

**PREPARATION FOR IMMIGRATION -
A PSYCHOLOGICAL EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

by

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SUMMARY

The phenomenon of migration has given rise to prolific research emphasising the psychological adaptation of persons post-immigration. This study focuses on psychological preparation pre-immigration.

Literature study and empirical research establish that an immigrant's adaptation is influenced by migration motivation and expectations. Several phases of adaptation occur, during which time individual stress is influenced by one's perception of the balance between the stresses of the new environment and one's personal and external resources. Various migration stressors could be identified in the sample group of South Africans living in Australia.

Personal and external resources include effective coping strategies, a positive, committed outlook, strong self-esteem as well as a cohesive family and an acquired support system.

Finally, guidelines were produced reflecting that the preparation for immigration is a complex and highly individualised task comprised of providing information, encouraging self-assessment and supplying training to improve the coping strategies of the individual.

Key Terms: coping strategies, immigration, immigration adaptation, migration stress, migration motivation, psychological preparation for immigration, stress inoculation, South Africans in Australia.



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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 BACKGROUND

Even the most cursory examination of the history of man will reveal that the restless movement of peoples from one country to another in search of a better life is commonplace. Some movements are precipitated on a large scale by catastrophic events such as political unrest, famine or religious persecution, some movements are of a more intimate nature - individuals or families deciding, for vastly differing reasons, to leave behind all that is loved and familiar to pursue the dream of a better life. Migration can be defined as the temporary or permanent movement from one's country of origin to live in another country. Migration, which is forced upon individuals by factors outside their control such as war, political upheaval or famine, can be seen as involuntary and giving rise to the term 'refugees'. Voluntary migration implies that the migrant makes an 'unforced' choice to relocate to a foreign country, usually to improve life-style or prospects. They are generally referred to as 'immigrants'.

In South Africa immigration has become a controversial and emotional issue. Some media refer to the increasing numbers of immigrants leaving this country as the 'diaspora', reflecting the belief that official statistics do not truly show the magnitude of the situation. It has even been argued that discrepancies with regard to one million white South Africans in the Census of 1996 could be ascribed to increased unofficial emigration, (<http://southafricanemigration.com>). Therefore, in some sections of the South African society, very few people have remained untouched by the phenomenon.

The concept of migration, its economic, political and social implications has been widely and exhaustively studied for several decades, as has the individual experiences of immigrants and refugees. It has, therefore, become possible to generalise with regard to certain elements of the migration experience.

Researchers generally agree that immigration is an extremely stressful process, that it is made up of certain stages or phases and that the migrants' initial motivation and expectations play an important role in their coping and adaptation later on. Many countries have devised 'immigration policies' in order to firstly limit and select potential migrants, and secondly to facilitate their integration into the host country. Therefore, practical and psychological support is often offered to migrant families only once they have relocated, at this point no comprehensive programme or set of guidelines for the psychological preparation of migration has been located.

Existing literature describes the psychological effects of migration and then focuses on post-migration support, with the exception of some practical guidelines developed for the use of business executives and their families whilst on temporary postings abroad, a good example is 'Surviving overseas: The wife's guide to successful living abroad', (Pascoe, 1992).

1.2 AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEM

Over the past decades increasing numbers of friends and acquaintances have left South Africa for many different reasons. Some leave, resolved to emigrate permanently, only to return after a period of time. Some planned to spend only a specific period of time overseas and yet after a while they make a decision never to return. Most of these people are well educated, informed and motivated and are therefore able to deal with the practical problems of relocation. The formidable list of practical arrangements include selling houses and cars, arranging visas, transferring bank accounts and insurances, finding new schools and homes.

Many, however, seem *psychologically* unprepared for what awaits for them, and upon arrival flounder around looking for coping strategies to enable them to function. Through the magic of e-mail, which gives an immediate and ongoing record of events and feelings, it seems that these very strategies can become the problem, for example dealing with feelings of loss and grief by denial may lead to further problems.

That migration is a psychologically taxing and difficult process is borne out by researchers such as Hulewat, (1996:129) who describes it as '*a cultural and psychological crisis*'. In a study of South African immigrants to New Zealand Bennett, Rigby and Boshoff, (1997:160) point out that the social, economic and psychological costs may be higher than expected for these immigrants. Levenbach and Lewak, (1995:381) in an article entitled "Immigration: Going home or going to pieces" refer to migration as a major stressful event and point out that depression, mourning or rage is to be expected. Popular magazines such as the widely read "Huisgenoot", (20 July 2000) devote articles describing the sorrow of families torn apart as children or brothers and sisters leave for Vancouver or Perth.

The physical act of immigration to a foreign country is a truly Herculean task involving months of work dealing with bureaucratic, administrative and practical problems which keep the family occupied for months before and after the relocation thus sidelining the obvious emotional trauma involved. Sluzki, (1979: 384) points out that the actual act of migration is often a period of '*heightened task-oriented efficiency*', and that the first priority of the family is sheer survival, but that this period of calm and '*overcompensation*' gives way to an era of major crisis. It is this '*era of major crisis*' that the researcher would like to focus upon and to explore if it could be avoided, or at least minimised by preparation.

Previous researchers present a wide range of findings that could be used via a literature study as a backdrop for further empirical research on the demarcated sample. Examples of possible sources include the following; Sluzki, (1979, 1998) has developed a model of the phases of the migratory process and has also examined the disruption of the social network of migrating families. Lee and Westwood, (1996) have studied the adjustment issues with regard to career and employment. The problems facing children, are explored by Hulewat, (1996), Levenbach and Lewak, (1995) and Sack, (1998) amongst others. Berry, (1997:12) has devised the concept of '*psychological acculturation*' to refer to the psychological changes that occur as people adapt to the new cultural context in which they now find themselves.

Some of the issues, which could be addressed, are as follows:

- Insight into one's motivation for migration and how this will affect your ability to cope with the demands of immigration.
- Understanding the emotional phases of migration.
- Recognising the styles of adaptation and coping strategies.
- Preparing migrants entering the job market for a temporary loss of status, identity and feeling of competence.
- Accepting that a period of mourning is natural and necessary.

1.3 LITERATURE OVERVIEW

Preliminary literature studies show that much work and research has been done with regard to the whole question of migration (Table 1). Researchers in Israel and Canada are especially prolific; therefore the 'after effects' of immigration are well researched and documented.

Especially valuable is the work done by Berry, (1997) on acculturation and mental health and Sluzki's, (1979) description of the five stages of migration.

From the fields of social work and family therapy authors such as Levenbach and Lewak, (1995) and Hulewat, (1996) describe coping or adjustment strategies as well as the effect of immigration on the family.

Of special value is the study done by Bennett, Rigby and Boshoff, (1997) entitled, "The relationship between tenure, stress and coping strategies of South African Immigrants to New Zealand". Firstly, problems as well as coping strategies employed by new emigrants are identified, and these are then compared with problems and strategies found in emigrants who have been living in New Zealand for longer than five years.

Table 1: Overview of available literature

Literature which discusses the concept and definitions of migration.	Taft, (1986); Bochner, (1986); Berry, (1992,1997); Sluzki, (1979, 1998).
Literature which describes and analyses the process and demands of migration with references to specific sample groups.	Lee & Westwood, (1996); Hulewat, (1996); Levenbach & Lewak, (1995); Sack, (1998); Sluzki, (1979, 1998); Guarnaccia & Lopez, (1998); Nevo & Chawarski, (1997); Walsh, (1996)
Literature which seeks to address the issues with regard to counselling migrants and understanding the process of stress and coping.	Tousignant, (1992); Westwood & Ishiyama, (1991); Kopala, Esquivel & Baptiste, (1994); Goldenberg, (2000); Haour-Knipe, (2001); Lazarus & Folkman (1984); Walsh, (1996); Brehm, (1998); Varna, (1996); Meichenbaum, (1985); Pascoe, (1992).

Education specialists have done much research on the needs of children, for example Kopala, Esquivel and Baptiste, (1994) describe the stressors that have an impact on immigrant children, mentioning that those over the age of 14 take longer to adapt to changed circumstances.

Sifting through the many available studies it emerges that work has been done in many diverse fields, for example the effect of immigration on professional people, Lee and Westwood, (1996).

Sluzki, (1979) and Tousignant, (1992) briefly discuss measures that can be taken by agencies in the host country to prevent or at least minimise migration stress.

The nature of stress and coping strategies are explored by Lazarus, (1991), Lazarus and Folkman, (1984), Brehm, (1998), Meichenbaum, (1985) and Varna, (1996). Researchers who explore international migration from the viewpoint of the highly mobile international business executive, diplomat and his or her family include Haour-Knipe, (2001) and Pascoe, (1992).

In conclusion, Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg, (1993:77) define Educational Psychology as, '*an applied branch of psychology (which) consists of psychological principles and techniques for the development of educational strategies and programmes*'. The question that emerges is whether the body of scientific research with regard to the psychological effect of migration could not be utilised in a strategy to prepare individuals and families for the process of migration? This study therefore seeks to understand the psychological aspects of the immigration experience in order to 'educate' and prepare the potential immigrant. In view of the above, the problem the researcher wishes to investigate is how immigrants can be better prepared for the psychological demands of migration.

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The researcher's problem then is to explore and summarise a vast and varied body of existing literature regarding the psychological demands and effects of migration. This information will then be used as a backdrop against which the experiences of recent migrants in the demarcated sample can be examined. The combination of the literature study and the empirical research will give rise to the formation of a set of guidelines to be used by laypersons and professionals to prepare migrants for the psychological challenges of migration.

The problem can be stated as following:

**In what way can immigrants be prepared to cope
with the psychological effects of migration?**

This invokes the following questions:

- What exactly is an immigrant?

- What is known about the process of immigration and what are the psychological effects on an individual and the family?

- What is migration stress and psychological coping?
- What should be included in an effective preparation programme?

1.5 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The aims of the researcher are as follows:

- To do a literature study on the concept of migration, its psychological effects and the strategies of coping and adaptation.
- To do an empirical study with recent South African migrants to Australia in order to establish to what extent that which has been uncovered in the literature study is applicable to this group and if their experience can add to, or is at odds with, the information gained from the literature study.
- To compile a set of guidelines for the preparation of persons for the psychological effects of migration.

1.6 RESEARCH METHOD

In order to research the problem of how migrants can be prepared for the psychological effects of migration a literature study as well as a qualitative empirical study will be implemented.

The initial study of existing literature will provide a basis prior to the second part of the study. The empirical second part of the study involves semi-structured, open-ended interviews with recent immigrants in order to examine their experiences of migration. Participants in this study were recent (that is, they migrated less than five years ago), and were not forced by uncontrolled circumstances such as war or famine to relocate, therefore their relocation can be seen essentially as voluntary.

In the empirical study descriptive research will be implemented. The role of the researcher will not be to intervene or attempt to control the participants' experiences but to observe and describe their situation, and the meanings they have assigned to that situation, as presented by them verbally, non-verbally and behaviourally.

1.7 DEMARCATION OF THE RESEARCH

In the literature study the researcher will examine a broad base of available information examining the psychological effects of migration on the individual. It will be borne in mind that the term 'migration' encompasses both voluntary migration, which implies that the immigrant made an informed choice about resettling in a different country, and involuntary migration, which comes about as a result of situations, such as war, which is beyond the control of the migrant. For the purposes of this study voluntary migration will be concentrated upon, and the term 'immigrant' will be used.

It must also be taken into account, however, that sometimes spouses or children may feel that they have little choice in the decision to migrate. Similarly, some people feel strongly that the circumstances in the country of origin are such that they have 'no choice' but to migrate. These individuals' experiences may very well parallel those who migrate involuntarily. Therefore literature discussing a broad range of psychological experiences will be studied.

In the empirical study the sample group will be made up of recent migrants from South Africa to Australia. Most of the participants arrived in Australia after October 2000, and are therefore still adapting to their changed circumstances. Superficially, these two countries have much in common; a similar outdoor life-style, a love of sports, a shared language and colonial heritage therefore factors such as learning a new language or coping with a different climate which may dominate the coping process have been minimised.

The family has been taken as a unit with the mother, and in one case the father, as the spokesperson. Haour-Knipe, (2001:143) asserts that it falls mainly on the wives

and mothers to orchestrate the emotional well being for the rest of the family. Sluzki, (1979:385) points out that in immigration it is often the male who takes the 'instrumental role' and the female who centres on the 'affective role' during the first few months. It follows that the mother will therefore be able to discuss her own adaptation as well as the emotional climate of the family.

1.8 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

Migration - the temporary or permanent movement from one's country of origin to live in another country. Migration, which is forced upon individuals by factors outside their control such as war, political upheaval or famine, can be seen as involuntary and giving rise to the term 'refugees'. Voluntary migration implies that the migrant makes an unforced choice to relocate to a foreign county, usually to improve life-style or prospects. They are generally referred to as 'immigrants'.

Mental health - the ability to function effectively, a sense of well-being, a healthy self-concept and a measure of self-actualisation.

Educational psychology - is concerned with the understanding of the learner and the learning process, it consists of, 'psychological principles and techniques for the development of educational strategies and programmes', Van den Aardweg and van den Aardweg, (1993:76).

Therapy - the intervention of the therapist or counsellor to bring about change in the psychological state of the client. The educational psychologist will take into account the experiences, attribution of meaning and involvement of the individual and how this influences his/her self-concept and helps or hampers the path to self-actualisation.

Psychological effects - the effect that the situation (in this study, immigration) has on the affective and cognitive life of the person which would, in turn, influence the behaviour of the individual.

Coping strategies - emotional reactions, thought patterns and behaviours resulting from the individual's efforts to deal with the internal and external demands that a life experience places on him/her.

Adaptation - a modifying process to enable one to cope with or suit new conditions or situations, Van den Aardweg and van den Aardweg, (119:160).

1.9 PROPOSED OUTLINE OF STUDY

The researcher proposes the following research programme:

In Chapter 2 (Literature study) the concept and process of migration and a brief survey of the models developed by other researchers with regard to this field will be explained. The factors impacting on the psychological adaptation of the individual will be explored. The phases or stages of migration will be discussed as each stage makes different demands on the coping resources of the individual. In addition, a review will be made of the psychological effects of migration as documented by previous researchers.

Chapter 3 comprises of a literature study of the concepts of stress and coping, specifically exploring the research with regard to migration stress and coping strategies. The concept of stress will be explored with particular attention to the definitions of stress as set out by Chalmers in Rumbaut, (1991), as well as Lazarus and Folkman, (1984).

Chapter 4 will outline the empirical study by means of qualitative research. The interview will be discussed as instrument for obtaining data as will the rationale behind the selection of the participants. The method of data analysis will be outlined.

Chapter 5 will be devoted to the empirical study and research results. Issues emerging from the empirical study will be compared to information taken from the literature study.

Chapter 6 will discuss a set of guidelines which may be utilised to psychologically prepare persons for migration.

Chapter 7 will consist of a concluding summary and remarks as well as recommendations for further study.

1.10 SUMMARY

Chapter 1 introduces the subject of migration, pointing out the large scope of the phenomenon and indicating the psychological effects for those undertaking relocation to a different country. The aims of the study are detailed; that is to use existing literature in conjunction with an empirical study for the formulation of a set of guidelines which can be used to prepare persons for migration. The research method and demarcation of the study is outlined. An outline is proposed for the continuation of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE STUDY:

A REVIEW OF THE DEFINITIONS OF MIGRATION, MIGRATION MODELS AND THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF MIGRATION.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The field of migration studies is vast, incorporating many disciplines and approaches. Migration is studied as an economic and political issue; it also touches the fields of international relations, sociology, theology, medicine, education, social welfare and commerce.

For the needs of this study the researcher has limited the literature study to four main areas namely:

- A definition of migration and a review of migration models in order to ascertain which factors contribute to the psychological state of the immigrant.
- A review of the psychological effects of migration as manifested in the different phases or stages of migration.
- A definition of stress, with the emphasis on migration stress.
- Coping and adaptation.

In Chapter 2 the concept and process of migration and a brief survey of the many models developed by other researchers with regard to this field is reviewed. The phases or stages of migration are discussed as well as the psychological effect elicited by each stage.

2.2 A DEFINITION OF MIGRATION

Migration can be most succinctly defined as the movement of an individual or family from the country of origin to live in another, so called, host country. The term 'migration' previously used to refer to movement within the boundaries of one country is now also used for international relocation. The act of migration is also referred to as immigration, relocation or resettlement. Emigrants are those *leaving* a country, immigrants are newcomers to a country. The term emigration is rarely used in subject literature, the terms migration and immigration are in general use.

