a catalyst whose purpose is to grips with their problems. The decision to divorce will ultimately be theirs. The only time the counselor makes a decision for divorce is when physical and emotional destruction continues despite efforts to the contrary (Fisher, *ibid.*).

2.1.3.4 Orientation and focus of marriage counseling

The increased demand for help has been partially met by large variety of professionals, including physicians, psychologists, sociologists, home-economists, ministers, social workers, and others. As a result, a growing body of theory is emerging, drawn from these fields (Stroup et al., 1959).

It is precisely because of its interdisciplinary nature and the variety of training and background of its practitioners that we find great difference in a definition of the

marriage-counseling field. Each of these differences reflects a somewhat different framework (Stroup et al., 1959).

Stroup et al. (1959) stress that marriage counseling deals primarily with the relationship between two people. This means that it should be more psychologically or sociologically oriented. The sociological approach neither denies nor neglects psychological factors. The difference is one of emphasis, personality factors are seen in the context of the marital relationship and situation in which the family finds it in the field of psychology. Sociologically oriented counselors emphasize upon behavior or the problem and situation. They tend towards levels that are more inclusive. On the other hand, psychologically oriented counselors emphasis upon the individual, and learning. They tend towards less inclusive levels.

What is the major aim of the counselor? Who can be a counselee? What techniques does the counselor employ, and what contents? are answered under the sub-topics put below.

a) Goals

The goal of marriage counseling is the solution of a marital problem. Many of the couples who come to the counselor for help have acute and serious relationship problems. If they can be helped to make a more satisfactory adjustment to these problems, or to handle them better in their present situation, the counselor's goal has been accomplished (Stroup et al., 1959). They emphasized that, the major goal of sociologically oriented counselors is solution of marital or premarital problem. However, personality reorganization is the major goal of psychologically oriented counselors.

b) Content and focus of interview

Content and focus of interview are marriage problems, educational resource, support, clarification on the conscious level, for sociologically oriented counselors; and personal problems, depth therapy, often bringing unconscious materials to the surface for psychologically oriented counselors. In addition, the former needs short-term contact while the later need long-term contact (Stroup et al., 1959).

It is valuable to distinguish between personal counseling and marriage counseling. Personal counseling deals with a number of personal problems that the client may bring to the counselor. Marriage counseling deals with the marital or pre-marital problems of a couple, focusing upon the role relationship between spouses or spouses to be. Personal counseling emphasizes the individual psychology. Marriage counseling emphasizes the sociological or socio-psychological aspect of individuals committed (Stroup et al., 1959).

c) Clients

From the previous discussion, it seems evident that the marriage counselor deals with people who have premarital or marital problems. Nevertheless, this does not say enough. Since the counselor is focusing upon reality factors in the marital relationship, it seems almost essential that both partners be involved in the helping process. If this is not possible, reality may be obscured by the emotions of the client and the process tends to take on the attributes of the more psychologically oriented personal counseling rather than dealing with the marital relationship (Stroup et al., 1959).

The greatest debate has been about the "normalcy" of the clients who present themselves for each help. Stroup et al. (1959) believe that there is a quantitative difference as well as quantitative or relative difference between the personality of the psychotic and the personality of the neurotic. The counselor should be equipped to recognize the former early in the counseling process so that he can make an appropriate referral.

In sum, *relationship counseling* as a discrete professional service is a recent phenomenon. Until the late 20th century, the work of relationship counseling was informally practiced by close friends, family, village or group elders. Today marriage mentoring mirrors those cultures before the relationships between the individuals can begin to materialize. It is important for all to recognize and acknowledge that everyone involved has a unique personality and background. Sometimes the individuals in the relationship adhere to different value systems. Institutional and societal variables: the social, religious, group and other collective factors which shape a person's nature and behavior in the way it does

must be recognized in the work of marriage counseling. This and the Oromo native model of marriage counseling will be discussed in the next section.

2.2. Related studies

In the first section of this chapter, different theoretical considerations are discussed. Since the aim of the chapter is to survey different thoughts and integrate those western models of marriage counseling with the native thoughts, it is imperative to assess related studies and map out some underlying tenets of the Oromo indigenous model, *safuu*, in this section while discussing the social organization of the community in the research area.

2.2.1. Ethnographic background

Genealogy

Of tribes that belong to Tulama genealogy, the Bacho tribe has five divisions: Salale, Warab, Ejere / Metta, Darra, and Borana / Wallo (octb, 2006: 141). The Salale subdivision includes Urru, Garasu, and Wajjitu all settling in the districts of Garba-Gurracha, Abote, and Goha along both sides of the highway to the Abbay Valley in the west and Jama Valley in the east in clusters of clans and sub-clans. There are Salale Oromos scattered in the Ethiopian 'Diaspora' uprooted from their original home following the Minilik conquest of Oromoland in the second-half of 19th century (Tsagaye 1996). According to the available human and written sources, the word Salale is the name of a mountain found on the other side of Dagam to the west (Hassen, 1994). The Salale livelihood depends on agriculture and rearing livestock, which one would label as mixed farming.

Children and age-grading

Anthropologists and sociologists have recognized the Oromo age-grading and age-set system of social organization as an important institution accounting for the unity and smooth functioning among this traditional preliterate society (Baxter 1978b, 1979; Asmarom 1973).

According to this tradition, various age-grades require each grade has its own social, economic and political rule. One may put the Oromo age system into three main categories as the *young*, *the middle*, and *the old age*. *Gaammee* is to age eight and is the years of fun and games. *Dabballee* is eight to sixteen years of age. Some mild jobs also accompany the play, as herding calves, sheep and goats near the homestead. Early non-formal education at this age includes story-telling, mental arithmetic and elementary computations, popular songs and dances, identification of names of local plants and birds, places and peoples, i.e., notables and close kin.

The child is well trained in these early years of his age to associate with members of his age-group as brothers and sisters until death and beyond, as *hariya* (Leus 2006). All Oromo males born in the same 8-year generation class (*gada*) belong to the same *hariya*, but belong to one of the two *hariya* lines. Among the Boorana Oromo the two *hariyyaa* lines are *waakor*, also known as *daraara* (*flower*), and *dambala*, known as *coqorsa* (*grass*), each headed by a *hayyuu* (*age-set leader*) of its own. The Salale also exercise this age-grouping as *hariyya*, literally meaning 'age-mates'.

Starting with the *gammee* (0-8), *dabballee* (8-16), *foollee* (16-24) upwards, both training and responsibility are stepped up. The young child learns his extended family history, history of his society, names of neighboring communities and relations with them (if just or unjust historical relationships, if warring or peace-loving, etc.), geography of the region, handling weapons, military tactics, breeding cattle and caring, hunting skill, nature of soils and seasonal weather conditions, and morals or rules of good manners. Young girls also take intellectual trainings as young boys. They learn poetry, dance, traditional games, history, regional geography, seasons and seasonal climatic changes all in the form of folklore and folk beliefs added to household chores. Salale Oromo also believes that laws and customs that govern the social and moral order as well as general rules of etiquette are taught to the youth through folklore and folklore practices. At every level of age-grade, the age-group undergo initiation rites to pass to the exalted level of manhood. It is upon his performances at these early periods that the individual's entire future will depend (Lamessa, 2007).

Customary laws, religion, social and moral thoughts

As elsewhere discussed in this thesis, according to traditional Oromo religion, *Waaqa*, the black God, is the creator of all things. Black colour, to the Oromo, represents *future, prospers, hopes* and is considered to be a symbol of *holiness* and *divinity*. Hence, *Waaqa gurraacha*, the black God. *Waaqa* has the power to do and undo everything (Knutsson,1963). *Ayyaana* is a phenomenon of great importance in Oromo religion. The Oromo believe that *Waaqa* or *Uumaa*, meaning 'Creator' created different creatures with different *ayyaana* (Bartels 1983; Gammachu in Baxter 1994). *Ayyaana* or spirit granted by *Waaqa* at birth, retained throughout lifetime, and beyond, is believed to determine the fate of the individual, be it good or bad. Every nature and natural phenomena has the *ayyaana* of its own. All days have their own *ayyaana*.

Another equally important religious and/or philosophical concept is the Oromo moral and ethical set of divine rule called *safuu*. The Oromo concept *safuu* is in the daily speech of the people. Lambert Bartels, in his great work of *Oromo Religion* (1983,p30), puts the word as having nine varied meaning, not dialectal variation, but differences observable in different contexts in the same linguistic community. Among others, the core meaning of the word relates to preserving the existing norm (e.g., by avoiding *haraamuu*, i.e. incest taboo (the *hoboo-cooraa horizontal intergenerational relationship*)). Bartels, while speaking of alternate generations (*oboo or coora*),

oboo and *oboo* can play with one another, even if their ages diverge, widely; they joke with another. Especially, a grandmother and her little grandson can do this; there is less respect; both of them are *oboo* or *coora*; they are like friends; *safuu walitti hintahan*—
They are not *safuu* towards each other

(p331).

The word 'play' is to mean 'romantic' or 'erotic' in this context, which is not incest / *haraamuu* as the tradition has demarcated it as *hoboo-cooraa*.

Bartels quotes his informants as saying the word *safuu* has a clearly religious implication. To express the fear of *Waaqa*, Almighty God, one would say, *safuun kan Waaqaa ti*, meaning, *Safuu* is of *Waaqa*, i.e. it is all because of *Waaqa*.

Referring to this ethical/moral dimension of the Oromo *finna* (heritage), Gemetchu Magersa has this to say: as a result of the historical character of the tradition,

early in Oromo tradition, there developed a tension between *uummaa* (literally Creation), referring to practice, ritual or otherwise, and *ayyaana* as the will of *Waaqa*. It is perhaps this contradiction that gave rise to the concept of *safuu*.

(in Baxter 1996,p97).

Gemetchu, is right saying that the concept *safuu* is ‘a mutual relationship between elements of the social and cosmic order’ (1994.). *Safuu* is a social and religious Oromo worldview that places hurdles before individuals to live up to the moral and social standards of the society and abide by the fear of *Waaqa*. Only then can the human and divine relations be maintained and peace and tranquility be kept at an equilibrium when the *safuu* divine order is most viable in the tradition. ‘Tradition’, with all its negative connotation of ‘remote past’ continues into the present ‘with emphasis on the spoken word and ‘literacy’ (Gemetchu, 1994 p96).

To the Oromo, *safuu* is one basic and all-pervading concept. It is a belief in peaceful resolution of conflicts: the belief that violence—domestic or whatever— war, and the taking of lives are unacceptable ways of resolving disputes (*‘Daaniyaa’*, 2006). Hence, this ethical/moral code is a fundamental concept of the Oromo worldview as a peace-loving nation whose underlying philosophy of *humanity* is pacifism. It implies that all things have a place of their own in the cosmic and social order, and that they should keep this place. Human and divine relations, the cosmic order, and the natural phenomena are all governed by the *safuu* divine order. Man and nature are conditioned by the specific *ayyaana* each has received from *Waaqa*. *Safuu* implies both rights and duties. In the people’s eyes, Wisdom is knowing *safuu* and abide by it (Bartels, 1983) in every aspect of life experience.

According to this Oromo concept of moral or ethical order, what is *cubbuu / sin* is not committing a social or moral evil that can be termed as violating those nine commandments. What is *cubbuu / sin* is destroying, damaging, or spoiling Man's relationship with *Waaqa*, Man's relationship with Man, and most of all, damaging *Waaqaa's* creation. By this Oromo world view, in *Waaqaa's* creation,

all things have been given a place of their ownThey are expected to keep distance from each other ; each of them has to follow his own way; they must not overstep the boundaries put between them by *Waaqa*; they must not get mixed up (Bartels, *ibid.*p339).

