

Utah State University

DigitalCommons@USU

All Graduate Theses and Dissertations

Graduate Studies

5-2008

Sex Differences in the Use and Evaluated Helpfulness of Premarital Advice

Neal J. Sullivan
Utah State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), and the [Social Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Sullivan, Neal J., "Sex Differences in the Use and Evaluated Helpfulness of Premarital Advice" (2008). *All Graduate Theses and Dissertations*. 152.
<https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/etd/152>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies at DigitalCommons@USU. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@USU. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@usu.edu.



SEX DIFFERENCES IN THE USE AND EVALUATED HELPFULNESS OF
PREMARITAL ADVICE

by

Neal J. Sullivan

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Family, Consumer, and Human Development
(Marriage and Family Therapy)

Approved:

Scot M. Allgood, Ph.D.
Major Professor

Victor Harris, Ph.D.
Committee Member

David Law, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Byron Burnham, Ed.D.
Dean of Graduate Studies

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

2008

Copyright © Neal J. Sullivan 2008

All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

Sex Differences in the Use and Evaluated Helpfulness of Premarital Advice

by

Neal J. Sullivan, Master of Science

Utah State University, 2008

Major Professor: Dr. Scot Allgood
Department: Family, Consumer, and Human Development

The purpose of this study was to explore sex differences in the use and evaluated helpfulness of advice received before marriage. In addition, this study explored who typically gave premarital advice. Advice is considered by some to be a form of social support which can be helpful or hurtful to the marriage relationship. The sex of the advice-giver and advice-receiver as well as the relationship quality between them was explored in order to highlight how these variables affect advice use and helpfulness. Utilizing a questionnaire and interviews with individual newlywed husbands ($n = 56$) and wives ($n = 56$), data were collected and analyzed. Advice was mostly given by mothers, fathers, friends, and religious leaders. Generally, both husbands and wives used the advice they were given and both evaluated the advice as helpful. Sex did not have a significant impact on advice use or helpfulness, but in some cases, the relationship between the advice-giver and advice-receiver significantly influenced the use and evaluated helpfulness of advice.

(78 pages)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Someone once said, “Behind every good man is a better woman.” I have expanded this idea and say behind every good thesis is a better committee. I am grateful for a supportive committee: Dr. Scot M. Allgood for his patience, foresight, and flexibility from the start to the finish of this work; Dr. Victor Harris for his excellent editing and needed encouragement; Dr. David Law for the provision of insight and questions to improve the quality of the study. I am also grateful for Cicile Edwards, whose work with Dr. Allgood resulted in the data used in this study. Finally, I appreciate the gentle reminders and example of Mary-Marie Austin Sullivan, my wife.

Neal J. Sullivan

CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	vii
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Nominal Definitions	3
Purpose Statement	4
II. LITERATURE REVIEW	5
Social Support	5
Effects of Support-Receiver and Support-Giver Characteristics on Supportive Interaction.....	16
Conclusion and Research Questions	28
III. METHODS	30
Design	30
Sample Procedures	30
Procedure	32
Measures	33
IV. RESULTS	35
Research Question 1	35
Research Question 2	36
Research Question 3	38
Research Question 4	41
Research Question 5	42
V. DISCUSSION	45
Summary of Research Questions	45
Limitations of Study	53
Implications of Study and Conclusion	55

REFERENCES58

APPENDICES65

 Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval67

 Appendix B: Interview Record Sheet68

 Appendix C: Instructions for Interview71

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Sample Characteristics of Husbands and Wives.....	32
2	Sources and Percentages of Premarital Advice Given to Husbands and Wives.....	37
3	Statistics of Husbands and Wives' Use and Evaluation of Helpfulness of Advice by Advice-giver.....	40
4	Pearson Correlation Coefficients Depicting Relationships Between Closeness of Relationship with Advice-giver and Use and Helpfulness of Advice for Husbands and Wives.....	43

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Relationships affect a person's mental, physical, and emotional health (Bryant & Conger, 1999; Cohen, 2004; Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997; Hurdle, 2001; Turner & Marino, 1994). For instance, Waite (1995) explained, "marriage seems to produce substantial benefits for men and women in the form of better health, longer life, more and better sex, greater earnings (for men), greater wealth, and better outcomes for children" (p. 486). Conversely, some statistics report that 40-50% of first marriages are likely to end in divorce (Amato, Booth, Johnson, & Rogers, 2007; Clark, 1995) and has been associated with increased numbers of those suffering "psychopathology, physical illness, suicide, homicide, violence, and mortality from disease" (Carrere, Buehlman, Gottman, Coan, & Ruckstuhl, 2000, p. 42). Hence, it is essential that we understand the various interpersonal interactions which lead to people experiencing the benefits of marriage rather than the costs of divorce.

Many professionals have dedicated their work to understanding what interactions make marriages last or hurt marriages while others are utilizing the available research to help couples prepare for marriage (Carrere et al., 2000; Stanley, Markman, St. Peters, & Leber, 1995). Such is the case with premarital prevention programs which focus on educating couples regarding communication, problem-solving, and conflict resolution strategies (Carroll & Doherty, 2003). In their meta-analytical review, Carroll and Doherty reported, "...premarital prevention programs are generally effective in producing significant immediate gains in communication processes, conflict management skills, and

overall relationship quality, and that these gains appear to hold for at least 6 months to 3 years” (p. 114).

Carroll and Doherty’s (2003) conclusion is encouraging, but there are many gaps in premarital prevention research. Among these gaps, there are at least three which will be addressed in the current study. The first gap, is revealed by one study in their review which found that few couples in the study participated in premarital education (Schumm, Resnick, Silliman, & Bell, 1998). This outcome is supported by other health service utilization research which indicates that many who need professional support do not seek it (Wills & DePaulo, 1991).

Those who do not seek professional support likely seek it from informal sources such as clergy, family, or friends (Wills & DePaulo, 1991). For example, participants reported that they prefer help from a spouse or a friend for worries and unhappiness (Veroff, Kulka, & Douvan, 1981). Additionally, researchers in this study found that people with less severe problems tended to seek help from clergy more than psychologists or psychiatrists. However, Wills and DePaulo, in their review of help-seeking literature, reported, “There [was] surprisingly few data on people’s preferred sources of help” (p. 351).

A second gap is that only four studies in Carroll and Doherty’s (2003) review examined male and female differences in how effective the premarital programs were. Though the outcomes of the four studies pointed to no significant differences between sexes on intervention effectiveness, there is some evidence in help-seeking and social support literature that points to differences in how males and females seek and receive support (e.g., Daubman & Lehman, 1993). For instance, Wills and DePaulo (1991)

reported that females tend to “appear in treatment settings in greater proportions than expected from population proportions” (p. 352). Liebler and Sandefur (2002) reported in their study of over 6,000 randomly sampled, middle-aged respondents, women were more likely to give and receive emotional support than men as measured by responses to a questionnaire. Also, Johnson’s (1987) study indicated that females have a more favorable attitude for receiving help than males.

Third, very few articles in the review (Carroll & Doherty, 2003) examined the relationship between the characteristics of the administrator of the program and the participants, though in marriage and family therapy literature, this has been shown to be an important element in the success of therapy (Blow, Sprenkle, & Davis, 2007). In addition, social support literature points to a relationship between the characteristics of the support-giver and the support-receiver and how the support is evaluated (Ashton & Fuehrer, 1993; Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997; Wills & DePaulo, 1991).

Nominal Definitions

In light of current and past research and according to the scope of this current study, the following definitions will be used: (1) Sex refers to the biological assignment of specific sex traits and includes only male and female. The definition does not account for socially constructed gender roles such as traditional male/female, undifferentiated, or androgynous male/female (Ashton & Fuehrer, 1993). (2) Social support is defined by Ashton and Fuehrer as “...an exchange of resources between at least two individuals perceived by the provider or the recipient as intended to enhance the well-being of the recipient” (p. 462). (3) Help is a sub-type of social support (Ashton & Fuehrer) and one

of the resources which may be exchanged in a supportive relationship (Lee, 2002).

Because the concepts of social support and help are similar, they will be used interchangeably; this will enable this study to draw from both social support and help-seeking literature and maintain the wording used in the original sources referenced. (4) Advice is a form of help offered by professionals, family, friends, clergy, and others in which “recommendations as to a course of action” (*Webster’s New World Dictionary*, 1962) are made. (5) Informal help is that offered by family, friends, or church leaders while formal help is given by paid professionals including but not limited to therapists, premarital educators, or counselors (Wills & DePaulo, 1991).

Purpose Statement

Through an exploratory design utilizing interview and questionnaires, this study will use ex post facto data collected from a sample of couples in their first marriage. The purposes of this study are to: (1) identify what informal sources of advice participants received when preparing for marriage, (2) explore differences in male and female responses to advice, (3) examine the effects of the sex of the advice-giver on advice use and helpfulness of advice, and (4) study the effects of the relationship quality between the giver and receiver of advice on use and helpfulness of advice.

Results from this study will add to a growing body of literature regarding how individuals prepare for marriage. In addition, it is hoped that this study will shed light on the personal and interpersonal characteristics that affect the process of utilizing help from informal helpers.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review includes sections on each of the variables examined in this study. It begins with a section outlining the broad context of social support and why it may play a role in preparing individuals for marriage. It will describe advice as one form of social support that has been researched at an increasing rate over the last decade. Later sections will examine the personal and interpersonal characteristics that have been shown in support- and help-seeking literature to affect the evaluation of quality of social support. Finally, this review concludes with research questions which will guide this study.

Social Support

Some researchers tie the foundation of social support research to the work of Caplan (1974) and Cassel (1974). According to Hurdle (2001), Caplan and Cassel were the first to highlight the importance of social networks in “coping with crises, life transitions, and deleterious environments” (p. 73). Researchers today have refined the definition of social support to mean, “... a social network’s provision of psychological and material resources *intended to benefit an individual’s ability to cope with stress*” (Cohen, 2004; p. 676; italics in original).

Since the 70s, researchers have continued to examine whether social support actually helps people—over 4,000 journal articles on social support were published between 1980 and 1996 (Cutrona, 1996). Researchers have grouped their studies on the

outcomes of perceived support and received support and often define the type of support offered (Cohen, 2004). Cohen gives a clear explanation of the three types of support typically found in social support research: *emotional support* involves the communication of care or empathy and allows opportunity for the stressed person to express their emotions; *instrumental support* is the giving of tangible support such as money or assistance with tasks of daily living; “[i]nformational support refers to the provision of relevant information intended to help the individual cope with current difficulties and typically takes the form of advice or guidance in dealing with one’s problems” (Cohen, p. 677; italics in original).

Currently, there seems to be some consensus among researchers that perceived social support does help buffer the affects of stress both physically and emotionally (Cohen, 2004; Eckenrode & Wethington, 1990; Hurdle, 2001). For example, Cohen cites a study of healthy Swedish men age 50 and older which provides some evidence of the effect of perceived social support on physical health (Rosengren, Orth-Gomer, Wedel, & Wilhelmsen, 1993). Participants in the study who experienced a greater number of stressful life events one year before a baseline exam placed them at high risk for mortality during a seven year follow up period. However, those who perceived a high amount of social support were significantly less likely to experience mortality (Cohen).