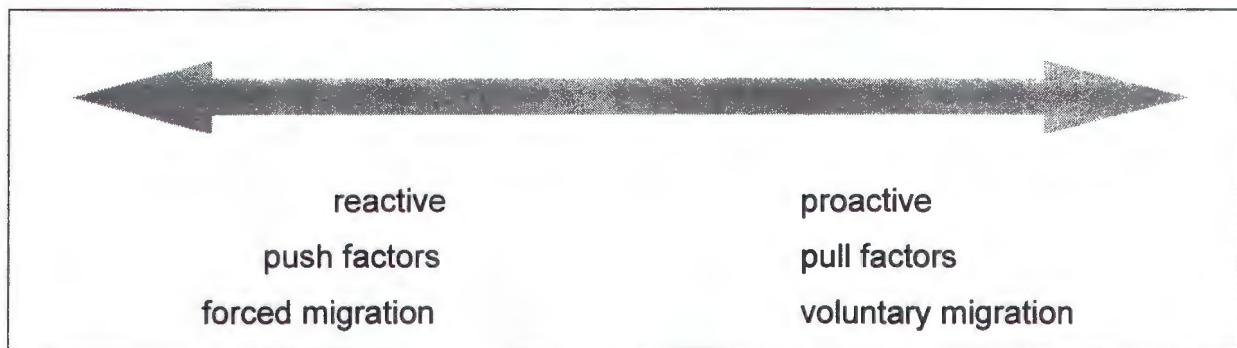
Researchers differentiate between 'voluntary' and 'forced' migration. Voluntary migration is defined as cases in which the decision to migrate is mainly in the hands of the prospective migrant who is motivated by a wish to achieve positive goals in a new country, (Ben-Sira, 1997:7, Guarnaccia and Lopez, 1998:538). Forced migrants can be defined as persons having no other reasonable alternative or options but to escape from 'threats to life and liberty by coercive political conditions'. Refugees and displaced persons would fall into this category. This study also takes cognisance of another category of 'forced migrant'; the dependents of a breadwinner who have little say in the decision to migrate, (Scott and Scott, 1989:4, Haour-Knipe, 2001:31).

Voluntary migrants are seen to be more motivated by 'pull' factors than 'push' factors in their decision to relocate. Pull factors are positive attributes in the new country such as better employment and social conditions which attract the potential immigrant. Push factors represent the negatives in the country of origin which motivate the migrant to want to leave, (Haour-Knipe, 2001:17, Ben-Sira, 1997:8).

The decision to migrate is often taken as a result of a blend of pull and push factors that are subtle and difficult to differentiate as seen by the assertion of Bennett, Rigby and Boshoff, (1997:180) that South Africans are leaving the country due to political, social and economic uncertainty and increasing levels of violence, yet the 'pull' factors of New Zealand include the perception that the way of life is similar to the South African life-style. These 'voluntary migrants' are motivated by both push factors and pull factors.

Push/pull factors can be seen as a 'reactive-proactive' continuum of migration motivation, and migrants with extremely high push or pull motivation may have psychological adaptation problems, (Berry, 1997:23). High push motivation implies fleeing unwillingly from a threatening environment; high pull motivation implies unrealistically high expectations of the new country. The motivation to immigrate is closely linked to the internal needs and values of the migrant. It involves a weighing up of the costs: social, economic and psychological, with the perceived benefits of the relocation. If the costs of the new environment seem to out-weigh the benefits maladaptation is likely to occur, (Bennett et al, 1997:160). It therefore follows that the motivation of the migrant and his expectations of the new country is an important component in the psychological preparation for immigration.

Figure 1: Continuum of Migration Motivation



2.3 MIGRATION MODELS

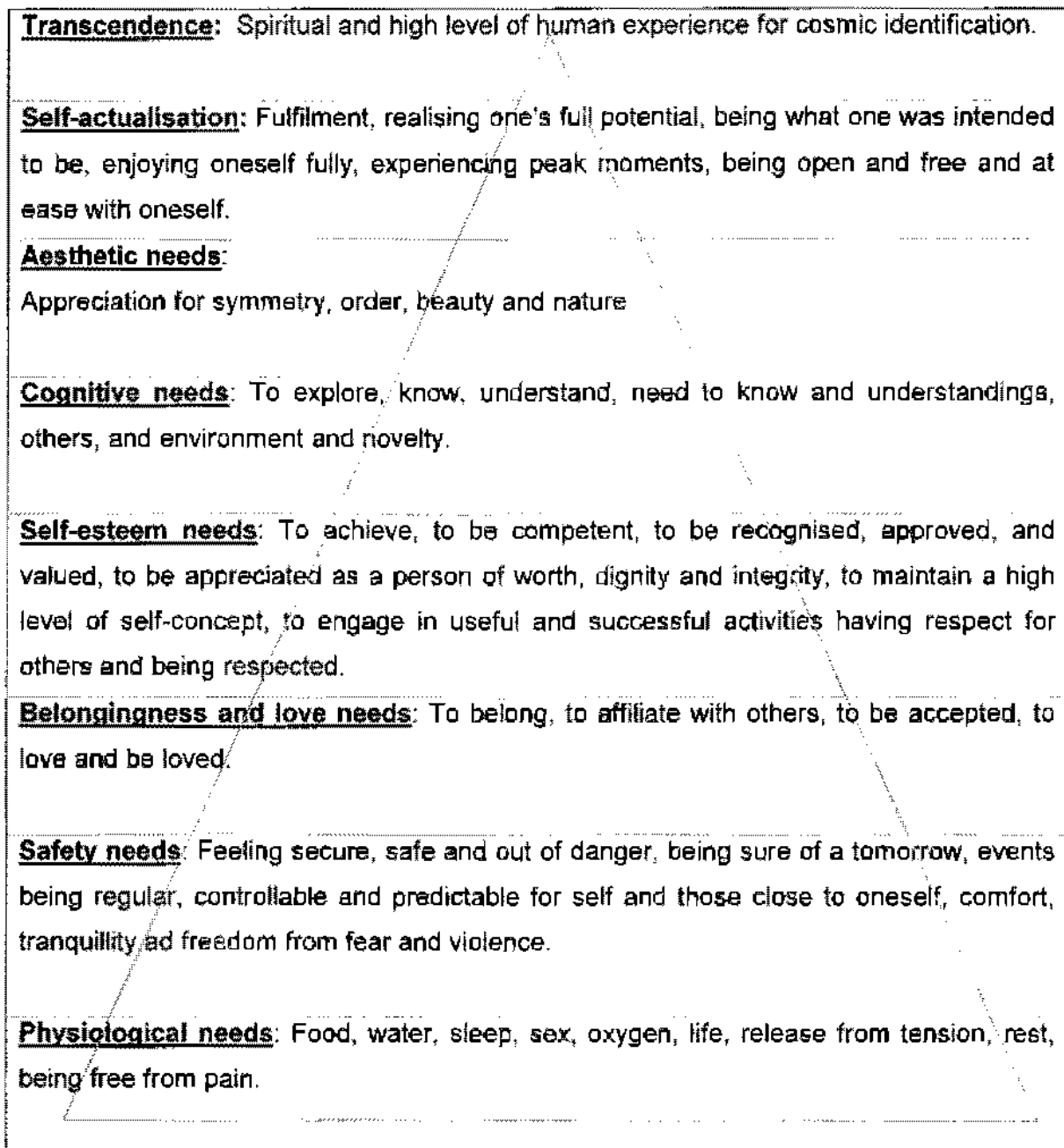
The motivation to migrate is the first of a large array of factors which influence the eventual adaptation of the individual or family unit in the host country. Several conceptual frameworks exist that attempt to organise the migrant experience in such a way that comparative studies can be made. For example the migration experience is approached from a different angle by each of the following researchers:

- Ben-Sira (1997:40): 'Paradigm of readjustment'. He sees migration as a complex readjustment process in the wake of an extreme life change. He lists the decisive factors in readjustment as: the demands confronting the immigrants, the availability and effectiveness of resources, the individual

perspectives of the immigrants, the societal perspectives prevailing in the host society, and the perception of these perspectives by the immigrants. This framework does not explore the psychological process of coping with demands nor does it examine in great detail the motivation of the immigrant, its focus is more anthropological.

- Taft, (1986): 'Aspects framework'. He attempts to establish a framework to enable comparative studies to be made. The adaptation of immigrants would be evaluated according to a number of different aspects. These include socio-emotional adjustments (which include feelings of satisfaction and a sense of well-being) and social and psychological integration (which include identity, cultural competence, social absorption and role acculturation).
- Bochner, (1986) argues that instead of adjustment the immigrant's experience should be seen as the learning of a second culture, in other words, a social skills model. His argument that migrants should not be seen as having to *adjust* themselves to a new culture but as having to *learn* selected aspects of that culture for instrumental reasons disregards the emotional demands of migration such as a loss of identity, grief and anxiety.
- Adler, (1977:444) bases his model on Maslow's Need Hierarchy (Figure 2). He suggests that migrants' first concerns after arrival will be based on physiological and security needs, (that is, housing and employment) and that social needs will only become an issue at a later stage. This model does not address many of the aspects of migration such as motivation for migration or the personal resources and capabilities of the individual, but has some value for this study as it acknowledges that the migrants' striving towards self-actualisation, (that is, the full realisation of one's unique characteristics and potentials) may be derailed or set back by the many changes in one's social, economic and cultural conditions.

Figure 2: Maslow's Needs Hierarchy



Mwamwenda, 1996: 348

- Berry, (1997:14): 'Framework for Acculturation' deserves closer examination as it lists comprehensively the factors influencing the psychological effect on the migrant as well as the process of adaptation. It is also one of the few models which include moderating (influencing) factors prior to acculturation (migration).

In its broadest sense 'acculturation' is defined as 'culture change that results from continuous, first-hand contact between two distinct cultural groups'

(Redfield in Berry 1992:69) and has as its field of study the wide spectrum of cultural contact. Berry also differentiates four different ways in which an immigrant can choose to interact with the host society, so named acculturative strategies.

Acculturative strategies can be defined as the *manner* in which groups and individuals choose to acculturate, in other words, how do individuals who have developed in one cultural context manage to adapt to new contexts that result from migration? (Berry, 1997:6). On the basis of *cultural maintenance* (the extent to which one maintains one's own cultural identity and characteristics) and *contact and participation* (the extent to which one becomes involved in other cultural groups) these four acculturation strategies are proposed by Berry, (1997:9):

- **Integration** – some degree of cultural integrity is maintained while at the same time seeking to participate as an integral part of the larger social network.
- **Assimilation** – individuals do not wish to maintain their primary cultural identity and rather seek to function fully in the other culture.
- **Separation** – individuals place a high value on maintaining the primary culture and avoid contact with other groups.
- **Marginalisation** – occurs when there is little possibility or interest in maintaining the primary culture (for reasons of enforced loss) and little interest in relations with others, perhaps due to exclusion or discrimination.

Research seems to indicate that immigrants following strategies of assimilation and integration experience good psychological and sociocultural adaptation. Integration is only possible in societies which are explicitly multicultural (Berry, 1997:11). Australia has a long history of acceptance of cultural diversity enabling immigrants to this country to make individual choices about the acculturative strategy they wish to follow. Knowledge of these strategies is valuable for this study as they indicate

to what measure the immigrant has embraced, and feels accepted by, the host country.

'Psychological acculturation' refers to the changes 'in an individual whose cultural group is collectively experiencing acculturation', and Berry, (1992:70) points out that although both the migrating group and the society of settlement is included in the definition it is the migrant who will experience most changes. He asserts that at the individual level social and psychological problems occur during acculturation which he refers to as 'acculturative stress'.

Figure 3: Berry: Acculturative stress in response to acculturation

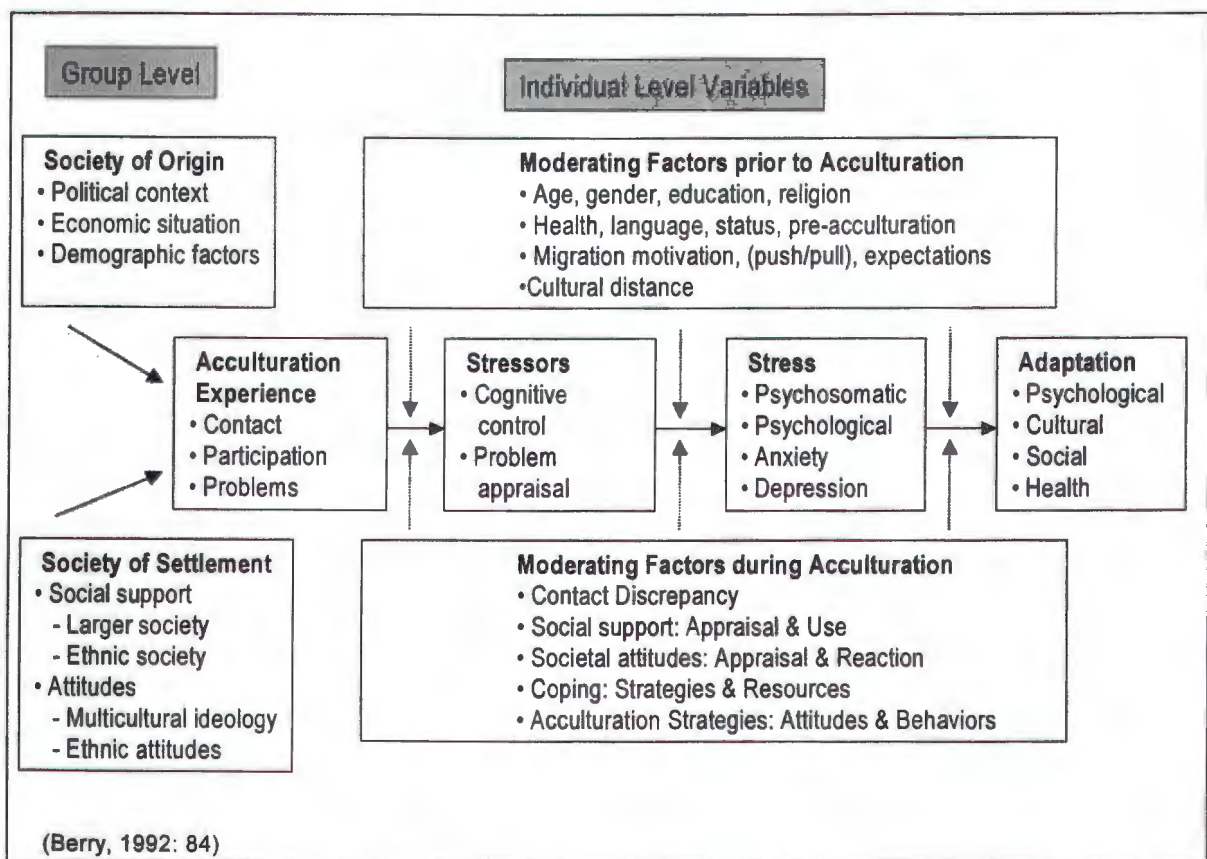


Figure 3 outlines Berry's concept of acculturative stress and is valuable for this study as it clearly outlines the interplay of factors which should be taken into consideration when analysing the psychological effect of migration. The acculturation experience of any individual is influenced by conditions in the country he migrates from as well as conditions in the settlement country. Each individual's

experience will differ depending on individual moderating factors prior to and during acculturation as well as the individual's own perception of those factors, his ability to deal with cumulative stress and his psychological reactions to perceived problems.

The value of these migration models is that they enable us to synthesise the information with regard to the many factors which play a role in immigration. This research seeks to provide an answer to the problem, 'How can immigrants be prepared for the psychological effects of immigration?' The next logical question is: 'What factors in immigration impact on mental health?' This implies that the researcher must search through the models and identify which factors are relevant to this question.

2.4 SUMMARY OF CONTRIBUTING FACTORS IN IMMIGRATION

Even though every immigrant experiences migration in his own unique way it is possible to conclude the following commonalities:

- Immigration is a process over time and should not be thought of as a single event. (Ben-Sira, 1997, Sluzki, 1979, Bochner, 1986, Taft, 1986).
- Immigration implies integration, adaptation, readjustment, learning and change in attitude and behaviour.
- Many identifiable factors, both external and internal, play a role in the adaptation of the immigrant. They include the demographics and circumstances of the individual in the country of origin as well as the individual's perception of circumstances in the host country. These factors tie in with the immigrants' motivation for migration and his or her expectations for the future. Once they have arrived in the host country the migrants must deal with a whole range of demands and stresses of living in the new culture. Their reactions to these demands will depend on their ability to access the external supports and resources available in the new country as well as their internal coping strategies and resources.