According to this Oromo tradition, in order for the *safuu* to remain functional, every member of the society must conform to this cosmic and social order, *safuu*; if s/he acts otherwise, s/he acts against the *safuu* ('*Daaniyaa*', 2006; Bartels, 1983).

Every social and moral aspect of the Oromo daily life activities are governed by the *safuu* moral and social order. Serious human relations such as marriage and other serious conflicts are treated accordingly by the existing codes of conduct and norms. The *safuu* is a rubric of Golden Rules to make check and balance against all odds that threaten the societal and cultural wellbeing. Such a concept as *safuu* is not a mere form of artistic expression; it is a guide to life. *Safuu* is founded on the concept of *finna* (real life situation, heritage) of the people, and links the people to the regenerative sources of their culture (Kassam 1986). Through transformation and the dynamic nature of *finna*, each generation finds its own meaning in the tradition in relation to its particular historical situation (Gemetchu, 1994p96). It is this relationship between the concepts, Gemetchu rightly argues, and the their particular meanings in specific circumstances that gives the Oromo tradition a historical character (1994p97). When the knot is loosened by externally induced and internally motivated factors, then those Golden Rules are no more functional, and consequently, those facets of morality and humanity are endangered. Where *safuu* is not viable, social and moral order is at disequilibrium. Elders, ritual and tribal leaders, counselors, seers all try their best as watchdogs of culture to maintain peace and security of their citizens by issuing and enacting moral and social laws.

In keeping marriage intact, fastening societal relations and maintaining the spiritual and social wellbeing of the people, safuu is the reference point.

2.2.2 Types and formalities of Oromo marriage

Marriage is one of the most important rituals in Oromo culture. The custom of marriage differs in various parts of the world and every civilization produces a marriage pattern appropriate to itself (Ludlow, 1965, cited in Gemechu & Assefa., 2006). Among the Oromo society also the type, name and ceremonies differ to some degree from place to place. Generally, there are three types of marriage among the Oromo.

a) Formal marriage

This type of marriage has different names in different parts of Oromia: '*kadhaa*' (Nuro,1989), or *fuudha baal-tokkee* (Hussen 2000) around Arsi, '*cida*' (Lemmesa, 2007) around Showa, and '*Naqataa*' (Gemetchu & Assefa, 2006) in Wallaga. '*Kadhaa*' or '*naqataa*' is the most typical and prevalent form of marriage where the ceremony starts at the moment when marriage is first thought of and even continues after the marriage is concluded (Gemetchu & Assefa, 2006).

Traditionally, it is arranged by family and before the match takes place, they make sure that the girl's family does not have members who are lepers, chawa-clan, crafts men such as tanner, potter etc. The groom's parents research back seven generations to make sure that the families are not related by blood, to avoid *haraamuu* or incest taboo. Once this has been done, the boy's parents then make contact with the girl's parents through a mediator. The girl's parents often impose conditions and the mediator will take the message to the boys parents. When the parents have reached an agreement, the man and woman get engaged (betrothed). The parent then set a wedding date and they meet all the wedding expenses (Nuro,1989, Gemechu & Assefa 2006).

b) Informal Marriage

i) Hawwii

According to Gemechu & Assefa (2006), this mode of marriage occurs when the boy happens to remain *qeerroo* (*bachelor*) for several reasons. Either because he is not handsome, or he is from a family of low social status, and therefore cannot pay the dowry. The boy has no consent of the family of the girl to wait long and to meet the financial and social demands of the girl's parents. Sometimes, the girl's mother is involved in arranging marriage of her daughter through *hawwee*. It is common among poor people. Youngsters resort to this kind of marriage after a lot of period of courtship that the boy approaches whom he thinks can keep secret to act on a go-between. There are places where the boy and the girl with their company can mostly wait each other. She signs an agreement saying that she was not taken against her will and she will be taken to one of the boy's relatives until his parent prepares feast for marriage (Gemechu & Assefa 2006, Nuro, 1989), and that her parents are solemnly informed about her safety by elders.

ii) Buttaa/Butii

This type of marriage takes of the following two forms. The first is when the girl has consented she is induced to be abducted. The second is accomplished by compulsion without any prior knowledge of the abduction (unlike the first form) on the part of the girl (Gemechu & Assefa, 2006).

As Gemechu and Assefa point it out in their co-authored article on the Western Macca Oromo Marriage Style, marriage by abduction is taken as option when:

- 1) a boy falls in love and she is not aware at all.
- 2) a girl's parent is affriad that their daoughter might agree to the proposed marriage,they consprice with the would be husband to take her by force.
- 3) a girl's parent are unwilling to agree to the proposed marriage, abduction would be resorted by boy's family to show that they have a power to take her by force evenif her parents refused (Gemechu & Assefa, 2006; Nuro, 1989).

This informal marriage was also observable among the Salale before the government intervention and the customary law became renewed in a way committed to preserving women's right and security.

iii) Aseennaa

This type of marriage empolys peaceful, but cunning means. According to Nuro (1989), when a girl could not get anybody who seeks herhand in marriage because she may be an ugly or her parent has an evileye "as said to be" by the society, she chooses anyone whom she thinks would marry her. And she directly goes to his parent's house. Gemechu & Assefa (2006) also explained that , for a women' to remain unmarried into her twenties is incomprehensible, though, she must go beyond herself, called aseennaa. Therefore,when a girl is left unmarried or when her father wants to give her to some one whom she doesnot like, she chooses unmarried young man and runs a way to his house without the knoweledge of the man mostly in the evening.

c) Conditional marriage

This type of marriage depends on the occurrence of certain incidents.

i) Dhaala

Dhaala is a type of marriage between a women and a brother of a deceased husband or levirate (Gemechu & Assefa 2006). Among such a patrilineal community where marriage secures children to perpetuate the father's line, it is usual for widow to be inherited by a brother of a deceased husband (Nuro,1989).

b) Mambeeto (manbeeto)

Its conditionality is the death of one's wife. The younger sister or relative of the late wife would be given to the widower as soon as the first wife dies (Nuro, 1989). It is known as *manbeeto* or *mambeeto* among Arsi. Among the Oromo of Tulama and Macca it is known as *hirpha*, literally, to 'compensate'.

2.2.3 Common causes of divorce in Ethiopia and arbitration

One study clearly shows that the common causes for divorce throughout the country Ethiopia are poverty, lack of property and income, jealousy, not bearing children (being barren), sexual incompatibility, interference of in-laws and relatives (Habtamu, 1998).

The Ethiopian Family Law article 76 states conditions of decision for divorce as follows:
Marriage shall dissolve by divorce where:

- a) the spouse have agreed to divorce by mutual consent and such agreement is accepted by the court;
- b) the spouses or one of them made a petition, for divorce, to the court.

Article 83, sub article 2 & 3 states that, where the spouses are not willing to agree or have failed to agree, the court shall, by itself, or through arbitrators, or experts appointed by it or, by other means if thinks appropriate, decide on the conditions of divorce. Then the conditions of divorce agreed upon by the spouses or decided by arbitrators or experts shall be submitted to the court for approval.

According to Habtamu(1998) major causes of conflicts and divorce in Ethiopia include: misuse of family income ,inability to support the family, adultery, being sterile (being barren, not getting along, jealousy, sexual incompatibility, interference of in laws and relatives, rumors and gossips, and lack of love between the partners.

According to Habtamu (1998), various factors such as ethnicity, religion, education level, culture and other variables will play some role on the strategy a family/community uses to resolve conflicts. Usually arbitration/mediation involves consultation, gathering of facts, opinions, and discussions, reaching to some compromise and setting some conditions (limitations) on the parties involved

The same researcher explains that the roles that elders play in all ethnic groups in resolving conflicts are vast. Hence, this broad based institutions of arbitration need to be improved (strengthened) in line with the socio-economic development of the country and respecting equal rights of men and women.

The Ethiopian Civil Code (Ethiopian Government, 1960) stipulates that the spouses have to go to elders to settle their disputes. In a country where about 60% of the population is illiterate, 85% rural, access to court or marriage counseling is limited, the arbitration by elders is very important. Habtamu rightly argues that traditional institution needs some changes with respect to the individual's autonomy, the view which the present researcher shares, while strengthening what it is deficient in (Habtamu, 1998).

On the whole, the researcher strongly believes that in such a non-literate society where traditional institutions and modernization are not only competitive but also cooperative, it is essential to follow closely and facilitate for the viability of workable traditional practices as long as development and human betterment is not impaired.

In what is to follow, those *theoretical considerations* reviewed under the first section of this chapter (2.1) and the *related studies* assessed in the second section (2.2) will be discussed side by side to create a modest but clear understanding of the multidisciplinary nature of such a study.

2.3 The 'scientific' and the 'traditional'

It has become a common knowledge that traditional concepts are essential backgrounds for African indigenous knowledge. Lemmesa (2007) describes that African indigenous education is based on communalism, cooperation, group work, observation, initiation, folktales, proverbs, riddles, legends, music, songs, community improvement, practical value and oral literature. On the other hand, modern education is based on individualism, individual freedom, individualized inquiry, discovery method, and learner centered. However, traditional ideas are being abandoned modified or colored (Salia-Bao, 1989 cited in Lemmesa, 2007).

Mlambo (2006) as cited in Lemmesa (2007) argues that

“Western social sciences or sociology of ideas, in combination with science and capitalism, have led to the domination and marginalization of African continent through imposing alien world

the bricolage, and indeed, is not the necessary preserve of any culture. Still, what is of importance is the framework, the (con)textual condition of the study including the metaphoric import and the constitutive terms of the discourse, the narrative, which elaborates not mere mental forms but structures of social and cultural organization.

Under the serviceable idiom of science and magic, four basic positions can be roughly isolated, namely,

- (a) that primitive (oral) thought is irrational, illogical, and unscientific;
- (b) that it is rational and logic but not scientific;
- (c) that it is rational but unscientific and illogical; and
- (d) that it is as rational and logical within its own cultural context as the scientific in modern Western society.

In this regard, the *rational* is clearly separated conceptually from the *logical* and *scientific*, but in reality, many of the disputants have often used these terms interchangeably.

Robin Horton (1993) in the extensive exposition of the relations between African thought and Western science (1993, pp197-258) favorably argues in favor of the traditional mentality. In this view, traditional thought is *rational* and *logical*, often in ways analogous to scientific thought. This is the case for two good reasons.

One reason is that, models of scientific theory are a quest for unity, simplicity, order, and regularity underlying the apparent diversity, complexity, disorder, and anomaly that characterize the universe of phenomena. Robin Horton rightly argues that African thought also seeks this order through the structure of the pantheon (group of people in the field of knowledge) and the categorical relations of its spiritual forces. As scientific thought seeks causal explanations, so does African thought—for example, the causal connection between social conduct and states of disease.

The second reason is this: the two forms of thought, i.e. the scientific and the traditional, employ similarly different levels of theory (low and high) to cover respectively narrow or

wide areas of experience. Both operate by first breaking up and then reintegrating objects and experiences (abstraction, analysis/interpretation, and integration). While this similarity of theoretical procedure does not turn traditional African thought into a species of the scientific, it nevertheless demonstrates its *rationality*.

Generally speaking, the scientific is regarded as the most characteristic Western model of thought, just as the religious is regarded as the most characteristic model of traditional (non-Western) thought, a comparative analysis is felt possible on cross-cultural grounds.