Outcomes of received social support are mixed based on how the researchers conceptualize the type of support received (emotional or instrumental) and the stress experienced (acute or chronic; Reinhardt, Boerner, & Horowitz, 2006). Typically, those who receive emotional support seem to benefit from it (Cutrona, 1996). Those who receive instrumental support reveal the greatest disparity in the research in terms of

outcomes (Reinhardt et al.). In Reinhardt and colleagues' study of men and women over the age of 65 dealing with chronic vision loss, they discovered that received instrumental support was associated with increased depression symptoms. They explained that this may be due to how people experiencing physical disabilities may realize their need for instrumental support to adjust to their impairment, but have ill feelings in regards to receiving it.

Similar findings are detailed in Daubman and Lehman's (1993) study of college-aged students who received instrumental support during a timed test (an acute stressor). The men in the study who received help performed worse on a subsequent test than those who did not receive it. The researchers reasoned that the men's poor performance on the second task may be due to how men experienced the help they received. If they experienced the help in the first task as a threat to their self-esteem and they perceived solving the second task was hopeless, they may have reduced their effort. Research in the area of received informational support bear varied outcomes similar to those of received instrumental support. Informational support research will be highlighted in an upcoming section on advice because some studies designate advice as informational support (Cohen, 2004). Because studies on the evaluation and outcomes of received social support are not as plentiful as research on perceived support, some researchers are calling for more research (Cohen; Reinhardt et al., 2006). The current study attempts to add information to the field of received support.

Premarital Social Support

So, why study received social support in the context of marriage preparation?

There are at least four reasons to study social support before marriage. First, not many people use premarital prevention programs even though research indicates those who use them benefit in a number of relationship areas over an extended period of time (Carroll & Doherty, 2003; Schumm et al., 1998; Sullivan, Pasch, Cornelius, & Cirigliano, 2004). Schumm and his colleagues studied over 14,000 military couples and found that only 4% of them received any type of formal premarital preparation. However, it is evident that even if people do not receive support from formal sources (in this case, premarital prevention programs) they are likely to receive support from informal sources such as parents, siblings, friends, or clergy (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997; MacGeorge, Feng, Butler, & Budarz, 2004; Wills & DePaulo, 1991). Hence, it may be important to examine how successful informal forms of social support can be in helping individuals prepare for marriage (Cowen, 1982).

Second, one study provides ancillary evidence which suggests that college students take their romantic relationships seriously enough to desire social support for them (MacGeorge et al., 2004). MacGeorge and colleagues discovered that of the 280 students who responded to their questionnaire about a recent support exchange, the majority of the topics requiring support had to do with romantic relationships (67), and friendships (24). Additionally, they discovered that on average, the participants rated the problems for which support was received as serious, though the authors do not specify how “seriousness” was assessed. In further support of the influence that social supporters have on romantic relationships, Bryant and Conger (1999) concluded from their review

of literature that social networks seem to influence the “initiation, maintenance, and dissolution of romantic relationships” (p. 438). Studies which support their claim will be highlighted in a later section on parents and family as support-givers.

Third, social support may help people through life transitions (Caplan, 1974; Cassel, 1974). Current research seems to substantiate their statement. However, social support as a resource to those preparing for marriage is currently unexplored in extant research. Past studies and the family life cycle model provide a plausible line of reasoning for how social support might help individuals preparing for marriage. McGoldrick and Carter (2003) proposed in the family life cycle model that as individuals make the transition from being young adults to being newlyweds, stress is likely to increase due to the necessity of creating and renegotiating family relationships. Stress is a catalyst for social support to be sought and given according to Eckenrode and Wethington (1990). Hence, according to the family life cycle, marriage preparation may be stressful for some (McGoldrick & Carter) and when it is, social support interactions among one’s social network may occur (Eckenrode & Wethington). In the event social support is mobilized as a result of premarital stress and the support is helpful, stress is likely to be reduced (Caplan; Cassel; Eckenrode & Wethington) and marital commitment and satisfaction may increase according to some studies (Bryant & Conger, 1999; Larson & Holman, 1994). Though plausible, this line of reasoning needs additional research in order for it to be substantiated.

Finally, couples seem to benefit from the support they receive from their social network. Bryant and Conger (1999) discovered in their longitudinal study of 406 couples that the support social networks provided specifically for the relationship of the couple

significantly correlated with relationship satisfaction. In addition, Cutrona (1996) related how social support given and received between spouses affected marital satisfaction for both husbands and wives. Though some research has been conducted on how received social support affects married couples (Bryant & Conger; Cutrona & Suhr, 1994) and romantic couples (Surra, 1988), no extant research explores received social support from one's social network given in a premarital context; this provides the impetus for the current study.

Social Supporters

The principle of homophily helps explain who usually is included in one's social network (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). McPherson et al. explain, "Homophily is the principle that a contact between similar people occurs at a higher rate than among dissimilar people. [It] implies that distance in terms of social characteristics translates into network distance, the number of relationships through which a piece of information must travel to connect two individuals" (p. 416). Hence, homophily implies that social networks often consist of people who are similar in socio-demographic characteristics and values and that the more similar two individuals are the closer they will likely be (McPherson et al.).

Sex is one socio-demographic characteristic around which social networks are organized (McPherson et al., 2001). For example, when it comes to confiding in a social network member, Marsden (1987) discovered that 22% of the respondents reported having no opposite-sex confidants. On the other hand, 37% of the sample had social networks consisting of nearly half females and half males. Marsden controlled for kinship

ties and discovered that among non-family social network members, there was more homogeneity. This outcome matched what Verbrugge (1977) discovered about close friends in social networks. Ninety-percent of male participants reported their closest friends were male while 68% of female participants indicated their closest friends were female.

People often establish their social ties among those of a similar religious persuasion (McPherson et al., 2001). Though the Jewish faith constitutes a small portion of U.S. religions, Fischer (1977) found in his study of Jewish men in Detroit that 80% of their friends and 80% of their marriages were with other Jews. Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) are encouraged to marry other Latter-day Saints and the church promotes social organizations and activities to encourage intra-faith social ties (Ludlow, 1992).

Based on the principle of homophily, it is likely that social support will come from family, friends, and members of the same religious organization. Some research substantiates this link. For example, Wills and DePaulo (1991) reviewed help-seeking literature and learned that family, friends, and clergy were often the most preferred sources of help when the problem was not perceived as severe or chronic. More review of those who are likely to provide social support will be discussed in a later section.

Advice as a Form of Social Support

Some researchers claim that advice is a common way people communicate social support (Cowen, 1982; Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997; MacGeorge et al., 2004). For example, Cowen studied surveys of four groups of informal helpers (hairdressers, bartenders,

divorce lawyers, and industrial supervisors). When asked about how they respond when clientele present them with some moderate to serious personal problem, all four groups reported that offering support and giving advice were their most frequent responses.

MacGeorge et al. (2004) claimed that advice is a “ubiquitous” form of social support (p. 43). In other words, advice can be given as emotional, informational, or instrumental support. Cohen (2004) designated advice as a form of informational support. Reinhardt et al. (2006) designated advice as a form of affective or emotional support and MacGeorge et al. designated advice as a form of instrumental support.

Because advice is a ubiquitous form of social support, it comes as no surprise that evaluations and outcomes of advice from those who receive it are varied (Goldsmith & MacGeorge, 2000; MacGeorge et al., 2004). Goldsmith and Fitch (1997) explored the phenomena of advice when they employed a research team of five women and one man to record the details of naturally occurring advice exchanges they observed or participated in during their every day lives. The exchanges involved at least two people and took place in a variety of settings such as a college campus or an office. The researchers kept field notes on the details of 112 interactions they observed or participated in where advice was given. Some of the interactions happened over the phone or by mail. In addition, nine interviews were conducted with eight college students and one college graduate assessing to whom they gave advice, from whom they received it, and the circumstances in which advice was given or received. They were also asked about the best and worst advice they were given and why they thought the way they did

about the advice. Some participants evaluated advice as supportive and caring while others evaluated it as threatening or intrusive.

MacGeorge et al. (2004) called for additional research on advice when they said, “A fuller understanding of social support processes. . . requires attention to factors that influence how support seekers respond to advice” (p. 43). The following two sections will highlight factors found to be associated with both positive and negative evaluations of advice quality, a construct which often includes helpfulness (MacGeorge et al.).

Negative evaluations of advice. In their study of how participants evaluated received advice, Goldsmith and Fitch (1997) reported that some participants felt that the advice they received was critical and promoted unequal status. They reported that some post-adolescents were sensitive to advice from parents because it seemed to threaten their identity as autonomous adults who are able to make their own decisions. Furthermore, they reported that four out of 10 married participants explained they were cautious to not give advice to, or receive advice from their spouse because it implied an imbalance of power or knowledge.

Several factors influence how positively or negatively advice can be perceived. The giver and receiver of advice may have different goals in the exchange and “situational, conversational, and cultural” factors influence how advice is evaluated (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997, p. 456). Christensen and Jacobson (2000) committed an entire chapter in their marriage relations book, *Reconcilable Differences*, to advice in marriages. They explain that when advice is given which does not take into consideration the couple’s unique context, negative effects may occur for the advice-receiver. As an example, a couple receiving the advice to communicate their feelings to each other may

find the advice to be a point of contention rather than a point of connection if the wife has persistently insisted the husband talk about his feelings. The advice, in this couple's context, may encourage the wife to continue to insist her husband talk about his feelings more and the husband to continue to avoid his wife. In this case, advice may not help the problem, but make it worse.

In addition, some marital advice may be based on myth (Larson, 1988) or false assumptions (Christensen & Jacobson, 2000). When this is the case, the advice runs the risk of creating unrealistic marital expectations for the couple, thereby decreasing marital satisfaction (Bonds-Raacke, Bearden, Carriere, Anderson, & Nicks, 2001; Larson). These advice related problems may account for the skepticism communicated in the quote by Jack Adams, "If it's free, it's advice; if you pay for it, it's counseling; if you can use either, it's a miracle" (<http://www.todays-woman.net/quoteid-455.html>).

Positive evaluations of advice. Goldsmith and Fitch (1997) found that advice was evaluated by some in their study as helpful and caring. MacGeorge and her colleagues (2004) conducted an exploratory study of 280 college students in order to better understand effective advice. The students were asked to recall a time within the last month when they spoke with another person about a personal problem and the other person gave them advice. They were also asked to evaluate the quality of the advice, identify who the advice-giver was (e.g., parents, siblings, romantic partners, friends, etc.), and complete questionnaires asking about what they thought and felt immediately after the advice was given. Hence, this study was unique in that it explored both evaluations and outcomes of received advice. From their study, MacGeorge and colleagues were able to discover some factors associated with quality advice: the usefulness of advice, absence

of limitations in the content of the advice, and whether the advice was wanted or not.