- Migration gives rise to psychological distress even in the most motivated and well prepared persons under the most favourable conditions. This is referred to as 'migration stress'.

Figure 4 is a summary of the factors impacting on the migration experience taken from the above models by the researcher.

Figure 4: Factors impacting on the migration experience.

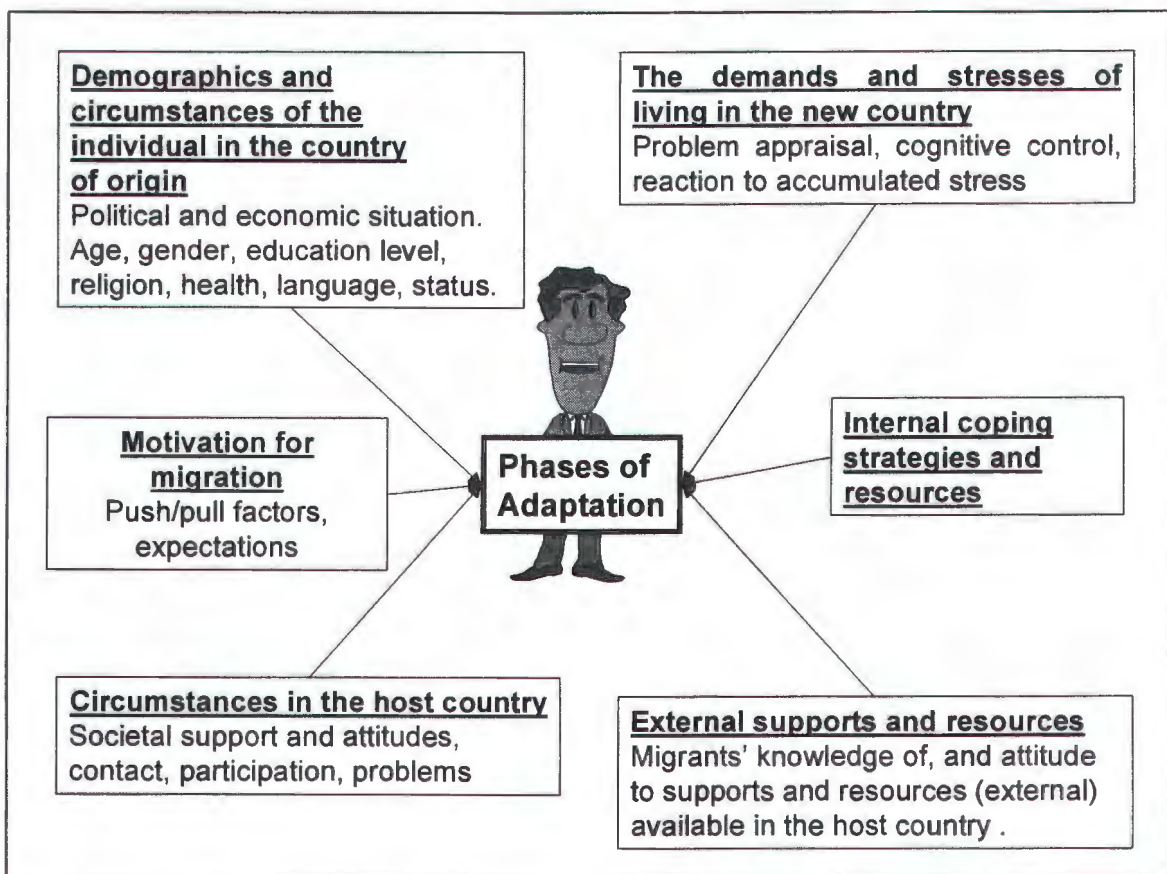


Figure 4 summarises the *context* wherein the immigrant finds himself and points out the factors, which will influence his psychological adaptation. The actual psychological effect on the individual of these factors will now be explored.

2.5 THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT OF MIGRATION

What happens psychologically to the immigrant? How does the act of migration impact on the state of his psyche? What does immigration do to the sense of self of the individual? In what way does it influence his relations with himself, others and the environment?

The act of immigration is not a single event but a process, which has several distinguishable stages. Each stage makes different demands on the individual and elicits different psychological reactions. No consensus can be reached with regard to time limits for each phase as individual adjustment experiences are unique, (Lee and Westwood, 1996:29).

2.5.1 Pre-immigration or preparatory phase

This phase covers the period of time elapsing between initial thoughts about emigrating to the point at which all arrangements have been made and the immigrant is on the point of departure. The decision to leave may be accompanied by much inner turmoil and debate. The motivation for relocation is important in terms of later adjustment, and can be loaded with either negative (to escape a threatening situation) or positive connotations (to make a better life), (Sluzki, 1979:382). Expectations of the future may be realistic and based on accurate assessment of and knowledge about the new country or may be an unconscious hope to leave behind 'fears, frustrations and failures', (Levenbach and Lewak, 1995:383). Unrealistic expectations may well delay adaptation and influence mental well-being.

Hulewat, (1996:130) comments that understanding *how* the decision was made to leave is an important component in understanding how a family, or individual, will adjust to resettlement.

Splitting, an ego-defence mechanism in which one views oneself or others as all good or bad, (Carson, Butcher and Coleman, 1988:64) can be used as a defensive manoeuvre in this phase, (Hulewat, 1996:130). By idealising one's future prospects

and denigrating the present situation leaving is made easier, therefore splitting is used as a temporary defence in a transitory crisis situation. However, the immigrant who 'over-idealises' the country of settlement may experience great disillusionment, as his expectations are sure to be unrealistic.

Rules about roles and functions in relation to the migration begin to be negotiated among members of a family, especially in terms of who was 'responsible' for the move and who in the family gained or lost by the change in circumstances, (Sluzki, 1979:382). These factors play an important role in later adjustment.

2.5.2 The 'honeymoon' phase

This period immediately following the actual migration can be an 'exhilarating and exhausting experience', (Hulewat, 1996:130). For some it can be a time of euphoria and excitement about the challenge of making a fresh start as everything is 'new, different and wonderful', (Coyle, 1992:58, Guarnaccia and Lopez, 1998:545, Haour-Knipe, 2001:23). At this stage people seem unaware of the cumulative effect of their stress and deal with frustrations, and possibly other negative emotions, by denial, (Tousignant, 1992:170, Levenbach and Lewak, 1995:384). The denial of reality is defined by Carson et al, (1988:64) as an ego-defence mechanism where the individual protects the self from unpleasant reality by a refusal to perceive or face it.

Individuals may seem to be in a state of '*concussion*', overall stunned and confused but maintaining a narrow focus of clear consciousness where task-oriented efficiency is heightened, (Sluzki, 1979:384). However, a sense of isolation and separation pain compounded by feelings of guilt towards those left behind may be dealt with by reaction formation. Reaction formation is described by Carson et al, (1988:64) as the prevention of the awareness or expression of unacceptable desires by an exaggerated adoption of seemingly opposite behaviour. The 'unacceptable desire' to wanting to go home is masked by an untempered optimism and enthusiasm for the new country.

2.5.3 The crisis phase of deflation or decompensation

Manifestations of cumulative stress

It is during this phase that immigrants are brought to the attention of counsellors and psychologists. This is a difficult time when a manifestation of the stress accumulated over several months begins to surface, (Tousignant, 1992:170, Guarnaccia and Lopez, 1998:545, Bennett et al, 1997:160). Negative stress manifestations include higher levels of depression and anxiety, feelings of marginality and alienation and heightened psychosomatic symptom levels.

Immigrants may experience frustration and anxiety as they realise that 'everything is different' causing them to lose their innate sense of competency, (Coyle, 1992:58).

Sense of a loss of identity and competency

Westwood and Ishiyama, (1991:136) describe self-identity as reflecting one's way of finding meaning in personal existence and in relationships with the world. One's identity is formed through experiencing the self in a positive way in various contexts and situations. Some immigrants may find their identity threatened and disturbed as they struggle to re-establish meaningful relationships, successful career involvement as well as social and academic recognition. Immigrants must also establish leisure activities, participation in social events and familiar landmarks. Until this occurs immigrants may struggle with self-validation especially within five key areas, namely:

- Security, comfort and support.
- Self-worth and self-acceptance.
- Competence and autonomy.
- Identity and belonging.
- Love, fulfilment and meaning in life.

Levenbach and Lewak, (1995: 381) assert that the immigrant may have to give up some personal identity in order to blend in with the new culture which may result in losing the 'sense of who one is'. Loss of boundaries of self may result in emotions which feel unpleasantly like disintegration and intense panic may result. The new society does not reflect back an acknowledgement of one's existence, belonging and status. Depression or rage may result.

Establishment of new roles

Sluzki, (1979:383) points out that in this phase there may develop a split in the family between instrumental and affective roles. The breadwinner, usually the husband, takes the instrumental role and goes out into the new society. He establishes a connection with the new environment and becomes more autonomous and comfortable in the new society as he gains his own networks. The wife remains fairly isolated and centres on affective activities that entail maintaining connections with the previous environment including mourning for what has been left behind. Although this division of function may be adaptive during the early months it has the potential for catastrophe in the relationship if rigidly maintained.

Behaviour problems with children

Tousignant, (1982:169) points out that adaptation to a new country appears more difficult during adolescence and old age. Adolescents have to please parents and peers as well as construct a self-identity. Levenbach and Lewak, (1995:387) assert that teenagers, not knowing the local customs and rituals, may be rejected by the cliquish peer group just at the point when belonging to a group and having friends is of the greatest importance.

Where adolescents have added problems with identity owing to the stresses of immigration younger children may respond by 'acting out', that is with behavioural problems, (Guarnaccia and Lopez, 1998:545). Sack, (1998:155) comments that the psychological well being of pre-school children is linked to the functioning of their caregiver and that in general children acculturate much faster than their parents. Weichers, (1987:76) warns against the assumption that all children will quickly

adapt to their changed circumstances and comments that several changes in location, which is not unlikely for new immigrants, may have an unsettling effect on the pre-school child. Although immigration often has a cohesive effect on the nuclear family providing the pre-schooler with a sense of warmth and emotional support immigration can have a disruptive effect on the child's basic feelings of security.

2.5.4 Levelling out, adaptation phase

The psychological situation of the individual and the family in this phase is dependent on how effectively the challenges of the crisis phase were resolved. There is great variation in psychological outcomes depending on the interplay of factors influencing migration.

Immigrants who master the environment begin to function adequately and experience a growing sense of competence and adaptation as they relate their own assumptions and expectations to the new culture. (Haour-Knipe, 2001:203), Coyle, 2001:59). New individual and collective strengths will emerge if the immigrant family manages to integrate constructively the rules, models and habits of the old society with that of the new reality, (Sluzki, 1979:387).

2.6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In order to prepare immigrants psychologically it is necessary to explore the effect that migration has on individuals and to ascertain which factors, both internal and external, influence mental well-being. An immigrant's psychological health at any point will depend on how his motivation for immigration has created certain expectations and his perception of how those expectations are being met by the new society. His level of stress is influenced by the balance or imbalance between his perception of the demands and constraints of the new environment and his own personal resources, capabilities and access to external support. As the adaptation of the immigrant, and his mental well being, depends largely on how he deals with the cumulative stress of his situation.

Chapter 3 explores the concepts of stress, particularly migration stress and coping.

Table 2: Summary of psychological effects of migration viewed in phases

Preparational Phase	'Honeymoon' Phase	Crisis Phase	Levelling Out Phase
EFFECT ON THE IMMIGRANT			
Debating the decision. Establishing motivation and expectations. Anticipation of new roles and functions.	Sense of achievement and new challenge. State of 'concussion'. Narrow task focus. Lack of awareness of cumulative stress.	Manifestations of cumulative stress. Sense of a loss of identity and competency. Threats to self-validation system. Establishment of new roles. Behaviour and identity problems in children and adolescents.	Manifestation of strengths and weaknesses of coping strategies. New individual and collective strengths. Great variation in outcome depending on individual circumstances. Possible behaviour and identity problems in children and adolescents.
ASSOCIATED EMOTIONS			
Inner turmoil. Apprehension. Positive Anticipation.	Euphoria. Excitement. Separation pain. Guilt.	Depression, anxiety, rage, panic. Feelings of alienation and marginality. Mourning.	Return of sense of competency or ongoing struggle to cope.
ASSOCIATED DEFENCE MECHANISMS			
Splitting.	Denial. Reaction formation.	Regression.	

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE STUDY: STRESS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL COPING.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Researchers are in agreement that migration is a stressful and traumatic experience which exacts many differing demands from the individual, (Goldenberg, 2000:1, Levenbach and Lewak, 1995:379, Ben-Sira, 1997:1, Bennett, Rigby and Boshoff, 1997:160). So much so, that Rumbaut (1991:56) asserts that migration can produce profound psychological distress even among the most motivated and well-prepared individuals, and even under the most receptive of circumstances.

In this chapter the researcher seeks to clarify the nature of stress with special emphasis on migration stressors. Methods of coping with stress by immigrants are explored as well as the role that the family plays as support system. The purpose of this chapter is to uncover information and strategies which should be incorporated into a programme for the preparation for immigration.

3.2 DEFINITIONS OF STRESS

There are numerous definitions of, and perspectives on, the concept of stress which are beyond the scope of this study to discuss in detail. However, the following three definitions succinctly state current perspectives on stress and are well suited to the needs of this research.

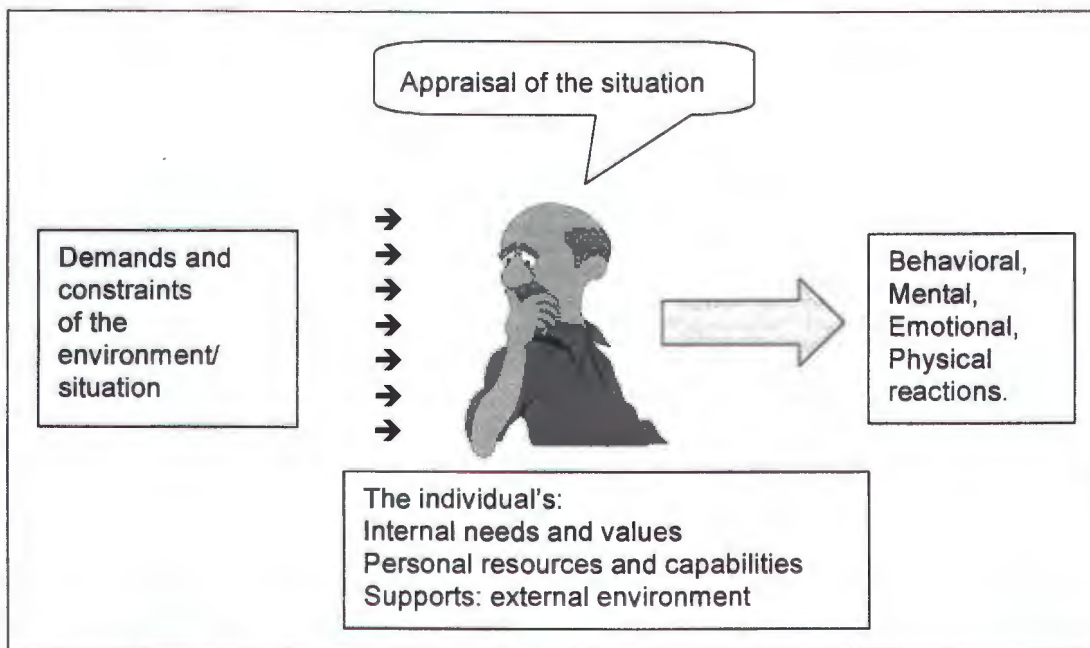
- Dunham in Varna, (1996:2) defines stress as a process of behavioural, emotional, mental and physical reactions caused by increasing or new pressures which are significantly greater than available coping resources.
- Lazarus and Folkman, (1984:21): Stress is defined as not only a stimulus (for example packing up all your material possessions and bidding family and friends farewell) or a response (for example feeling 'stressed', unhappy, tense and

under strain) but as a relationship between the person and the environment. It takes into account the characteristics of the person on one hand, and the nature of the environmental event on the other. Psychological stress is a relationship between the person and the environment which is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his/her well-being. The person's judgement that a particular situation is stressful hinges on his or her cognitive appraisal.