In this chapter, an attempt is made to review the existing *models of marriage counseling* and examine closely the *traditional institutions* serve as a model of marriage counseling in line with *modern counseling*. *Traditional marriage-counseling practices* will be scrutinized closely in the chapters three and four along the lines of the eclectic approach set and then the result of the study will be synthesized.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS OF THE STUDY

3.1 Research design

This research uses a qualitative method of data presentation and interpretation. The study primarily focuses on first-hand information gathered from elders, community leaders, traditional counselors and their clients.

The research tools include those most widely used methods of qualitative data such as interview/close-private conversations, and in-depth individual interviews. Since the most commonly used method of qualitative research is interviewing, note-takings and audiotape recordings were part of the data collecting tools.

Qualitative research method is used because it enables the researcher to use different techniques to grasp a social phenomenon as well as to see into the socio-cultural nature of Oromo traditional marriage counseling from the viewpoint of the natives. In line with this, the researcher has conducted in-depth individual interviews and discussions with community elders, counselors and clients to gain exposure to the detailed narrative accounts of the *themes* and *patterns* of *traditional Oromo marriage counseling* in that particular socio-cultural milieu.

Thus, the study focuses on the primary data collected from Oromo traditional counselors and clients.

3.2 Informants

In this study initial deliberate contact with potential sources of information suggested further people to be approached for interview or discussion, i.e., a 'snowball'

technique was also used. Interviewees were carefully selected using deliberate sampling and the 'snowball' sampling technique.

During the interviews counselors were asked how, when, why and what they offer in the counseling practices, and to whom, to bring about some positive change to the individual client in his/her lifetime. All community elders are not necessarily counselors. But there are notable community elders people consult under normal circumstances and to seek some coping mechanisms in adversities. Selection was based on their reflective ability and their social status in the community.

The researcher has deliberately recruited such elderly peoples presumably to gain adequate data relevant to the problem at hand, which, of course, proved workable.

The tribal and community leaders involved in this study are well versed and skilled in ways of conflict resolution, offering advice, counseling, and information relevant to marriage.

3.3 Sample selection and size

The researcher chose a deliberate sampling technique and a 'snowball' sampling method. That is, since potential knowledgeable informants are few in number in the research area and presumably well known for their public counseling services, it was necessary to start with some initial contacts suggesting further respondents to be conducted by the researcher. Therefore, deliberate sampling and snowball sampling helped the researcher to select the participants for the in-depth individual interviews and discussions.

Hence, subjects participated in the study are: 7 elders (5males and 2 females) above 60 years of age , 4 betrothed young (2 males and 2 females) clients received

traditional marriage counseling before marriage; 2 men and 2 women clients received traditional marriage counseling before and in-marriage, and 2 men and 2 women whose divorce cases were resolved by traditional conflict resolution methods under viable customary laws.

3.4 Study area

The study was conducted in three kebeles of one district (Dagam) in Salale, north-west Showa. The researcher deliberately selected the location since she comes from this area herself to possibly contact potential respondents by starting with initial contacts leading on to further informants.

3.5 Research instruments

The data collecting tools in this research are deliberate and 'snowball' sampling (semi-structured), in-depth individual interviews and discussions in the process of collecting data between February-April 2008.

During the course of in-depth individual interview, the researcher introduced the purpose of the study and informed the anonymity of the respondent for the purpose of building confidence for thorough discussions. The introduction also included seeking permission to record the interview on an audio-tape recorder, before commencing the interview.

Interviews were mostly conducted in the respondent's house with all the hospitalities and generosity accompanied the interview/discussion.

3.6 Data recording

Since the verbal messages are the primary sources produced by the informants, the verbal responses, statements, opinions, arguments and interactions of the respondents

had to be carefully recorded by the researcher for later use. That was made with each participant's proper introduction of her/himself for voice identification during transcription. The researcher also took written short notes while taking care of the full account of the respondent's information as well as the nature and format of the interview.

It is imperative that data collecting involves ethical issues. Therefore, the researcher had to ask each respondent's permission to record their responses on an audio-cassette tape and that their name to remain anonymous.

3.7 Data presentation and interpretation

The narratives and textual data collected are large. Thus, to transcribe the data, label and categorize the interview transcripts in such a systematic fashion is by itself very demanding and awesome.

All the interviews and discussions were carefully documented and transcribed into English in an attempt to maintain originality and sense of meaning in the emerging *themes* and *patterns* of the traditional Oromo marriage counseling. The emergent *themes* and *patterns* are meanings of the narratives and texts and their most important features interpreted in this study in a critical and coherent form. Hence, the data were presented in a narrative form with extracts from original texts deemed relevant and important to illustrate major findings of the study and make the organic whole, namely, *themes* and *patterns* of traditional Oromo marriage counseling more consistent, if not comprehensive.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1. Data presentation

This chapter presents the *themes* and *patterns* of the research, i.e., findings of the research and interpretation. In the first part of the chapter, data and findings are presented. In the remaining parts of the chapter, interpretation of the data and findings are discussed.

4.1.1 Social organization, religion, social and moral thoughts

The Salale are socially organized into *qehees* known as clusters (*warra*), almost in all cases, based on close blood-ties or pedigree. Surrounding each household of the clusters and lineages are perennial trees (e.g., eucalyptus), acacia, cactus plants and high piles of stones known as *kaabii* hedging each house and homestead. The cluster includes parents, married sons and grandparents, other extended families or close kin and dependants. Clusters form *ganda* or a village. Each village is headed by a community-elder called *abbaa quunna*, also known as *abbaa lagaa*, *abbaa burqaa*, or *abbaa biyya*. The position is held by eligible families in the village. According to this tradition, only the first-born son of the *abbaa quunnaa* is entitled to hold this social responsibility of the *laga/burqaa* or *ganda* (village) when the father *abbaa quunnaa* dies or becomes inactive and unable to give the public services. Among the social and cultural responsibilities of the *abbaa quunnaa* are: settling disputes, offering counseling, performing rituals, reflecting public interests to concerned bodies, and maintaining peace, harmony and stability between man and man and man and Waaqa, God. Most importantly, *abbaa qehee* ratifies, implements and guides the community to live up to the *seera biyyaa*, i.e., *customary law*. He is equally responsible to train his elder son about endorsing customary laws, performing rituals, maintaining social and moral orders, handling issues related to public interests, and working cooperatively with other community elders on the common good, etc. As the son grows up, he starts by attending different cases like conflict resolution, traditional contractual marriage agreements, '*jarssummaa*' etc to practice along his father's apprenticeship and under his close supervision.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1. Data presentation

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Each *ganda* of same clusters makes a *ganda* / *kebele* under one *aanaa* / district with other sister *kebeles* having one *abbaa quunnaa* each. Center for a command post for all *abbaa quunnaas* is Odaa nabee, East Showa. All community representatives of the area come together to set and endorse new *heera* and *seera*, modify the existing ones, discuss the *finna* or the *common factors* thought to affect the common good of the people. Decisive issues such as extra-marital affairs known as *irree*, for instance, calls for the deliberation of all *abbaa qe'ees* to re-consider the existing social customs and folk beliefs. Consulting elders of adjacent villages is very common. Especially when there is a serious problem among the community or to settle certain disputes that threaten the well-being of the society, elders ask for help and support of the community, which makes a *general assembly*.

In discussing the social organization of the Salale Oromo, the vertical relationship among the close kin is set along the cline called *hobo-coora*, i.e., *abbaa-ilma/intala* to keep intact the father-child moral / *safuu* relationship and maintain in order. The knowledge of this vertical social organization is mainly to check against such immoral acts as incest-taboos and other self-doubting relations related to endogamous marriage. Marriage among the Oromo, like other Oromo tribes, is exogamous. Another such line of kinship is the horizontal relationship among the *hiriya*, those belonging to same age-set as presented next.

Informant 1 told the research^{er} that the Oromo concept of *safuu* constitutes the ethical basis upon which all human action should be founded. According to this informant *safuu* is that which directs one on the right path. The violation of this divine moral and social order inflicts one the wrath of *Waaqa*. *Safuu* shows the way life can best be lived.

This informant and others confirm that by Salale Oromo tradition, like other Oromo tribes, customary laws are issued and enacted in line with this divine moral and social order, *safuu*. Social, religious and cultural practices have rules, procedures and serious purposes. The customary laws of marriage, children, women, men, family, neighbour, rites and ritual sites, cooperative works, animals, beasts and environment are issued and

endorsed to maintain morality, humanity and identity of members of the community in particular and preserve healthy relationship between *Uumaa (Creator)* and *Uumama (Creation)* in general .

Even if the Salale in this region are largely Orthodox Christians, but *Waaqa* is on the tip of their tongue in almost all courses of life to bless or to curse, to express fear or hope, failure or success. It is no exaggeration to say that *Waaqa* is their point of reference in every aspect of the Salale day-to-day life activities deemed as religion, worldview, and social and moral order. The researcher has come to infer from the informants religious view that the Oromo monotheistic belief in One God shares several features with Christianity: God in Trinity; the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, that They are not three Gods, but One God. To settle serious cases as *gumaa*, i.e., blood price, to pray for enough rain or to reverse a plague, famine, war or any similar adverse condition in their life, the Salale summon upon *Waaqa*. Children are told not to swear by *Waaqa* when they know they lie. *Waaqa* is believed to be *Dhugaa (True)*, hence '*Dhugaa*' is a word of swear to show one is '*True*'.

The Salale Oromo traditional religious practices and rituals are presided over by such functionaries possessed of *ayyaana*, or spirits as *Booranticha*, *Abbaa Ganuu*, *Jiilcha*, *Haadha Abbayyi*, *Giftii Elemoo*, and *Cooka*.

4.1.2 Marriage among the Salale Oromo

Marriage is one of the solemn and formal social institutions among the Salale. There have been five types of marriage practices among the Salale. These are: *kadhaa / kennata*, *aseenaa*, *aqaaal (ol-kuftuu and gad-kuftuu)*, *buttaa/butii and dhaala*. The difference varies from the conventional pre-marital normative procedures to the nature of the traditional contractual agreement as solemn marriage processes. Currently *kadhaa / kennata* and *fedhii / ol-kuftuu* are the most popular marriage practices in the region.

a) *Kadhaa ykn Kennata / Cida*

Kadhaa ykn Kennata marriage is practiced when the boy's parent have come to believe that their son is now mature to get married. Tradition has it that when the boy is physically and mentally thought to be mature enough to assume such a social responsibility as marriage, the parents start to think about *making him a lovely home of his own*, literally means, *abidda isaatiin gahuu*. Whether or not one is ready for marriage is measured by his successfully tackling responsibilities granted to him through time at every point in his age-grades to the present. The parent selects him a mate thought to be *suitable* after a long time thorough investigation, which involves genealogical, moral and economic background study. Though it is an arranged marriage, the boy may be given chance to look for a suitable girl and propose to the parents. While selecting a mate focus is on the girl's personal quality and appearance, her family background and other relational factors. When decided at the boy's own choice and/or the parent's, an elderly delegate of the go-between take the proposal formally to the girl's parent. If she and her parents agree, fixed dates of continuous meetings scheduled until the dowry and wedding day is decided. As the wedding day approaches, the boy and the parents arrange best men for the wedding, and start to prepare for the feast, which is on both sides a must, as to meet the public demands.

a) *Ol-kuftuu*

This is a traditional marriage where the parents of both the girl and the boy do not have knowledge of the relationship of the two, while a boy and a girl have love relationship secretly. It is also known as *fedhii*, to show that the relation is based on the mutual agreement of the two. Once the parents know the relationship, they do not involve in any kind of the decision-making about the relationship. This type of traditional marriage follows the normal route as that of the *kadhaa*, once parents are informed.