MacGeorge et al. caution interpretation of their findings on the basis that the construct of advice quality may have been too broad; hence, all of the predictor variables were able to predict advice quality. However, their research highlights some factors associated with advice quality.

Other factors have also been associated with advice quality. Goldsmith and Fitch (1997) made several conclusions from an examination of their data. First, they reported, “Advice was widely recognized by. . . informants as a form of *helpful* information for making decisions and solving problems. . . it was also valued for the relational *caring* it expressed” (p. 462; italics in original). Hence, if recipients perceive caring through the advice given, they are more likely to evaluate it positively. Next, they explained that the closeness of the relationship between the advice giver and receiver was related to participants’ evaluation of the helpfulness of advice. Finally, they pointed out, “In some instances, *caring* and *closeness* were also the basis for expertise (or the lack thereof) on the recipient and his or her problems” (p. 464; italics in original). Their findings highlight the influence of the relational context on the evaluated quality of advice. The effects of the relational context on advice receipt will be examined more closely in a later section.

Though the efforts which have been made to delineate factors associated with positive evaluations of advice are encouraging, there are limitations in this area of research. First, most researchers have studied advice in the context of researcher-made scenarios of advice (Goldsmith & MacGeorge, 2000; Smith & Goodnow, 1999) while very few studies deal specifically with naturally occurring advice exchanges (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997; MacGeorge et al., 2004). Second, few studies dealt with social support in

the context of marriage relationships. Research that did examine social support in marriage focused on how husbands and wives respond to support given to one another (Cutrona & Suhr, 1994). No research to date has explored advice as a form of social support given by one's social network as one prepares for marriage.

Effects of Support-Receiver and Support-Giver Characteristics on Supportive Interaction

Research on advice is still in an exploratory phase (MacGeorge et al., 2004), thus this area of research yields minimal understanding of the effects of the advice-giver and advice-receiver characteristics on the evaluations of advice. Much of what is known in this area comes from help-seeking and social support literature. Help-seeking research suggests there are many help-giver and help-recipient variables which have been shown to influence responses to help attempts (Wills & DePaulo, 1991). This section considers the sex of the helper and receiver (Ashton & Fuehrer, 1993; Mickelson, Helgeson, & Weiner, 1995) and the closeness of their relationship (MacGeorge et al.).

Sex of Help-Giver

Mickelson et al. (1995) proposed that understanding the effects of the sex of the help-giver on a supportive exchange may be important because some research indicates there is a qualitative difference in how men and women give support. Based on their review of literature, they concluded that women tend to be empathetic in their support-giving whereas males often give advice, which can seem judgmental to the receiver. They reasoned:

To the extent that men provide advice that is more evaluative and women provide empathy that is more supportive, interactions with women could lead to more health benefits than interactions with men. Thus, it is important to determine how the nature of interactions with men differs from the nature of interactions with women. (p. 212)

Intending to examine differences between how males and females give support, Mickelson et al. (1995) examined 61 pairs of college students (15 female/female; 16 male/male; and 30 male/female pairs). Both participants in the pair were asked to share a problem with the other in order to become more acquainted. The interactions were audio-taped and transcribed for content analysis and participants were asked to complete questionnaires regarding their experience after their interaction. The outcomes of the study did not substantiate their hypothesis that men would give more advice than women and women would give more emotional support than men; there were no significant differences. Other researchers have observed this outcome (Goldsmith & Dun, 1997). Goldsmith and Dun, in their study of a college sample of 49 women and 51 men, discovered that sex differences in type of support given (i.e., problem, emotion, or action-focused support) in seven hypothetical situations were not statistically significant. They concluded that there were far more similarities than differences between the sexes.

As indicated by the research cited above, men and women seem to show little differences in how they offer support. However, if the sex of the giver is examined in connection with the sex of the receiver, outcomes seem to differ from studies of sex of the giver or receiver alone (Mickelson et al., 1995). Goldsmith and Dun (1997) reported on a study (Winstead, Derlega, Lewis, Sacher-Hucles, & Clarke, 1992) in which 92 pairs of students were paired up in same sex and mixed-sex dyads. They found that the mixed-

sex dyads engaged in more emotional support than same sex dyads. Mickelson et al. also found that mixed-sex dyads in their study tended to give more emotional support .

The link between the composition of the support dyad and the type of support offered may be important in understanding how the support is evaluated. This is because emotion-focused support (a common form of support in mixed-sex dyads) is consistently associated with positive evaluations and outcomes for males and females alike (Cutrona, 1996). Other types of support (instrumental and informational) are more varied in their evaluations and outcomes (Reinhardt et al., 2006). However, studies of instrumental and informational support did not examine the effects of the combination of the sex of the support-givers and receivers on the evaluation of support. Because advice could represent any type of support depending on the context in which it is given, exploring advice received in same or mixed-sex dyads may reveal that evaluations of advice quality may have more to do with the sex composition of the dyad than the type of support given. Exploring the combined effects of the helper and receiver's sex on the supportive interaction seems warranted based on Mickelson and colleagues' (1995) conclusion that it had more effect on support giving and receiving than did the sex of the giver or receiver alone.

Sex of Help-Receiver

Some researchers focused their search in the area of the sex of the receiver alone (Ashton & Fuehrer, 1993; Burda, Vaux, & Schill, 1984); others focused on the combined effects of the sex of the giver and receiver (Mickelson et al., 1995); still, others viewed sex differences as they interact with the type of support being given (Albizu-Garcia,

Alegria, Freeman, & Vera, 2001; Ashton & Fuehrer, 1993). As with the outcomes of studies examining the effect of the sex of the help-giver on evaluations and outcomes of help, the outcomes of studies on the effect of the sex of the help-receiver are mixed (Daubman & Lehman, 1993; Mickelson et al.). This section will highlight a few studies which are indicative of what researchers have found when examining the effects of sex on social support evaluations.

Male help-receivers. Much of what is known about male support-receivers has been focused on support-seeking rather than support-receiving. For example, in a recent literature review of men's support-seeking behaviors, Galdas, Cheater, and Marshall (2005) reviewed 124 articles published between 1966 and 2003 and concluded that there is a general trend both in the U.S. and U.K. of men seeking formal support less frequently and later than women. In other words, men tend to wait to seek support until they think the problem for which they seek help is severe enough.

In exploring how men evaluate support, some researchers have examined support-receiving attitudes (Johnson, 1987) while some have addressed the receipt of support (Daubman & Lehman, 1993). For instance, Johnson's research examined the help-seeking attitudes of males and females. Through self-report, significantly more men than women admitted they were less inclined to bear the social stigma associated with receiving professional help. In other words, females seemed to care less about what others thought of their use of professional help than males. We can catch another glimpse of men's attitudes toward receiving help from Nadler, Mahler, and Friedman's (1984) work. Utilizing a questionnaire, they examined the help-seeking and receiving attitudes of 95 female and 116 male Israeli students. The men in their study reported a higher

likelihood of seeking help when the helper was a woman. Also, they indicated they were more likely to feel better about the help if the helper was female. Studies focused on attitudes toward seeking and receiving help may only imply how men may evaluate social support once they have received it.

Some research has focused on sex differences in the type of support received. Mickelson and her colleagues (1995) discovered that males in their study received more negative support (i.e., minimizing, reprimand) than females overall. In a sex of support-giver by sex of support-receiver interaction, it was also found that males received more emotional support when in a mixed dyad (i.e., helper was opposite the sex of receiver). As was mentioned in a previous section, Daubman and Lehman (1993) found in their study that when offered unsolicited help on one task, men performed worse on the subsequent task than those who received no help. Though the studies mentioned above are useful for understanding types of received support, there were no studies that specifically explored how males and females evaluate received support nor were there any that explored support received in a premarital context.

Female help-receivers. Generally, females have been shown to utilize formal treatment in greater number than males (Wills & DePaulo, 1991). One of the reasons this is the case may have to do with females' attitudes toward receiving support. For example, Johnson (1987) found that female participants reported on their questionnaire a greater need for support than males. In addition, they reported they were more likely to be tolerant of social stigma associated with receiving formal support and were more likely to be open about their problems. Another study of sex differences in general medical practice attendees revealed that women were more likely than men to reveal personal

information to family and friends (Corney, 1990). In other words, they were more likely to bring up social or psychological problems in their conversations with friends and family. Cutrona (1996) reported in her research, which focused on social support received in marriage relationships, that wives tend to receive most of their support from family and close friends and that they usually report a greater number of people in their social support network.

Because females generally express attitudes welcoming support, tend to be more open to those who would support them, and generally report having more people in their social network, females likely receive and benefit more from social support than males. However, little can be concluded in terms of differences in how males and females evaluate received support because there is a dearth of research in this area. Though there is research that has examined the evaluated quality of advice (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997; MacGeorge et al., 2004), these studies have not addressed how males and females may evaluate received support differently nor are there any studies which explore support in a premarital context.

Relationship Between Help-Giver and Help-Receiver

Wills and DePaulo's (1991) review of the interpersonal aspects of help-seeking includes a summary of several variables that have been shown to affect positive reactions from help recipients. Two of the variables are specific to the relationship between the help-givers and receivers: "the recipients' liking for the helper" and "whether the helper is a friend or a stranger" (p. 359). Hence, when the helper is close to the help-recipient, a positive response to the help is more likely. This implication is supported by several

studies which suggest that people prefer help from those they are close to such as friends, family, and spouses (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997; MacGeorge et al., 2004; Wills & DePaulo). Friends, family, and spouses may be most preferred because of their close proximity to the support seeker (Wills & DePaulo). These outcomes may or may not be replicated in other contexts where social support is received. Research to date does not afford the opportunity to make any clear connections in regard to the relationship between the giver and receiver of advice in a premarital context.

Informal Social Support

Wills and DePaulo (1991) noted in their literature review that help may come from formal or informal sources, but that informal sources seem preferable to formal sources, especially when the severity of the problem for which help is sought is lower. Cowen (1982) offers several explanations why this may be the case: some may not have the money to pay for formal services; formal services may not be available due to where the recipient lives; formal services may not match the personal beliefs and expectations of the recipient; and recipients may prefer to receive support from people they know and trust in settings they know and trust.

Veroff et al. (1981) surveyed a community sample on their preference for help based on different kinds of problems. They discovered that for coping with worries or unhappiness, the majority of the participants preferred help from informal sources (i.e., spouse or friends). Exploring how helpful informal helpers can be seems increasingly important especially in a premarital context because formal premarital preparation

programs are being underutilized (Schumm et al., 1998) and support from social networks is linked to marital satisfaction (Bryant & Conger, 1999).