- Chalmers in Rumbaut, (1991:333): Stress within an individual is 'the balance or imbalance resulting from the interaction of four components: internal needs and values, external environmental demands and constraints, personal resources or capabilities, and external environmental supplies and supports'.

The above definitions can be combined into the following schema:

Figure 5: The stress relationship



It becomes obvious that the immigrant's ability to adjust to the host country does not only depend on his or her personal circumstances but also on the way in which the individual appraises the demands and problems in those circumstances. Appraisal implies the individual's evaluation of encounters as threatening, harmful

or challenging, (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984:32). Furthermore, some situations could be appraised as being simultaneously threatening and challenging: there are both potential gains and risks involved. Migration would fall into this category; the immigrant voluntarily decides to relocate in order to attain positive goals whilst aware of the fact that the process will involve some hardship and sacrifice.

Lazarus and Folkman, (1984:34) point out that appraisals are not static but may shift as the encounter progresses, a situation may be appraised as more challenging than threatening as cognitive coping efforts enable the person to view the episode in a more favourable light. A person's quality of functioning is likely to be better if problems are viewed as challenges because the person feels more confident, less emotionally overwhelmed and more capable of drawing on available resources. The implications for this study is that in the preparation programme immigrants should be encouraged to explore their usual patterns of appraisal and should be armed with cognitive coping skills.

Several other aspects of the concept of stress which are pertinent to this study are as follows:

- **Acute stress occurs largely as a result from change** (Coyle, 1992: 63). The Holmes-Rahe Social readjustment scale rates potentially stressful events in terms of 'life change units' on a scale up to 100 (Table 3). Each life event reflects change requiring some measure of adaptation. It follows logically that migration, which demands many changes in many differing spheres of a person's life would be extremely stressful, even if those changes were perceived to be positive.
- **Stress can accumulate.** A person can experience feelings of stress as a result of one discrete event or as a result of ongoing problems. Immigration encompasses both aspects; the actual move or event is only one part of a much bigger picture as it may take years to solve all the problems involved in settling in a new country, (Coyle, 1992:65, Levenbach and Lewak, 1995:381). According to researchers this '*pile up of demands*' plays a major part in the '*crisis phase*' of migration. (Frame & Shehan, 1994:196, Sluzki, 1979:383).

Table 3: Holmes and Rahe Social Readjustment Rating Scale.

An objective method of measuring cumulative stress to which an individual has been exposed over a period of time. Cumulated stressful events that add up to a 'life change units (LCU)' of 300 or above may result in the person developing a major illness within the next two years (Carson et al 1988:144).

EVENTS	SCALE OF IMPACT
Death of a spouse	100
Divorce	73
Marital separation	65
Jail term	63
Death of a close family member	63
Personal injury or illness	53
Marriage	50
Fired at work	47
Marital reconciliation	45
Retirement	45
Change in health of a family member	44
Pregnancy	40
Sex difficulties	39
Gain of a new family member	39
Business readjustment	39
Change in financial state	38
Death of a close friend	37
Change to a different line of work	36
Change in no. of arguments with spouse	35
High mortgage or loan	31
Change in responsibilities at work	30
Son or daughter leaving home	29
Trouble with in-laws	29
Outstanding personal achievement	29
Wife begins or stops work	26
Begin or end school	26
Change in living conditions	25
Revision of personal habits	24
Trouble with boss	23
Change in work hours or conditions	20
Change in residence	20
Change in schools	20
Change in recreation	19
Change in church activities	19
Change in social activities	18
Small mortgage or loan	17
Change in sleeping habits	16
Change in no of family get-togethers	15
Change in eating habits	15
Vacation	13
Christmas	12
Minor violations of the law	11

- **Stress can accumulate.** A person can experience feelings of stress as a result of one discrete event or as a result of ongoing problems. Immigration encompasses both aspects; the actual move or event is only one part of a much bigger picture as it may take years to solve all the problems involved in settling in a new country, (Coyle, 1992:65, Levenbach and Lewak, 1995:381). According to researchers this '*pile up of demands*' plays a major part in the '*crisis phase*' of migration. (Frame & Shehan, 1994:196, Sluzki, 1979:383).
- **Extreme and long-term stress may result in mental and physical health problems.** The DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1995:641) gives the essential feature of Adjustment disorders as the development of clinically significant emotional or behavioural symptoms in response to an identifiable psychosocial stressor or stressors. Stressors may be a single event or multiple stressors; they may be recurrent or continuous and may affect an individual, a family or a whole community. Some stressors may accompany specific developmental events, for example becoming a parent. This information is valuable for this study as it emphasises the vulnerability of the immigrant to succumb to Adjustment disorder especially if migration stress is compounded by other 'normal' developmental events. Symptoms of Adjustment disorder include depressed mood (tearfulness or feelings of hopelessness), anxiety (nervousness, worry and separation anxiety in children) or disturbance of conduct (vandalism, reckless driving, fighting).

Prolonged or intense periods of stress contribute to a variety of stress-related physical health disorders (Brehm, 1998:61). It may increase artery disease, exacerbate gastrointestinal disorders, increase muscle tension, depress the immune system and give rise to maladaptive changes in sleep, eating and exercise habits. Furthermore extreme stress may also lead to increased use of harmful substances such as caffeine, alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, (Brehm, 1998:62). Immigrants should therefore be alerted to the fact that they need to pay attention to both their mental and physical well-being.

- Coyle, (1992:63) lists the following **indicators of extreme stress**; increased anxiety, depression, frustration, habitual anger, helplessness, irritability,

restlessness and withdrawal, concentration and sexual difficulties, changes in eating habits, sleep disturbance and difficulty in decision making. Children experiencing stress may show signs of muscle tension, aching limbs, headaches, skin disorders, bowel and bladder disorders. They may also become aggressive and restless or withdraw. Psychological symptoms of stress in children include obsessions, anxiety, fear and panic, reduced self-esteem and lack of enthusiasm, (Varma, 1996:3).

- Immigrants should take cognisance of these symptoms, firstly, as a reassurance that they are experiencing 'normal' reactions to great stress and secondly, that these symptoms serve as a warning that they need to alleviate their stress levels, consulting a professional person if necessary (Goldenburg, 2000:1).

3.3 MIGRATION STRESSORS

Previously it was mentioned that stressors may be a single event or multiple stressors or they may be recurrent or continuous and may affect an individual, a family or a whole community. A survey of the literature emanates the following list of frequently cited migration stressors. The value for this study is that dissemination of the information contained in this list may take away the surprise element of potential problems, enabling the potential immigrant to devise methods of coping prior to migration.

- (a) The actual move is stressful as the individual is called on to deal with many demands on time and energy, including 'tying up loose ends' in one country whilst planning ahead for life in a new environment.
- (b) The depletion of one's social support system which involves the following problematic aspects: the actual greeting and leaving behind of family and friends, isolation from those support groups in the new country, difficulty in re-establishing friendships, networks and one's social and occupational reputation. Experiencing a feeling of loss of one's identity and support system.

- (c) Disruption in structure of meaning as well as the conceptual organization of physical and social surroundings. This includes finding employment, housing, educational and leisure facilities. Organising insurance, telephones, licences and energy connections. Locating shopping centres, doctors, dentists, hairdressers etc. Shopping for unfamiliar products and negotiating new locations.
- (d) Problems with regard to financial security and a change in one's standard of living.
- (e) Loss of lifestyle, country and roots. Adapting to new cultural norms and systems.
- (f) Dealing with feelings of decreased mastery, control or competence. This may affect one's self-esteem. Some immigrants may be plagued by uncertainty about whether to immigrate was the right decision.

(Coyle, 1992: 60-62; Bennett et al, 1997:160-163; Haour-Knipe, 2001:55-65; Sluzki, 1998.)

This list is by no means exhaustive nor is it implied that every immigrant will experience all the stressors mentioned. Individual reactions will be modified by individual circumstances and personal coping strategies. These coping strategies will now be explored.

3.4 PSYCHOLOGICAL COPING STRATEGIES

Lazarus and Folkman, (1984:141) define coping as *'constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person'*. This definition sees coping as a **process** in which the person is constantly cognitively appraising or interpreting the situation, that is, discovering the realities of what is happening and what can be done about it. Strategies to cope may be problem-focussed

(instrumental) or emotion-focussed (palliative), (Lazarus and Lanier in Meichenbaum, 1985:54).

3.4.1 Problem-focussed techniques to cope with stress include information gathering, problem-solving methods, training in communication and social skills, time management, life-style changes such as reassessing priorities, mobilising supports and other direct action efforts designed to change environmental demands or alter stressful situations. Brehm, (1998:2) points out that problem-focussed strategies, specifically problem solving, can be seen as the first step in alleviating stress – one attempts to eliminate or change the source of stress.

3.4.2 Emotion-focussed coping includes strategies to relieve stress and 'foster emotion-regulation' (Meichenbaum, 1985:54). This includes taking perspective, searching for meaning, making social comparisons, diverting attention, denial, expressing emotions and relaxation training. These techniques are most relevant when stressful situations cannot be altered or avoided.

Coping techniques may be seen as 'adaptive' or 'maladaptive' (Brehm, 1998:13). Adaptive coping responses have a positive effect on stress by lessening the force of the stressor itself or helping an individual to feel better in both the long and short term. Maladaptive coping strategies may make you feel better in the short term but may create more problems at a later date.

Immigrants are confronted by a vast array of stressors some of which can be dealt with by using problem-focussed techniques, for example finding accommodation and educational facilities or making new financial arrangements. Other stressors such as feelings of loss and grief, missing friends and family and change in life-style involve situations which cannot be changed and would require the use of palliative coping techniques.

It follows that potential immigrants should acquire and develop a wide array of coping skills in order to deal with the myriad of problems which they may have to face. Meichenbaum, (1985:55) proposes that coping skills which are taught to individuals prior to periods of great stress can be considered as 'stress inoculation'.

Stress inoculation has as its goal the training of people to acquire and nurture 'a flexible, integrated coping repertoire that is situationally sensitive to the full range of stressful transactions'. Clients undergoing stress inoculation are told that the object of training is not to totally remove stress but to use their stress constructively - to view it as a challenge, an opportunity, and a problem to be solved. Meichenbaum also cautions against overwhelming clients with a 'plethora of coping options' as that in itself may prove to be 'stress engendering'

Skills which may be acquired through training include problem solving methods, relaxation techniques and strategies such as cognitive restructuring which involves raising awareness of how one's thoughts and feelings initiate and maintain stress and how, by modifying one's self-talk, one could cope more effectively with encountered problems, (Corey 1996:347).

3.5 PSYCHOLOGICAL COPING RESOURCES

Research attempts to find definitive personal traits that would facilitate successful immigration have not been conclusive (Berry, 1997:23, Scott and Scott, 1989:170). However, several researchers have indicated qualities, resources and skills that facilitate coping and enhance stress resistance. These findings are relevant to this study as they indicate which personal psychological attributes could possibly promote coping with the demands of immigration.

Lazarus and Folkman, (1984:158) identify the following categories of coping resources:

- Health and energy – a person who is frail, sick or tired may have more difficulties in coping than one who is physically robust.
- Positive beliefs – existential beliefs, for example about God, and general beliefs about control, as well as commitments which have a motivational force with regard to coping.

- Problem solving skills – the ability to search for information, analyse situations, weigh up alternative courses of action, select and implement courses of action.
- Social skills – the ability to communicate and behave with others in ways that are socially appropriate and effective.
- Social support – having people from whom one receives emotional, tangible and informational support.
- Material resources – people with money, especially if they have the skills to use it effectively fare better than those without.

Walsh, (1996:264) in her discussion of 'hardiness' or personal resilience specifies the following characteristics:

- A high level of self-esteem characterised by a realistic sense of hope and personal self-control.
- The belief that one can control or influence events in one's experience.
- An ability to feel deeply involved in and committed to the activities in one's life.
- Anticipation of change as an exciting challenge to further development.
- Moral and spiritual sources of courage and conviction.
- A feeling of confidence that the odds can be surmounted, an optimistic bias.

Nevo and Chawarski, (1997:89) conclude, as a result of research with 65 immigrant scientists, that '*practical intelligence and tacit knowledge*' are important factors in the process of adaptation to the requirements of life in the new country. 'Tacit knowledge' is defined as areas of knowledge which are not explicitly taught or verbalised but that are necessary for dealing successfully with tasks posed by the

environment. In layman's terms we may be speaking of 'street sense' or 'common sense'.

In addition Lazarus and Folkman, (1984:165) identify possible constraints to utilising coping resources:

- Personal constraints due to internalised cultural values and beliefs, for example, difficulty in asserting oneself in some social contexts or an inability to accept help.
- Psychological deficits due to a person's unique development, for example, low tolerance of ambiguity, fear of failure and fear of success, problems with authority figures and dependency needs.
- Environmental constraints – some coping strategies may be thwarted by the conditions in the environment, for example, not being able to achieve a placement for a child with special needs.
- Level of threat – excessive threat interferes with problem-focussed forms of coping. The greater the threat, the more primitive, desperate, or regressive emotion-focussed forms of coping tend to be.

3.6 SYNTHESIS OF MIGRATION COPING

It is now possible to venture an answer to the question, 'What personal traits will enable an immigrant to cope with the many and varied stressors of immigration?' An integration of the information in this chapter can be summarised as follows:

The immigrant who is more likely to cope with migration stress will:

- Have a sense of commitment and a strong motivation to make this life change work.
- Have moral or spiritual sources of conviction and courage.

- Have a realistic idea of what stressors are likely and will see them as challenges to be overcome.
- Have a positive and optimistic outlook, strong self-esteem and the belief that one has a large measure of control over one's environment.
- Will be informed about the indicators of extreme stress.
- Will be able to apply a varied range of coping strategies, both problem and emotion focussed.
- Will be skilled in problem solving and applying street or common sense.
- Will be physically robust.
- Will have good social skills.
- Will maintain existing support systems and work at establishing new support systems.
- Will have a measure of material resources.
- Will have the insight and ability to overcome cultural, psychological and environmental constraints and to maintain focus even when circumstances could be appraised or interpreted as being very threatening.
- Will be positive about assimilating or integrating into the host culture.

3.7 THE FAMILY AS SUPPORT SYSTEM

Tousignant, (1992:171) asserts that the adaptation of the individual is inextricably bound to the adaptation of the family which is seen as 'a unique harbour in an ocean of strangers, which may work for better or for worse'.

On the one hand family solidarity may impede identification with the new country and assimilation or integration into the new society, (Scott & Scott 1989:170). However, Walsh, (1996:261) points out that families which have shared beliefs and narratives that foster *'a sense of coherence, collaboration, competence, and confidence'* are resilient to crises and persistent stressors. This view is reinforced by the research of Haour-Knipe, (2001:155) who finds that families with a high *'sense of coherence'* were more able to identify the difficulties of migration, more likely to see them as *'challenges'* and take steps to resolve problems and to cope with stressful situations. A sense of coherence in a family can be described as follows; the members of that family live in the *'same emotional world'* and are united in their commitment as well as their co-ordination. Family members would recognise, formulate and discuss individual problems and in so doing the entire family may be able to *'maintain relative serenity in the face of severe stress'*. The family's own adaptability and problem solving skills are keys to successful adaptation to a new culture, (Settles 2001:657).

Family resilience can be developed by encouraging collaboration among family members enabling them to build new competencies, give mutual support and have shared confidence. Shared efforts, resources and abilities empower the family reinforcing the idea that working together will enable them to overcome great obstacles. Shared success enhances family pride and efficacy resulting in more effective coping and life adaptations (Walsh, 1996:275).

Although the family can be a source of support and an aid to individual adjustment some factors may arise within families which place additional strain on individuals. Sluzki, (1998:11) points out that as immigrant families are isolated from the extended support system of families and friends spouses may turn to each other to fulfil needs and expectations at precisely the time that each partner is most overloaded and unable to do so. This gives rise to *'complaints and resentments'* which escalate both needs and unavailability. In some cases separation of the family may occur due to the circumstances of the migration. This situation creates great stress on both sides, (Tousignant, 1992: 171, Haour-Knipe 2001:81).

