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PREMARITAL EDUCATION: PARTICIPATION, ATTITUDES,  
AND RELATION TO MARITAL ADJUSTMENT IN  
A SAMPLE FROM NORTHERN UTAH

by

Bryan D. Ramboz

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

of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Family Life/Family and Human Development

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY  
Logan, Utah

2003

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## ABSTRACT

Premarital Education: Participation, Attitudes, and Relation to  
Marital Adjustment in a Sample from Northern Utah

by

Bryan D. Ramboz, Doctor of Philosophy

Utah State University, 2003

Major Professor: Dr. Kathleen W. Piercy  
Department: Family and Human Development

The purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes, participation in, and potential effectiveness of premarital education as a vehicle to promote more satisfying marriages. A retrospective survey instrument, including existing measures of religious values, willingness to invest in marriage, and marital satisfaction, was used to gather data to answer research questions related to couples' participation in, and attitudes about premarital education, and their influence on marital adjustment and satisfaction. Information about the amount of *Time* spent in premarital education, breadth of *Topics* covered, *Training* of the provider, and whether or not *Testing* was performed also was gathered and called Four T's of premarital education.

Sample couples were identified by comparing marriage license information to current telephone listings from Cache County, Utah. One hundred forty-five couples returned usable surveys. Statistical analysis revealed that most couples participated in



little or no premarital education even though most couples had favorable attitudes towards such marriage preparations. Further, no significant relation was found between participation in any type of premarital education and marital adjustment or satisfaction. Implications for policy and practice are discussed.

(130 pages)

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Bryan D. Ramboz

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Since the 1960s, premarital interventions have been viewed as powerful instruments in the promotion of marital stability and satisfaction (Mace, 1972; Rutledge, 1966). However, the use of premarital education has yet to find its way into mainstream American culture. Even within the family sciences, premarital education as a preventive force in increasing marital stability and satisfaction has been largely overlooked for many years. For example, in a survey of family therapists who were members of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy, premarital education was not even listed as a category of practice (Doherty & Simmons, 1996). Recent changes in governmental policy and attitudes have brought new attention to the possibilities of using premarital education to increase marital stability and decrease the negative outcomes associated with divorce for some families.

Contrary to some predictions by demographers, the divorce rate in the United States has not continued to escalate into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. According to reports released by the National Center for Health Statistics (1998), the national divorce rate peaked in 1981, held relatively steady until 1985, and has been either holding steady or very slowly declining since 1985. Utah's divorce rate appears to have closely followed the national trend. Measured in numbers of divorces per 1,000 population, Utah's divorce

rate peaked at 5.5 in 1981 and has decreased from 4.4 in 1997 to 4.2 in 1998 (Utah Department of Health, 2000).

Even with this gradual decline in the divorce rate over the past 15 years, the incidence of divorce in Utah, and in the nation, still exists at twice the level as reported in the 1960s (Utah Department of Health, 2000). According to some researchers, between one half to two thirds of new marriages will end in divorce (Martin & Bumpass, 1989; National Center for Health Statistics, 1989). With social science research on the potentially negative outcomes of divorce on adults, children, and society continuing to accumulate (Gallagher & Whitehead, 1997; Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1999; Rogers & Pryor, 1998), efforts at strengthening the institution of marriage are gaining state and national attention.

#### History of Divorce Prevention

Much of the early focus on preventing divorce has clustered around making divorce more difficult to obtain. Commonly referred to as "no-fault" divorce, current legislation allows either party in a marriage to sue for divorce with only the claim of "irreconcilable differences" as reason for dissolving the marriage. Some argue that no-fault divorce statutes seriously undermine the importance of marriage in American society (Gallagher & Whitehead, 1997). At the present time all 50 states have some form of no-fault divorce legislation available for the dissolution of the marriage contract (Schoenfeld, 1996). However, in the past few years, many states have considered placing more restrictions on divorce, including abolishing no-fault statutes. Supporters



of abolishing no-fault divorce cite the drastic increase in divorce rates following the implementation of the no-fault statutes (nearly a 40% increase in the five years following enactment), along with the lack of a decrease in the levels of conflict between divorcing parents (Gallagher & Whitehead; Schoenfeld). However, to date no state has eliminated its no-fault grounds for divorce. Instead, many current legislative efforts are aimed at strengthening marriage.

### *Strengthening Marriage*

A new generation of divorce intervention in America represents a true paradigm shift. Instead of waiting until the couple is in distress and the marriage is often beyond repair, the new focus on divorce prevention is preventive (Sphatt, 2000). One strategy has been the inception of "covenant marriage" statutes. "Covenant marriage focuses on strengthening marriage from its inception to dissolution, not simply making divorce more difficult" (Sphatt, p. 5). Covenant marriage stress permanence in the marriage vow, and include the use of premarital education as one way to increase marital stability. Louisiana passed its version of the covenant marriage law in 1997. Since then more than 25 states have introduced various means to strengthen marriage, including Utah. However, Arizona and Arkansas are the only other states to have enacted such a law to date (Fagan, 2001; Rosier & Feld, 2000).

Other programs aimed at reducing divorce have originated in Florida, which in 1998 passed the "Marriage Preparation and Preservation Act" (Fagan, 2001). This legislation made the teaching of marriage skills a required part of the high school curriculum, and encouraged premarital education by reducing the marriage license fee

by 50% for couples who completed at least 6 hours of premarital education. In April 2000, the governor of Arizona signed a marriage initiative authorizing the state to spend \$1 million of regular budget money annually to develop community-based marriage skills courses aimed at both engaged and married couples. Oklahoma's governor has pledged \$10 million dollars of the state's welfare resources to promoting stable marriages after a state economic panel concluded the states high rate of poverty and welfare dependence was directly connected to the states elevated divorce rate (Regier, 2002). In 1998, Utah's governor created the country's first Commission on Marriage with the charge to strengthen marriages in Utah by studying best practices throughout the country to set a direction that will improve marital relationships in Utah (Fagan).

### *Premarital Education*

An integral part of many of the new generation initiatives and legislation is the encouragement and, in some cases, required use of premarital education. The move to strengthen marriage has produced several premarital education programs, though there remains much debate over which methodologies, if any, are efficacious (Cole & Cole, 1999; Gottman, Coan, Carrere, & Swanson, 1998; Stanley, Bradbury, & Markman, 2000). Some programs are skills-based. For example, Relationship Enhancement (RE; Guerney, 1977; Guerney, Brock, & Coufal, 1986) is a group program focused on strengthening and enhancing nine positive relationship factors by teaching couples skills associated with each relationship factor (Stahmann, 2000). The Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP; Markman, Floyd, Stanley, & Lewis, 1986; Markman, Floyd, Stanley, & Storaasli, 1988) is also a group program that teaches

couples skills in handling conflict, dealing with core issues leading to conflict, and relationship enhancement.