Of the many people who may be included in social networks, parents, close friends, and religious leaders are considered here because they seem to be the most frequently used sources of advice (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997; MacGeorge et al., 2004; Wills & DePaulo, 1991). For example, one study of 280 college students revealed, in recalling a recent experience when they shared a problem with another and the other offered advice, that over half of the participants received advice from a friend while the rest received it from romantic partners, roommates, parents, and siblings or other family members (MacGeorge et al.). These outcomes were also observed in a study of naturally occurring advice exchanges reported in a previous section (Goldsmith & Fitch). Of the 112 advice exchanges reviewed, most were between friends and roommates ($n = 70$). Veroff et al. (1984) discovered that of the 26% of the participants who actually sought help, most sought it from clergy (39% of all help sources of utilized), especially when the problem was considered less severe. These studies indicate that people are more likely to receive social support, especially advice, from informal supporters when the problem is not perceived as severe or persistent (Reinhardt et al., 2006; Wills & DePaulo).

Parents/family as social supporters. Much research has been devoted to understanding what effects parents have on their children (Baumrind, 1975; Cummings & Davies, 1994; Gottman & Declaire, 1997). Less research has been done on the effects of parents' support of their adult children (Prezza & Pacilli, 2002; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1992). Understanding the influence of parents and family as social supporters may be important in light of one study which indicated that although the perceived support of

friends and significant others waned as people grew older, the perceived support of family was not influenced by age (Prezza & Pacilli). Hence, it is likely that the effects of parental and family support can be seen even as children grow to be adults and form their own families through marriage.

In fact, some studies give evidence of the continued influence of parents on their adult children (Sprecher & Felmlee, 1992). For example, Sprecher and Felmlee studied 101 dating couples. Like many of the studies in social support literature, the sample was largely Caucasian, middle to upper-class, college students. The study was longitudinal in design with three points of measurement over the course of two years. At each of the three times, perceived and actual social support of parents and friends and relationship quality were assessed. From the study, Sprecher and Felmlee derived several conclusions regarding the relationship between parental and friendship support of the relationship and relationship quality. First, perceived social support of family and friends was positively and significantly related to relationship quality (love, commitment, and satisfaction) at all three points of time. Second, through longitudinal analysis, the researchers discovered that social support of the relationship at one point in time was significantly and positively correlated with perceptions of relationship quality up to 18 months later. Third, fluctuations in social support were strongly associated with fluctuations in levels of relationship quality. Finally, outcomes were similar for males and females in all but one category, family support at time one. Females perceived significantly less support from parents than did males. Sprecher and Felmlee highlight that participants in their study mostly lived on campus, a fact which may explain why they perceived less family interference.

Though Prezza and Pacilli's (2002) study indicated that perceived family support did not change with age, McCarthy, Newcomb, and Bentler (1994) found that parental influence on their children was likely to be more pronounced in early childhood and adolescence and less pronounced in young adulthood. Their findings seem to explain why more college students receive social support from friends, roommates, and romantic partners (see Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997; Liebler & Sandefur, 2002; MacGeorge et al., 2004).

Friends as social supporters. Generally, social support usually comes from friends and the support friends give is often beneficial to the recipient (Liebler & Sandefur, 2002). The sheer number of people who receive social support from friends is represented by two studies. Goldsmith and Fitch (1997) discovered that 79 of 112 advice exchanges observed and recorded by the research team occurred between friends, roommates, or romantic partners. This finding is particularly indicative of the number of friends who provide social support as the data for the study was collected throughout a community rather than exclusively on a college campus. MacGeorge and colleagues (2004) found that of the advice exchanges that had occurred with the 280 participants, over half were with friends, close friends, or best friends.

One study highlights the beneficial outcomes of support from friends (Antonucci, Lansford, & Akiyama, 2001). Antonucci and colleagues studied a large sample of older adults and examined the influence of friends on well-being. Their findings highlighted how friends were found to have both positive and negative effects on men's and women's well-being and were more important for women.

Friends have become increasingly important as social supporters due to divorce rates and the rate at which people move from one place to another, usually away from the support of parents (Liebler & Sandefur, 2002). In addition, according to the family life cycle theory (McGoldrick & Carter, 2003), it is developmentally appropriate during the young adulthood and marriage stages for the adult to move away from parents and family in order to start their own. This shift away from parents opens adults to receive more social support from friends and acquaintances. Outcomes from research on the support of friends provide ancillary evidence that friends may be an increasingly influential support to those preparing for marriage.

Clergy as social supporters. Religious leaders do not seem to be the focus of many social support studies and currently it is unclear as to whether clergy are considered formal helpers or informal helpers. Veroff et al. (1981) categorized clergy as professionals, or formal helpers. Maybe it is plausible to categorize clergy as both formal and informal sources of social support depending upon their training. For instance, clergy in traditional Catholic and Protestant religious organizations are usually required to be trained and are paid for their services. In this case, clergy may be considered professional or formal helpers. On the other hand, clergy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) usually do not have any formal training and are not paid, but are volunteers. Hence, these clergy men and women may be considered non-professional or informal helpers. Categorizing clergy as formal or informal social supporters based on their training or lack thereof seems plausible, but such a categorization has not been attempted as yet. Because the majority of the clergy in this study were LDS and volunteers, they are considered informal helpers.

In any case, there is some evidence that clergy are a preferred source of support in both hypothetical and actual help-seeking situations (Veroff et al., 1981). In Veroff and colleagues' study, participants were given a hypothetical situation in which they were told they were experiencing a persistent problem. Of the 46% that reported they would seek professional help, 27% reported they would seek help from clergy (second only to doctors at 28%). Of the 26% participants who ever actually sought help, most (39%) sought it from clergy. Those who sought actual help from clergy typically reported less severe problems while those with more severe problems sought the help of doctors and mental health professionals.

One study indicated that religious leaders are as effective (in at least the short-term) as university staff in administering a premarital preparation program (Stanley et al., 2001). Stanley and colleagues' study suggests that religious leaders are one source of social support that couples may go to when preparing for marriage and that their support, given through administering premarital prevention programs, may be as helpful as that offered by formal sources.

Additional reasons for exploring clergy as premarital social supporters are: first, they perform the majority of marriages (Stanley et al., 2001); second, the religious organizations in which they are involved are more "deeply embedded in their respective cultures" than are other organizations such as mental health facilities and therefore experience less barriers and resistance to treatment (Stanley et al., 1995, p. 397); and third, some Catholic and Protestant clergy require premarital preparation before they will perform marriages (Stanley et al., 1995). Though research on the role of clergy as social supporters is scant, what has been accomplished so far suggests that clergy may be in

position to support individuals preparing for marriage. More research is needed to understand how effective their support may be.

Conclusion and Research Questions

In summary, there is evidence that people generally benefit from marital relationships. Divorce, on the other hand, seems to incur individual, familial, and societal debts. To decrease divorce and promote marital satisfaction, researchers and social activists are searching out ways of preventing divorce. One form of prevention is premarital preparation programs. So far, these programs seem to produce improvements in couple communication, problem-solving, and relationship quality up to three years post treatment. However, few people seem to utilize premarital programs.

Some studies indicate that people prefer informal support over formal support, especially when the problem for which they seek help is perceived as less severe. Informal supporters include, friends, family, and parents, and in some cases, clergy. One form of social support is advice-giving. How people give and receive advice has received more attention in research over the past 10 years, but the role of advice in a premarital context has not been studied. Understanding what role advice from informal social-supporters plays in preparing individuals for marriage may be important because some research indicates that family and friends affect the creation and maintenance of romantic relationships and may affect how satisfied people are with their marriage. Also, social support has generally been shown to be beneficial to those who receive it. Some researchers even claim that social support networks may be an advantageous group in which to promote change.

Though advice can be a risky form of social support as indicated by the variety of ways that people evaluate it, extant research has begun to explore variables affecting the evaluations and outcomes of received social support which may help in deciphering what variables are associated with helpful advice. So far, research suggests that sex and relationship quality between the support-giver and receiver are two variables which may determine whether social support is evaluated as helpful; however, these outcomes are yet to be explored when advice-giving is the social support method. To navigate the relatively unexplored phenomena of advice in a premarital context, the following research questions guide this exploratory study:

1. Who do newlyweds report gave them premarital advice?
2. Are there sex trends among newlyweds in whether they use premarital advice?
3. Are there sex trends among newlyweds in how they rate the helpfulness of premarital advice?
4. Is use and helpfulness of advice affected by the combination of the sex of the advice-giver and advice-receiver?
5. Is there a relationship between the evaluated quality of relationship between the newlyweds and advice-giver and the evaluated helpfulness and use of premarital advice?

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The following chapter will identify the design, sampling procedures, and measures that will be used to answer the research questions. A proposed method to answer each question will also be provided.

Design

The idea and design for this study stems from a larger study. The current study draws from the same sample and some of the instruments of the larger study, but analyzes different phenomena. The most appropriate design for the purposes of this study is one of exploration (Dooley, 1990); this is so because extant research has not yet addressed the differences between males and females in how they evaluate premarital advice and whether or not they use it. Hence, this study is designed to explore phenomena in a unique context with hopes of promoting confirmatory research in the future (Dooley; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). Sex will be the independent nominal variable while advice use (nominal) and helpfulness of advice (interval) will be the dependent variables in most statistical analyses.

Sample Procedures

A convenience sample was sought for the study because the primary interest of the study is to explore phenomena and not to make generalizations to a larger population (Dooley, 1990). Volunteers were sought through advertisement at Utah State University.

The purposes of the current study seemed best served by obtaining a university sample because universities typically have a large population of young married couples or of students who know a young married couple.

Three criteria were established for those who desired to participate: (1) Volunteers had to be in their first marriage, (2) both participants had to be over the age of 18, and (3) they had to be married between three and nine months. A period of marriage between three and nine months was established based on the reasoning that the couple would have had enough time to evaluate any advice they received while not forgetting the circumstances in which they received it. Other studies of newlyweds have established a similar time frame to define who would be in their study due to the belief that couples are able to adjust to marriage and create an identity as a couple during this time (e.g., Haws & Mallinckrodt, 1998). Couples who volunteered for the study were given class credit while those who did not participate were given an alternate assignment for the same amount of points. Also, participants were asked to invite their friends or others they knew who fit the study criteria to participate; through these processes, 56 volunteer couples were obtained for the study. Table 1 provides characteristics of the sample.

Fifty-four of the 56 couples were used in the analysis because two couples were missing data pertinent to the study. The husbands and the wives were similar in measures of age, ethnicity, religious preference, and education. The participants were mostly Caucasian (90.7% husbands, 90.4% wives) and affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS; 98.1% husbands, 100% wives). Husbands and wives reported attending religious services almost weekly ($M = 3.63$ and 3.72 times per month

Table 1

Sample Characteristics of Husbands and Wives

Variables	Husbands		Wives	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	23.87	4.86	22.65	3.96
Months married	8.88	3.11	8.86	3.11
Years of education	14.63	1.78	14.29	1.58

respectively). The mean income for husbands was \$21,115 and \$18,093 for wives.

Husbands and wives both averaged about 14 years of education. Couples were married an average of 8.87 months at the time they participated in the study.