3.8 SUMMARY

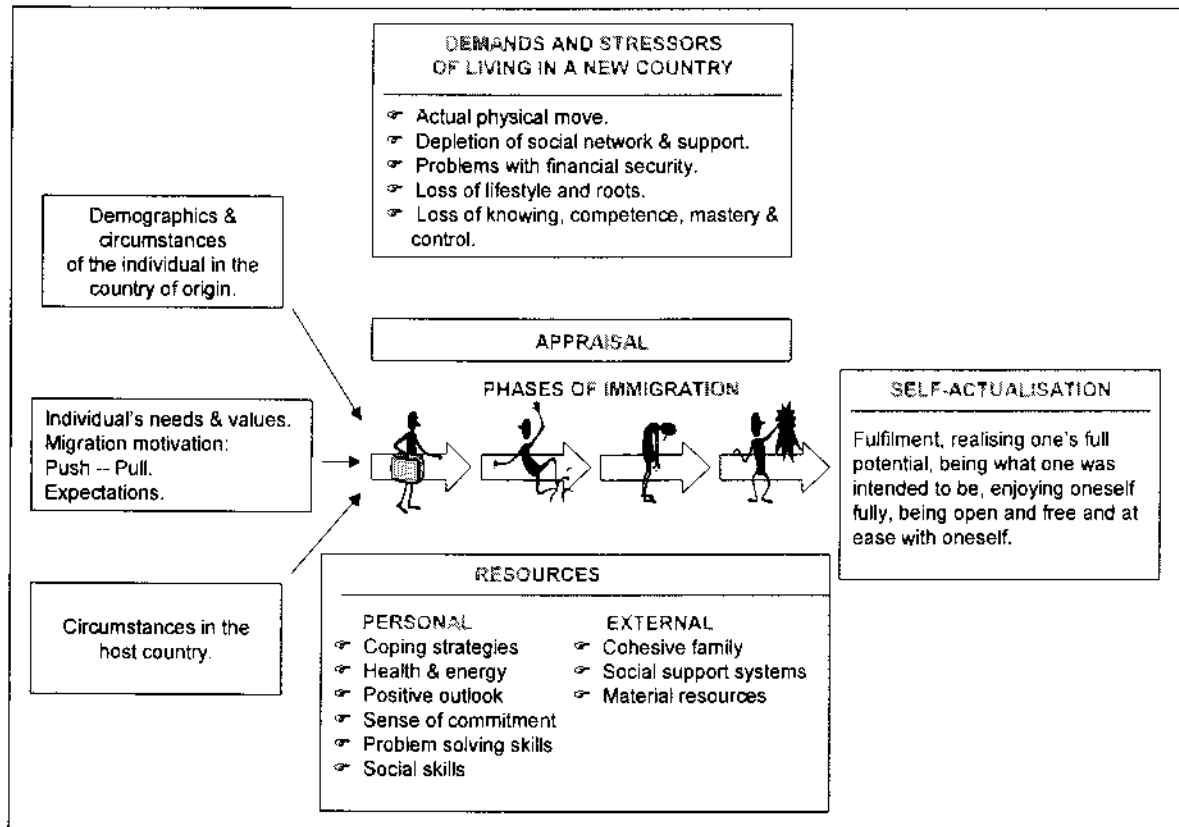
Immigration can be stressful even for highly motivated and prepared individuals under receptive circumstances. Migration stress arises when the individual appraises or interprets that the demands of living in a new country as exceeding his or her personal coping ability or resources. Identified migration stressors include the physical and mental strain of the actual move, loss of support systems, unfamiliarity of the new environment and culture, changes with regard to finances and lifestyle and feelings of loneliness, incompetence and loss of control.

How well immigrants adapt to their changed situation depends on the physical, mental, emotional and material resources they have at their disposal. Both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies are utilised by the immigrant. For some immigrants the family will be an additional source of support, for others it may be an additional source of stress.

In order to prepare psychologically for immigration the person must firstly evaluate which resources are available to him or her and which should be developed and nurtured. Stress inoculation training in the form of improving coping skills such as information gathering, problem-solving, communication skills, relaxation training and cognitive restructuring could be valuable. Understanding one's motive for immigrating and committing to one's course of action will positively impact on long-term adaptation. Finally, families who adopt the characteristics of resilience, that is, a sense of coherence, collaboration, competence, and confidence are more likely to cope with migration stress.

In Figure 6 the researcher presents an overview of the information found in Chapters 2 and 3. It presents in a framework the factors impacting on the psychological well-being of the individual during the process of immigration.

Figure 6: Framework of factors impacting on psychological well-being during the process of immigration.



CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This study is focussing on the problem, 'How can immigrants be prepared to cope with the psychological effects of migration?' The literature study in Chapters 2 and 3 explores existing research with regard to the range of factors impacting on the immigrant and his or her resulting psychological well-being. The aim of the empirical study is to explore and describe the feelings and perceptions of a sample of recent immigrants from South Africa to Australia. Data obtained from in depth interviews probing the immigrant's experience will enable the researcher to devise guidelines for the psychological preparation of the immigrant.

4.2 SELECTION OF THE RESEARCH METHOD

For the purposes of this study a qualitative research design has been chosen. The qualitative method is concerned with understanding the selected phenomenon from the participants' perspectives through the interpretation and analysis of data obtained by observation, interviews or surveys. Qualitative designs can be defined as 'an assessment of a situation expressed in words' (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1993:197) or the presenting of facts in a narration with words, (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:14). This is in contrast to a quantitative research method where the researcher seeks to establish causes and effects experimentally by manipulating variables and by presenting the results in a statistical format, (Foster & Parker, 1995:19).

A qualitative case study will be chosen by the researcher because the research question implies many variables and factors to be explored and the researcher is not attempting to 'obtain numerical results which can be reported in tables,

charts or graphs' and which can be generalised to the greater population (Bouma, 2000:171). By applying a case study design and interviewing a small number of participants in depth the researcher hopes to establish how immigration affected these people and in what way they attempted to cope psychologically. In the words of McMillan and Schumacher, (1993:394), 'the researcher does not aim at generalizations of results but at **the extension of the understandings**, detailed descriptions that enable others to understand similar situations and extend these understandings in subsequent research'.

4.3 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

In quantitative research the researcher is detached from the study to avoid bias. In qualitative research the researcher's role will be more complex as she 'immerses' herself in the phenomenon being studied. This requires a measure of 'disciplined subjectivity', (Erickson in McMillan & Schumacher 1993:15).

As an expatriate living in Australia this researcher will have to guard against allowing her own experiences and perceptions to prejudice her research. This was done in three ways. Firstly, the researcher will keep a written record of her own experience raising her awareness of her own stance, attitudes and possible bias. Secondly, interviews will be recorded and transcribed verbatim. Finally, the researcher will occasionally check back with participants to confirm facts and interpretations. These techniques are all recommended for ensuring qualitative research reliability, (Bouma, 2000:172,186, McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:388).

4.4 SELECTION OF THE SAMPLE

The research site of the study is Sydney, Australia, which is home to many voluntary immigrants from South Africa. The lifestyle of this area closely mirrors the suburban lifestyle in many South African settings which means that immigrants do not have to grapple with great differences in housing, language or climate which may overwhelm all other adaptation problems.

In the pilot study, which took the form of informal conversations with possible participants to the study, the researcher discovered that recent immigrants were more likely to want to talk about their experiences, in other words were 'information-rich' participants. South Africans who had lived in Australia for longer periods were more likely to gloss over their earlier difficulties or to generalise about their experiences.

In this study purposeful sampling and not probability sampling will be used. The researcher wished to select information-rich cases for in-depth study, (Patton in McMillan and Schumacher, 1993:378). Participants will be selected by purposeful sampling, chosen because they seem likely to be 'knowledgeable and informative' about the phenomena the researcher is investigating. As all immigrants are likely to be 'knowledgeable' about the effects of immigration the researcher's criteria for selection will include that the participants are recent, first-time immigrants whose circumstances could be seen as 'typical', that is, not complicated by factors such as severe ill-health, single parenthood or dire financial difficulties. The rationale for this is the belief that immigrants who are overwhelmed by one extreme stressor may well ascribe many of their difficulties only to that stressor.

Bearing this in mind a process of convenience sampling was then used. A convenience sample is defined by McBurney, (1994:203) as 'a nonrandom sample that is chosen for practical reasons'. The following participants agreed to take part in the research which will involve a number of face-to face interviews:

- Griet, Afrikaans-speaking mother of 3 daughters, age 42, works as a relief teacher at primary schools. Arrived in Australia, January 1997.
- Fanus, Afrikaans-speaking father of 4 sons, age 42, chartered accountant, arrived in Australia, April 2001.

- Estelle, age 45, English-speaking mother of 2 daughters and one son, teaches music part-time. Arrived in Australia January 2001.
- Karen, (37) homemaker and student is the mother of one son (3). Arrived in Australia October 2000.
- Carla, (26) works as a school counsellor and has no children.

4.5 INFORMATION GATHERING

After the initial contact meeting (where it will be established whether participants met the sample criteria and are prepared to take part in the study) a follow up meeting will be arranged in which the aims and procedures of the study are to be explained. The gathering of autobiographical details will be used as an opportunity to establish rapport and trust. The frequency and length of subsequent interviews will differ from participant to participant depending on practical considerations and how much ground is covered in each interview. Interviews will be recorded verbatim, and notes will be taken during the course of the interview containing references to nonverbal communication and researcher observations.

4.5.1 The interview as method of gathering information

The ethnographic interview is defined by McMillan and Schumacher, (1993:423) as *'open-response questions to obtain data of participant meanings – how individuals conceive of their world and how they explain or make sense of the important events of their lives'*.

For this study the semi-structured interview type will be used, that is, although the topics are kept in mind the researcher will decide on the wording and sequence of questions during the interview. Although this interview takes on the appearance of a normal everyday conversation it is fact a 'controlled conversation' as the interviewer keeps in mind that she wants to elicit

experiences and attitudes which are relevant to the problem (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell & Alexander, 1995:65). Questions are open-ended to elicit detailed responses rather than yes/no answers. Personal face-to-face interviews have the advantage that the researcher can probe for more complete answers or explain questions if necessary. The disadvantages are that the presence of the interviewer creates a social situation which may result in biased responses according to McBurney, (1994:199). For this researcher this disadvantage is outweighed by the opportunity to probe for more information, to listen to what is *not* being said, and to obtain information from non-verbal cues.

4.5.2 Topics explored in the interview

The researcher will seek to cover the following topics during the course of the interviews. The questions given below are tentative and will be adapted to suit the circumstances of each interview. At all times the researcher will remain aware of the research question and seek to explore the phenomenon of psychological adaptation in immigration.

- ***Motivation for leaving South Africa (push – pull continuum).***

What made you decide to leave, how did you make the decision to leave?
Who was the person in your family who was most strongly in favour/hesitant to move?

- ***Initial expectations.***

What did you imagine Australia to be like?
How did you find Australia initially?
How did you think your life would be different in Australia? Now that you're here is it like you thought it might be?

- ***Circumstances of move and initial arrival.***

How did your move go?
What was difficult or problematic about leaving?
How did you feel?

What do you most vividly remember about your first weeks in Australia?

Did you know people in Australia? What did that mean to you?

Did you do a lot of research about Sydney before you came? Who helped you find out things once you were here?

- ***Phases of adaptation.***

Tell me about the ups and downs you have experienced.

Did you settle in easily?

Describe for me some good/bad days you've had in Australia.

- ***Migration stress.***

What bothered or stressed you most about settling in Australia?

What were the most difficult things you had to cope with in Australia?

Tell me what it was like for you to settle in a new country.

Were there difficulties that took you by surprise?

Did you ever regret immigrating...why/why not?

- ***Coping mechanisms.***

What did you do about.....? What are you doing about

What has happened to your marriage/family during this time? How are you children doing?

How have you come to terms with your new life?

What do you think about Australia/Australians?

How do you see your future in Australia?

How has your health been in Australia?

- ***Psychological preparation***

Is there anything you wish you had known before you left South Africa?

What is the most difficult thing about immigrating?

What advice would you have for would be immigrants?

Knowing what you know now would you have immigrated?

Is there anything you wished you had done differently?

4.6 INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Information obtained in a semi-structured, open-ended interview is not systematically organised in categories or topics and may introduce new perspectives not delineated in the proposed schedule of topics. The interviews will be transcribed and integrated with the interview notes before coding the emergent categories or topics. The aim of data analysis, according to Minichiello et al, (1995:247), is to find meaning in the information collected. This will be done using a process of arranging and presenting the information in order to search for ideas.

An analysis and interpretation of each participant's information will be made. Participant's responses to questions will be coded in order to identify concepts and themes. Inferences will be drawn about the nature of these participant's psychological preparation and coping. On the basis of these inferences and the information obtained from the literature study a set of guidelines for the drawing up of a programme to facilitate psychological preparation for immigration will be formulated.

4.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Participants will be informed of the nature of the research prior to the interview and their permission was gained to use any information given by them in the study. It will be made clear to participants that pseudonyms could be used but that biographical details would remain intact. Fears that the interview could dredge up personally upsetting issues, as mentioned by Bouma, (2000:200) will be kept in mind by the researcher.

4.8 SUMMARY

In this chapter it was established that a qualitative research design will be used for the empirical study. The case study of the phenomenon of the psychological effects and coping strategies will be explored as it manifests in the experiences

of recent immigrants to Australia from South Africa. The feelings, perspectives and experiences of five participants will be explored in depth through the technique of face-to-face, open-ended interviews. Data obtained from the participants' interviews will be collated into categories and compared with information gathered by the literature study, and to each other. These findings will be discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

EMPIRICAL STUDY AND RESEARCH RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aims of this study as stated in Chapter 1.5 are threefold. The first aim was to uncover by means of a literature study existing research on the psychological effects of immigration as well as strategies of coping and adaptation. This information is discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Figure 6 in Chapter 3.8, 'Framework of factors impacting on the psychological well-being during the process of immigration' is a synthesis of the literature study.

The second aim of this study is to do an empirical study with recent South African immigrants to Australia in order to establish to what extent that which was reported in the literature study is a true and adequate reflection of the experience of these immigrants. In the forefront of the researcher's mind is the third aim; to draw up a set of guidelines for the establishment of a programme for the psychological preparation for immigration.

In this chapter the empirical data obtained by means of the interviews is presented. Five individuals were invited to share their immigration experience in semi-structured interviews. Participants, more often than not, became so engrossed in sharing their story that they presented it as a chronological narrative during which they inadvertently touched upon many of the topics the researcher wished to explore. In order to analyse the data in an orderly and systematic manner the 'Framework of factors impacting on the psychological well-being during the process of immigration' Figure 6, Chapter 3.8, is used as a basis for organising the information.

Consequently the data is arranged under the following headings:

- Migration motivation and the impact of circumstances in the country of origin and the host country on the immigrant.
- Demands and stresses of living in a new country.
- Experience of phases of immigration as perceived by the participants.
- Personal and external coping resources utilised by the participants.
- The path to self-actualisation: participants' evaluation of their present condition.

Prior to the discussion of the obtained data a brief description is given of each of the participants.

5.2 DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS

What the participants have in common is that they emigrated from South Africa to Australia and are all living in Sydney at the time of this study. However, their personal circumstances differ widely, as this thumbnail sketch of each shows. It should also be pointed out that every participant did not only reflect upon his or her own personal experience but included the experiences and perceptions of spouses and, in some cases, children. To a large extent the data reveals the trials, tribulations and triumphs of five families and not only of five individuals. In order to protect anonymity and confidentiality pseudonyms have been used.

- **Carla**, age 26, has been married to David, also 26, for two years, they have no children. They arrived in Australia from Johannesburg on 31 December 2001; at the time of the study they had been living in Sydney for 8 months. Karen works as a School counsellor and David is involved in the I.T. industry.
- **Estelle**, age 45, has been married to Robert (48) for 22 years, they have a son (12) and two daughters (17 and 18). The family left Pietermaritzburg in January

2001; they have been in Australia for 20 months. Estelle is a music teacher and Robert an engineer.