Other programs are more assessment-based and are aimed at increasing couples' awareness of potential problems in their relationships without providing skills or exercises to address the problems. Relationship Evaluation (RELATE; Holman, Busby, Doxey, Klein, & Loyer-Carlson, 1999) is a comprehensive premarital assessment that covers 96 percent of factors predictive of later marital quality (Larson et al., 1995). Results from RELATE can be used in conjunction with premarital counseling or provided to the couples for their own information though no specific intervention is outlined.

A third group of interventions are termed "inventory-based programs," as they combine assessment and intervention (Stahmann, 2000). Facilitating Open Couple Communications, Understanding, & Study (FOCCUS; Markey, Micheletto, & Becker, 1985) is a 156-item instrument often used by Catholic and Protestant churches for marriage preparation (Larson et al., 1995). The Premarital Personal and Relationship Evaluation (PREPARE; Olson, Fournier, & Druckman, 1989) assesses eleven relationship areas, which become the basis for a three-session (or more) process of counseling, outlined in a work book, provided for the counselor and clients (Stahmann).

Despite the proliferation of these premarital education programs, few couples are shown to use them, though there is considerable variability in rates of participation depending on the study (McMannus, 1994; Sullivan & Bradbury, 1997). Further, it has been shown that the couples electing to participate in some kind of premarital education

are generally at low risk for marital discord and dissolution (Sullivan & Bradbury). More information is needed on couples' premarital preparations and attitudes in order to create useful interventions to strengthen marriages locally and in the state.

#### Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study was two-fold. First, this study examined what formal premarital education couples engage in prior to marrying. The main focus of this question was to gather baseline information to be used in the development of a premarital education program. Finding out what couples are doing presently, as well as their interest in, attitudes about, and willingness to participate in premarital education will provide valuable information for the creation of premarital intervention programs. It is anticipated that few couples engage in formal premarital education and that many others will not see it as valuable to their marriage.

Second, this study examined the relation between the premarital education couples obtained and a measure of marital satisfaction at 3 years after marriage. It has been shown that relationship satisfaction declines in the first 2 to 3 years of marriage (Huston, McHale, & Crouter, 1986; Kurdek, 1991), and it is hoped a more realistic, less idealized view of marriage may be obtained. In the early years of a marriage, couples establish both constructive and destructive patterns of relating to each other. One of the main reasons that marital therapy is not more successful at preventing divorce is that these destructive patterns become ingrained in the relationship over time, and are highly resistant to change (Jacobson & Addis, 1993; Rausch, Barry, Hertel, & Swain, 1974). It

also has been reported that couples who do seek help wait an average of 6 years from the time they detect serious marital difficulties (Buongiorno & Notarius, 1992), usually after there have been negative effects on spouses and children (Hahlweg & Markman, 1988). It also has been reported that the degree to which the partners are willing to work to resolve relationship problems decreased during the first few years, particularly in distressed marriages (Huston, Caughlin, Houts, Smith, & George, 2001). It may be valuable to identify at-risk couples early in the marriage before such patterns become insurmountable. According to Lawler and Risch (2001), even though most couples report doing well early in marriage, approximately 20% of both males and females in their study were no better than slightly adjusted. Distress levels increased if the couple was ages 30 and over, was in the fourth or fifth year of marriage, and were parents. Lawler and Risch surmise that over time, marriage does not get easier; it gets more difficult, at least in the first 5 years of marriage. Given the disproportionately high rates of marital disruption in the early years of marriage, the most critical point in a marriage is the third year (Lawler & Risch).

#### Definitions

The term *formal premarital education* is used to describe services provided to couples prior to marriage that include, but are not limited to, counseling procedures that make couples aware of strengths and weaknesses in their proposed marriage, and suggest ways of dealing with those weaknesses. The intended purpose of most premarital education programs is to prevent divorce (Stahmann, 2000). The level of

formality in premarital education was assessed by examining four factors, referred to as the Four T's of premarital education: (a) *Time* spent in marriage preparation, (b) breadth of *Topics* covered, (c) *Training* of the provider, and (d) use of a premarital inventory or *Test*. Couples who spend more time, cover more topics, use a trained professional, and use a premarital survey were considered to have a higher degree of formal premarital education than couples who spend a short amount of time, cover few topics, use someone with little or no training, and do not take a premarital assessment.

#### Research Questions

1. What types and quantity of formal premarital education do couples participate in?
2. Does participating in formal premarital education make any measurable difference in marital satisfaction at 3 years post marriage?
3. What are the attitudes of couples married 3 years about premarital education and its usefulness?
4. Are couples who participate in premarital education more likely to seek help for their marriage than those who do not participate in premarital education?
5. Are couples who participate in premarital education more likely to report willingness to participate in certain behaviors related to marital investment?

CHAPTER II  
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the attempt to reduce divorce and its negative consequences, the traditional approach has been to treat couples who come to clinical settings complaining of difficulties in their marriage. There is growing realization that this strategy is inadequate to address the over one million divorces annually in America (Markman & Floyd, 1980; National Center for Health Statistics, 1998). Described as *tertiary prevention*, traditional marriage therapy is undertaken in order to improve and rehabilitate marriages that have already become dysfunctional. This contrasts with *secondary prevention*, which is undertaken to assist marriages that are identified as vulnerable in some way to probable difficulties. The preferred method of family researchers is termed *primary prevention*, which attempts to reduce new cases of marital dysfunction prior to marriage, and is designed for populations not currently in need of intervention. The focus of primary prevention is on providing resources to prevent problems from developing in the future (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990; Markman, Floyd, & Dickson-Markman, 1982). The point in the temporal course of dysfunction at which resources are instituted distinguishes these three levels of prevention: before it gets too late, before it gets worse, and before it happens (L'Abate, 1983). According to Stahmann (2000), preventive efforts are an attempt to "intervene with couples at the transition point of beginning marriage in order to give them a better base for a stable and satisfactory marriage" (p. 104).

As described earlier, family science researchers, clergy, and community leaders

are encouraging the movement away from the tertiary mode of intervention and towards primary prevention efforts, especially the use of premarital education as a means of promoting and stabilizing marriages.

### Benefits of Marriage

Even with the present movement to promote healthy marriage at various levels of community and government, there remains a fair amount of debate over the value of marriage itself. Popenoe (1993) warned against the erosion of marriage and the traditional family, forecasting serious negative social consequences, especially for children. Others contend that the family must be viewed in a larger context and that the married, two-parent family never really was the norm for society (Coontz, 1992). Some researchers have focused specifically on marriage and concluded that marriage between a man and woman is fundamentally incompatible with individual growth and autonomy (Mintz & Kellogg, 1988), and especially damaging to women's health and well-being (Stacey, 1993).

As the academic debate over the value of marriage continues, the personal value of marriage continues to be quite evident in the actions and attitudes of Americans. "Even with the rise in divorce, cohabitation, and unwed parenthood, marriage remains a core value and aspiration of many Americans" report Waite and Gallagher (2000, p. 2). Over 90% of Americans rate "having a happy marriage" as either one of the most important, or very important objectives in life. When asked to select their top two goals in life, a majority of Americans include a happy marriage as one of the choices (Glenn,



1996). The importance of marriage in American society is also evidenced by the rates of remarriage following divorce, with an estimated one-half of all current marriages being remarriages for one or both partners (Bumpass, 1990).