4.1.3 *Traditional Oromo marriage counseling*

In the first section of this chapter, social and cultural background of the Salale Oromo is discussed in line with that of the universal Oromo reality, i.e., socio-cultural and religious worldview of the society. What informants have to say substantiates available secondary

sources on the social, cultural and religious realities of the people. In what follows themes and patterns of the traditional Oromo marriage counseling is presented with particular emphasis on that of the Salale.

4.1.3.1 Pre-marriage counseling

Pre-marriage counseling includes training, educating, informing, and advising youngsters to prepare them for demand of life in general and marriage life in particular. In Salale Oromo culture there is no preset age of marriage. Particularly in old days, early marriage was common. Females can marry—make promise to marry—as early as five years of age if parents are interested in each other and need to build affiliation and family connection. Sometimes parents promise to give their daughter to somebody's son, even before the children are born, a tradition known as *garatti waal qabachuu*, i.e., married in womb. In the present day, because of the country's law, early marriage is not common. In most cases, age of marriage practically is above 18 (Informants 1,2).

Informants 3 &6 also explained that previously there is no predetermined age of marriage in their customary law. Nowadays it is determined. Based on the country's legislation, customary laws were also revised. Marriage, almost in all cases, is based on the will and interest of the parties. Informants 4 &7 stated that "Age of marriage according to the legislation of the country is above 18. Sometimes there are cases where marriage is concluded between 15 and 18. Such is the case when the boy and the girl are in love relationship and urge their parent to conclude marriage. We, as community elder, advise them to stay by engagement until 18, informants said to the researcher. If they do not agree, marriage is concluded in fear of the consequences like pregnancy.

Pre-marriage counseling starts with educating children feminine and masculine roles at early age. As they grow up, and approach to marriage, advice, close follow up and education become more intense and specific.

i) Goal and agents of pre-marriage counseling

The goal of pre-marriage counseling is not merely advising and counseling. It includes: teaching children feminine and masculine roles at early ages, ritual activities, socialization and family life. Once engaged, they are resorted to specific issues which they are going to experience in their married life in the near future.

Agents of the orientations and counseling are parents, close kinships, peers and elders of the clan, traditional religious / ritual leaders. Informants and leaders of modern religions in the area, e.g., Orthodox Church, told the researcher that people less often or in no time come to Church for counseling services' related to marriage than purely for religious purposes (Informants 3, 12, & 18). From what is generally observable in this socio-cultural milieu, traditional community leaders and religious or ritual performers are more frequently consulted for such serious cases as marriage and other social affairs believed to have some direct bearings on the societal common good.

Boys acquire the service from males: father, male elders, and age mates. Whereas, girls get it from females: mother, female elders, and peers (Informants 1,2,3,5,&7). There are also opportunities where they obtain the same service from both sex even though it is not common (Informants 2,&6).

ii) Contents of pre-marriage counseling

a) Pre-marriage counseling for girls

In pre-marriage education, the girl is trained and skilled in every possible aspect of life to be a full woman, motherly. The major contents are productive and non-productive chores: preparing food, home management and self-care, bearing and rearing children, social activities and responsibilities, cultivating, hoeing, weeding, harvesting, threshing and winnowing, and sexual life (Informants 1,3,6,&7). As she approaches to marry, she learns and practices being and becoming good wife to her husband, good mother to her children, and good mix to the society. She goes through various initiation ceremonies and passage rites to experience womanhood and exercise responsibilities (Informants 6&7).

To practice such activities there are no such planned and scheduled time and place. Every time is learning time. Young girls learn by observing their mother, elder sisters and any woman said to be knowledgeable in the nearby. Then they start participating and getting involved to learn deeply and prove their performance. There are also ritual ceremonies on which elders teach and advise young girls. To mention one: on one ritual ceremony called *Ateetee*, female divinity rite, young girls are told to *look outside*, that is to show that she is going to marry, and that this is not her lasting residence and she belongs to other family which is not yet known. Thus, she is expected to act accordingly so that she can get a nice husband, which is her permanent life mate (Informant 1).

Moreover, on the ceremony, she is given blessings, i.e., *ebba*, words of good will, success in all endeavours, and long and prosperous life:

bidden furdaan siif ha bahu
abidda furdaadhaan si ha gahu
qalbii si ha gudisu
jiraadhu, jireenya argadhu.

have Life and have it in abundance
be your Fire light to the endless
your Mind open always
live long life, prosper

The blessings have a long-lasting message for the unmarried girls. It serves as a golden rule to be alert in all her life and it has some motivating power to achieve a successful life. Blessing informs young girls and boys that marriage is important and imperative for propagation and to be more productive and socially responsible 'Somebody' in the respective society. Besides it prepare the girl psychologically for future marriage life (Informants 5&7).

Mothers and old females focus on training girl for productive and non-productive house chores: food preparation, home management, sewing and knitting, basketry, etc. While peers and elder sisters advise, direct and counsel on sexual issues, and relationship with

in-laws, best men are responsible to help adapt to the new environment after marriage (Informants 7&8). Informant 8 says, her elder sister advised her about relationship with boyfriend (*wadajii*), and not to have sex before marriage. Another informant (9) explains that what her mother told her about sexual issues and relationships was limited. It was from her friends that she learnt more. With age-mates, married or unmarried, she added, she discussed and shared information regarding sexual life without fear. Especially, married friends informed her from their own practical experience.

An engaged girl requires her much to be happy in her marriage; respecting her husband is one such crucial issue for her to abide by. According to this informant (9) girls are informed the importance of respecting and caring for husband. *Dhirsii ofii kafana ofiiti, namni kafana malee hinmiidhagu*, she told the researcher. That is to mean, **a husband is one's attire; without husband, one is nude.**

In relation to respect, tolerance and patience are taught as key elements of the Golden Rules in such a serious human relationship as marriage. Informant 1 explains girls are advised to tolerate problems whatever in their relation with husband and in-laws. Otherwise, minor difference and disagreements can lead to serious conflict, which affects a healthy relationship, even leads to divorce. Such traditional counseling activities as advising, orienting or teaching are not in such a planned fashion as in modern counseling. Rather it is through presenting oral narrative stories, proverbs, parables and fables, to which children are exposed from early age to that fireside schooling.

Above all, oral culture makes the young people more keenly observant, more sensitively and sensibly responsive towards themselves, fellow human beings and the environment.

One informant further goes to say,

If we simply tell our girls what to do, it may not satisfy them. For example, if I advise my young girl to tolerate, she can't know to what extent she is expected to tolerate. So to avoid confusions we present our personal experience in an oral narrative form (informant 6).

b) Pre-marriage counseling for boys

At all age-grades from the *gaammee* through the *dabbllee* and *foollee* to the adult age, an individual lives up to certain parental and societal expectations. To fulfill or fail to fulfill those expectations depends on the individual person's exposure to every kind of training, advice and orientation and/or counseling.

Like girls, boys are also prepared for life from all perspectives to be a full man. Starting as early as possible, both training and responsibility step up. As already discussed, the young child learns his extended family history and history of his society, names of neighboring communities and relations with them, geography of the region, breeding cattle and caring, nature of soils and seasons, and moral/social skills.

At early age, boys take up task considered as men's role in the community: herding cattle, farming, harvesting, making fences and kraals, burns and plows. A young boy assists his father through all that staff and build up his basic life skills. Besides, it is on such practical occasions, like in the farm field, where the father teaches to and counsels his son about every demand of life, merits of a strong farmer, and good personality (Informant 4&5).

In line with boy's training, one informant says that before marriage, what boys learn is practical aspects of life skill. They see and observe what it requires to be a good father, a responsible and successful husband. Values and norms, characters of being husband and father and socializing with new family are trainings almost part of the young boy's everyday life.

Another informant stresses on mate selection. Advising young boys not to focus only on physical appearance rather on other qualities is paramount. According to this informant, the view that the researcher has come to share, it is behavior and/or temperament that governs human appearance, and less often the other way around. To live in harmony with *Uumaa* and *Uumama* (*God and nature*) what matter most are social and moral skills,

respecting Waaqa and elders, respecting each other and, most of all, hard working (Informant 1).

One informant strongly believes that emphasis should be on teaching the boys to be self-dependent, self-sufficient and to exercise sense of responsibility: *Qabeenyi warraa, lagaa si hinceesisu. Qalbii godhadhu, kashilabuummaan namaa gad si godha* (informant 5). That is, relying on parent's wealth does not make one wealthy. It is rather the great effort that one makes at own young age that makes wealth. This comes through a due care, close follow-up, and serious counseling starting from young age. Initiating young boys to have own property is highly emphasized in pre-marriage counseling. One boy said, *qeerrummaan gudunfaa godhachuu baannaan, niitii maal fuuta? Atuu niitiidhaa!* The way he put caught the researcher with a surprise: if one does not make wealth when one is still a bachelor, how come one thinks of marriage, he is a wife himself, literally, dependent himself?

Boys (and girls less often) are encouraged to work hard and possess property starting from their early age. They rear chicken, then sheep or goat and sell those to have a heifer or a bullock at their age of a bachelor called *qeerroo*.

This is the case in such a patriarchal society where men are the sole source of income to the family. If the husband fails to cover the expense of home for no good reason, this can lead to marital conflicts and even divorce as a final resort. Therefore, the above informant's observation increases the researcher's knowledge about having own property and the social meaning of self-dependence.

Boys give testimony valuing the pre-marriage advice and information they get from elders. One boy-informant states,

I respect and use advice of my father and other community elders. It is useful. They tell us what they learned from their elders previously and what they know from their own life experience. It is good for us as young to be informed before we get immersed blankly in a new life (Informant 10).

The same informant summarizes the advice and counseling he acquires from his father and community elders as saying:

My father says to me one proverb: **haadha ilaalii, intala fuudhi**. That is, while mate selection, focus should be equally on the mother: her manner, her words and deeds, what she values and chooses, etc. My father also initiated me to have own property and to work hard. Once I get engaged, now he advises me not to listen to others gossip about my fiancée and to avoid such interference builds mutual trust between us. Lack of such a care erodes our mutual trust and love.

This informant assured the researcher that parental pre-marriage counseling and elders' orientation is valued most as having practical implications in a successful married life of the young person.

Another informant also explained that premarital counseling and education has helped him to be informed and build confidence in life. There is a collective rule in the community in every aspect of life including marriage. By the age of marriage, all have satisfactory information regarding the rules, dos and don'ts. This informant is confident that now he is ready both physically and psychologically to embark on a new life: he is well skilled in farming and, therefore, successful, and that now he can manage and head his home with abundance and peace. If something new happens in life, he said, he solves it with his wife through discussion. If the case is serious and they could not solve it, they present it to community elders. This informant has rightly observed that, in such a close follow-up and serious scrutiny, divorce is almost impossible or difficult without thorough deliberation and consideration (Informant 11).

While summing up pre-marriage counseling to the boy and the girl, it may be useful at this point to give a brief account of a conclusive remark on wedding day. Pre-marriage counseling continues up until the wedding day. On the wedding ceremony, community elders bless the couple and forward parental and communal expectations to the would-be husband and wife, and pray to *Waaqa* to help them in all adversities and endeavours in

marriage. The content of the blessing, *ebba*, is good will of the parents and relatives, and, in a way, promises the two need to make for peace and harmony and success in life:

walitti horaa, jalduuf qamuu ta'a
hidda dhiigee hincinne nu ha godhu
fira milkki nu ha godhu
deechee ishii maale deemtee ishii nu hindhageechisin
dhugaan tulluu, dharri sulula haa ta'u
saani asitti ya horu, mucayyoon achitti ya hortu
moortuun giddduudhaa ha baddu

propagate, bear prosper: one in breast one on the back
may Waaqa help us remain our blood mingle
may Waaqa help us succeed in all our endeavours
may news be of her deliver, prosper, not her failure
may Truth remain lofty as a Mount, and Lie, lowly as a rift
bear calves, rear children
may no evil befall you all!