Procedure

Volunteers for the study were contacted by telephone to determine if they met the criteria (i.e., first marriage, both over the age of 18, and married between three and nine months). If the criteria were met, the volunteers were asked to agree to a 45-minute interview with a student interviewer. If they agreed, an appointment was made for the interview and a letter of informed consent was sent to them. The letter described the purpose and procedure of the study and outlined the risks associated with participation in it. Also, professional referrals were available to the participants in the event their

participation caused unanticipated stress. They were asked to sign the consent if they agreed to its terms.

Upon receipt of the signed informed consent, participants were given a questionnaire to fill out separate from each other which was approved for use by the Institutional Review Board of Utah State University (see Appendix A). Afterwards, participants completed an individual interview then a couple interview. When completed, the informed consent, questionnaire, and interview notes were coded. The informed consent was separated and kept in a locked filing cabinet to ensure that participants' personal information was kept confidential.

Measures

There were two primary instruments for obtaining data for the larger study from which this study draws. The first was a questionnaire made from a combination of measures and the second was the individual interview. The questionnaire was administered to the volunteers to be filled out separately before the interviews began. For this study, only demographic information will be used from the questionnaire. Primarily, data for this study will come from the individual interviews.

After each partner completed the questionnaire, individual interviews were conducted to ascertain who gave them marriage advice and what the advice was (verbatim if possible). In addition, each participant was asked to rate the helpfulness of the advice on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = Not Helpful; 10 = Very Helpful), describe some of the characteristics of the advice-giver (sex, marital status, and marital quality), rate how close they were with the advice-giver (measured on a 1 to 10 scale), and answer whether

they used the advice or not. Interviewers marked the participants' responses to the questions on a uniform record sheet (see Appendix B) according to specific instructions (see Appendix C).

Reliability

In order to ensure increased reliability, the administration of the measure was standardized. Interviewers were trained by a professor and graduate student and instructions for the interview were typed and given to each interviewer (see Appendix C). They were taught to give the interview in the same order and were instructed how to address questions that could arise from participants about the informed consent, questionnaire, or interview process.

Validity

Of the several types of validity which can be established to ensure that the measure is actually measuring what it is intended to the questionnaire has face validity because it appears to measure what it is intended to (Cohen, 2001). In other words, the questions included in the questionnaire and interviews are directly related to the information sought in the study.

Content validity was also established. Kaplan and Succuzzo (2001) explain, "Determination of content validity evidence is often made by expert judgment . . . Typically, multiple judges rate each item in terms of its match or relevance to the content" (p. 134). For the purposes of this study, three family scientists, whose extensive research in marriage and family relations have been published, reviewed the content of the measures and approved it.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter focuses on the analyses that were performed in order to answer each research question. Each section will address a research question, its analysis, and outcomes in the order established in the previous chapter.

Research Question 1

Who, do newlyweds report, gave them premarital advice? Question one was answered through an interview with each husband and wife individually. They were asked who gave them advice about marriage. Their responses were recorded by the interviewer on an answer sheet and the data was later entered into SPSS, a computer program for statistical analyses.

To highlight who advice comes from, a frequency table reporting whether the advice-recipient was a husband or a wife by the relationship between the advice-giver and receiver (i.e., parent, sibling, friend, and clergy) was used. The number of advice-givers was totaled and percentages were calculated. Possible sources of advice included up to five friends, mothers, step-mothers, fathers, step-fathers, grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, up to two religious leaders, and others. Frequencies and percentages of those who gave advice to the husbands and wives in the study are presented in Table 2.

There were a total of 412 advice-givers for the husbands and wives in the study. For husbands, there were 208 advice-givers and for wives there were 204. Hence, there was an average of about 3.7 advice-givers per person. Of all who gave premarital advice

to the participants, the majority consisted of friends (32.4%), followed by parents (29.5%), and religious leaders (19.5%).

When considering the sex of the advice-givers, 207 were male and 205 were female. Both husbands and wives received over 74% of their advice from givers of the same sex. When comparing husbands and wives, it can be noted that for wives, female friends constituted the greatest number of advice-givers ($n = 72$) followed by mothers ($n = 45$) and religious leaders ($n = 37$), whom were all male. For husbands, male friends ($n = 51$) represent the greatest number of advice-givers followed by religious leaders ($n = 43$), fathers ($n = 38$), and mothers ($n = 36$; see Table 2). These results indicate that though husbands and wives tend to receive advice from both males and females, the majority of the advice-givers are the same sex as the advice-recipients.

Research Question 2

Are there sex trends among newlyweds in whether they use premarital advice?

The data for this question was taken from individual interviews. Participants were asked whether they used the advice given them and a “yes” or “no” response was given. A “yes” was given a value of 1 while a “no” was given a value of 2. Statistical analysis utilizing cross-tabulation and a chi-square test of significance was computed with statistical software. This test seemed appropriate because none of the expected values were less than one (Norusis, 1990), the dependent and independent variables were nominal, and population parameters are unknown (Glass & Hopkins, 1996).

Table 2

Sources and Percentages of Premarital Advice Given to Husbands and Wives

Sources	Husbands		Wives		Total within source	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Friends						
Male	51	92.7	4	07.3	55	100.0
Female	6	07.7	72	92.3	78	100.0
Mothers	36	44.4	45	55.6	81	100.0
Fathers	38	52.8	34	47.2	72	100.0
Siblings						
Male	10	66.7	5	33.3	15	100.0
Female	10	33.3	20	66.7	30	100.0
Grandmother/father	6	40.0	9	60.0	15	100.0
Aunts/uncles	3	37.5	5	62.5	8	100.0
Religious leaders	43	53.8	37	46.2	80	100.0
Others	6	57.2	4	42.8	10	100.0

For the purposes of this study, two of the possible five friends, mothers, fathers, and two religious leaders were included in the analyses; third, fourth, and fifth friends, step-parents, aunts and uncles, and others were excluded due the small number of participants who reported receiving help from these sources. Chi-square tests for whether husbands and wives used the advice by who gave them the advice were computed and no

statistically significant differences were noted. Hence, the chi-square results are not included in this study. Table 3 indicates that the majority of husbands and wives reported taking the advice they were given. For instance, husbands reported that they took the advice of 118 out of the 129 friends, parents, and religious leaders who gave it to them (91.5%). Wives reported using the advice of 161 of 170 advice-givers (94.7%). This datum seems to indicate that male and female recipients used the advice they were given.

Research Question 3

Are there sex trends among newlyweds in how they rate the helpfulness of premarital advice? Sex of the advice-receiver and the helpfulness of the advice (an interval measure; scale of 1 to 10) were measured using independent sample *t* tests. Husband and wife advice-receivers were the independent variables and helpfulness of advice was the dependent variable in each analysis. A *t* test was performed for each advice source (i.e., friends, parents, siblings, religious leaders, etc.). The independent sample *t* test is an appropriate statistic because it is generally not affected if the assumption of a normal distribution is not met (such as may be the case in our convenience sample), but may be problematic in some instances due to a small sample size (Dooley, 1990).

As with analysis for trends in whether husbands and wives use the advice, there were no statistically significant differences in how they evaluated the helpfulness of the advice they were given. As a result, outcomes from the *t* tests are not included here. Table 3 records minimum, maximum, and mean evaluations of the helpfulness of advice for husbands and wives. Overall, both husbands and wives indicated that the advice they

Table 3

Statistics of Husbands and Wives' Use and Evaluation of Helpfulness of Advice by Advice-giver

Advice-giver	Husbands							Wives						
	Advice Use		Helpfulness of advice					Advice use		Helpfulness of advice				
	Yes	No	<i>n</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Yes	No	<i>n</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Friend 1	26	6	32	2	10	7.97	2.15	34	3	38 ^a	1	10	7.37	2.49
Friend 2	15	0	16 ^a	3	10	7.69	2.33	17	3	20	1	10	7.00	2.75
Mother	32	4	36	4	10	8.47	1.93	43	1	43	4	10	8.93	1.55
Father	35	1	36	3	10	8.64	1.84	33	1	34	5	10	9.09	1.38
Religious leader 1	31	0	31	1	10	8.23	2.39	30	1	31	5	10	9.00	1.29
Religious leader 2	11	0	11	6	10	9.36	1.29	4	0	4	1	10	6.75	4.27

^a Discrepancy due to missing data for advice use

received was helpful based on the means ranging from 6.75 to 9.36. For husbands, the advice from the second religious leader received the highest mean score ($M = 9.36$), followed by fathers ($M = 8.64$), and mothers ($M = 8.47$). For wives, advice from fathers seemed to be the most helpful ($M = 9.09$) followed closely by the first religious leader ($M = 9.00$) and mothers ($M = 8.93$). The trend seems to be that male and female recipients evaluated the advice they received to be mostly helpful.

Research Question 4

Is use and helpfulness of advice affected by the combination of the sex of the advice-giver and advice-receiver? Independent and paired sample t tests were used to identify if there were statistically significant interactions with the sex of the advice-receiver and advice-giver. Using both independent and paired sample t tests for analyses enabled a more thorough examination of any statistically significant relationships between sex and advice use and helpfulness. The combination of these tests allowed examination within and between dyads. For example, the independent sample t test involved comparing husbands receiving advice from female friend 1 with husbands receiving advice from male friend 1 (i.e., a mixed-sex dyad compared with a same-sex dyad within the sample of husbands). A paired sample t test compared husbands receiving advice from fathers and wives receiving advice from fathers (i.e., a same-sex dyad compared with a mixed-sex dyad between the sample of husbands and wives).

Both independent and paired sample t tests did not yield any significant differences between same and mixed-sex dyads receiving advice from friends, parents, or religious leaders. The information recorded in Table 3 will assist in comparing means

between same and mixed-sex dyads. As with the trends revealed by comparing mean scores between sexes (as accomplished by Table 3), there seem to be no significant differences when examining the sex of the advice-receiver in combination with the sex of the person giving the advice. Hence, the use and evaluated helpfulness of advice do not seem to be affected by looking at same and mixed-sex dyads.

Research Question 5

Is there a relationship between the reported closeness of relationship between the newlyweds and advice-giver and the use and evaluated helpfulness of premarital advice?

This question was examined by analyzing the correlation between the participants evaluation of the closeness of their relationship with the advice-giver with advice use and advice helpfulness. A p value of .05 will be used to establish significance because it is generally sufficient to suggest the null hypothesis can be rejected (Patten, 2005) and our sample size was not large. In addition, as this is an exploratory study, its purpose is to highlight possible relationships to be tested further in future research. Results of the analyses for husbands and wives are recorded in Table 4.