The current divorce culture in America has contributed to a paradox for many Americans. Even though marriage remains very important to most adults, "the proportion of Americans married has declined, and the proportion of successfully married has declined even more" (Glenn, 1996, p. 15). This conflict is evidenced by the conclusions of two researchers that young adults "are desperate to have only one marriage, and they want it to be happy. They don't know whether this is possible anymore" (Levin & Cureton, 1998, p. 95)

With the continuing popularity of cohabitation (Bumpass, 1990; Bumpass & Sweet, 1989) and the growing belief that marriage is just one of many equally valuable forms of intimate relationships (Waite, 1995), researchers have examined the value of marriage and have largely determined that the institution of marriage is inherently different from other forms of intimate relationships, and that marriage offers individuals, couples, and society a larger benefit than other forms of relationships (Waite; Waite & Gallagher, 2000). After reviewing extensive research on the subject, Waite and Waite and Gallagher found that marriage had advantages in nearly every area of life, for husbands and wives, over other forms of relationships, including singlehood, cohabitation, divorce or separation, and widowhood. Some of the benefits of marriage include longer and healthier lives, improved mental health, more frequent and more satisfying sexual relationships, improved financial standing, and lower incidence of

domestic violence. These benefits also extended to children, with children from two-parent, married, intact families demonstrating better health (including mental health), higher quality of life, better academic performance, and significantly lower criminal and delinquent activity when compared to single parent families (never married or divorced).

“Marriage actually changes people’s goals and behavior in ways that are profoundly and powerfully life enhancing” (Waite & Gallagher, 2000, p. 17) and those who are not married do not receive the benefits of marriage. After reviewing the available research, Waite and Gallagher concluded that it was not simply having someone to share your life with, or the act of becoming a parent that produced such benefits. It is not related strictly to socio-economic status or health prior to marriage. Marriage “typically provides important and substantial benefits” (Waite, 1995, p. 486) to everyone involved. With this kind of research based, empirically tested support, it appears that the decision to promote marriage, specifically healthy marriage, is a valuable undertaking to both individuals and society.

### Types of Premarital Programs

Premarital education programs typically fall under one of three categories: skills-based, inventories, or inventory-based. A review of each category of programs follows.

#### *Skills-Based Programs*

One of the best known of the divorce prevention programs is also a program

based on years of theoretically driven research. The Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program, or PREP (Markman et al., 1986, 1988) is a 12-hour, 6-week, small-group (4-8 couples) program aimed at teaching skills in conflict management, dealing with core relationship issues, and relationship enhancement. Couples work with trained facilitators or "communication consultants" privately as they practice the skills covered in the seminars. Another format is available in which large groups (20-40 couples) attend lectures over the course of a single weekend (Renick, Blumberg, & Markman, 1992).

PREP interventions are based on the idea that it is the negative aspects of a couple's relationship, particularly escalation of negative communication patterns during discussions, that are key factors in marital distress. Longitudinal research has indicated that the quality of communication before marriage and before the development of distress in the relationship was one of the best predictors of future marital distress (Renick et al., 1992). Based on this research, couples are taught important differences in how males and females communicate, effective speaking and listening skills, destructive and constructive styles of communication, expectations and beliefs, sensual communication, and four spiritual values (honor, respect, intimacy, and forgiveness) that may impact their relationship.

Relationship Enhancement (RE; Guerney, 1977; Guerney et al., 1986) is one of the earliest programs developed, and it continues to be widely used. RE focuses on nine positive relationship factors: increasing caring, giving, understanding, honesty, openness, trust, sharing, compassion, and harmony. By learning skills to enhance these

relationship factors, RE contends that couples will be able to eliminate or be better able to deal with pain and distress in their relationship (Stahmann, 2000). Participants of the RE program show increases in relationship quality and communication when compared to control groups (Guernsey, 1988), though there have been no longitudinal outcome studies to date for this program.

From Catholicism comes a movement called Marriage Encounter™. Provided to an estimated two million married couples during its weekend sessions, a reported 80% to 90% of the participants succeed in saving their marriage. Sessions are led by couples with successful marital lives (McManus, 1996). Though not a premarital intervention, Marriage Encounter™ has evidenced effective intervention with couples in distress and in preventing divorce, with 90% of couples who complete Marriage Encounter™ reporting that they fall back in love with their spouse and at a much deeper level (McManus).

Such success with the Marriage Encounter™ program led to the creation of Engaged Encounter™ which focuses on couples preparing for marriage. These couples meet with mentor couples who share details of their own marriage in an intensive retreat. Described as more demanding than traditional "Pre-Cana Workshops" that most engaged Catholics attend, there is no empirical data to date that supports the efficacy of Engaged Encounter™ (McManus, 1994).

#### *Premarital Inventories*

There are also many questionnaires designed to help determine which marriages may be at higher risk for divorce. Two of the most common and comprehensive

premarital inventories are FOCCUS and RELATE.

FOCCUS (Markey et al., 1985) is the most widely used premarital inventory employed in marriage preparation by the Roman Catholic Church. FOCCUS is used by approximately two thirds of the Roman Catholic dioceses in the country, as well as over 500 Protestant churches of varying denominations. The FOCCUS computer service currently scores approximately 30,000 forms a year (Williams & Jurich, 1995). FOCCUS uses 156 items to assess relationship strengths and areas for growth and is intended to help a couple discuss and explore their relationship. This feedback also helps clergy tailor their instructions to best help the individual couple (Williams & Jurich). FOCCUS is available in a variety of formats, including Spanish, Braille, and audiotapes, as well as a nondenominational version for nonCatholic couples.

FOCCUS helps couples explore their relationship in 15 areas: personality match, marriage covenant, life style expectations, communication, friends and interests, problem solving, parenting, religion and values, second marriages (where applicable), interfaith marriages (where applicable), personal issues (e.g., jealousy, substance use/abuse, moodiness, and so forth), readiness for marriage, finances, sexuality, and extended family (Markey et al., 1985).

In a five-year follow-up study, Williams and Jurich (1995) tracked 333 couples who had taken FOCCUS premaritally. They discovered that about 6% of the couples responding had broken up before marriage, and another 7% had divorced, annulled, or separated, which is lower than the 18% of couples one would predict would be divorced after 4 years of marriage. Williams and Jurich were also able to reliably predict nearly

68% of the time that couples could be classified as having high- or poor-quality marriages based on Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976) scores. In this particular analysis, Williams and Jurich based their prediction on the percentage of questions within a topic area on which both partners agreed with the preferred response.