- **Fanus**, (42) and his wife Ula (40) of Centurion have been married for 19 years. They have four sons (18,16,14,11); the youngest is slightly handicapped. Fanus is a chartered accountant and Ula takes care of the home. They have been in Australia for 20 months.
- **Karen**, (37) is married to Bill, they have one son, aged 3, and Bill has a daughter from a previous marriage who stayed behind in Cape Town. They arrived in Sydney October 2000 and have been in Sydney for 23 months. Bill is in the I.T. industry and Karen is doing a course to qualify as a personal fitness trainer. In South Africa she worked in the field of human resources.
- **Griet**, (42) is married to Pieter, (48), they have three daughters aged 15, 13 and 9. This family arrived in Sydney from Pretoria in January 1997, making Griet the participant who has been in Australia the longest; nearly five years. She is included in this study as she can give the perspective of a longer term immigrant, and is seen by the researcher to be information-rich as she has given a great deal of thought to the immigration process and is both perceptive and articulate. Since arriving in Australia Griet has returned to university to qualify as primary level schoolteacher and at present works on a part-time basis. Pieter is an engineer in the field of water supply.

The views expressed by these five participants are now discussed starting with their motivation for immigration and their expectations of the host country.

5.3 MIGRATION MOTIVATION AND THE PERCEPTION OF CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND THE HOST COUNTRY

As seen in the literature study (Chapter 2.2) the motivation for immigration plays a key role in the psychological well-being of the immigrant. The researcher sought to establish the participants' reasons for leaving South Africa, how they reached the decision and who in the family was the driving force behind the immigration.

It is significant that not one of the families made an impulsive decision to immigrate, all of them had given it some thought for years prior to taking action. Carla, the youngest of the participants, said that she and her husband had been thinking about it for two years. Griet and Estelle had been considering immigration intermittently for 20 years. Fanus had even explored Canada as an option four years ago. This implies that a great deal of careful consideration, soul-searching and a measure of mental preparation must have gone into their decision, making their comments and experiences valuable for this study.

When discussing their motivation for immigration participants cited both push and pull factors as discussed in the literature study, Chapter 2.2. Two primary reasons emerged as push factors; fear of becoming victims of violent crime and concerns about the economy. Participants often justified their fears about crime by relating incidents which had occurred to them personally or to close friends and family. Three of the women referred to the stress of feeling threatened all the time. Karen, especially, spoke of her feelings of vulnerability when she was out with her baby.

Interestingly, for four of the participants their experiences whilst travelling to other countries contributed to their motivation to emigrate from South Africa. Karen points out that she felt safer in New York than in Cape Town, and that she was amazed at her own amazement that she could go for a walk in suburban Sydney at 10 pm without a twinge of unease. Griet describes a moment when she witnessed a small child using the pedestrian crossing to negotiate an extremely busy street in Sydney. The child's absolute confidence and trust in the system and the fact that the traffic did indeed immediately stop to let her cross safely became for Griet symbolic of what she wanted for her daughters.

The economy, future prospects and employment problems in South Africa were discussed reflecting the fact that immigrants' perceptions of circumstances in their country of origin influenced their decision to immigrate. Karen could not find employment in Cape Town in spite of being extremely well qualified and experienced, Carla felt that she and her husband would become *'financial prisoners'* if they developed careers and accumulated assets in South Africa.

Fanus, as a chartered accountant, substantiated his concerns about the economy with statistics and references to economic models. Three of the participants were motivated by concerns for their children's future opportunities for study and employment.

Another push factor touched on by the participants is more difficult to label, referred to variously as '*the declining environment*', '*the negative circumstances*', '*the beggars and the constant bad news*' and the '*situation in Zimbabwe*' as well as references to Australia as being a '*first world country*'. This reflects a negative perception of the political and social structures in South Africa at this time and the fact that individual needs and values drive migration motivation.

Pull factors that motivated people to choose Australia were varied, but not surprising. The fact that it was an English speaking country was seen to be important and that it was similar to South Africa, a reference to the climate and life-style. Employment opportunities and future prospects for children was an important consideration. Both Griet and Carla mentioned that they saw immigrating as an '*adventure*,' reflecting the positive attitude which would stand them in good stead. Every participant alluded to the fact that both partners in the relationship had to be ready for emigration *at the same time*. Some mentioned the fact that over the years one or the other may be positive about emigrating but that action could only be taken if both spouses were equally in favour of going. Fanus sums up by saying, '*Both parties have to be ready to make the change*'.

Closely tied up with motivation are the expectations of the immigrant with regard to how his or her needs and values will be met in the host country, (Chapter 2.2). The reactions of the participants' to queries of how their original expectations of Australia were met or disappointed proved to be very interesting. Both Carla and Griet asserted that they had deliberately not fostered any specific expectations but had been open to anything; both of them reiterated that they expected an adventure and were hugely excited by the prospect of immigration, but were realistic that they would experience difficult times. At point of writing Carla felt that life in Sydney was even better than they thought it would be, that they were not struggling financially as much as they thought they would and that their initial

feelings of loneliness and being overwhelmed by the big city had abated and they now regretted not immigrating two years earlier. Griet was equally positive, reflecting that their only disappointment had been that Pieter was working extremely long hours and they had thought that the life-style in Australia would be more relaxed and less pressured than in South Africa.

Estelle gave a considered and careful answer listing the positive and negative aspects of the city and also referring to the fact that life was very busy and that Robert worked very long hours. The tone of her answer was one of guarded optimism and reflected an attitude that problems were expected and should be seen as challenges that need to be dealt with.

Interestingly both Fanus and Karen used this question as an opportunity to talk about the great emotional stress they had been experiencing. One can assume that neither had expected the process of immigrating to be so difficult emotionally. Both acknowledged the positive aspects of living in Sydney but seemed overwhelmed by the stress they had experienced initially. A more detailed account of this data follows later in the discussion of the crisis phase of immigration.

It can be concluded that all participants are very aware of the push/pull aspect of immigration, but are more focussed on the push aspect. Karen and Fanus are most strongly motivated by their perceptions of the negative aspects of living in South Africa, and justified their decision to leave that country by dwelling at length on the adverse conditions experienced by themselves, friends and family and reports in the press. Estelle, Griet and Carla were more likely to include comment on the positives offered by Australia. Carla and Griet, who deliberately kept an open mind and approached immigration with a very positive attitude, expressed least feelings of disappointment. Carla sums this up by saying, *'I think people come for the wrong reasons...one's expectations...you must be coming FOR something, not just leaving bad things behind...but you mustn't have too high expectations, you have to be realistic'*.

It can be concluded that the participants' motivation for leaving South Africa and their personal expectations and attitude seems to have had some influence on their

initial adaptation. This substantiates the assertions made in the literature study, Chapter 2.2.

5.4 DEMANDS AND STRESSES OF LIVING IN A NEW COUNTRY.

In the 'Framework of factors impacting on psychological well-being during the process of immigration' (Figure 6, Chapter 3.8) the researcher delineated five demands and stressors of living in a new country. They are:

- The actual physical move.
- The depletion of one's social and support network.
- Problems with financial security.
- Loss of lifestyle and roots.
- Loss of knowing, competence, mastery and control.

The participants' experience of each of these demands will now be explored.

5.4.1 The actual physical move

Participants refer to several different aspects when discussing this phase; the severing of family and friendship ties, the winding up of affairs, the physical work of sorting and packing, the selling off of homes and cars, the actual plane journey and the initial task of finding a new place to live and setting up one's home. All participants describe their moves as going well, and point out that they started to plan well in advance. This fits in with Sluzki's assertion that the first phase of immigration is usually a time of heightened efficiency and narrow, task-oriented focus, (Chapter 2.5.1).

Saying good-bye to family, friends and even pets was very traumatic for most participants. Only Griet points out that by the time they left she was '*sick of saying*

good-bye' and felt only relief and excited anticipation when she boarded the aircraft. For some the living conditions prior to their departure impacted strongly on their stress levels; Karen waited out her last month in South Africa in a furnished flat, with no car and a screaming, colicky baby. She wept uncontrollably during the flight from Cape Town to Johannesburg only to find herself having to go through another heart wrenching farewell at that airport. Estelle says that everything was so hectic that she didn't have a chance '*to feel anything*'.

Fanus, Estelle and Karen all expressed strong feelings of being overwhelmed by the immediate demands placed on them upon their arrival in Sydney. Estelle describes it as a time of '*shock, noise, traffic, rush to sort out kids and somewhere to live...*' Fanus and his family discovered halfway through their first day in Sydney that they had forgotten that it was their son's birthday, which reduced the whole family to tears. Karen found that she could not sleep as her mind was whizzing and their attempts to find somewhere to live were frustrated by the Olympics. Forced to live with work colleagues for six weeks she found the first months in Sydney extremely difficult. This substantiates the statement made in Chapter 2.5.2 that individuals seem to be in a state of concussion, overall stunned and confused but maintaining a narrow focus where task-oriented efficiency is heightened.

Griet and her family slept on the floor for several days until her husband's new colleagues discovered their predicament and provided them with basic necessities. Her memories of that time are dominated by her amazement and gratitude for the overwhelming kindness of strangers. Fanus also recalls how, having no car, the family walked kilometres from the local station to enrol the children in school but were taken home by a kindly school secretary who did two trips in her little car. He repeats several times during the interview that he should have planned the first month of their stay more carefully and should not have placed additional stress on himself and the family by rushing and pushing to get through their 'to do' list as quickly as possible. He now wishes that he had delayed taking up his position and had rather spent time settling in the family.

What emerges from this portion of the interview is; firstly, how strongly one's perceptions of the circumstances, in other words one's 'patterns of appraisal' as

discussed in Chapter 3.2, influences one's stress levels and mental state, and secondly, how one's living conditions directly prior to, and after, relocation may play an important role in one's state of mental well-being.

Both Estelle and Fanus placed great stress on themselves as they felt it incumbent on them to re-establish the family as quickly as possible. Griet and Karen both had adverse living conditions to contend with but reacted very differently to their individual circumstances. Carla did not refer to her living circumstances at all but spoke of how excited and happy she and David were to explore the city. Her experience seems to reinforce the statements made by the participants with children that one should immigrate as young as possible.

5.4.2 The depletion of one's social and support network

This seems to be, along with the feelings of a loss of competence, the aspect of immigration most problematic for all the participants. Every participant spoke of loneliness and a sense of isolation. Carla says that she and David felt very isolated, like outsiders and yearned for friends and a change in conversation. Karen missed having someone to talk to as she was at home with a very young child. Griet comments that even now, after being in Australia for five years she misses sharing her children's achievements with her family and recalls that the only time she really wept during their immigration was when she unpacked her belongings in her new home and missed having her mother share this with her.

Estelle, having come from a small and close community, was uncomfortable with the impersonality and rush of a big and busy city. She reflects that she relied heavily on her sister (who has been living in Sydney for 20 years) and really worked at re-establishing friendship networks especially amongst the expatriate South African community. Fanus pointed out that both he and Ula experienced tremendous stress but felt that they had no-one to talk to, neither wanted to add to their partner's load or felt close enough to new friends to express their emotions. Fanus added that it was not possible to speak honestly to friends left behind as they could not begin to understand and it would, in any case, involve a loss of face.

What also emerges in the interviews is the stress placed on the marriage during immigration. Fanus comments that he and Ula did not confide in each other as each was trying to protect the other partner, it was only after a crisis that they re-established their usual close relationship and started to rely on each other. He wryly points out that they then took it in turns to be the one needing help. Estelle makes the comment that husband's and wives should study a guide on emigrating together as women '*have such different needs and perspectives to men*'. For Karen immigration precipitated a great crisis in her marriage. She became increasingly isolated, frustrated and resentful about the fact that she had sacrificed much and was now left literally holding the baby, doing housework and watching her husband '*excited and on a buzz*' enjoying work and making friends. They are now in marriage therapy and are '*renegotiating their roles*'. Her experience convincingly illustrates the statements made with regard to marital stress discussed in Chapter 2.5.3. Carla comments that she actively worked at being as supportive as possible towards her husband and she felt that he made an extra effort to support her as well.

5.4.3 Problems with financial security

All but one of the five participants referred to this aspect of immigration stress. Carla had initially felt pressurised to find employment, which she did quite easily and commented that their expectations of financial stress had proved to be less of a problem than they originally expected. Estelle mentioned that as they had three children attending private schools they needed to budget strictly which was difficult as they had been very comfortable financially in South Africa. She envisages that their future in Australia will be financially tough. Griet had recently started working on a part-time basis and really enjoyed earning money for luxuries, which they had previously not been able to afford. Fanus mentions the stress he felt when he unexpectedly had to come up with a large amount of cash money for school deposits.

5.4.4 Loss of lifestyle and roots

For both Griet and Estelle this was a factor which was very important. Estelle describes her life in Pietermaritzburg as being very 'genteel'. They were well-known members of a close-knit community and their children were scholarship pupils at a small but highly regarded school. She did not feel threatened or unsafe in her area and their motivation to immigrate was taken on a long-term view. Estelle wonders if they made the right decision as their day to day lifestyle has become very hectic and she now has concerns for her daughters' safety as they travel and socialise all over Sydney. Furthermore, her part-time employment of teaching music has been a frustrating experience as she finds Australian children rude and undisciplined.

Griet, a fairly conservative and devout Afrikaans-speaking South African has found the licentious behaviour of young people in Australia quite distressing. She worries about the abuse of alcohol and drugs and is concerned about the lack of respect shown towards authority by young people. She does comment that ~~that~~ which we see as disrespectful may in fact just be the result of young Australians being encouraged to have their own opinions and speak their own minds.

Griet still mourns the loss of her own culture and the fact that she may never be able to fully share her history and heritage with her daughters. She recounts the anecdote of her youngest child saying that they need to go back to South Africa as she does not have enough memories. Griet has gathered around her a number of like-minded families who go to church together (sometimes the services are in Afrikaans), visit each other regularly and go on holidays together.

5.4.5 Loss of knowing, competence, mastery and control

The participants of this study all expressed their dismay, anxiety and frustration as well as their feelings of uncomfortable dislocation as they struggled to master the many demands of their new surroundings. For all of them the feelings of incompetence and loss of control were very uncomfortable and they recounted anecdotes of 'losing it'. Every person mentioned how difficult it was to learn to get

around Sydney, a vast city of 4 million inhabitants, its roads clogged with traffic night and day.

Carla, Fanus and Estelle reflect on the difficulty of opening bank accounts, getting insurance, driver's licences and finding somewhere to live. Carla recalls the day she 'lost it': *' I had to make a call, insurance or something, I couldn't understand what they wanted me to do, then I lost my way when driving, completely, and I landed up crying...I felt most unhappy, I felt that I had lost a bit of myself, lost my identity...adapting was taking too long, I couldn't cope, which was hard for me as because I've always been the one in my family who copes...I had a sense of a loss of self. I've never been in this position before'*. Her experience aptly illustrates the sense of a loss of identity and competence discussed in Chapter 2.5.3.

Estelle felt most frustrated when it came to making important decisions about her daughters' choice of schools and subjects. She had always been totally informed and in control and now these decisions had to be made almost blindly.

Fanus spoke eloquently and in great detail on how, after months of working punishing hours in order to prove himself worthy of the high position to which he had been appointed, he found himself unable to sleep, concentrate or express his thoughts in fluent English. He became depressed and emotional and resigned from that position when he was offered a job elsewhere. He describes his crisis as, *'the hard drive had crashed, the screen is on, it is flickering but nothing is coming through from the hard drive'*. For Fanus, who is a highly competent, successful businessman and academic this was an extremely frightening experience. He feels that it took him about 18 months before he regained his pre-immigration levels of self-confidence and was capable of delivering a high standard of work. His experience shows the effect of cumulative stress as discussed in Chapter 2.5.3.

Griet, whose resilience and optimism are obvious, was reduced to tears by her first job interview. She expressed tremendous feelings of vulnerability and frustration that after five years in Australia she still did not feel capable of presenting herself in such a way that her strengths and competence would be noticeable.

In this study Griet, Carla, Fanus and Estelle all fit the profile of capable, experienced persons who are pro-active and accustomed to being in control. For these people the feeling of not knowing, not being in control and of being thought of as inadequate or insignificant is a very stressful situation with which to cope.

5.4.6 Additional factors: dealing with feelings of grieving and guilt

Although the researcher did not include these two topics as focus points they emerged during the course of the interviews as important aspects of the immigration process for the participants.

Participants made many references to a sense of loss they experienced, along with great feelings of mourning and sadness. Often this mourning was inextricably bound up with feelings of guilt.

Carla felt sad and guilty that she had deprived her parents of the joy they would have had with their grandchildren, she felt that she had traumatised them and that they were more upset than they revealed. Some members of her husband's family made him feel guilty and they had to make a decision not to 'own' that guilt. Carla uses words such as 'deserted' and 'traitor', which reflect how difficult it was for them to leave their families.