There was a correlation between the closeness of the relationship between husbands and their fathers in both use of advice ($n = 36, p = .039$) and helpfulness of advice ($n = 36, p = .004$). In regards to use of advice, an r of $-.345$ suggests a negative relationship between relationship closeness and advice (see Table 4). This result seems counter-intuitive at first glance, but it is appropriate if it is remembered that advice use was scored as a 1 for “yes” and a 2 for “no.” Therefore, as relationship closeness scores

Table 4

Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Relationships Between Closeness of Relationship with Advice-giver and Use and Helpfulness of Advice for Husbands and Wives

Closeness	Husbands		Wives	
	Use	Helpful	Use	Helpful
Friend 1	-.167	.063	-.109	.384*
Friend 2	.000 ^a	-.095	-.534*	.482*
Mother	-.285	.293	.002	.042
Father	-.345*	.467**	.121	.045
Sibling	.158	.168	-.199	.416*
Religious leader 1	.000 ^a	.216	-.052	.112
Religious leader 2	.000 ^a	.513	.000 ^a	.482

^a Could not be computed because variable was constant; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

increase, advice use scores decrease (or approach a mean score closer to 1). This means that husband participants tended to use the advice more if they felt close to their fathers.

For wives, there were relationships in three of the analyses (see Table 4). First, when wives reported a closer relationship with friend 1, they also tended to report the advice was more helpful ($n = 38, p = .017$). This correlation accounts for over 14% of explained variance in helpfulness evaluations. Second, when wives reported a closer relationship with friend 2, they also seemed to use the advice ($n = 20, p = .015$) and evaluate it as helpful ($p = .032$). Hence, closeness with the advice-giver accounts for

28.5% of the variance in use of advice and 23.2% of helpfulness evaluations. Finally, the closeness of the relationship between the wives and their siblings was related to their evaluations of advice helpfulness ($n = 23$, $p = .049$; accounting for 17.3% of variance). Hence, results for husbands and wives indicate that in some cases, the closeness of relationship between the advice-giver and receiver is related to advice use and evaluated helpfulness and accounts for between 14 and 28.5% of variance.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Summary of Research Questions

This study was designed to explore how individuals preparing for marriage receive social support from informal sources in the form of advice. Of particular interest in this study was answering who in the participants' support network gave them premarital advice. Additionally, this study wanted to explore how the sex of the advice-receiver and advice-giver affected whether the advice was used or not and how helpful the participants evaluated the advice to be. The following sections will discuss the results of this study in the context of what is known about social support, informal social supporters, advice-giving and receiving, and the characteristics of the sample. In addition, implications of this study to marriage preparation will be made and the limitations of this study will be related.

*Research Question 1:
Sources of Premarital Advice*

Consistent with research examining the preferences for and actual sources of social support (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997; MacGeorge et al., 2004; Veroff et al., 1981; Wills & DePaulo, 1991), participants in this study received premarital advice from friends, parents, religious leaders, and other family members. Descriptive statistics revealed that for husbands and wives, friends constituted the greatest number of advice-givers followed by parents and religious leaders.

Friends. McGoldrick and Carter (2003) explained that it is developmentally appropriate for a young adult to move away from parents in order to navigate adulthood independent of their parents and prepare to begin their own family. The sample for this study consisted of young adults who were earning their own wages and otherwise living independent of their parents. Because the young adults of this study were less dependent upon parents and associated more with peers the same age, the majority of the advice-givers were friends. This finding also seems to substantiate what Liebler and Sandefur (2002) said concerning how friends are simply more available to act as social supporters for young adults who move away from home for education or employment.

Also of interest is an exploration of sex differences in friends who give advice. Husbands seemed to receive advice largely from male friends (89.5%) while wives seemed to receive advice mainly from female friends (94.7%). This finding is consistent with the homophily principle explained by McPherson et al. (2001). They explain that homophily is the phenomena where people generally tend to associate with others who are of the same sex, religion, age, and ethnicity. This principle also suggests that the more two are alike, the closer they are likely to be. The current study also resembles the outcomes of the study by Verbrugge (1977) in which the majority of the participants identified their close friends as being of the same sex. Hence, it seems apparent that in terms of advice from friends, homophily explains why most participants received help from same-sex sources.

In addition to homophily, friends were likely the most abundant source of premarital advice due to the fact that the participants were mostly young adults who were less dependent on parents for their social development and physical well-being. Hence,

the participants were more likely to associate with peers their own age who were likely to be in premarital relationships (i.e., dating and courting). Because the participants and their peers were likely in the same developmental stage in the family life cycle (McGoldrick & Carter, 2003) the topic of marriage likely arose and advice was likely shared.

Parents. Not far behind friends in terms of who gave premarital advice in this study were parents. Parents were the number one source of advice for husbands constituting over 35% of the husband's total advice-givers. The number of mothers and fathers who gave advice were about the same (mothers $n = 36$; fathers $n = 38$). Though the principle of homophily might suggest that husbands would receive more advice from fathers due to the sameness of their sex, Marsden's (1987) study suggests that kinship ties are more heterogenous when compared with non-kinship ties (e.g., friends) due to the nature of families to have male and female members. Hence, in this study, husbands received advice from mothers almost as much as fathers.

Parents were also important sources of advice for wives (23% of total advice-givers). Mothers constituted the majority of the advice-givers (57%). Again, the principle of homophily may explain why advice was received from about as many fathers (43%) as mothers. However, mothers may be the greater number of advice-givers due to the content of the advice. For example, the wives may have felt more comfortable speaking with their mothers about birth control and sexuality issues than their fathers. Husbands may have received advice from both their father and mother because the advice content was not directly related to sex role issues (such as birth control for the wives), but was more general marital advice which both father and mother could give.

Religious leaders. Many of the participants in this study received premarital advice from religious leaders. In fact, they were the third highest group of advice-providers for husbands and wives as a whole. As noted earlier, the sample consisted almost exclusively of LDS married couples. Before marriages are performed in the LDS church, couples must meet with their bishop, who authorizes and often performs their marriage (Ludlow, 1992). This cultural practice in association with the principle of religious homophily may explain why so many participants received marriage advice from their local religious leader. Additionally, the results make sense in light of how the participants reported attending church almost weekly. In attending church, the participants were likely to have frequent contact with their religious leaders. As a result, they may be more apt to trust their leaders and feel more comfortable seeking marriage advice from them. Giving counsel is one of the roles of religious leaders in the LDS church (Ludlow). Hence, these results may also speak to how religious leaders are fulfilling their duties.

In addition to supporting the principle of homophily, the results of this research question may also support Cowen's (1982) explanations as to why some choose informal social support sources over formal support sources: some may not have the money to pay for formal services (advice from family, friends, and religious leaders is usually free); formal services may not be available due to where the recipient lives (an unlikely problem where family, friends, and religious leaders are often part of the recipient's immediate context); formal services may not match the personal beliefs and expectations of the recipient (an obstacle often overcome in a homophilous social network such as a friendship or relationship with a religious leader); and recipients may prefer to receive

support from people they know and trust in settings they know and trust (which is usually the case when family, friends, and religious leaders give advice in settings such as a home, school, or chapel).

*Research Question 2:
Sex Trends in Use of Advice*

The second research question was interested in highlighting similarities and differences between husbands and wives in whether they used the advice they were given. The overall trend seems to be that the husbands and wives reported using the advice they were given (91.5% and 94.7%, respectively). Because the advice was reportedly used by the majority of the participants, no fruitful contrasts can be made.

Some of the reasons the participants tended to report that they used the advice may be found in an examination of their social demographic characteristics. Not only were the couples of the study mostly LDS, husbands' average monthly attendance in church services was 3.63 and wives' 3.72, which means that most of them attended church services weekly. During church services, obedience to commandments (including honoring parents and sustaining church leaders) are often topics of emphasis. Hence, participants may have felt encouraged to present themselves as people who obey the advice they receive from parents and religious leaders. In other words, they may present themselves in the most socially desirable way (Dooley, 1990). This idea seems supported especially when noting that of the husbands and wives who received advice from religious leaders; only one wife reported to have not used the advice. On the other hand, this study may suggest that the advice participants received was in fact helpful and useful to them. However, such conclusions invite further research.

*Research Question 3:
Sex Trends in Evaluated Helpfulness of Advice*

As with sex trends in advice use, trends in how husbands and wives evaluate the helpfulness of advice are clear; most advice seemed to be evaluated as more or less helpful. For husbands, average evaluations of helpfulness ranged from 7.69 (friend 2 advice) to 9.36 (religious leader 2 advice) where an evaluation of 10 was considered the most helpful advice. For wives, the average evaluations were similar ranging from 6.75 to 9.09. These higher average evaluations of helpfulness of advice may also be attributed to socially desirable responses and religious emphasis on obedience to religious and family leadership.

This study's outcomes may follow what was discovered in Goldsmith and Fitch's (1997) study where some participants associated closeness with the advice-giver as expertise. In this study, the connection between closeness and expertise may be revealed by evaluations of helpfulness. In other words, if expertise or helpfulness of advice is associated with closeness, then participants may have evaluated advice as helpful because of the closeness of relationship with the advice-giver. This connection is explored more specifically in research question 5.

In addition, that the advice was both used and generally helpful may indicate that the advice was indeed quality advice. If this is the case, social and family scientists may benefit from continuing their research in the field of advice in order to understand what helpful advice exchanges consist of.

*Research Question 4:
Effects of Mixed and Same-Sex Dyads*

Some research suggests that sex differences in social support can be seen more clearly when examining the sex of the giver *with* the sex of the receiver rather than the sex of either party separately (Mickelson et al., 1995; Winstead et al., 1992). Independent and paired sample *t* test outcomes suggest that examining sex in combination did not have a significant impact on whether advice was used and how helpful it was evaluated to be. This outcome makes sense when considering the lack of variation in the outcome measures of advice use and helpfulness of advice. The majority of the participants used the advice they were given and evaluated the advice as helpful. There does not seem to be enough variance to warrant determining if variance could be explained by a combination of the sexes.

On the other hand, this outcome may be interpreted as meaning the sex of the giver and receiver of advice are insignificant when it comes to whether the advice is used and considered helpful; other variables may be more telling, such as the closeness of the relationship with the advice-giver (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997), the content of the advice (MacGeorge et al., 2004), or sex role effects (Ashton & Feuhrer, 1993).

Again, the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample are likely to influence the use and helpfulness of advice outcomes. In this study, the samples' many similarities in religious preference, religious activity, age, and geographical location all may emphasize the importance of following the counsel of others especially if they occupy a position of authority. To be fair, this data may also indicate that parents, friends, and local religious leaders may have given useful and helpful advice.

*Research Question 5:
Relationship Closeness and Advice*

Outcomes in this area provided more statistically significant outcomes overall. In some cases for both husbands and wives, the closeness of relationship was associated with whether or not advice was used and how helpful it was evaluated to be. For husbands, the closeness of relationship with their fathers was associated with both use and helpfulness of advice. In other words, the more close the relationship between husbands and their fathers, the more likely they were to use the advice and evaluate it as helpful.

Wives' responses indicated that the closeness of relationship between friends significantly influenced whether the advice was used and considered helpful. This outcome was also discovered when siblings were the advice-givers. The closeness of the sibling relationship was related to whether advice was evaluated as helpful.