RELATionship Evaluation (RELATE; Holman et al., 1999) is a 271-item instrument designed to measure various aspects of the family of origin, individual characteristics, social contexts, and couple interactional processes. Couples who take RELATE receive a 20-page report detailing their and their partner's perceptions of over 60 aspects of the premarital relationship (Holman et al., 2000). The report does not necessarily provide information dramatically different than what couples already know and struggle with in their relationship, because they are the ones who answer the questions that are used to generate the report. Furthermore, RELATE is not presented as a diagnostic tool to tell couples if they should marry or not or if their relationship will last (Busby, Holman, & Taniguchi, 2001). Built from a previous instrument called the Preparation for Marriage Questionnaire (PREP-M; Holman, Busby, & Larson, 1989; Holman, Larson, & Harmer, 1994), RELATE is reportedly the most comprehensive and most cost effective premarital assessment tool available to date (Holman et al., 2000).

In a five-year follow-up study, the predictive power of the instrument was tested to see if premarital scores on RELATE could indicate marital outcomes (Meredith & Holman, 2000). Using a 6-item measure of marital quality of the author's own design ( $\alpha = .86$ ), Meredith and Holman accurately predicted between highly satisfied married individuals and others groups (broke-up premaritally, unsatisfied-married, and divorced/

separated) 85% of the time. Distinguishing among the other three groups proved to be very difficult. Two of the groups, unsatisfied-married and divorced/separated, were almost indistinguishable premaritally. Meredith and Holman found that those who did marry and remained unhappily married generally reported higher support from the woman's parents and from friends for the relationship premaritally, and reported a closer and healthier relationship with their parents and future in-laws than did individuals who eventually divorced or separated. This suggests that a social support network can have a predictable influence on marriages by either providing support to stay together or pressure to not divorce (Meredith & Holman).

#### *Inventory-Based Programs*

The use of a comprehensive premarital assessment is a valuable component of the premarital education process (Stahmann, 2000). The use of premarital inventories allows counselors or clergy to tailor their interventions to the specific couples' needs.

Developed by Dr. David H. Olson, a professor of family psychology at the University of Minnesota, Premarital Personal and Relationship Evaluation (PREPARE; Olson et al., 1989), is a 125-item questionnaire designed to identify relationship strengths and work areas (Fowers, Montel, & Olson, 1996). PREPARE measures 11 categories of marital concern. These categories are: realistic expectations, personality issues, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relationship, children and parenting, family and friends, egalitarian roles, and religious orientation. The measure also contains a control scale for the tendency to answer items in socially acceptable ways (Olson et al.). After the questionnaires are

scored, the couple meets with a counselor to review a detailed report. This report contains both individual and couple profiles. In a few follow-up sessions, the counselor uses prescribed exercises to help the couple develop skills in the categories in which their scores are low (Fowers et al., 1996). With the ability to predict which couples will divorce and which will remain happily married with about 80% to 90% accuracy (Larson & Olson, 1989), PREPARE could be a useful tool to select those couples who may benefit most from premarital counseling (Larson et al., 1995). According to recent estimates, about 100,000 couples complete PREPARE annually (McManus, 1994).

#### Church-Sponsored Intervention

The point at which churches normally have the greatest leverage with couples is when they ask to be married. Approximately 75% of marriages in Utah (Utah Department of Health, 2000), and 73% of marriages in the U.S. (McManus, 1994) are performed by clergy. Furthermore, evidence suggests that the majority of premarital counseling or education is undertaken in church settings and conducted by clergy (Stahmann, 2000; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1980; Sullivan & Bradbury, 1997). Premarital preparation has been described from a Catholic perspective (Markey, 1998), a Jewish perspective (Dalin, 1998), and a Protestant perspective (Anderson, 1998). In performing the greatest amount of premarital education, clergy generally do so as part of an optional or mandatory marriage preparation program before a religious wedding ceremony or service is conducted (Stahmann, 2000).

Churches have been described as "existing institutions that contact large



numbers of couples at stages of family development that are logically conducive to preventive intervention” (Stanley, Markman, St. Peters, & Leber, 1995, p. 393), and, therefore, are a clear choice to partner programs that are empirically and scientifically based. One such endeavor provided remarkable results using PREP (Markman et al., 1986, 1988). Stanley, Markman, and Prado (2001) reported on a partnership with local clergy in providing premarital education. All couples in this study had volunteered for premarital education, and already showed at least some interest in the premarital education process and purpose. The first group of couples received premarital education by clergy who were trained in the use of PREP. The second group of couples participated in the standard program, referred to as “naturally occurring,” as commonly provided by clergy for couples who were engaged. A third group of couples received PREP from the university staff. Following completion of the programs, couples who participated in naturally occurring premarital intervention provided by clergy showed an increase in negative communication. Couples who participated in PREP showed a decrease in negative communication and an increase in positive communication, with the couples in the clergy group scoring slightly better than those who worked with the university staff. This study evidences the power of partnering empirically based programs with community resources, especially churches. As PREP creators have stated, it is time to bring “empirically validated prevention programs out of university-based laboratories and into the communities of need” (Stanley et al., 1995, p. 393).

### Efficacy of Premarital Programs

There is no clear consensus as to the measure of premarital intervention efficacy. That is, each program or evaluation differs slightly on what it considers important in evaluating the effectiveness of premarital education. For example, research on the PREP program often focuses on levels of conflict in couple communication, and the intervention is considered a success if negative communication decreases and positive communication increases following couples' participation (Stanley et al., 2001). Other research focuses on couples reported levels of marital satisfaction and adjustment, supposing that higher levels of marital satisfaction translate into a more effective intervention (Williams & Jurich, 1995). One common denominator for any premarital education program's measure of effectiveness is whether or not couples remain married over time (Hahlweg, Markman, Thurmaier, Engl, & Eckert, 1998; Markman, Renick, Floyd, & Stanley, 1993; Meredith & Holman, 2000).

According to recent meta-analyses, programs that are designed to prevent marital discord and instability produce reliable improvement in relationship functioning compared with no-treatment and placebo control conditions (Gilbin, Sprenkle, & Sheehan, 1985; Hahlweg & Markman, 1988). Unfortunately, there are very few outcome studies dealing with premarital education in the literature (Stahmann, 2000, Stanley, 2001), and those studies that do exist paint a mixed picture of the efficacy of premarital education. For example, Sullivan and Bradbury (1997) reported "no reliable associations between premarital counseling status and marital outcomes" (p. 29) in an 18-month longitudinal study of 60 newlywed couples. In an evaluation of PREP,

Markman and colleagues (1993) reported couples who had taken PREP demonstrated more positive and less negative communication (a focus of the PREP program), but did not differ on scores of marital adjustment.

However, there is some encouraging news from research on premarital education. Hahlweg and colleagues (1998) reported on a three-year follow-up of German adaptation of the PREP program. After three years, participant couples showed significantly lower dissolution rates, higher satisfaction scores, and more positive communication behaviors in comparison to a control group.