Karen comments that she felt a 'great deal of sadness...I felt sad about my son's loss of contact with his grandparents'. She continues, 'You do grieve...the loss is there, in a way it is worse than death as they are still there, but not for you'. Her husband felt guilty about leaving his daughter from a former marriage in South Africa, this was dealt with by getting advice from a child psychologist, co-opting family to stay involved with her and setting up a permanent bedroom for her in Australia as she visits them twice a year.

Estelle felt sad and guilty that she had taken her older children from an idyllic setting where they were doing very well and plunged them into a very different and demanding world. She was concerned that they would not replace the good life-

long friends they had left behind and would struggle to attain the high status positions they held in their former school.

Karen also expressed guilt at being able to escape from the South African situation. She felt guilty about leaving her housekeeper with whom she had a warm friendship and was concerned about her future. When she was in South Africa she saw street children and thought guiltily that she was already privileged and yet she wanted to, and could, leave.

Griet reflected quite a different attitude; *'Here you can breathe easy...without feeling guilty, you don't have to feel guilty about having money, about having a normal life, about your children being able to go to school'*. She expressed a feeling of relief, of being able to put aside a burden of guilt.

These feelings of grief and guilt were dealt with by rationalisation, acceptance and in Fanus's case by denial. He stated that he did not feel guilty about anything or anyone as he is putting the past behind him and optimistically focussing on the future.

To sum up, South Africans immigrating to Australia experienced every one of the stressors and demands mentioned in the Framework of Factors, with the loss of one's social network and the loss of knowing, mastery, competence and control coming to the fore in the interviews. Furthermore, feelings of grief, mourning and the subject of guilt were also alluded to frequently.

5.5 EXPERIENCE OF PHASES OF IMMIGRATION.

The phases of immigration, as discussed in the Literature study (Section 2.5) follow the classic stress model, that is; a period of preparation is followed by one of high efficiency, excitement and exhaustion. After that we may have a crisis phase of decompensation when the effects of cumulative stress become obvious, the sense of a loss of competency and identity become noticeable, children may develop problems and the roles in the marriage may need to be renegotiated. Finally a levelling out or adaptation phase occurs.

All five the participants experienced these phases to a greater or lesser degree. However, the time frames and intensity of the experience differed from person to person. Carla and Griet both felt that although they had off days they did not experience a phase of crisis. Paula describes her difficult time as '*a dip*' and feels that she and David both felt like they were fitting in after six or seven months. She does however admit to developing terrible migraines as a result of her stress. Griet describes the mechanisms she put into place to ensure that she would cope but admits to having succumbed to tears on some occasions. Estelle comments that her mood was much affected by the state of mind of her children, and there were times that she felt stressed, angry and guilty for having done this to her children. Estelle feels that they have now, after almost two years, settled in and describes this phase as a '*coming to terms via shock, anger and finally submission*'.

Fanus and Karen both underwent a major crisis phase, both feeling that they could not cope, having problems with their health and becoming depressed. Both have put into place measures to deal with their stress and at time of writing Fanus felt that he had come through the crisis and was coping with the pressures at work and at home. Karen comments that she has never felt '*wonderful*' but that she has gradually felt more comfortable and is still putting measures into place and working at her relationship in order to regain lost ground.

The fact that participants commented that one should give oneself time to settle in, that one should be patient with oneself and one's family and that immigration adaptation should be seen as a two year project reflects their experience that a period of '*levelling out*' as referred to in Chapter 2.5.4 is ultimately achieved.

5.6 PERSONAL AND EXTERNAL COPING RESOURCES.

The researcher attempted to establish how the participants coped with migration stress. A wide variety of coping mechanisms are mentioned, both instrumental and palliative as discussed in Chapter 3.4. Participants all mentioned that first and foremost came the active work of re-establishing a support network of acquaintances and friends. Both Estelle and Karen reveal that they accepted every

invitation offered to them. Griet started conversations with people she overheard talking Afrikaans in shopping malls. Neighbours, colleagues, the parents' of children's friends and people at church were where most friends were made. Participants pointed out that the network of South African expatriates is vast and informal but newcomers are generally made to feel welcome and are introduced to other families. Having someone to talk to other than one's similarly beleaguered partner was seen as the first step in reducing stress. Interacting with other South Africans was seen as valuable but also dangerous as one could be destabilised emotionally when confronted by people struggling to cope with similar issues.

Familiarity with the environment was also important. Griet tells that she made a point of visiting the same row of shops so that the girls identified with 'their' shop, pet store and bank. The simple act of being recognised by a shopkeeper was important when feeling that your identity has disappeared.

Taking ownership of a house, getting pets and joining a church, gym or sports club were important ways of putting down roots. Both Fanus and Karen found that exercising was a good way of relieving stress. Griet found the sharing and support she got from her church group was instrumental in her ability to cope with her changed surroundings.

Some participants worked very hard at regaining competence: Estelle studied books and newspapers so that she became familiar with the history, geography and social structure of Sydney. Every re-establishment of 'normal' life, such as attaining one's driver's licence, procuring insurance and credit cards was seen as an achievement which would alleviate stress. Carla comments that they found ways to solve problems, for example studying the Sydney map book, or establishing a routine.

Griet coped by focussing on the needs of her children, she decided that if she was seen to be coping and happy her family would follow, *I made a point of never crying or moaning or complaining in front of my children...I knew they would respond to my emotional state*. In the first months she spent all her time with her three-year

old teaching her English by visiting playgroups and libraries, and by watching videos. She also became very involved in church activities and Bible study.

Karen points out that she and her husband found themselves drinking wine every night whereas before it had been an occasional occurrence. Fanus started using sleeping tablets in order to get some rest. Both Estelle and Griet referred to uncomfortable weight gain in the first months of resettlement. These are short-term palliative coping techniques which may prove to be problematic in the long-term.

Rationalisation and acceptance of the situation helped some participants to cope. Carla comments that she rationalised that she had made a sacrifice to be here and that she now had to accept and live with her decision. Estelle had to work through feelings of anger and doubt about the wisdom of their decision until she came to a point of '*submission*'. For Karen a visit back to South Africa seemed to give her the perspective she needed to accept and make the best of her situation in Australia, she comments, '*After three days in South Africa I wanted to go home...and I meant Sydney*'. It could also be argued that for Karen motivation to immigrate was based mostly on 'push' factors and her visit to South Africa reinforced her primary motivation.

For four of the participants sharing with, and caring for, their families was seen as a positive coping mechanism. These families seemed to develop a strong sense of cohesion and mutual support. Both Estelle and Griet were strongly aware from the start that they were setting the emotional climate of the home. Fanus's 'recovery' from his crisis phase was at least partially motivated by his realisation that his wife was equally stressed and unhappy but felt that she could not share her feelings with him and add to his burden. Karen and her husband moved further away from each other as each struggled in isolation to deal with the demands of living in a new country, finally they turned to professional support in the form of a marriage counsellor.

To summarise; Table 4 summarises the coping strategies employed by these participants under the headings of instrumental and palliative techniques. These techniques closely reflect those discussed in the literature study in Chapter 3.6.

Table 4: Coping strategies employed by participants

Instrumental coping strategies	Palliative coping strategies
Actively re-establishing a network of friends.	Talking to spouse, family or friends. Talking to other recently arrived immigrants.
Establishing a routine.	Exercising.
Gathering information, increasing knowledge.	Drinking, eating or smoking more.
Putting systems back into place, e.g. schooling, banks, licences, insurance, renting or buying a home.	Keeping busy, focussing on the needs of others, such as spouse or children.
Exploring the environment, getting to know places.	Keeping in touch with friends and family in South Africa by regular phone and e-mail contact.
Seeing therapists or counsellors.	Rationalising, accepting, coming to terms with grief and loss. Dealing with overwhelming stress by denial.
Joining clubs and churches.	Adopting and maintaining a positive outlook. Focussing on a sense of commitment

5.7 THE PATH TO SELF-ACTUALISATION: PARTICIPANTS' EVALUATION OF THEIR PRESENT CONDITION

Self-actualisation is described by Maslow in Mwamwenda, (1996:348) as *'fulfilment, realising one's full potential, being what one was intended to be, enjoying one's self fully, experiencing peak moments, being open and free and at ease with oneself'*.

In the final stage of the interview participants were asked to reflect on the effect that immigration had had on them and to consider what they would have done differently, or had wished they had known before embarking on leaving South Africa. These questions were phrased in exactly the same way for each participant and the substantial difference in both the content and tone of the answers revealed a great deal about the attitude and experience of the person involved. Therefore each participant's response is discussed individually in this section.

- **Karen**, whom the researcher would judge as struggling tremendously to adapt to living in Australia, commented that she did not think that anyone could be prepared for the demands of immigrating; she compared the experience to giving birth and having a child, 'People can tell you about it but you don't know until you've experienced it yourself.' She reiterated how difficult it had been for her and the negative effect the pressures had had on her marriage. Karen also commented on the manner of acculturation (as discussed in the literature study in Chapter 2.3), she felt strongly that new immigrants should assimilate with the new culture and that following a strategy of separation or integration was counter productive to settling down. Her experience was that expatriates who clustered together often expressed anti-Australian sentiments, sadness and bitterness.

Karen did not offer any personal strategies that she could have used to facilitate her adaptation to living in Australia when answering this question, although previously she had mentioned the setting up of a support system, exercising and keeping busy and going for counselling.

- **Fanus**, who also underwent a challenging crisis period strongly emphasised that immigration should not be taken lightly as it is *'very traumatic'*. He adds that both partners in the marriage should be sure of what they are getting into as their marriage will be tested. In retrospect he feels that he should have taken time off to settle his family before launching into demanding employment, and that a person should be *'patient with yourself, your wife and your children...and if you need help ask for it'*. He comments that one should immigrate when you and your children are young, and that the establishment of a new support network is tantamount. His final remark is, *'We did not realise the extent of the change, and the adaptation we would be required to make'*. His testimony endorses the comment made Rumbaut referred to in Chapter 3.1 that *'migration can produce profound psychological distress even among the most motivated and well-prepared individuals, and even under the most receptive of circumstances'*.
- **Estelle**, out of all the participants, was the only one who expressed ambivalence about the wisdom of their decision to immigrate. In retrospect she feels that her family would have been happier if they had settled in a smaller, quieter, less financially competitive city. She endorses the view that one should immigrate when you are young and that the decision to immigrate should be carefully explored by both partners in the relationship. For Estelle the loss of knowledge, competence, control and mastery was very problematic and she comments that she wishes they could have visited the city for a couple of months prior to immigration in order to do research. Her greatest coping mechanism seems to have been her steely determination and commitment to make the best of her circumstances as well as her ability to focus on the positive. Along with Griet, Estelle was also the participant who found humour in the most difficult of situations and could often laugh at herself and her family's struggle to adapt.
- **Carla**, the youngest of the participants and also the one who has been in Australia for the shortest period of time shared with Estelle and Griet the steely resolve to be positive and not to be a person who complains. This attitude reflects the conclusions of *'The stress relationship'* as summarised in Figure 5,

Chapter 3.3. The magnitude and effect of the demands and constraints of the migration situation is dependent on the individual's appraisal of those demands. A positive outlook can result in greater levels of mental well-being. She also comments that immigration is not easy and that one should expect that it will be *'hard, difficult, lonely, bad'*. Yet she repeats her earlier assertion that if they had known how good things were in Australia they would have immigrated earlier. Carla says that she would warn aspirant immigrants that there are many capable, educated people in Australia and that one should realise that one is no longer *'part of an elitist group'*. She refers to the belief that Australians find South Africans to be unobtrusive and arrogant and cautions that one has to, *'start at the bottom and work your way up, tread lightly when you start out ...don't come out with guns blazing'*. Her observations reflect her attitude that one should take pains to assimilate into the host society as discussed in Chapter 2.3.

Carla concludes with a remark which may be taken to reflect Adler's views that immigration adjustment follows Maslow's Need Hierarchy as discussed in Chapter 2.3. She comments that after some time in Australia she and her husband felt, *'What do we do now? We felt very restless...everything seemed slow...simple things became life...like enjoying a bike ride on a beautiful afternoon. Then we realised what was missing ...the state of tension and anxiety. We realised that we got to enjoy life, it took us by surprise; getting used to living rather than surviving'*.

- **Griet**, the participant who has been in Australia for the longest period of time expresses eloquently her satisfaction with her situation. Her strongest coping mechanisms seem to be her unflagging positive attitude, her Christian conviction, the support system she has worked hard to establish and maintain and her infectious cheerfulness and sense of humour.

She comments, *'Here you can breathe easy, without feeling guilty, you can earn and spend your money, you don't have to feel guilty about having a normal life. You have the freedom of being your own person, freedom of spirit, freedom from the oppressive fear to your soul, freedom to sit in front of an open door like*

this, your kids have the freedom to walk the streets, you have the freedom to be alone in your house'.

Since arriving in Australia Griet has returned to University and has qualified as a teacher. She does relief teaching which she enjoys enormously and she gains much pleasure from her ability to contribute to the family budget and to occasionally indulge in luxuries. The researcher is of the opinion that Griet would describe herself as a self-actualised person.

It can be concluded from these interviews that the adaptation to living in a new country is seen as an extremely difficult process by the participants and that they cite own and partner's motivation, realistic expectations, a positive attitude and sense of humour as well as utilising coping resources as necessary for adaptation. Furthermore, participants mention the need to assimilate or integrate into the new society and that adapting to one's changed circumstances requires acceptance, the ability to rationalise about one's situation and to maintain a positive and committed outlook.

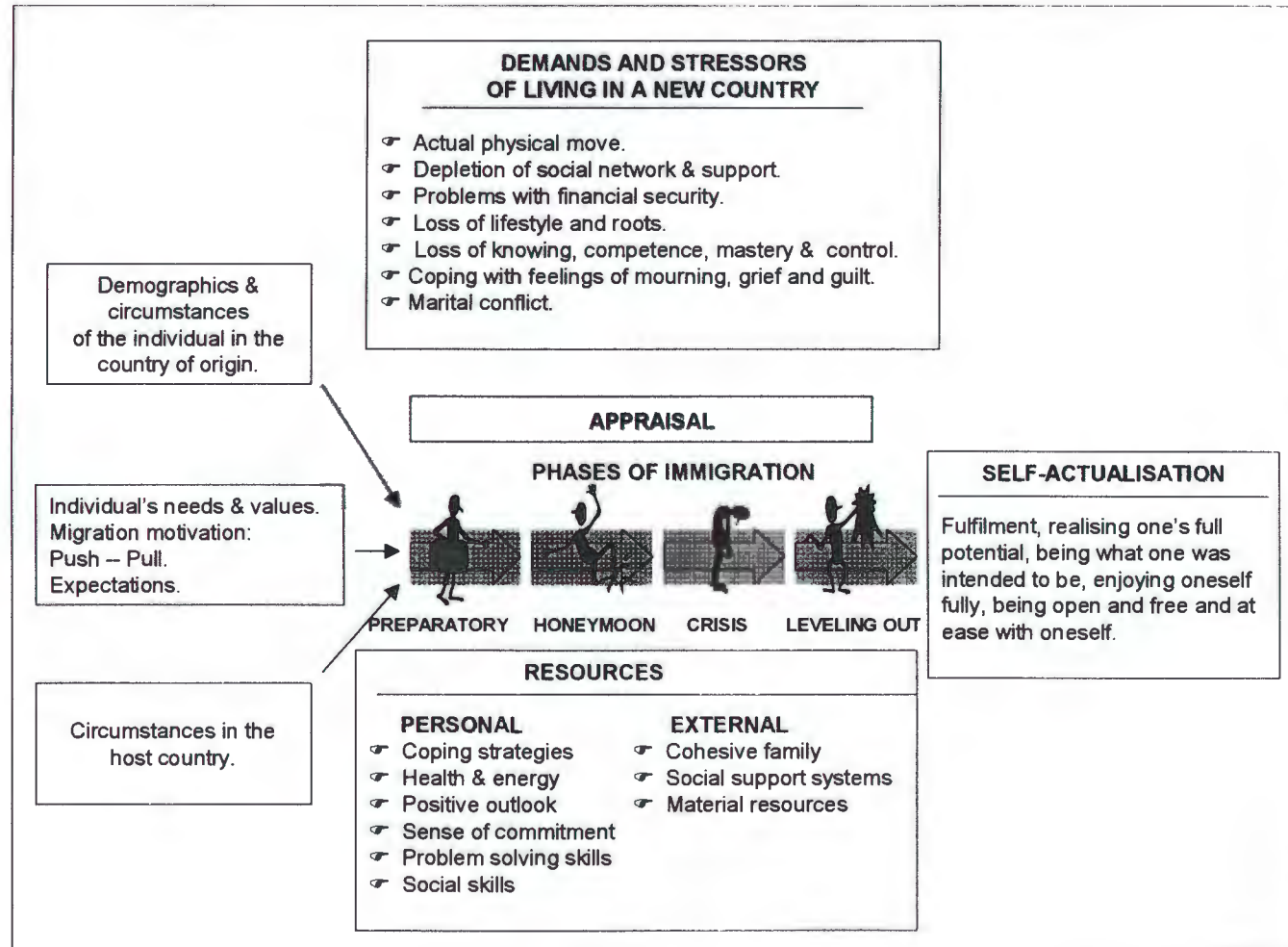
5.8 CONCLUSION

The data obtained from these five participants supports the relevance and accuracy of the information gained from the literature study. The Framework, which was a synthesis of that information, is a fair reflection of the factors influencing these participants' process of psychological adaptation.