Why closeness of relationship did not always have a significant affect on advice use and helpfulness is unclear. For example, there was approximately the same number of mothers as fathers who gave advice ($n = 36$ and 38 , respectively) to husbands. However, only correlations between relationship closeness, helpfulness of advice, and advice use were statistically significant between husband recipients and father advice-givers. Even when outcomes were statistically significant, only 14 to 28.5% of variance could be accounted for by the correlation between closeness and advice use and helpfulness. Hence, there are other explanations beyond the scope of this study which account for variance.

Limitations of Study

Because this study was interested in how sex and relationship closeness affect the use and evaluations of advice helpfulness, it naturally excluded other variables which may have had more power to detect relationships. This study was also a secondary analysis of data already collected for purposes different than the purposes of this study. As a result, at least one of the research questions was difficult to explore due to the design of the original study. For example, the original study was not particularly interested in how the sex of the advice-giver and recipient affected the use and helpfulness of advice; and though there were questions which enabled measurement of such variables, a different design could have been more sensitive to sex differences than the design of the original study. Designs where the sample is paired in mixed and same-sex dyads as utilized by Mickelson et al. (1995), Goldsmith and Dun (1997), or Winstead et al. (1992), might have been more sensitive to sex differences. On the other hand, Goldsmith and Fitch (1997) call for more research on naturally occurring advice exchanges which was afforded by the nature of this study. Though this study utilized an ex post facto design, the advice exchanges occurred naturally not by arrangement of the researcher.

Discussion of the results of the study often alluded to the principle of social desirability as a possible explanation for the trend for the participants to both use and evaluate as helpful the advice they received (Dooley, 1990). Given this possibility, having the participants answer face-to-face interview questions regarding their advice-giver and advice response may have exacerbated any social desirability tendencies

participants may have had. Future researchers can minimize socially desirable responses by using questionnaires instead of interview. In addition, they may also word the questions so as to not influence socially desirable answers (Dooley). Finally, researchers may want to utilize a more random sample or stratified sampling procedure (Cohen, 2001) in order to obtain a sample representative of various ethnic, racial, and religious groups.

Future studies on the effectiveness of advice in natural circumstances (in contrast to researcher created scenarios) may benefit by considering three variables associated with sex and advice that the current study did not. First, Burda et al. (1984) suggest differences between males and females may have more to do with socially constructed sex roles than with sex alone. Their study of the effects of sex and sex role orientation on social support resources found that feminine and androgynous participants reported significantly more support resources than other sex roles. In their series of hierarchical regression analyses, when sex role was controlled for, it reduced the relationship between study variables by approximately half. Although they report their relationships were not strong, they nevertheless point to sex role as having a partial effect on the differences we see when studying gender and support-seeking behaviors. Since Burda and colleagues' study, other researchers have found similar sex role effects (Ashton & Fuehrer, 1993; Johnson, 1987; Nadler et al., 1984).

Second, whether or not the advice was solicited or unsolicited may affect whether it is used and how it is evaluated (Daubman & Lehman, 1994; Smith & Goodnow, 1999). The current study was not designed to measure this variable.

Third, as was discussed in the review of literature, responses to advice may vary depending on the type of support the advice represents whether emotional, informational, or instrumental. Hence, future researchers may want to distinguish what type of support was communicated through the advice.

Future researchers may also benefit by studying engaged couples through the first year of their marriage. The participants could be trained to keep record of who gives them advice voluntarily and who they seek advice from, how close they are to the advice-giver, and what advice is given. At the end of their first year of marriage, couples could be asked to complete a measure designed to record what advice they used and how helpful it was to them.

Implications of Study and Conclusion

One implication may derive from the face value of the outcomes reported. That is, maybe the advice given by friends, parents, and religious leaders to participants in this study was indeed helpful advice worth implementing in a marriage relationship. If this is the case, then a more scrupulous examination of advice content and the processes of advice exchanges may reveal ways to improve what and how advice is given.

It seems clear in this study that individuals preparing for marriage are receiving advice almost exclusively from informal sources. Would advice-giving be as successful from formal sources? One study of 116 couples in treatment for alcohol abuse indicated promising results for the effectiveness of advice when it comes from a professional therapist (Zweben, Pearlman, & Li, 1988). Participants were randomly assigned to either eight sessions of conjoint marital therapy or one 90 minute session of advice counseling.

Results indicated that couples in the advice counseling group fared as well as those in the marital therapy group on measures of overall outcome and both groups showed improvements in days abstinent. The authors explain, “The lack of differentiation between the effectiveness of the two interventions could not be explained by differences in socio-demographic or pre-treatment drinking or marital adjustment measures between the two subgroups of couples” (p. 911).

The authors caution against over-generalizing the outcomes based on the limitations of their design and sample. Yet, they use their outcomes to promote further investigation in to the effects of brief outpatient treatments, like advice counseling. The current study in connection with Zweben and colleagues’ (1988) study and the several advice studies cited throughout this article (e.g., Goldsmith & Dun, 1997; Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997; MacGeorge et al., 2004) provide ancillary evidence that advice may be an effective intervention for some human experiences and problems. Hence, advice-giving may be an area of research providing great return on investment for those seeking to influence individuals preparing for marriage.

The current study’s outcomes may also hint at why people do not utilize professional premarital prevention programs in greater number (Carroll & Doherty, 2003). Those who receive social support from informal sources before their marriage may be less likely to enter a formal preparation program due to lack of perceived need; however, more research in this area is necessary to substantiate such a claim. Yet, if it is true, utilizing individuals’ social network as a preventative intervention may prove as advantageous to the individual as a marriage preparation program.

That social support is a context suitable for intervention is implied by Cohen's (2004) argument for "creating and strengthening a diverse natural social network, increasing the availability of social supporting in natural networks, and reducing negative interactions within one's network" (p. 682). For highlights of how some researchers have studied different ways of intervening through one's social network, see Hurdle (2001). Furthermore, in light of how religious leaders have been shown to administer premarital prevention as effectively as professionals (Stanley et al., 2001) informal social supporters may be effective, though indirect, sources of intervention for couples preparing for marriage.

This study discovered that husbands and wives in their first marriage received marital advice from friends, parents, other family members, and religious leaders. Friends constituted the majority of advice-givers followed by parents and religious leaders. Participants received advice mostly from those of the same sex. The majority used the advice and evaluated the advice as helpful. In some cases, the closeness of the relationship with the advice-giver affected advice use and helpfulness evaluations. These outcomes provide a foundation for on-going studies of the effects, processes, and outcomes of premarital advice given by informal sources. Future research in the area of advice-giving may result in improved interventions for helping individuals prepare for marriage and avoid divorce.

REFERENCES

- Adams, J. Quote on advice. Retrieved on September 6, 2007, from <http://www.todays-woman.net/quoteid-455.html>
- Albizu-Garcia, C. E., Alegria, M., Freeman, D., & Vera, M. (2001). Gender and health services use for a mental health problem. *Social Science and Medicine*, *53*, 867-878.
- Amato, P. R., Booth, A., Johnson, D. R., & Rogers, S. J. (2007). *Alone together: How marriage in America is changing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Antonucci, T. C., Lansford, J. E., & Akiyama, H. (2001). Impact of positive and negative aspects of marital relationships and friendships on well-being of older adults. *Applied Developmental Science*, *5*(2), 68-75.
- Ashton, W. A., & Fuehrer, A. (1993). Effects of gender and gender role identification of participant and type of social support resource on support seeking. *Sex Roles*, *28*(7/8), 461-476.
- Baumrind, D. (1975). Child care practices anteceding three patterns of preschool behavior. *Genetic Psychology Monographs*, *75*, 43-88.
- Blow, A. J., Sprenkle, D. H., & Davis, S. D. (2007). Is who delivers treatment more important than the treatment itself? The role of the therapist in common factors. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, *33*(3), 298-317.
- Bonds-Raacke, J. M., Bearden, E. S., Carriere, N. J., Anderson, E. M., & Nicks, S. D. (2001). Engaging distortions: Are we idealizing marriage? *The Journal of Psychology*, *135*(2), 179-184.

- Bryant, C. M., & Conger, R. D. (1999). Marital success and domains of social support in long-term relationships: Does the impact of network members ever end? *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 60(2), 437-450.
- Burda, P. C., Vaux, A., & Schill, T. (1984). Social support resources: Variation across sex and sex role. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 10(1), 119-126.
- Caplan, G. (1974). *Support systems and community mental health*. New York: Human Sciences Press.
- Carrere, S., Beuhman, K. T., Gottman, J. M., Coan, J. A., & Ruckstuhl, L. (2000). Predicting marital stability and divorce in newlywed couples. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 14(1), 42-58.
- Carroll, J. S., & Doherty, W. J. (2003). Evaluating the effectiveness of premarital prevention programs: A meta-analytic review of outcome research. *Family Relations*, 52(2), 105-118.
- Cassel, J. (1974). An epidemiological perspective of psychosocial factors in disease etiology. *American Journal of Public Health*, 64, 1040-1043.
- Christensen, A., & Jacobson, N. S. (2000). *Reconcilable differences*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Clark, S. C. (1995). Advance report of final divorce statistics, 1989 and 1990. *Monthly Vital Statistics Report*, 43(8), 1-20.
- Cohen, B. H. (2001). *Explaining psychological statistics*. New York: Wiley.
- Cohen, S. (2004). Social relationships and health. *American Psychologist* (November), 676-684.

- Corney, R. H. (1990). Sex differences in general practice attendance and help seeking for minor illness. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 34(5), 525-534.
- Cowen, E. L. (1982). Help is where you find it: Four informal helping groups. *American Psychologist*, 37(4), 385-395.
- Cummings, M. E., & Davies, P. (1994). *Children in marital conflict: The impact of family dispute and resolution*. London: Guilford Press.
- Cutrona, C. E. (1996). *Social support in couples*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cutrona, C. E., & Suhr, J. A. (1994). Social support communication in the context of marriage: An analysis of couples' supportive interactions. In B. R. Burleson, T. L. Albrecht, & I. G. Sarason (Eds.), *Communication of social support: Messages, interaction, relationship and community* (pp. 113-135). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Daubman, K. A., & Lehman, T. C. (1993). The effects of receiving help: Gender differences in motivation and performance. *Sex Roles*, 28(11/12), 693-707.
- Dooley, D. (1990). *Social research methods*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Eckenrode, J., & Wethington, E. (1990). The process and outcome of mobilizing social support. In S. Duck & R. C. Silver (Eds.), *Personal relationships and social support* (pp. 83-103). London: Sage.
- Fischer, C. S. (1977). *Networks and places: Social relations in the urban setting*. New York: Free Press.
- Galdas, P. M., Cheater, F., & Marshall, P. (2005). Men and help-seeking behaviour: Literature review. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 49(6), 616-623.
- Gall, M. D., Gall, J. P., & Borg, W. R. (2003). *Educational research: An introduction*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