In the longest study of its kind, Stanley and colleagues (1995) have tracked participants of their PREP program for 12 years. After the first 5 years, 19% of couples who had not participated in the PREP program had divorced or separated, compared to only 8% of couples who had taken PREP (Markman et al., 1993). After 12 years, however, the PREP group had a separation or divorce rate of 19%, while the control group was up to 28%. Not regarded as a statistically significant difference, the researchers suggest the results indicate a need for "booster sessions" periodically during marriage (Stanley et al., p. 395). The lack of statistical significance may also have to do more with high attrition in the control group than a lack of difference between the groups. Those who participate in the PREP program also have been shown to evidence lower rates of physical aggression in marriage by half (Markman et al., 1993). There is also strong evidence that, while low risk couples do not differ after 4 years, high-risk couples (e.g., history of parental divorce, domestic violence, or substance abuse) show significant advantages in maintaining marital satisfaction scores (Behrens & Halford,

1994 as cited in Stanley, 2001).

One interesting feature of premarital intervention is that between 6% (FOCCUS), 8% (RELATE), and 10% to 15% (PREPARE) of couples who go through these programs decide to break their engagements and either postpone or cancel the wedding (Meredith & Holman, 2000; Olson, 1983; Williams & Jurich, 1995). According to Meredith and Holman, it is "clear that those who broke up premaritally were wise to do so" (p. 73). They concluded that couples who broke up before they married were more similar to couples who later divorced or who remained unhappily married than they were to happily married couples.

#### Attitudes and Participation in Premarital Programs

Though most couples would probably acknowledge, "an ounce pf prevention is worth a pound of cure," the adage that "if it's not broken don't fix it" characterizes their behavior more accurately, and this tendency places limits on the potential impact of marital prevention efforts (Olson, 1983).

According to Sullivan and Bradbury (1997), in two separate research studies, between one third and two thirds of couples they interviewed had participated in some form of premarital intervention, with most services taking place in church-related settings. Such large fluctuations in participation rates may have been due to using a convenience sampling method, accepting the first English speaking couples to respond to advertisements in the Los Angeles area who could readily be scheduled to participate in the study. Services used reportedly ranged from 1 to 200 hours and cost between \$0

and \$2,000. When asked if they would do things differently if they had the choice, the vast majority of participants reported they would choose premarital education again. Of primary importance in this study is the conclusion that "couples who receive premarital counseling tend to be at relatively low risk for marital discord" (Sullivan & Bradbury, p. 29).

According to a national sample Gallup poll, fewer than 20% of all U.S. marriages are preceded by any premarital education, with very little evidence that what was provided was effective. Couples who reported receiving premarital education had a dissolution rate of 15%, while those who report no premarital education had a dissolution rate of 18% at the time of the survey (McManus, 1994).

As reported earlier, those couples who do engage in premarital education generally describe it as a valuable experience (Sullivan & Bradbury, 1997), but its perceived value declines with the length of the marriage (Williams, Riley, Risch & van Dyke, 1999).

#### Newlywed Years

Early marriage is generally characterized by the highest levels of marital satisfaction of any time during marriage (VanLaningham, Johnson, & Amato, 2001). The early years of marriage also evidence high levels of idealistic distortion (Fowers, Lyons, & Montel, 1996), though there is considerable evidence that this protective viewing of the relationship wears off rapidly in some couples. Current divorce statistics indicate that half of all divorces reported in any given year occur for couples married less than 5

years. In Utah, an average of 17% of recorded divorces occurred among couples married one year or less (Utah Department of Health, 2000). Some research suggests that the steepest decline in marital happiness occurs during the earliest and latest years of marriage (VanLaningham et al.). It is also important to note that patterns of romance and negativity early in marriage vary considerably in newlyweds and tend to persist over time (Huston, Niehuis, & Smith, 2001).

Recent studies examining the first few years of marriage reveal that couples experience serious conflicts over the use of time, sex, and money (Lawler & Risch, 2001). For newlyweds, especially in first marriages, the transition from single life to married life can be difficult. Balancing job and family is the number one problem reported in a national study of the first 5 years of marriage (Lawler & Risch). It is interesting to note that when couples were asked how they were doing in the marriages, respondents generally reported doing well. However, when their marital adjustment was assessed, approximately 20% of both husbands and wives were no better than slightly adjusted. Further, Lawler and Risch found that a larger percentage of respondents in their fourth or fifth year of marriage and who were parents scored in the distressed range, suggesting that over time, marriage does not get easier; it gets more difficult, even in the early years of marriage.

There have been numerous studies examining the early years of marriage and factors predicting future marital outcomes. Huston et al. (2001) reported that long-term marital fate could be predicted by changes in relationships over the first 2 to 3 years of the marriage. Huston and colleagues concluded that it was not emergence of distress

early in marriage that leads to marital failure but a decline of love and overt affection that best predicted couples heading for divorce. "Both groups of couples who divorced after at least 2 years of marriage...came to view their spouses as less responsive, and became more ambivalent about their marriage" (Huston et al., p. 248). They suggest that disillusionment may underlie divorce later in the marriage, but it is evident in the early years of the relationship.

John Gottman has devoted his career to conducting research that records, monitors, and examines couples' interactions. Gottman et al. (1998) recorded and coded 124 newlywed couples in five 3-minute intervals of a conflict discussion. Using the Specific Affect Coding System, Gottman et al. reported being able to reliably predict marital outcomes over a 6-year period, using just the first 3 minutes of data for both husband and wife. If they included the next 12 minutes, the prediction improved for husbands. This suggests that patterns present early in the relationship have powerful effects on marital stability years later. Some researchers posit that these patterns are not the product of matrimony, but are present premaritally, and continue into the marital relationship (Markman et al., 1982).

#### Theoretical Framework

Allan (1993) has suggested that the approach to the study of personal relationships evolved over the past 15 years from an emphasis on individual constructs to a focus on interactional and relational processes. In both instances the focus has been on discrete units, either the individual or dyad, and has ignored wider social contexts in

which the individual and dyad are embedded (Holman et al., 2000). Relationships develop and are maintained at a number of levels, including the individual, couple, and contextual levels (Wilson, Larson, McColloch, & Stone, 1997). In order to gain an understanding of the family and its processes, one must take into account the multileveled influences of the various contexts in which the family functions.

Family ecology is a general theory that can be used to study a wide range of problems related to families and their relationship with various environments, including diverse levels and kinds of external systems. "Since this theory is not based on any particular family type or configuration, it is appropriate for use with families of diverse structures and national, ethnic, or racial backgrounds, in different life stages and life circumstances" (Bubolz & Santag, 1993, p. 424). Borrowed from the original scientific view of ecology as a broad biological discipline, which assumes that life and environment are inseparable parts of a greater whole, Bronfenbrenner (1986) asserted the necessity to study human development in actual life settings, including the most influential setting the developing individual has, the family. Bronfenbrenner has been a major influence in advocating a contextual emphasis in ecological research in human development. He has described the individual's environment as "...a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 3). Bronfenbrenner's model is not a model of family process or family development *per se*, but provides a framework for looking at ways in which intrafamilial processes are influenced by extrafamilial conditions and environments (Bubolz & Santag).