4.1.3.2 In-marriage-post-marriage counseling: themes and patterns

In the last section of the thesis, it has been discussed that contents of the *traditional pre-marriage counseling* in the area vary from social and moral skills to psychological preparation for marriage. In what follows, implications of those premarital orientations and / or lack of them, traditional ways of resolving domestic conflicts / violences and coping mechanisms, and ways of keeping the marriage intact are presented.

i) Common causes of marital conflicts

In human relations, conflict is obvious to occur even though the degree differs. In Oromo tradition, there is the *safuu* moral and social divine order that makes check and balance to every human/natural and divine/supernatural entities including marital relations. Conflict can occur, however, to the extent that it shakes the base of the contractual agreement and bring home to demolish. What matters is its degree, intensity and regularity. Causes of marital conflicts are diverse and include: adultery, extramarital relationship, laziness,

jealousy, infertility, family interference, children, poor communication, lack of love and respect. Economic insecurity also can cause a major conflict.

There are various means of tackling such instabilities and maintaining married life. Oral culture of the society, as elsewhere presented in this chapter, is one binding force: e.g., Proverbs:

suunsumiifi eeleenuu walitti bu'a

nama ta'ee kan irraa hingorre, hindogogorree fi mukaa ta'ee kan hin aarre hinjiru

meaning,

even the pun and the pun-support can collide

to err is human, so much as fire burns wood smokes. A matter of fact!

Such words of wisdom support the above thoughts and suppositions that the tradition by itself is strongly restrictive than permissive. Hence, an *individual* autonomy is at its limit in such a *communal* society. Regular conflicts and violence on daily basis are abandoned and strictly criticized. Elders say *goojjoon aaraa, Waxabajjii ha gubattu*; meaning, *a home of quarrel better burn in June*—this month of June, there is no thatching grass.

ii) In-marriage counseling: goal and agents

Both females and males have roles in dealing with marital cases and conflicts. To give information, advice, and settle minor disputes, men and women elders have almost equal social responsibility to save marriage. However, when the case becomes serious and growing more and more divisive, the role of men and women mediators differs.

There are traditional institutions functional to resolve conflicts on the basis of *customary laws*. In some areas, among the Ittu and Humbanna (Arsi), for instance, the *siinqee institution* is still viable to protect women from male-caused domestic violence. In this case, all women in the near-by protest against the husband and run out on a strike for successive days to echo the voice of the woman said to be harassed (Hussen,2007). Among the Salale in the area of the research, *siinqee* is not functional. Informants have very related experience about the role of men and women in offering *in-marriage counseling* in the area.

Men elders give help both counseling and solving the problem based on customary laws. Whereas women prepare, inform and advise the wife counselee to conform to elders' advice and to live by *seera biyyaa*, i.e., the *customary laws*, to know her rights and responsibilities, but not to take action in a haste, such as break the marriage (Informants 2,5,6&7). Informants 1,&6 have the view that elder females have great contribution working as consultants for male elders while mediating the marital conflict.

. There are women more enlightened than men counterparts, assertive and well informed about the customary laws and can assume every role of the community elder. One informant confirmed saying, nowadays 'the government is facilitating females' involvement and it seems fruitful (Informants 4,&6).

iii) Patterns of in-marriage counseling

Among the Salale Oromo, *in-marriage counseling* has two patterns:

Pattern I: the couple are not in conflict but either one of them or both have confusion, adjustment problems, need information or clarification, experience stress or any problem which they think need consulting others.

Pattern II: the couple have disagreements or quarrel and not able to come to terms and solve problems themselves. Such is the case when the wife leaves her home and flee because of persistent disagreement, or when she is in her home even though they have frequent disputes and growing conflicts.

Counseling Pattern I

Whatever the case, in need of help the couple are firstly resorted to seek advise and help of husband's family. Informants unanimously agree that husband's parents help the couple in every aspect; show them direction until they get accustomed to the new life (Informants 1,3, &7) whenever the couples are in need. One informant (6) states that the newly wed couple stay in the home of the husband's family for sometime (in most cases 2 to 6 moths). It is time for further training, close follow up and adapting the bride to the new environment and to best practices under the close supervision of the mother-in-law.

Constantans and agents of the bride in-marriage, according to this informant, include: the mother-in-law, wives of elder brothers, if any, relatives and the first best-man.

They help her how to overcome the stress and fear of new relationship and environment. It is common and expected after sometime that there can be disagreement between the bride and the mother in-law. Nevertheless, during the first days, the critical time, the mother in-law is source of information and help for the bride (Informants 2,7).

Other agents are involved in counseling depending on the type and intensity of the problem. If the help is needed for personal use, elders of the same sex are consulted in most cases. i.e., females usually consult their mother, aunts, age mates, and any practitioner in the nearby. Whereas males are resorted to male practitioners (Informants 3,4,6). However, if the service is needed for the partner, if one of the couple believes her/his partner requires counseling and advice, elders from opposite sex are also consulted. This is because there is an expectation in the community that females themselves can best handle females' problems and males get suitable help from male elders (informants 1,7). Consulting elders from opposite sex also works and is not overlooked.

According to the informants, *themes of in-marriage counseling* to resolve the case as in *pattern 1* differ. Nevertheless, whatever the case, since it is to maintain marital relationship, elders prefer defining the problem in a relationship context, not as personal problem attributed to one partner (Informants 1,3,7,12). For example, in spite of the type of the problem at hand, traditional counselors give the following:

wal mari'adhaa jiraadhaa. Waan mana keessan diigu wal duuba hingodhinaa. Garaa wal hinhanqatinaa. Marii dhabuun goojjoo jigsa. Goojjoo jiksuun immo ijoollee offi bittinnessuudha. Isin kana booda ofii qofa miti kan jiraattan. ijoollee keessaniifisi. Ijoollee kana bakkan gahuutu isinirra jira. Ofiifis, isiniifis, biyyaafis akka ta'an. Yoo kana hintanee garuu, ijoolleen kashlabbee taati, hattuu taati, biyyatti ba'aa taati jechuudha.

Discuss, confer and settle differences. Do not do things that break your marriage and your family. Once you break, your children disperse. They become a liability instead of being an asset. Care for them, help them to become Somebody. Note that they succeed in life and achieve some goal if you live at peace and in harmony. Tolerate. Endure. Learn to live for your children. You are not rivals. You are Husband and Wife, Father and Mother.

Here elders emphasize on matters that are domestic and communal, social and moral, and of some significance to the couple, the children, and the society at large. Issue of child rearing and living for children by subordinating personal affairs is also emphasized.

Counseling Pattern II

When a marital problem is serious and the couple and the family cannot resolve, it is common for the wife to flee her home. She may decide it herself when she can't bear the problem. According to the informants, she most often resorts to run away when she thinks she has exhausted every possible option in her reach and sometimes to save her live in the case of physical abuses. She does not go away permanently. It is one means for the woman to protest and to present her problem before elders any concerned body that her marital problem needs attention and help of others, including community elders and/or traditional counselors. Once she left home, the husband negotiates and consults elders to interfere. His intention is to get counseling service as to how to maintain peace and get the conflict resolved (Informants 1,2,6,7)

Sessions and processes

The steps and process of counseling according to informants is summarized as follows.

Sessions 1: Husband consults the traditional counselor

When the man in need of help goes to traditional counselor, the traditional counselor welcomes the person with greeting and good gesture of solidarity. The counselor asks almost about everything general and particular: children, cattle, neighbour, harvest, grass, water, etc. With these words of good will and *nagaa / solidarity*, and after coffee is served or something to bite, the counselor gradually gives the guest a signal to present purpose of his visit. The counselee uses this as an opportunity to present freely and

clearly causes of the problem before the counselor since he may have some confusion where to start. The counselor stays silent on active listening. After some deliberation, the counselor paraphrases the problem to make sure whether the perceived and the real problem presented by the client match. Before departing, the counselor sets a schedule for the second meeting after the counselor contacts the wife of the client.

Sessions 2: Traditional counselor contacts the wife

The traditional counselor speaks to the client's wife at her temporary residence, in most cases her parent's home. To break the ice, talks vary from issues of social or communal to personal wellbeing. Through the converse, the counselor gives her some clue of the basic agenda so that she begins presenting the problem. Her mother or other person, which she supposes as helpful, can attend the discussion and help her in straightening the narration to keep the matter on the right track. Informants agree that such is the case when the woman is young and less experienced of discussing freely with the counselor.

The counselor does not delve into the crux of the matter from the outset; he stays on active listening. Once she is done, the problem clearly presented removing the chaff, the counselor asks the woman what she plans, i.e. what the solution could be in her view. The counselor reflects on what she proposes as a working solution. If what she forwards seems useful and fair, the counselor builds on it and guarantees her to discuss with her husband, tell her to cool down and investigate her own contribution into the conflict, etc. Traditional counselors use different techniques to care for client's feelings and moral. Some present similar, and even, serious cases from their experience, tell stories, say parables and proverbs. Proverbs like,

nama ta'ee kan hingorre hindoggorre, muka ta'ee kan hinaaree hinjiru

to err is human, so much as fire burns wood smokes. A matter of fact!

is a common proverb relevant to settling disputes. This is to stress that it is not to make mistakes in life but to learn from one's mistake and take some corrective measures. At last, a schedule is set for a conjoint session.

Sessions 3: Counselor—husband second-round meeting

This session is the final session where the traditional counselor pins down and clearly defines the problem based on the previous sessions. The counselor discusses with the husband on issues which he deems relevant: what the wife's complaints are, roots of the problem, what she expects to see improved from the husband's side etc. The discussion is concluded by informing the husband the appointment time and place decided by the counselor and the man's wife. The husband is informed the final schedule set for the tripartite discussion.

Sessions four: The traditional counselor and the counsees' conjoint talks

The counselor opens the by presenting similar cases or by telling stories before he comes to the case at hand. Informants say that this is done to soften the hearts of the clients and to give them chance to reflect forgiveness. It is deliberately to inform the clients how marriage life is demanding, that relationship always needs sacrifices and subordinating personal need to the common good. Clients actively but diligently involve in the discussion while listening, giving ideas and information when needed. Informants say that traditional marriage counseling is future-oriented. That is, discussion focuses on what should be done in the future than what happened to the relation, or to the humans committed to the relation. The traditional counselor uses strategy different from the modern counseling. Traditional marriage counseling involves not only advising, informing, etc, but warning and cautioning—*gorsaatis lolaatis*—and levying social and moral obligations on the clients to abide by the *safuu biyyaa*, i.e., norms and conventions. Finally, the session is concluded by the clients forgiveness undertaking some solemn *wadaa* or vows and promises not to violate *nagaa* and to live in harmony.

Sessions 5: Follow up

In traditional counseling, follow up has equal weight and importance at every step. Where there is no a close follow up, the counselee comment the traditional counselor as saying,

Maal taatanillee nuun hinjenne, achumaan callise, maalif hafee laata?

He hasn't turned around and checked if are on the right course. But, why not?