However, based on the empirical research some adjustments should be made: Under the heading 'Demands and Stressors of living in a new country' the researcher would include, 'Dealing with feelings of grief, mourning, and guilt' as well as 'Marital stress'. Although marital stress was discussed in Chapter 2.5.3 under the heading of the crisis phase of immigration it became evident that spousal relationships are under great stress throughout the process of immigration and this issue needs specific focus.

The amended 'Framework of factors impacting on psychological well-being during the process of immigration' (Figure 7) can be found at the end of Chapter 5. This synthesis can now be used as a basis to devise a programme to psychologically prepare individuals for immigration. This final aim of the study is addressed in Chapter 6.

Figure 7: Amended framework of factors impacting on psychological well-being during the process of immigration



CHAPTER 6

GUIDELINES FOR THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PREPARATION OF PERSONS FOR THE EFFECTS OF IMMIGRATION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 5 the findings of the empirical study were discussed and the experiences of the participants were compared to information gained in the literature study. In this chapter information from both the literature study and the empirical study is used to meet the aim stated in the first chapter: to compile a set of guidelines for the psychological preparation of persons for the effects of immigration.

It is the opinion of the researcher that the preparation of persons for immigration is a complex and highly individualised task. It is beyond the scope of this study to present a full programme and the following guidelines would be used as a basis for the formulation of a more individualised plan of action.

The 'Framework of factors impacting on the psychological well-being during the process of immigration' Figure 7, Chapter 5.8, makes it clear that there are several different modifying aspects to be taken into consideration when examining an individual's psychological reaction to immigration. Although it is possible to generalise about some information which would be relevant to most immigrants there are other aspects which require a measure of interaction and individualisation. Therefore, any programme to prepare persons psychologically for immigration could not be static and one dimensional, that is, providing only information, but would also have to contain an element of assessment, either in the form of self-assessment or more formal evaluations. Finally, in order to be truly valuable such a programme would also improve and strengthen the scope of coping strategies of the individual. The programme would therefore consist of three separate components namely:

- The provision of information.

- The assessment of various attitudes, approaches and skills.
- The enhancement of a range of coping strategies, that is, 'stress inoculation'.

These components will now be discussed in more detail.

6.2 THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Providing people with information allows them to anticipate and make provision for future demands, and knowledge can be a tool for reducing anxiety and apprehension. The research reported in Chapters 2, 3, and 5 of this study revealed a great deal of material which could be valuable in this programme. In order to make somewhat technical information accessible to the ordinary reader it could be framed in a question and answer format. The potential immigrant could be provided with the following information:

- **Do you know why you want to immigrate?**

Information would be provided about the motivation continuum, push/pull factors, the importance of balance and realistic expectations.

- **How do you see yourself fitting into your new society?**

This question would be followed by a discussion on acculturative strategies, with emphasis on the success of assimilation and integration.

- **How long do you think it will take you to adapt to your new country?**

The phases of immigration adaptation would be discussed here, along with the demands of each phase. It would be important to emphasise that the final phase is often accompanied by a sense of great fulfilment and achievement.

• **What do you think might be tough about immigrating?**

Information about the demands and stressors of living in a new country (that is, migration stress) as experienced by previous immigrants can be provided. It would be important to emphasise that no two individuals' experience is the same; the range and intensity of stress can differ dramatically from person to person and from day to day.

• **So, what is stress exactly?**

The nature of stress would be discussed with special emphasis on 'The stress relationship' (Chapter 3.2) which emphasises that one's appraisal or evaluation of the situation is very important in terms of your ability to cope with it. At this point the concept of Cognitive-Behaviour therapy could be introduced as a way of learning how to deal with future difficulties, (Chapter 3.4).

• **What happens on bad days?**

The indicators of extreme stress would be discussed enabling clients who find themselves in such a position to recognise and deal with the stress before it becomes extremely problematic.

• **What can I do to make the process easier?**

In this section an overview of psychological coping strategies, both instrumental and palliative would be discussed. The difference between adaptive and maladaptive strategies would be clarified. Clients would be encouraged to start thinking about their personal repertoire of coping skills and strengths.

6.3 THE ASSESSMENT OF VARIOUS ATTITUDES, APPROACHES AND SKILLS

As every aspirant immigrant will have a totally different set of circumstances, strengths and weaknesses it would be necessary for a measure of assessment or evaluation to take place. This assessment may be done in an informal way, the client may, for example, do undisclosed self-assessment or it may be formalised, using existing or especially designed instruments. Owing to the scope of this study it is not possible to examine at great length this aspect of the programme beyond a brief discussion as to which areas should be investigated.

A good starting point would be the 'Synthesis of migration coping' found in Chapter 3.6. These thirteen points initially summarised the information found in the literature study with regard to qualities and traits which enabled immigrants to cope with the many and varied stressors of migration. These points would serve as an interesting starting point for self-reflection or for discussion. In a family group they may enable family members to analyse their combined strengths and weaknesses. Rewritten in the form of questions they are as follows:

1. Do you have a sense of commitment and strong motivation to make this life change work?
2. Do you have moral or spiritual sources of conviction and courage?
3. Do you have a realistic idea of the stressors you will face and the ability to see them as challenges to be overcome?
4. Do you have a positive outlook, strong self-esteem and the belief that you control, to a large extent, your own circumstances?
5. Can you recognise the signs of extreme stress?
6. How do you deal with stress and problems? Do you have an array of coping strategies, both problem and emotion focussed?

7. Do you know how to go about solving a problem and using your common sense?
8. Are you in good shape physically?
9. How are your social skills? Are you good at making and maintaining contacts and friends?
10. Will you be capable of maintaining your existing support system while working actively at establishing a new one?
11. Do you have a measure of financial resources?
12. Do you have the ability to recognise your own weaknesses and not allow them to hamper your ability to cope?
13. Are you positive about becoming a part of your new culture?

Other assessments which would be valuable are:

- An assessment of one's motivation and expectations.
- The level of marital support and family cohesion.
- An assessment of the individual's range of coping strategies, both adaptive and maladaptive, for example, problem-solving, social skills, time-management, knowledge of relaxation techniques, ability to regulate emotions.

6.4 THE TEACHING OF COPING STRATEGIES, THAT IS, 'STRESS INOCULATION'

Stress inoculation has as its goal the training of people to acquire and nurture a flexible, integrated coping repertoire. The goal is not to totally remove stress but to use it constructively, (Chapter 3.4). Possible skills which may be acquired include:

- How to gather (practical) information.
- How to make decisions and solve problems.
- Social and communication skills.
- Relaxation training.
- Cognitive restructuring, that is, raising awareness of how one's thoughts and feelings initiate and maintain stress and how one can, by modifying one's self-dialogue, cope more effectively with encountered problems.
- How to use the family as a source of support, that is, methods of fostering family resilience.

6.5 CONCLUSION

Prospective immigrants can be prepared psychologically for immigration in three different ways. Firstly, by providing them with information about what to expect and how they can deal with challenging situations. Actual case studies could be included as peer models of behaviour and coping. Reading about other people's experiences may clarify concepts. Secondly, immigrants can be given the opportunity of assessing what their strengths and weaknesses would be in this situation. The third phase would enable them to develop and strengthen coping strategies and skills. This final stage is important as individuals may become overwhelmed and intimidated by the information and assessment components. The programme should therefore finish with a discussion on self-actualisation with the emphasis on immigration as an adventure and a possibility for personal growth.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of migration is not a new one; people have been relocating since the beginning of time in search for what they see as a better life. The field of immigration studies is vast, encompassing the realms of commerce and economy, sociology, political science, education and philosophy as well as psychology. As the topic of immigration becomes more and more relevant to the South African society opportunities and the need for research expands. In some countries, such as Canada and Israel, the movement of people in and out of the country has given rise to prolific psychological research with the emphasis on psychological adaptation of immigrants once they have immigrated. The emphasis of this study differs in that it focuses on the psychological preparation of individuals prior to immigration. The aims of this study were threefold;

- To do a literature study on the concept of migration, its psychological effects and known strategies for coping and adaptation.
- To do an empirical study with recent South African migrants to Australia in order to establish to what extent that which has been uncovered in the literature study is applicable to this group and if their experience can add to, or is at odds with, the information gained from the literature study.
- To use the information gained in the literature and empirical study to compile a set of guidelines for a programme to prepare persons psychologically for the process of immigration.

7.2 SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE STUDY

The aim of the literature study was to explore previous research on the psychological effect that migration has on individuals and to ascertain which factors, both internal and external, influence mental well-being.

It was established that an immigrant's frame of mind is influenced by his motivation for immigration which gives rise to a set of expectations with regard to the host society. The immigrant experiences several phases of adaptation during which his level of stress is influenced by the balance or imbalance between his perception of the demands and constraints of the new environment and his own personal resources, capabilities and access to external support.

The adaptation of the immigrant, and his mental well being, depends largely on how he deals with the cumulative stress of his situation. Identified migration stressors include the physical and mental strain of the actual move, the loss of social network and support systems, unfamiliarity with the new environment and culture, changes with regard to finances and lifestyle and feelings of loneliness, incompetence and loss of mastery and control.

How well immigrants adapt to their changed situation depends on the physical, mental, emotional and material resources they have at their disposal. Personal resources include the ability to apply both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies, good health, a positive outlook based on a sense of conviction and commitment, strong self-esteem as well as skills in areas such as social interaction and problem solving. For some families the family will be an additional source of support, for others it may become an additional source of stress. Immigrants who quickly rebuild a support system and maintain existing support systems are at an advantage, as are those who choose to become assimilated or integrated into the host society.

7.3 SUMMARY OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

An empirical study was undertaken with a sample group of five recent South African immigrants to Australia in order to establish to what extent the information which had been uncovered in the literature study is applicable to this group and if their experience can add to, or is at odds with, the information gained in the literature study.

The data obtained from these five participants supports the relevance and accuracy of the information gained from the literature study. The 'Framework of factors impacting on the psychological well-being during the process of immigration', (Chapter 5.8) which was a synthesis of that information, is a fair reflection of the factors influencing these participants' process of psychological adaptation.

However, the empirical research indicates that these participants felt that dealing with feelings of grief, mourning and guilt played a significant role as a stressor when living in a new country, as did marital stress. These two factors are therefore included in the adapted 'Framework of factors impacting on psychological well-being during the process of immigration'.

7.4 SUMMARY OF THE PROGRAMME FOR THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PREPARATION OF PERSONS FOR IMMIGRATION.

Information was taken from both the literature study and the empirical study to meet the final aim stated in the first chapter; to compile a set of guidelines for the psychological preparation of persons for the effects of immigration.

The preparation of persons for immigration is a complex and highly individualised task, therefore, a programme to prepare persons psychologically for immigration could not be static and one dimensional, that is, providing only information, but would also have to contain an element of assessment, either in the form of self-assessment or more formal evaluations. In addition, to be truly valuable such a programme would also improve and strengthen the scope of coping strategies of

the individual. The programme would therefore consist of three separate components namely:

The provision of information

Information would be provided about the motivation continuum, push/pull factors, the importance of balance and realistic expectations. This would be followed by a discussion on acculturative strategies, with emphasis on the success of assimilation and integration.

The phases of immigration adaptation would be discussed, along with the demands of each phase. It would be important to emphasise that the final phase is often accompanied by a sense of great fulfilment and achievement.

Information about the demands and stressors of living in a new country (that is, migration stress) as experienced by previous immigrants can be provided. It would be important to emphasise that no two individuals' experience is the same; the range and intensity of stress can differ dramatically from person to person and from day to day.

The nature of stress would be discussed with special emphasis on 'The stress relationship' which emphasises that one's appraisal or evaluation of the situation is very important in terms of your ability to cope with it. At this point the concept of Cognitive-Behaviour therapy could be introduced as a way of learning how to deal with future difficulties.

The indicators of extreme stress would be discussed so that if clients find themselves in that position they will recognise and deal with the stress before it becomes extremely problematic.

An overview of psychological coping strategies, both instrumental and palliative would be discussed. The difference between adaptive and maladaptive strategies would be clarified. Clients would be encouraged to start thinking about their personal repertoire of coping skills and strengths.

The assessment of various attitudes, approaches and skills

As every aspirant immigrant will have a totally different set of circumstances, strengths and weaknesses it would be necessary for some formal or informal self-evaluation to take place. Possible areas of assessment include:

- 'Synthesis of migration coping' - a summary of 13 qualities or skills which enable immigrants to cope with migration stress as indicated by previous researchers. These points would serve as an interesting starting point for self-reflection or for discussion.
- An assessment of one's motivation and expectations.
- An evaluation of the level of marital support and family cohesion.
- An assessment of the individual's range of coping strategies, both adaptive and maladaptive, for example, problem-solving, social skills, time-management, knowledge of relaxation techniques, ability to regulate emotions.

The enhancement of a range of coping strategies, that is, 'stress inoculation'

The acquisition of certain skills should be included in the programme, these include:

- How to gather (practical) information.
- How to make decisions and solve problems.
- Social and communication skills.
- Relaxation training.

- Cognitive restructuring, that is, raising awareness of how one's thoughts and feelings initiate and maintain stress and how one can, by modifying one's self-dialogue, cope more effectively with encountered problems.
- How to use the family as a source of support, that is, methods of fostering family resilience.

7.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE PRESENT STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The present study could have covered several aspects in more detail were it not for the constraints of space. Areas which can be researched in more detail both in the literature study and in the empirical study include, marital stress, specifically the renegotiation of roles, as well as the effect that immigration has on children. Interviews with children would have given an interesting perspective on the study.

A second set of interviews at a much later date would undoubtedly have produced interesting comparative data especially with regard to the perception of the phases of immigration.

It would have been valuable to devise a questionnaire to ascertain with a larger sample the range and intensity of the demands and stressors of living in a new country as well as individual's perception of which coping strategies they would like to master prior to finalising the final programme.

Future research could include the examination of existing psychometric instruments to establish if they could be incorporated into the final programme, or alternately undertake the design of test instruments specific to the needs of the programme.

The emphasis that these participants placed on the whole concept of loss and guilt seems to indicate the possibility for further research. Questions that could be explored include the link between voluntary and forced migration and guilt, or the impact that guilt has on psychological adaptation.

7.6 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The contributions of the study include firstly, a succinct synthesis of the factors which impact on the psychological well-being of the immigrant. It serves to summarise the situation of the immigrant which will simplify comparisons, analysis and discussions.

Secondly, the study describes the experience of South African immigrants in Sydney, Australia providing a window on their experience.

Thirdly, this study makes a definite contribution to the unexplored field of immigration preparation prior to leaving one's country of origin. Guidelines for a practical programme have been formulated opening the door to a more refined and specific schedule.

7.7 CONCLUSION

To immigrate is to undertake an experience which gives rise to a myriad of intertwined and conflicting perceptions, emotions and attitudes, all of which can change in an instant. In this study it has been attempted to secure some of the factors which play a role in the process of immigration. These factors were distilled from the work of other researchers describing the experiences of individuals under very different circumstances and surroundings, and tested against the data obtained in the empirical research. The similarity in experience enabled the researcher to compile a forward-looking programme containing the elements of knowledge, assessment and growth in order to offer some guidance to those undertaking this challenging experience.

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I declare that * PREPARATION FOR IMMIGRATION? A PSYCHOLOGICAL

EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



SIGNATURE
(MRS E VAN COLLER)

18-11-02.

DATE