Huston (2000) conceptualizes marital relationships as having three levels of



analysis: (a) the society, (b) the individual spouses, and (c) the marriage relationship. He suggests that the three levels "interpenetrate each other, and they operate together in a complex, interdependent fashion" (p. 16). The marital dyad, as conceptualized by Huston, is "a sphere embedded within a larger social network, or the other individuals who constitute the immediate social environment within which marital activities and interactions are embedded" (p. 17). Therefore, marital behavior patterns are seen as a reflection of the environmental context within which they are embedded.

Usually, however, researchers focusing on the dynamics of marital interaction study couples as two-person units, as if they rarely spent time together as part of a larger social network. Both a wide-angle and a close-up lens must be used to create a rich, comprehensive portrait of a marriage relationship. Larson and Holman (1994) hold that an ecosystemic perspective is the most useful for understanding the development of relationships from premarital to marital. This ecosystemic perspective "helps us understand a couple in the mate selection stage of the life course as a developing system that can and does respond to influences from within and without the system" (p. 229). This theory is also useful for research and as an organizing framework for family intervention programs (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993).

The present study examines several factors at different levels including individual, dyadic, and contextual. From the individual perspective, the present study accounts for such factors as age at marriage, education level, parent's marital status, religious affiliation and religious values. At the dyadic level, many of the individual factors combine and influence one another. For example, religious homogeneity of the

individuals in the relationship has been consistently shown to influence marital satisfaction and stability (Heaton & Goodman, 1999; Lehrer & Chiswick, 1993). Parent's marital status also has been shown to be a factor in couples marital satisfaction and stability (Holman et al., 1994). Further, dyadic factors such as dyadic adjustment (consensus, cohesion, and satisfaction), family income, and use of premarital education are measured. At the contextual level, the primary measure is that of religiosity. Historically, the role of religious affiliation in the marital relationship has received little attention (Lehrer & Chiswick). Examination of a national probability sample indicates a wide variety in marital stability patterns between marriages with various religious compositions, with couples reporting "no religion" at the greatest risk for marital disruption and couples reporting homogamous Mormon marriages the most stable (Lehrer & Chiswick).

The stabilizing effect of religious homogamy has been attributed to higher religious involvement among religiously homogamous couples (Heaton, 1984), denominational prohibition of divorce (Heaton & Goodman, 1999), and the influences that religion asserts on many activities beyond the purely religious sphere (e.g., upbringing of children, allocation of time and money, cultivation of social relationships, and even the choice of place of residence; Lehrer & Chiswick, 1993). Whatever the cause, including a measure of religiosity and religious homogamy in a study of marital satisfaction and stability appears to be justified.

## Summary

At the present time, several premarital programs exist, some based on longitudinal scientifically based research. With new emphasis placed on promoting and stabilizing marriage at the federal and state level, it would seem prudent to know what couples are doing and how effective such programs are at both preventing divorce and enhancing marriage. One of the main criticisms of research on such programs is the quasi-experimental design many such evaluations use. In evaluating research on many programs, it becomes clear that the experimental and control groups are self selecting; that is, those who select premarital education are compared to those who do not select premarital education and that there is an inherent difference already existing in the two groups before any intervention that predisposes the experimental group to higher marital satisfaction and longer lasting marriages. It seems appropriate to take a step back and look at what couples do naturally to prepare for their marriage, their attitudes about premarital education, and its relationship to marital satisfaction in early marriage.

## Research Hypotheses

### *Hypothesis 1*

Couples participating in formal premarital education will report higher levels of marital satisfaction at 3 years post marriage.

### *Hypothesis 2*

Couples participating in premarital education will have more positive attitudes

about premarital education and its usefulness than couples who have not participated in premarital education.

*Hypothesis 3*

Couples participating in premarital education are no more likely to have sought help for their marriages than those who did not participate in premarital education.

*Hypothesis 4*

Couples participating in premarital education are more likely to participate in behaviors that invest in their marriage.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

#### Research Design

This study used a retrospective survey design to collect self-report, mailed questionnaire information from 145 couples who had been married 3 years. Couples married 3 years were purposively selected because others have found that levels of idealistic distortion decrease after 2 years of marriage, and these couples may offer a more accurate depiction of marital satisfaction (Fowers et al., 1996). It has also been demonstrated that even the early years of a marriage relationship can evidence sharp decline in marital happiness and satisfaction, as 50% of divorces occur within the first 5 years of marriage and 30% occur within the first 3 years (Utah Department of Health, 2000).

The questionnaire had sections for couple information, as well as individual sections for both husband and wife to complete. Couples were asked to fill out the individual sections privately and return them inside sealed envelopes. One section of the survey was for couples who were no longer married, and could be completed by either husband or wife. The survey appears in Appendix A.

#### Population and Sample Recruitment

The population for this study consisted of all couples married in Cache County, Utah during 1998. A complete list of all 1,262 couples granted marriage licenses during

1998 was obtained from the Cache County clerk's office. A sample was obtained by comparing the marriage license list to the most recent version of the *Qwest Dex* telephone directory (August 2001/2002) for the Cache Valley area. Exact name matches were marked and compiled into a database for use in mailing surveys and follow-up reminders. Names were considered an exact match if the telephone directory listed both groom and bride that matched the marriage license list (i.e., Budge, Jason & Lindsay) or if the directory listed only the groom, and it could reasonably be determined that no other name in the directory matched the name in the marriage license list (i.e., Bird, Darrell L. for Bird, Darrell Leroy). Only telephone directory listings with complete address information were used. This method resulted in a potential sample of 359 couples. These couples were called in an attempt to verify if they were the couples from the marriage license records and to enlist their support. After several attempts to contact were made, it was possible to remove 89 couples as ineligible to participate because they were wrong couples (e.g., not married in 1998), or they had moved from the area (e.g., disconnected telephone numbers), thus reducing the eligible sample size to 270. Twenty-three of the original 359 couples declined to participate.

Surveys were mailed to all identified couples followed by reminder postcards to all nonresponding couples after 2 weeks. This method resulted in a return of 94 surveys (34.8%). It was discovered that many surveys had never been delivered due to insufficient address information collected from the telephone directory (e.g., missing apartment numbers), but it was not possible to determine which or how many surveys had not been delivered. Permission was received from the Institutional Review Board at

Utah State University to contact all nonresponding subjects by telephone to determine if they had received the survey, ask if they would be willing to participate, and collect complete address information (see Appendix B). After making several more attempts to contact the remaining 176 telephone numbers, 116 couples were contacted and 93 agreed to participate (30 provided new addresses or apartment numbers for mailing). New surveys were mailed with reminder postcards sent after 2 weeks. This effort produced an additional 57 responses for a total of 151 responses from a total of 270 possible subjects, or 55.9% total response rate. Only 6 of the 151 surveys returned were unusable (e.g., incomplete information) and were omitted from analysis, for a total sample size of 145 (53.7%).