The follow up is in an informal fashion: the clients may invite the traditional counselor to their home, merely to show him their respect that if it were not for his support, they would be no more. This, no doubt, gives chance to the counselor to observe the client's present condition. Here, follow up is not necessarily by schedule and appointment for additional sessions like in the modern counseling. The counselor can elicit from the client whether or not there are improvements, if no, to take some remedial actions. Wherever the traditional counselor meets the client at a marketplace, on the *daboo* cooperative work, on religious ceremonies and other social gatherings such as weddings, funeral ceremonies etc, he/she asks the client if there is improvement or not. Based on the information gained from the client, the counselor decides if something should be done by way of taking some remedial action.

One case presented by informant 3 is summarized as follows:

The wife does not have respect for her husband and for the in-laws, and spends most her time chatting and drinking coffee with fellow-women in the neighbors. The couple severely quarreled. After a thorough counseling and advising sessions, the counselor asked the husband about the progress and found that the problem still exists. Another time, the counselor met the wife, to treat again the problem indirectly, without telling her that he talked to the husband. The counselor presented facts, stories and related experiences relevant to correcting such persistent behaviours as hers. The mother-in-law should be treated like a biological mother. Otherwise, it will be *daabaa*, sin, passed on to her own son that she might be treated likewise by her son's wife. Or the same *daabaa* will go on to her daughter.

There is this common belief that all the wrongs done by parents are inherited by the offspring. The *safuu* concept of distancing oneself from breaking the rules and moral codes set by the society is a strong binding force.

Success or failure of traditional marriage counselor depends on the counseling experience of the counselor. There are some expected qualities of a traditional counselor informants proposed.

iv) *Qualities of a good traditional counselor*

1. Respect

In the eyes of the community, elders are highly respected. Every person is welcomed and given opportunity for counseling irrespective of the kind of the problem. Individual difference is acknowledged so long as it is not against group right, culture and moral or social wellbeing of others. To illustrate this there are sayings like,

**akkuma bifa keenyaa keessi keenyas adduumaani,
our inner self, much like our outer self, is different**

**garaan haadhaa babaruudha
the same mother's womb is multi-colored**

This is to mean that differences are tolerable if they do not violate the set standards and deviate from the common factor, i.e., the shared value. The problem is evaluated, criticized, acknowledged or condemned based on the set rules and norms, the *safuu*. The counselor can give advice and sometimes can warn (*gorsaatis lolaatis*) where necessary.

2. Impartiality

While dealing with the problem the counselor gives equal chance and opportunity to the ^{counselees} counselors to present their problem and to choose what they deem important etc. A traditional counselor does not take part. Siding with either counselee is violating *safuu* and committing *cuubbu[xiurii namatti ta'a]*. It is considered as transgression against the will of *Waaqaa*. His effort is to offer help to keep peace at equilibrium between the couple, not to affect either of them. It is if and only if they strictly follow this same right track that *Waaqaa* recognize their effort and softens the hearts of the clients to abide the rule of customary law and forgive and forget to hold a grudge.

3. Present cases from personal life experience, be it success or failure, if relevant

4. Commitment and free service

The traditional counselor does not charge for services s/he offers. As community elders, counselors spend most of their time working as adviser, counselor, mediator and source of information. Elders are masters of the Indigenous Knowledge (IK) and sources of coping mechanisms during such hard times and in the faces of adversities. Elders have

every commitment that can vary from social to religious consultants. Informant 2 explained this as saying the clients payback in sticking to their promises and living up to their words, and that the priceless value is the peace and harmony at family level, village, and the community at large; *hoo ollan rafe rafan*, he went on to say, meaning, *where the neighbour is at peace, so you are*. The community elders have *waadaa*, i.e., a covenant, not to ask any fee in charge. Respecting *waadaa* is respecting God, violating it is disgraceful before God. Of their own accord, peoples help traditional counselors in farm in *daboo* cooperative work. There may be moderate invitations to acknowledge the public support.

5. Flexibility

Community leaders are ready for change; they are not change resistant. For example, *butii/buttaa* or abduction / forced marriage and marriage by *kallacha*, i.e., insisting on marrying by unfailingly forcing the parents under some religious enactments as carrying *kallacha*, a ceremonious staff not to be carried out casually in public is nowadays frowned at. It is widely accepted as violating females' human right, and commonly perceived as immoral, as against the rule of law. Elders do not cooperate in unlawful deeds though previously functional. This shows that tradition is not change resistant. .

4.1.3.3 Techniques of traditional marriage counseling

In traditional counseling, there are plenty of techniques employed to deal effectively with various marriage related cases. Even though it is impossible to list exhaustively and narrate them all, the researcher prefers to present the *techniques* setting them in their *purposes* and *themes* as follows.

i) To probe problems

An informant says a client coming for help prefers reporting partner's weakness, mistakes etc, rather than telling own faults and flaws. Apparently, the client may have fear, lack of confidence, etc to present the problem in cases associated with sexual relation, serious mistakes considered as *cubbuu*, sin, and violate the culture of the society. The traditional counselor firstly listens to the client, and later uses techniques, e.g., saying

proverbs, telling relevant stories, to encourage the client to tell the truth and to investigate further into the underlining problem (Informants 1,6).

- *Proverbs*

Namni dhukkuba isaa dhokse qoricha hin argatu

One hides he is sick, one gets no cure.

Du'a dhoksanii awwala eessaan dhaqan?

One hides death, where to take the dead, and the funeral?

The first proverb confirms that a person cannot get the right medication unless he/she tells his true history, i.e., relevant symptoms, and cooperate with the medicine-man/woman for a thorough diagnosis. In the same way the second proverb explains if a death of one person is kept secret, it is impossible to hide the funeral. Minor problems can be kept secret, what if they grow to conflict and divorce, which are not to remain secret, for how long? Therefore, such sayings and proverbs describe the importance of transparency in counseling. Besides if, a person keeps minor problems as secret to escape the feedback and judgments of the counselor and community, at last the problem will get complicated. It cannot be secret anymore and the loss will doubly hurt the partners and the family.

- *Presenting options*

Even though the client persists to keep the matter secret, there are possible problems presumed by the traditional counselor, and to one set of problems, this particular case may belong in the catalogue.

One such case is presented next (Informant 3):

The wife goes to the traditional counselor seeking help. She presents her problem as saying,

'I don't know what happen to my husband, he is not happy. Previously, he enjoys playing with our kids and me. We discuss everything and had good communication. Now he completely changed. He is silent. His responses are offensive and negative. We failed to communicate and discuss. What shall I do?'

And the dialogue goes on and on:

Counselor [C]: Have he nay quarrel either with you or with anyone?

Client [Cl.]: To my knowledge, no.

[C] Think hard and tell me if you have disappointed him or have done something wrong.

[Cl.]: Nothing on my part, I assure you. You better ask him personally

[C]: It may be minor. And he may perceive it as serious. *Funyaan yoo dhahan, ijatu booha*, The root of the problem may be somewhere. So think of it and tell me the root of the problem so that we can get solution in a short time.

[Cl.]: I don' think this is a serious problem. Last time he was complaining our scarce resources to make the living. He mentioned things like, I should stop giving birth, and, he added to my irritation that we go to the nearby Clinic in the morrow. I furiously rejected the idea. There is no any disagreement.

This time, the counselor can temporarily define the problem on the basis of the client's testimony and can further employ techniques, while collecting relevant and adequate data from either side, to plan and work on it accordingly.

ii) To evade further disagreement

There is this widely known philosophy among the elders and traditional counselors, namely, *sobanii araarsuu*, meaning, *to use falsity, no mere logic, to resolve conflicts*. On the surface, it looks like resolving problems using *false statements* as a technique. However, the exact meaning according to the informants is different. According the Informants traditional counselors themselves, [Informants 2,5,6,] the technique of *sobaanii ararsuu* is used when one partner commits a grave mistake but makes a covenant, *waadaa*, not to repeat. Dealing with the problem time and again avails not; so, the other side is advised not to hold a resentment, and to *dhiisuu*, i.e., to forget and forgive. Dealing with the problem any more spoils the relation and the attempt to pacify.

Secondly, if clients attribute the problem to either side, the counselors prefer dealing with the underlying problem centering the couple. Solution for the problem is discussed closed, with the person who committed it, usually after the case is over. It would be adding an insult to wound dealing the matter anymore with the partner said to be hurt.

Let us observe the case to follow (Informant 6)

children and, at large, the community to subordinate own interest and preferences (Informants 4,5,6).

Decision should not be in hurry. There is this proverb that goes, *Jarjaraan jiruun hinjirtu*, meaning, *Haste makes waste*. One has to learn to wait, develop sense of perseverance, and prudence to make decisions in married life that affect others severely. Otherwise, the consequence could be regret, additional conflict, disagreement and loss (Informants 1,2).

Traditional counselors are well acquainted with nature of decision and decision-making procedures, much the same way as modern *legal procedures*. Therefore, they have their own strategies to treat clients in case of problems associated with decision-making. One such strategy is presenting options with their possible outcomes for clients who are confused, feel unsafe and unable to decide.

An Informant presents a case to follow (Informant 3):

The couple have marital conflict for a long time. Families, neighbors, and community elders have seen their case for various times. However, the root of the problem was always there, that is, there are stepchildren from the previous wife. The children do not respect the wife, now the stepmother. They quarrel most of the time. As a result, she decides to divorce because she found that the problem is unbearable. She flee home and asks community elders to process her divorce case. Now the husband consults a traditional counselor. He presents the problem as follows,

My wife left her home because of my children. She could not agree with them. I have asked her time and again to tolerate. She refused and decided to divorce. What shall I do? Would you advise her not to break the family?

The traditional counselor asks the client if their relationship is healthy and based on mutual trust. The client says, they do not have any problem. She is hard working, good at home management. They are doing well together. Reason of disagreement is that she could not tolerate the children.

The counselor observes the case and after a due deliberation says,

you are happy with your wife. So you do not want to lose her, on the one hand. On the other hand, your wife does not need to live with you because of the stepchildren. Here you need to look for options. Because you need both of them, you can not force her to bear the problem. Therefore, I present the following as alternative solutions: One, to solve your problem with her, you need to discuss with your parent and put your children with the grandparents. You fulfill their needs and demands whatever while you involve your wife to decide on financial issues. This is a practical solution for many individuals with such a problem like yours. Yours is not very special. Such is common. It is good for children too, to be with grandparents. Second option is, to accept your wife's decision (divorce) since the disagreement may lead to serious problems. This is not something you decide and practice here-and-now. Take time, exhaust the two options with her and with the children, where you think relevant, and finally tell me the result.

4.1.3.4 Divorce counseling

i) Community attitude towards divorce

The community of the study area has their own understanding and viewpoint regarding divorce. According to my informants, divorce is not an accepted and acknowledged practice unless causes are forcing to. Hence, couples exhaust every possible solution either themselves or by the help of others to save marriage from breaking. Tolerance and endurance are key precepts in the life philosophy of the people, not only in marriage. One Informant says, the Oromo believe that *opsaan aannan goromsaa dhuga*. This is to mean, *only a tolerant can drink a heifer's milk, i.e., better later than never*. It shows the positive outcomes of tolerance. This does not mean every problem should be tolerated. If it is thought it can have negative consequences, other means's are looked for, like divorce, in the case of marriage, as one last resort (Informants5, 7).

Still to another informant, (2),

there is no predestined rule regarding reasons which lead to divorce as a must. If the person is ready to show behavioral change and admit his fault, forgiving and agreement is preferred. However, if it continues, and do not show positive changes, as elders, we take care in handling the case. For example if the husband is drunker and beat his wife frequently, we do not enforce her to tolerate, rather we guide her to processes divorce to save her life, otherwise it may risk her life.

Others Informants add,

erga wajjin jiraachuun balaa qabatee, wal hiikuun akkuma araaraatti ilaalama. Hiikuunis dubbii hiika, araaruma.