- Glass, G. V., & Hopkins, K. D. (1996). *Statistical methods in education and psychology*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Goldsmith, D. J., & Dun, S. A. (1997). Sex differences and similarities in communicating social support. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 14*, 317-337.
- Goldsmith, D. J., & Fitch, K. (1997). The normative context of advice as social support. *Human Communication Research, 23*(4), 454-476.
- Goldsmith, D. J., & MacGeorge, E. L. (2000). The impact of politeness and relationship on perceived quality of advice about a problem. *Human Communication Research, 26*(2), 234-263.
- Gottman, J., & DeClaire, J. (1997). *Raising an emotionally intelligent child: The heart of parenting*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Grusec, J. E., & Goodnow, J. J. (1994). Impact of parental discipline methods on the child's internalization of values: A reconceptualization of current points of view. *Developmental Psychology, 30*, 4-19.
- Haws, W. A., & Mallinckrodt, B. (1998). Separation-individuation from family of origin and marital adjustment of recently married couples. *The American Journal of Family Therapy, 26*(4), 293-306.
- Hurdle, D. E. (2001). Social support: A critical factor in women's health and health promotion. *Health and Social Work, 26*(2), 72-79.
- Johnson, M. E. (1987). Influences of gender and sex role orientation on help-seeking attitudes. *Journal of Psychology, 22*(3), 237-241.
- Kaplan, R. M., & Saccuzzo, D. P. (2001). *Psychological testing: Principles, applications, and issues*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

- Larson, J. H. (1988). The marriage quiz: College students' beliefs in selected myths about marriage. *Family Relations*, 37(1), 3-11.
- Larson, J. H., & Holman, T. B. (1994). Premarital predictors of marital quality and stability. *Family Relations*, 43(2), 228-237.
- Lee, F. (2002). The social costs of seeking help. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 38(1), 17-35.
- Liebler, C. A., & Sandefur, G. D. (2002). Gender differences in the exchange of social support with friends, neighbors, and co-workers at midlife. *Social Science Research*, 31, 364-391.
- Ludlow, D. H. (1992). *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*. New York: Macmillan.
- MacGeorge, E. L., Feng, B., Butler, G. L., & Budarz, S. K. (2004). Understanding advice in supportive interactions: Beyond the facework and message evaluation paradigm. *Human Communication Research*, 30(1), 42-70.
- Marsden, P. V. (1987). Core discussion networks of Americans. *American Sociology Review*, 52, 122-313.
- McCarthy, W. J., Newcomb, M. D., & Bentler, P. M. (1994). The contribution of personal and family characteristics in adolescence to the subsequent development of young adult competence. In R. D. Parke & S. G. Kellam (Eds.), *Exploring family relationships with other social contexts* (pp. 169-197). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- McGoldrick, M., & Carter, B. (2003). The family life cycle. In F. Walsh (Ed.), *Normal family processes: Growing diversity and complexity* (pp. 375-398). New York: Guilford Press.

- McPherson, M., Smith-Lovin, L., & Cook, J. M. (2001). Birds of a feather: Homophily in social networks. *Annual Reviews Sociology*, 27, 415-444.
- Mickelson, K. D., Helgeson, V. S., & Weiner, E. (1995). Gender effects on social support provision and receipt. *Personal Relationships*, 2, 211-224.
- Nadler, A., Maler, S., & Friedman, A. (1984). Effects of helper's sex, subject's androgyny, and self-evaluation on males' and females' willingness to seek and receive help. *Sex Roles*, 10(5/6), 327-339.
- Norusis, M. J. (1990). *SPSS introductory statistics student guide*. Chicago: SPSS.
- Prezza, M., & Pacilli, M. G. (2002). Perceived social support from significant others, family and friends, and several socio-demographic characteristics. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 12, 422-429.
- Reinhardt, J. P., Boerner, K., & Horowitz, A. (2006). Differential impact of perceived and received support on well-being. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 23(1), 117-129.
- Rosengren, A., Orth-Gomer, K., Wedel, H., & Wilhelmsen, L. (1993). Stressful life events, social support, and mortality in men born in 1933. *British Medical Journal*, 307, 1102-1105.
- Schumm, W. R., Resnick, G., Silliman, B., & Bell, D. B. (1998). Premarital counseling and marital satisfaction among civilian wives of military service members. *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy*, 24, 21-28.
- Smith, J., & Goodnow, J. J. (1999). Unasked-for support and unsolicited advice: Age and the quality of social experience. *Psychology and Aging*, 14(1), 108-121.

- Sprecher, S., & Feilmee, D. (1992). The influence of parents and friends on the quality and stability of romantic relationships: A three-wave longitudinal investigation. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 54(4), 888-900.
- Stanley, S. M., Markman, H. J., Prado, L. M., Olmos-Gallo, P. A., Tonelli, L., St. Peters, et al. (2001). Community-based premarital prevention: Clergy and lay leaders on the front lines. *Family Relations*, 50(1), 67-76.
- Stanley, S. M., Markman, H. J., St. Peters, M., & Leber, B. D. (1995). Strengthening marriages and preventing divorce: New directions in prevention research. *Family Relations*, 44(4), 392-401.
- Sullivan, K. T., Pasch, L. A., Cornelius, T., & Cirigliano, E. (2004). Predicting participation in premarital prevention programs: The health belief model and social norms. *Family Process*, 43(2), 175-193.
- Surra, C. (1988). The influence of the interactive network on developing relationships. In R. M. Milardo (Ed.), *Families and social networks* (pp. 48-82). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Turner, R. J., & Marino, F. (1994). Social support and social structure: A descriptive epidemiology. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 35(3), 193-212.
- Verbrugge, L. M. (1977). The structure of adult friendship choices. *Social Forces*, 56, 576-597.
- Veroff, J. B., Kulka, R. A., & Douvan, E. (1981). *Mental health in America: Patterns of help-seeking 1957-1976*. New York: Basic Books.
- Waite, L. J. (1995). Does marriage matter? *Demography*, 32(4), 483-508.

Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language (College Ed.), 1962.

Cleveland, OH: World Publishing.

Wills, T. A., & DePaulo, B. M. (1991). Interpersonal analysis of the help-seeking process. In C. R. Snyder & D. R. Forsyth (Eds.), *Handbook of social and clinical psychology: The health perspective* (pp. 350-375). New York: Pergamon Press.

Winstead, B. A., Derlega, J. V., Lewis, R. J., Sanchez-Hucles, J., & Clarke, E. (1992).

Friendship, social interaction, and coping with stress. *Communication Research*, *19*, 193-211.

Zweben, A., Pearlman, S., & Li, S. (1988). A comparison of brief advice and conjoint

therapy in the treatment of alcohol abuse: The results of the marital systems study. *British Journal of Addiction*, *83*, 899-916.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Institutional Review Board Approval

MAR 31 2004



Marriage and Family Therapy Program
2700 Old Main Hill
Logan UT 84322-2700

March 15, 2004

Informed Consent
Marriage Advice Given to Engaged Couples

Dear Participant,

Researchers from the Department of Family, Consumer and Human Development at Utah State University are conducting a research study to find out what type of information is given to engaged couples and how they perceive that information. Data shows that couples are at the highest risk for divorce in the first three years of their marriage. A factor affecting divorce are the expectations the couples have toward marriage, and the expectations are based on information received before the marriage. This study has been designed to assess the formal and informal information/advice and who gives the couple advice after they get engaged. You have been asked to be part of this study based on being married between three and 12 months.

Your participation is voluntary and you can chose to withdraw at any time without consequence. Participation instructions are attached. You will be asked to fill out a short questionnaire and be interviewed by an undergraduate student from USU. Your participation should take about ¼ hour. Depending on the outcome of this study, you may be contacted in the future. Your questionnaires will have a numeric code and will be stored in a locked cabinet separate from the code sheet (which will be kept in a separate locked cabinet. Please do not put your name on the questionnaire. Signing this form constitutes your informed consent. When you sign, please mark whether you would be willing to be contacted in the future. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects at USU has reviewed and approved this project. Should you have any questions regarding this approval process you many contact the IRB at (435) 797-1821.

There is minimal risk in participating in this research project, although you may experience some emotional distress. If the interview becomes bothersome you can stop it at any time and your interviewer will have a list of therapists who deal with marital problems who may help you. There may or may not be any direct benefit to you from this interview, although it is possible to strengthen your relationship by remembering positive parts of your history and comparing expectations. The investigators hope to learn how to improve the role of information given to premarital couples as they marry and start a new life together.

Your participation and contribution to this effort is greatly appreciated. If you would like a summary of the results, please contact either Dr. Allgood or Cicile Edwards to make arrangements for you to obtain a copy of the results. We would also be happy to answer any questions you may have. This is part of a master's thesis project and you are welcome to contact either one of us. Dr. Allgood or Cicile can be reached at the Family Life Center (435) 797-7430. Dr. Law at USU Uinta Basin Campus will also be involved in this study.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Scot M. Allgood
Scot M. Allgood, Ph.D.
Principle Investigator

Cicile Edwards
Cicile Edwards
Student Researcher

I have been given two copies of the informed consent. I have signed both copies, returned one copy to the interviewer and kept one for my records. By signing below I agree to participate.

Participants Signature

Spouse Signature

Date



Appendix B. Interview Record Sheet

Who did they get advice/information from?

	Sex of Info Giver	Marital Status of Giver	Marital Quality of Giver	How Close to the person	Did They use the advice	How Helpful Was advice	Information Given (verbatim, if possible)
	M/F	M/S	1-10	1-10	Y/N	1-10	
Friends (1st Name) <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>							
Family Mother Father Stepmother Stepfather Grandparents Siblings Aunt/Uncle Other (who) <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>							
Religious Leader <hr/> Name/position <hr/> Name/position							

Appendix C. Instructions for Interview

Instructions to Interviewers for Newlywed Information Study

The first item of business will be to discuss the informed consent. Give each spouse a copy of the sheet and have them sign both copies. Collect one copy and let them keep the other one for their records. Remind them that while you are doing the interview, the data will be turned in without names to maintain the integrity of the research project and to protect their confidentiality.

Make sure both spouses are comfortable and tell them you will be writing their responses on your interview sheet. This should be a low key interview on a subject that most couples like to talk about.

The purpose of these interviews is to determine the amount and type of information that engaged couples receive before they get married. Waiting a few months after marriage provides the couples a chance to evaluate the information. We want you to get details from each spouse as well as the couple together. While the couple will be together, ask each spouse for specific information they received about marriage while they were engaged. Use the prompts on the interview sheet (e.g. friends, family—including specific members, religious leaders—titles only—no names) and provide all the information to complete each line of data. The information for each box in order is:

- gender of the information giver,
- marital status of the giver,
- perceived marital quality of the giver,
- how close do they feel to the giver,
- did they use the information,
- how helpful was the information, and
- write down word for word (as close as possible) what the information was.

Before ending the interview ask if there were items not already covered. This may include information related to religious practice, sex, conflict resolution, or communication. After each piece of information is recorded, ask if the same person offered any additional information. We need information on amount as well as type of information.

To provide a context for the interview, we need each spouse to fill out the demographic sheet. Ask them not to compare answers to avoid influencing each other.

Thank them for participating. Before leaving, ask if they know any other couples who have been married 3-9 months who may be interested in participating in this project. If yes, get their names and contact information.