#### Sample Demographics

The majority of couples were in the first marriage for both partners (86.3%). The mean age at marriage for husband and wife were on average 3.5 years lower than national figures for both first and remarriages. The mean age at first marriage in this sample for husbands was 23.3 and 21.6 for wives. This compares to the national mean age at first marriage for husbands of 26.9 and 25.0 for wives (Clarke, 1995). The mean age at remarriage in this sample for husbands was 36.9 and 32.7 for wives. The national mean age at remarriage is 40.7 for husbands and 37.0 for wives (Clarke).

Nearly 95% of wives and 92% of husbands indicated affiliation with the LDS church. This is higher than the 85.4% estimate for the LDS population of Cache County provided by the General Social Survey (American Religion Data Archive, 2002). It is

also interesting to note that 95.2% of all couples indicate being in a religiously homogenous marriage, with 90.4% being in a homogenous LDS marriage. Religiously homogenous marriages have been shown to be more stable than nonhomogenous marriages, with homogenous LDS marriages showing one of the lowest divorce rates of any religious group (Lehrer & Chiswick, 1993). Along with the high percentage of LDS marriages, the vast majority of all couples (71.9%) reported being married in the Logan LDS temple. No figures were available from the Logan LDS temple or from the LDS Church headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah, to which to compare this figure. In a random sampling from 26 of Utah's 29 counties, a conservative estimate of 46% of Utah marriages are reported to be performed in an LDS temple (Schramm, D. Feb. 14, 2003, personal communication).

On average, couples reported dating for 15.1 months and being engaged for 4.2 months for a total mean courtship of 19.3 months. The mode reported by couples for dating was six months, plus three months for engagement, resulting in the most frequent time of total courtship reported as nine months. One couple reported 132 months (11 years) of dating, with six months of engagement. Given the couple's age at marriage, this would have meant that they had started dating when the husband and wife were 11 and 13, respectively. This couple was omitted from this analysis, as they may have misunderstood the intention of the question or miscalculated the actual time spent in dating.

As most couples were early in their first marriage, 22.8% reported having no children and 49.7% reported having one child. All couples reporting three or more



children involved at least one spouse being remarried. The median annual income reported by couples was \$30,000 to 39,000. Other demographic summaries and figures are contained in Appendix C.

### Measurement and Variable Measures

The survey included four sections. The first section collected general demographic information from the couple, including age, income, and family composition. This first section also included questions in regard to courtship, engagement, date and place of marriage, and the couple's premarital educational experiences. The question regarding place of marriage ties in with the religious measure discussed later because a temple for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) is located in Cache County, and couples getting married in the temple must demonstrate a higher level of religious activity and commitment than couples choosing to get married in a church or civic ceremony (Heaton & Goodman, 1999).

The first section of the survey also contained questions for individuals who are presently annulled, separated, divorced, or widowed from their 1998 marriage. Based on trends in state divorce rates (Utah Department of Health, 2000), it was anticipated that of the 270 sample couples, approximately 25 to 30 would no longer be married. Only three (1.99%) respondents reported being divorced. For the purposes of this study it was important to identify these couples, as they may have provided valuable information on marriages lasting less than 3 years.

None of the three divorced individuals reported any premarital education. When

asked if they would consider premarital education should they entertain thoughts of marriage in the future, all three reported being "somewhat unlikely" to pursue premarital education.

The last two sections contained identical questions for husband and wife. Each section included questions on education level, parent's present marital status, previous separations and counseling experience, religious affiliation, a measure of religious values, marital satisfaction, and willingness to invest in their marriage.

#### *Idler Religious Values Measure*

The *Idler Religious Values Measure* focuses on religious values and is intended by its creator to measure dimensions distinct from the value the individual places on religion itself (Idler, 1999). This domain attempts to assess the extent to which an individual's behavior reflects an expression of his or her religion and faith in everyday life. The three-item, Likert-scaled measure is composed of items borrowed by Idler from Benson (1988) and the Intrinsic/Extrinsic (I/E) Revised Scale (Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989). Idler reported that the I/E scale is the single most frequently used measure in the social scientific study of religion. One of the items is phrased negatively and one includes a moral dimension. These three items exhibit face and content validity (see Appendix A, numbers 8-10).

The rationale for selecting this measure was a desire to assess individual behavior, and how religious values influenced respondents' behavior in regular life. The questions from the Idler measure form a global picture of religious importance in a brief form. Other measures of religiosity, such as religious commitment, may tap into the

larger construct of commitment in general. Therefore, individuals who score high on religious commitment may also score high on relationship commitment because they possess a higher level of a characteristic called commitment rather than the desired construct of religiousness.

#### *Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale*

As a measure of marital satisfaction, the *Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale* (RDAS; Busby, Christensen, Crane, & Larson, 1995) was selected. The RDAS is a 14-item instrument that uses a 0 to 5 (0 to 4 on one item) Likert scale to measure the frequency of couples' agreement or disagreement on matters ranging from religion to sex. The RDAS is a reliable, valid, and brief instrument with seven first order scales (decision making, values, affection, stability, conflict, activities, and discussion) and three second order scales (dyadic consensus, dyadic satisfaction, and dyadic cohesion).

Evaluation of the RDAS has produced very high internal consistency and reliability scores. The RDAS has a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of .90 and a SpearmanBrown split-half reliability coefficient of  $r = .95$  (Crane, Middleton, & Bean, 2000). Further, each subscale has demonstrated high reliability as shown in Table 1. Construct validity also was established when the RDAS was compared with the Marital Adjustment Test (MAT; Locke & Wallace, 1959) and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976). The correlation coefficient between the RDAS and the MAT was  $r = .68$  ( $p < .01$ ). The correlation coefficient between the DAS and the RDAS was  $r = .97$  ( $p < .01$ ) (Busby et al., 1995).

Table 1

*Subscale Reliability Estimates of the RDAS (adapted from Busby et al., 1995).*

Subscale	Cronbach's Alpha	Guttman Split-Half	SpearmanBrown Split-Half
Dyadic Consensus	.81	.88	.89
Dyadic Satisfaction	.85	.88	.88
Dyadic Cohesion	.80	.79	.80

Busby et al. (1995) also hypothesized "that the RDAS would be an improvement over the DAS if it was as successful as the DAS at discriminating between distressed and nondistressed samples" (p. 302). The discriminant analyses comparing both measures illustrated that the measures were equal in their ability to classify cases as either nondistressed or distressed. Both the RDAS and DAS correctly classified 81% of the cases, even though the RDAS had fewer items than its predecessor. Verification of the RDAS being in the public domain was provided by the first author (see Appendix D) so no permission to use this measure or licensing fees were necessary.