That is, if it is apparent and evident that living together damages either partner or both, divorce is the right decision and considered as agreement. At least one has to agree to disagree. If the divorce case is processed in the right way, the couple see each other as brother and sister after divorce.

In the case of divorce, the couple seek advice and relevant information about customary laws, and other important issues from family, friends and community elders. However, the decision to divorce or not to divorce is that of the couple. The informants unanimously agree as saying, *bultii namaatti murteessuun cubbuu dha, daabas namatti ta'a* That is, no one can push the couple for divorce as the only alternative. To do so, it is cubbuu, sin, and sin-to-inherit to one's children. That inflicts God's wrath unto us (Informants 4,5,6,16).

ii) Steps in divorce counseling

Step 1: Counseling before divorce

Individuals consult the traditional counselor when they decide divorce to be a final resort. At first, the counselor asks the client why he/she thinks divorce to be one final option, if the case is new and not repeated. If the counselor already knows the case and had dealt with it previously, the discussion starts with the client's presentation of his/her plan.

According to the informants divorce should be the last choice after exhausting every possible solution: *Ni araarsina jenna malee, addaan hiikna hinjennu*, which means, *we deal with the case to create agreement and save the marriage, but not to break.*

Informant 5 says,

I advise not to decide quickly. I advise as saying, *lama bulaa, sadii bulaa, irratti ilaalaa.* Take time, think about the benefits and consequences of divorce, think about the fate of children etc. I use this as first step because individuals may decide emotionally rather

than reasonably looking at the problem, and before exhausting possible solutions. Sometimes individuals may decide to divorce just to harm a partner not because of the intensity of their problem. Through carefully handling such cases, I have saved many marriages from break. That is why I stress it even though the decision is basically of the clients.

Another informant (IV) states,

divorce has time: addaan bahuunis yeroo itti miidhagu qaba. Erguma soddaa argatanii, akaakayyuu ta'anitti namarraa hinbareedus, fayidaas hinqabu.

It shows the badness of divorce at old age. The community elder adds, bidden baakahe jedhanii dhiisuun, tokko afaan godhataniiti malee, nyaatani fixaniitii miti.

That is, one can say this food is stale at the first taste, not after one has eaten his fill. Such a judgment is not fair, not judicious, either. So much so, lived together for a long age, now grand parents, to say the partner is weak is itself deficient.

Step 2: On-divorce counseling

Once the couple decided to divorce, community elders continue advising. The issues stressed are: briefing what customary laws say about divorce, the worth of peaceful divorce, how to ask their right in peaceful way and ways of emotion regulation.

CII described the content of divorce counseling at this stage as follows:

Odoo baasi wal hinbaasisin, odoo jibbi hinbaayyatin, hoo deemtes hoo teechees isin obolahaa waliiti. Kanaafuu, waan wajjin xaarrattani horattan hirattaniitoo, nagahaa walitti dhiifattaniitoo, waaliigaltee godhachuutu isinirra eeggama. Yoo kana ta'e, jaarsi biyyaa dhirsaa nituummaa keesaan gara seera isinii barreessa.

The couples are advised to agree according to the customary law regarding their property, to forgive each other and promise to see each other as brother and sister. Not to hold a grudge and think of a revenge. If the couples agree, community elders will write a letter to the court stating that the couple have a serious case that the two persisted to resolve by divorce.

Step 3: Post-divorce counseling

After divorce the traditional counselor helps the divorcee for future adjustment, to overcome the emotional disturbances which result from divorce and, generally, in any aspect they taught the client need help (Informants 2,5,18).

In what follows, cases are presented to the researcher by divorcees and traditional counselors. The cases help to see areas of stress, strength and weakness of post-divorce counseling.

Case I. This client has divorced before two years. The reason of her divorce is that she is infertile. But she is a hardworking woman. She lived with her husband for ten years. Finally, her husband told her that he needs to have a child and need to marry another woman. And he divorced her. She presented the case as follows:

After divorce my feeling was so bad. I was almost mad. I lost my home and all. In addition, he abused my property. The community elders could not solve our case because he was not cooperative. They sent us to court. The case took long time and the justice did not prevail to my satisfaction. My mother died when I was a child, I did not have friends. I did not have any body around, except my father. Therefore, I was in problem. When he realized my condition, my father consulted one well-known community elder to advise me. It is after her advice and help I showed progress. She told me many facts from her relative experience, that being fertile is not by will or did, it is by 'Waaqaa'. She told me about fertile women who do not get chance of nurturing rearing their children; sometimes the mother die, sometimes the child. To think of parents who are disappointed by their children bad behavior. Therefore, God has plan for every thing. He knows why he did this. Finally, she told me that I could marry man who does not need children if I need to marry. She stressed on advising me not to loss my positive behaviors by staying in regret and sorrow.

Case II: The two have lived together for long time. They have seven children and grandchildren. After this long time of marital relation, they decided to divorce. The problem relates to sexual affair. The wife needs to quite it while the husband not. He narrates the cause of the conflict as follows:

My wife informed me that she does not want sex any more. She told me that our children said this to her. They warned her to stop giving birth and sex, because we are old enough. She decided accordingly. I was not consulted for the decision. I was against their decision but she refused. Then I started extramarital relationship. Now she became upset and

asked for divorce. The counselor tried to convince her to go to clinic and use contraceptives, if that is really case. She said, "I do not need to disappoint my children. Once he started such relation I need divorce and living with my children peacefully".

They did divorce, the Informants sadly says, after divorce, she was happy, but she was not. His family disappointed him. After divorce, he consulted community elders about his future. Community elder presented the post-divorce help offered to him as follows:

In rural area, it is difficult to stay single for a man. Remarriage is important. He also knows this. His fear was how the new wife could live with the children and previous wife in the compound. His fear was right. If the divorce was before their children marry and start independent living in the compound, after divorce, the wife, go to her parent, in most cases with children. However, this is not the case. After divorce, both husband and wife stay in the same compound but in separate house. If Y brings another woman there, she may not agree with the other family. Then I advised him to live his 'qehee' and arrange another place possibly in the nearby town and manage his property. It was difficult for him. He considered it as shame. Finally he accepted my idea and found it useful".

Case III: This woman has divorced because she was not happy with her husband. On the one hand, her husband has love for her. Before divorce, she frequently left her home because of the same problem. Her father and community leaders advised her many times not to live her home, worth of marriage life and related issue. She returned back just in fear of them, not to break 'saafu'. However, she could not bear the problem and finally asked for divorce. Community elders asked her why saying, your husband is hard working, he loves you, and his family accepted you, what is your problem? If you thought to have another better life ignoring his love, it will affect you. His love could be 'daaba' for you.

This time she decided to tell her problem to this Informant, a traditional counselor saying, *Midhaanuu yoo namatti mi'ahee nyaatanii, annimoo inni naaf hintaane*. Her problem relates to lack of sexual compatibility. The community elders did not accept her reason. It is not common and acceptable for women to complain sexual affairs. If the husband is happy, wife is expected to tolerate. Finally, the divorce is processed even though it is based on her will, no body except herself believed in the divorce as the only solution. Now she divorced for about four year. She lives alone with her eight years old son. Nobody helped her after divorce. Feeling humiliation, she leaved the area. She said,

“Every body including the community elders opposed me. But I decided and took the risk. If my mother were alive, she might understand me better, or she would not do me harm like others: *Gorsa miti, lolli hadha ofii nama fayyadaa*. Now I am not happy with my life. I feel lonely. Everybody considers me as prostitute. On holidays I feel bad. My friends advise me to marry. I have fear. I know, I can make it. My problem is the issue of my child. I do not want to expose him to a stepfather. I Know what my stepmother did to me. Sometimes I say, let me marry, soon I change my mind. I am confused.

From the three cases presented above, it is evident that pre-divorce and on-divorce counseling is highly emphasized and effectively offered for every counselee irrespective of their background. However, it is observable that post-divorce counseling is offered only for those clients who are not against the culture and norms of the society. Those who violate the *safuu* and the existing norm are viewed as deviant.

4.2 Interpretation of the findings

As presented in the first section of this chapter, the repertoire of the *themes* and *patterns* of traditional Oromo marriage counseling is carried in those traditions, sub-cultures, customary laws, ethical and social values, in short, the oral culture of the society. To collect those relevant data, which are of anthropological and literary nature, as elsewhere argued, necessitates a wider coverage in both scope and time. This section discusses those relevant data presented under the section of this chapter, following the logical steps a traditional marriage counselor would follow.

4.2.1 Pre-marriage counseling

The techniques and strategies traditional counselors put to practice are transmitted orally and practically to the succeeding generation, i.e., mother to daughter, father to son, under a close supervision. The goal and content of traditional pre-marriage counseling are similar with most of the findings of previous studies. The finding of the present study shows that the goal of Oromo pre-marriage counseling is not merely advising and counseling. It also involves teaching children feminine and masculine roles at early ages, ritual activities, socialization and family life. Once they become mature and engaged, they resort to specific issues which they are going to experience in married life in the near future. The orientation here according to Rutledge (1967) is to tradition of family life education than to marriage counseling. Everything from the wedding and honeymoon through love, sex, and children, relations with parental families, finances, religion, and attitudes toward divorce and remarriage are covered at the pre-marriage counseling stage.

According to the Oromo tradition, which is also the case to the Salale, boys learn about the fundamental unit of human society, namely, family. In pre-marriage education, girls learn no sex before marriage. Chastity, i.e. sexual cleanness or virginity is of a paramount importance to value the girl's moral and dispositional quality in the tradition. Lack of virginity, the informants unanimously maintain in the findings, has a very serious repercussion. It leads to a serious conflict resulting in physical violence, beating,

insulting, and immediate expulsion of the bride on that nuptial day. The girl is advised closely at this pre-marriage stage to stay virgin to avoid such a humiliation not to slur her name and the name of her parents.

The girl acquires feminine roles, how to live with her husband, parent-in-laws, and neighbors. The boy is initiated to have own property and be self-dependent and understands what a mature person can do as an individual and as a responsible member of the community. Likewise, according to the findings of the present study, the major contents for girls earlier orientation before marriage include: home management and self-care, bearing and rearing children, and matters related to sexual life. As she approaches to marry, she learns and practices being and becoming good wife to her husband, good mother to her children, and good mix to the society. She goes through various initiation ceremonies and passage rites.

Like girls, boys are prepared for life from all perspectives to be a full man. At early age, boys take up tasks considered as men's role in the community. A young boy assists his father through building basic life skills. Besides, it is on such practical occasions, like in the farm field, where the father teaches to and counsels his son about every demand of life, merits of a strong farmer, and good personality. In line with boy's training, mate-selection, self-dependence, self-sufficiency, and sense of social and moral responsibility are highly emphasized. In addition, respect, tolerance and perseverance are taught as key elements of the Golden Rules of a 'full-human' in such a serious human relationship as marriage for both boys and girls.

Agents of the orientations and counseling are parents, cloth kinships, peers and elders of the clan, traditional religious/ritual leaders. Boys acquire the service from males. Whereas, girls get it from females. There are also opportunities where they obtain the same service from both sex even though it is not common. The findings of the present study are compatible with Lemessa's (2007) who states that agents of pre-marriage education are family, close relatives, uncles, elders, and all members of the community.

To practice such activities at the pre-marital stage, there is no such planned and scheduled time and place. Every time is informally a learning time at this stage. Informants unanimously agree that oral culture and oral narratives offer a valuable / practical educational experience contributing to the total growth, development, and self-fulfillment of the person exposed to it. Proverbs, riddles, parables and fables impart to the child useful cognitive, affective and performative skills. Proverbs, for instance, are not merely said for the sake of it but that they are vehicles of the society's precepts through indirect instructions such as warning, cautioning, satire, advise, counsel, invective, encouragement, or any of the similar roles. The major aim of dependence on the oral culture is that the society needs the succeeding generation to maintain those standards that it cherishes and wishes to perpetuate. Proverbs and other oral verbal genres facilitate the achievement of that goal.

Informants believe that skills thus obtained through observation and indirect instruction enable the child to live a rewarding life and to be a useful member of the society. Above all, oral culture makes the young people more keenly observant, more sensitively and sensibly responsive towards themselves, fellow human beings and the environment.

In general, the findings showed that pre-marriage counseling is highly concerned with teaching, informing, training, and advising youngsters starting from early age to wedding day. On the wedding ceremony, community elders bless the couple and forward parental and communal expectations to the would-be husband and wife, and pray to *Waaqa* to help them in all adversities and endeavors in marriage. The content of the blessing, *ebba*, is good will of the parents and relatives, and, in a way, promises the two need to make for peace and harmony and success in life. Agents are all practitioners including, elder sisters and brothers, mother and father, grand parents, peers, uncles and the community at large.

save marriage. However, when the case becomes serious and growing more and more divisive, the role of men and women mediators differs.

Men elders give help both counseling and solving the problem based on customary laws. Whereas women prepare, inform and advise the wife counselee to conform to elders' advice and to live by *seera biyyaa*, i.e., the *customary laws*, to know her rights and responsibilities, but not to take action in haste, such as break the marriage. There is the view that elder females have great contribution working as consultants for male elders while mediating the marital conflict.

Female elders work as counselors while men work as both counselors and lawmakers and adjudicators or judges in resolving marital disputes. There are influential women elders who can make change in the community, actively participate in all aspects social and cultural life of the community. There are women more enlightened than men counterparts, assertive and well informed about the customary laws and can assume every role of the community elder. Nowadays the government is facilitating females' involvement and it seems fruitful.

c) Patterns of in-marriage counseling

Among the Salale Oromo, the data obtained show, *in-marriage counseling* has two patterns:

Pattern 1: the couple are not in conflict but either one of them or both have confusion, adjustment problems, need information or clarification, experience stress or any problem which they think need consulting others.

Pattern 2: the couple have disagreements or quarrel and not able to come to terms and solve problems themselves. Such is the case when the wife leaves her home and flees.

Whatever the case, since it is to maintain marital relationship, elders prefer defining the problem in a relationship context, not as personal problem attributed to one partner. Here

marriage from breaking. Tolerance and endurance are key precepts in the life philosophy of the Oromo people, not only in marriage. The Oromo believe that *opsaan aannan goromsaa dhuga*. This is to mean, *only a tolerant can drink a heifer's milk, i.e., better later than never*. It shows the positive outcomes of tolerance. This does not mean every problem should be tolerated. If it is thought it can have negative consequences, other means's are looked for, like divorce, in the case of marriage, as one last resort.

That is, if it is apparent and evident that living together damages either partner or both, divorce is the right decision and considered as agreement. At least one has to agree to disagree. If the divorce case is processed in the right way, the couple sees each other as brother and sister after divorce.

In the case of divorce, the couple seeks advice and relevant information about customary laws, and other important issues from family, friends and community elders. However, the decision to divorce or not to divorce is that of the couple. The informants unanimously agree as saying, *bultii namaatti murteessuun cubbuu dha, daabas namatti ta'a*. That is, no one can push the couple for divorce as the only alternative. To do so, it is *cubbuu, daaba, sin, and sin-to-inherit* to one's children.

4.2.3.2 Steps in divorce counseling

Step 1. When individuals consult traditional counselors regarding divorce, first, the counselor informs the counselee to exhaust every possible solution, not to decide quickly. *Lama bulaa, sadii bulaa, irratti ilaalaa*-take time, think about the benefit and consequences of divorce. Fisher (ibid) strengthens the present finding that time and timing play an important role in the divorce process, in the process of divorce counseling. At this stage, if the clients are at old age they are informed the negative consequences of divorce at old age. Proverbs that imply the following message are provided for the counselee. So much so, lived together for a long age, now a grand parent, to say the partner is weak is itself deficient. This stage is similar with what Fisher labels as *pre-divorce counseling*.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

5.1. Summary

In sum, in this study, themes and patterns of traditional Oromo marriage counseling is examined set inside the socio-cultural milieu of the society. An attempt has been made to discuss the data in line with the underlying ethical and social codes issued to be enacted and modified by the community and tribal elders, religious leaders and counselors and abided by the whole community. It has been observed that the major aim of counseling is to sustain morality and humanity through ensuring peace and harmony in the society starting at family level. And prolong marriage relation as a strong social institution.

For the purpose of scrutinizing closely the sociological and psychological nature of the traditional counseling practice, the discussion is set back into the research milieu, within the socio-cultural context, in order that the researcher can best understand the *themes* and *patterns* of the practice. That has been done to commensurate the indigenous counseling *techniques* and *procedures* with those western theoretical considerations and the related studies reviewed in Chapter II.

The findings presented and interpreted in Chapter IV have been collected involving counselors, counselees, tribal and religious leaders and well informed community elders through interviews and discussions as discussed in Chapter III. The findings interpreted in Chapter IV have showed that the *patterns* and *themes* of traditional Oromo marriage counseling practices are put into the *pre-* and *in/post-marriage counseling* and *divorce counseling* much the same way as the *modern marriage counseling*. The study has also proved that traditional Oromo marriage counseling practiced in the area is *inclusive* and that the practice is of some social and psychological nature. That is, the social and personal disorders are treated with a great care with some socio-psychological orientation, as it were. The counselor diagnoses and treats disorders within the context of marriage, involving couples and family systems, as well as assists clients in achieving more adequate, satisfying and productive marriage, family, and social adjustment through a close follow up much like the modern counselor.

This shows that traditional Oromo marriage counseling is sociologically oriented in that both the counselor and the counselee are committed to each other to work under the existing codes of the ethical and social norms. Hence, they are morally and socially obliged to this *common factor* to work towards enhancing healthy relationship within the family and ensuing peace and harmony within the society, at large. The practice is psychologically oriented in that the counselor emphasizes on preparing the individual emotionally for the counseling and that success or failure to tackle the problem depends on the free will and cooperation of the counselee. Hence, the practice tends towards *inclusive*.

5.2. Conclusion

In this study, an attempt has been made to discuss traditional Oromo marriage counseling with specific reference to the Salale Oromo. Chapter I of the study has posed research questions related to the techniques and nature of traditional counseling practice: who is involved in the processes, how and when, what are practiced, and to whom, to prepare the individual(s) for the lifelong contract. Chapter I also has set the traditional and socio-cultural background of the study wherein the traditional counseling practice is still viable.

The *themes* and *patterns* of traditional Oromo marriage counseling is interpreted in line with the underlying ethical and social codes issued, enacted and modified by the community and tribal elders, religious leaders and counselors and abided by the whole community. It has been observed that the major aim of counseling is to sustain *morality* and *humanity* through ensuring peace and harmony in the society starting at family level, and prolonging marriage relation as a strong social institution.

Generally, it is fair to say that Oromo marriage counseling is inclusive and suit for practical use in the community and could be integrated with the modern counseling thoughts for better outcomes. Oromo marriage counseling is future oriented and it reflects the development view of the society; in that it is more communal than individual in its best orientation. Hence, there are times where individual rights are violated to sustain the communal and group common good.

Finally, this study is helpful for counselors and practitioners to integrate the indigenous counseling practices with the modern ones. Using indigenous knowledge will provide opportunity for the counselor to deal with cases based on practical problems.

5.3. Implications/Suggestions

Based on the above conclusion, the following suggestions and implications are forwarded:

Firstly, traditional Oromo marriage counseling is characterized by *eclecticism*, *inclusiveness* and *future-orientation*. These features enhance not only the relationship between husband and wife, but also their relationship with children, neighbors, and the community at large. Those techniques, which are unique and effective, can better be suited in other models of counseling for better outcomes. The researcher confidently suggests this because modern counseling models are not judicious to take into consideration cultural and traditional practices. The researcher strongly believes that both the traditional and the modern counseling could be more effective if the two work hand-in-hand cooperatively than competitively. It is possible to see one example here. In modern sense, advising is not considered as part of counseling. In practice, however, it is common for counselors to advise. In a country where the modern counseling is a new phenomenon, it is difficult to apply counseling as it is. Therefore, it will be more effective if the ingenious techniques of counseling like the Oromo *gorsaatis lolatiis—warning and cautioning*—are incorporated.

Secondly, as described else where in the present study, traditional counselors offer the service based on customary laws referring to the existing moral and social codes. There are cases where the individual is mistreated, misguided because of lack of adequate information and orientation from the counselor. Hence, concerned bodies, NGO's, family related and health related institutions like Family Planning, higher (research) institutions, have moral and social obligations to give short term trainings and closely follow up the traditional counselors for efficacy and to work in line with the existing legislation, family planning, females and individual rights, and children's rights..

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Appendices

Appendix A

Informants

	Community elders		Betrothed youth		Married person		Divorced person		Total
	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	
Alidoro		2	1		1		1		5
Lemman	1	2		1		1	1	1	7
Ganda	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	7
Shano									
Total	2	5	2	2	2	2	2	2	19

Table 3:1. Informants Distribution by sex, and kebele

Informant	Age	Sex	Number of children	Year of marriage life	
1	83	male	10	45	
2	65	male	3	30	
3	71	male	7	50	
4	62	male	-	43	
5	62	male	3	15	
6	60	female	6	43	
7	60	female	8	44	

interview questions provide the guidelines to investigate the nature, and traditional Oromo marriage counseling.

Community Elders

Pre-marital counseling

1. What kinds of activities are practiced by the community to prepare young boys and girls for marriage life?
2. Have these methods been helpful in your view?

In-marriage counseling

1. As an elder of the community, do you have experiences of dealing with marital problems and conflicts?
 - What are the major causes of marital conflict in this area?
 - From the two parties (husband and wife) who come to you for help in most cases?
2. Can you describe any incidence where marital disagreement is resolved by your effort?
 - Can you tell me in detail two stories/practices that have been top success and top failures?

Divorce counseling

1. What are the major causes of divorce in this area?
2. Can you describe any incidence where elders including you handle divorce case?
 - Who decides on divorce, what is the role of elders?

betrothed youths

do your parents prepare you for marriage life?

- Is there special ceremonies or activities practiced by family, kinship ...
- What are the main issues discussed?
- Do you think the service is useful for your future marriage life?

For persons in marriage life who have marital conflict some time their life.

Have you experience of conflict or disagreement at time in marriage life with
your partner?

What was the cause?

- Have you solved it by yourselves or asked others for help?
- Whom did you ask for help? How did they handle your case?
- Have they helped you to solve your problems at your will or did they consider feeling of your partner too?
- Do they respect your opinions, feelings, thoughts, and emotions?

- Are you happy with their help?

IV. For Divorced persons

1. What forced you to decide and divorce? Is it you or others who decided?
2. Who handled your divorce case (Dissolution of marital relationship)?
 - Can you describe what happened from the start to the end of the divorce process?
 - Are you happy with the help of elders and others who involved in the process?
3. After divorce, have you received any help from elders, family, etc to overcome the pain and humiliation of divorce?

Declaration

I, undersigned declare that this work is my original work and all materials used are fully acknowledged.

Name: Tigist Mereda

Signature: 