#### *Willingness to Invest In Marriage Scale*

The *Willingness to Invest in Marriage Scale* (WIMS; Long & Beach, 1992) is a 60-item measure used to determine a spouse's willingness to participate in certain behaviors related to marital investment. Divided into two parallel forms (Forms A and B), each 30-item instrument asks questions phrased in a true/false format regarding a spouse's willingness to participate in certain marital investment behaviors even if they

were upset with their spouse or if the activity would be upsetting to themselves. For example, one item states: "I would be willing to pleasantly surprise my spouse more often, even if my spouse had greatly displeased me earlier." The instrument is scored with "true" responses counting as one point and "false" answers counting as zero points. With a range of possible scores between 0-30 on each form, scores higher than 24 represent a "high" commitment to invest in the marriage (Katz, Long, & Beach, 1995).

The 60 items on the WIMS were selected from an original pool of 600 items nominated by marriage therapists. After testing, the 60 items with the highest item-total correlations were selected. Both Form A and Form B have a coefficient alphas of .87, inferring parallel form reliability. Further, the two forms have been found to correlate strongly with each other at  $r = .85$  (Katz et al., 1995).

The WIMS also has demonstrated construct validity by correlating with other measures of similar concepts. For example, when compared to scores on the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976), scores on the WIMS correlated at  $r = .34$  on Form A and  $r = .37$  on Form B (Katz et al., 1995). Permission to use this measure was obtained from the first author and is provided in Appendix D.

#### *Marital Expectations, Experience, and Attitudes*

The author created five questions on marital expectations, experiences, and attitudes regarding premarital education. The purpose of adding these questions was that their content was not tapped by other measures being used in the current study, and provide information regarding couples' attitudes towards premarital education. More

information was needed on why couples do or do not participate in premarital education in order to better develop an effective intervention.

#### Role of the Researcher and Bias

A common section in qualitative research is that of the role of the researcher in the investigation and the effects of bias. Even though much of the literature comes from the area of qualitative research methods, its usefulness for quantitative methodology should not be overlooked. This section is generally included under the Methods heading since the researcher is viewed, in qualitative research, as the primary research instrument. According to Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, and Steinmetz (1991):

In presenting the pros and cons of their work, qualitative researchers cannot point to the test, the sampling procedures, the statistical treatment, the outside expert. They can only point to themselves and to how they decided to sample, to treat data, to work with others, to confer with experts, to carry out their research, and to share their findings. This is so because they are their own most important instrument. (p. 103)

#### *Subjectivity*

As Lewis (2001) noted, research cannot be value-free. From the very inception of the research project, the researcher is making judgments based on personal and philosophical biases. The formulation of the research question and design are all based on assumption and the worldview of the researcher. Bias is impossible to escape (Ely et al., 1991).

Although many researchers in social sciences disavow bias and partiality in their research, according to Miller (1996, p. 17), "none of us is impartial, even though some

of us take a long time to recognize it." Every step of the "scientific method" is influenced and constrained by bias. The underlying assumptions, the research questions posed and investigated, and the empirical, observational, and sensory data obtained and interpreted, all reflect the values of the researcher in some fashion (Miller, 1996). As Scarr (1985) explained, "Each scientist seeks to find 'facts' to assimilate into his or her world view. Thus, each of us is biased by the human tendency to seek 'facts' that are congruent with our prior beliefs" (p. 499).

For this project, I selected the topic of premarital education. This selection is based largely on my experience and assumptions about the world. Coming from a family disrupted by divorce when I was young, divorce has had a tremendous impact on my life. I do not doubt that my parents' marital dissolution was the driving force behind my education and training in the field of marriage and family therapy. The impact of that decision and process some 30 years ago continues to influence my life course today. Being involved in conducting parental education about the impact on divorce on children is likely a result of my own negative experience as a child, coupled with a desire to help others avoid similar experiences.

My experience as a marriage and family therapist also has biased my view of the effectiveness of marriage therapy. Again, marriage therapy is far too often too little and too late of an intervention to be of any measurable benefit. Marriage counseling is viewed as a remedial effort, with little hope of affecting significant change in behavioral patterns that have developed over the course of years of dysfunctional marital relationships (Stanley et al., 1995).

What is needed, in my view, is an intervention prior to the development of corrosive relational patterns. Because many of these patterns are evident prior to marriage, it makes sense to examine the probable marital stability and satisfaction before couples become married.

My personal experience, clinical experience, and professional experience have all combined in a manner that leads me to the conclusion that marriage is good and that promoting healthy, stable marriages is in the best interest of individuals, couples, families, and communities. These are my biases and assumptions. This is my worldview. I am not naïve enough to think that all divorce is bad and that it always leads to detrimental outcomes for those involved. I do believe that divorce occurs too frequently and for ungrounded reasons, and it is in those cases that an effective intervention would prove to be most beneficial.

### *Reflexivity*

Since bias is impossible to escape, a method often used by qualitative researchers is to discover bias and openly confront it in terms of its impact on the research process and outcomes. According to Friedman, "Confronting oneself and one's biases was one of the most difficult and thought provoking aspects of being a qualitative researcher for many students" (Ely et al., 1991, p. 122). My experience was not dissimilar to this description. The ability to discern "blind spots" is largely based on one's perspective. The ability to change perspectives is not an easy task and often is benefited from collaboration and debriefing with peers and supervisors.

As I struggled during the analysis phase to find any analysis of statistical



significance, I could not get the data to support my views. I realized that with a small sample size taken from a demographically unique population, I would not be able to draw many generalizable conclusions. I was, however, hoping for some validation of my own assumptions, and when that support was not obvious, my assumptions became clearer. I wanted premarital education to be important to these couples and I wanted it to have made a major difference in their marriage. It became sadly apparent that neither was going to hold true.

As my anxiety rose, the thought of bracketing my biases and assumptions returned. "Bracketing" is the process by which the researcher becomes aware of their own assumptions, feelings, and preconceptions, and then strives to put them aside in order to be open and receptive to what they are attempting to understand (Ely et al., 1991). By becoming more aware of bias, some researchers become more free to listen openly to the broad experience of others (Farnsworth, 1996). As I paused to "shelve" my preconceived ideas and assumptions, I began to review the data and results again, this time with openness and a value for the respondent's experience. What was a frustrating experience began to unfold as an enlightening experience. It was enlightening not only in terms of the data, but also for my experience of seeing the data from a different perspective.

## Procedures

### *Data Collection*

Identified sample couples were assigned an identification number solely for

purposes of tracking return of surveys and awarding the incentive prizes. Only the student investigator and his major professor had access to names and identification numbers.

Survey packets were mailed to the sample couples. Included in the packet was one copy of the self-report questionnaire, two plain white envelopes, and a preaddressed, postage paid envelope. One copy of the questionnaire was mailed for both husband and wife, with sections coded and matched for each couple. Due to the sensitive nature of this information, couples were instructed to complete the individual sections privately and return them in separate sealed envelopes. This step was taken to encourage honest responses. As an incentive to return the surveys, couples who returned the survey within 2 weeks were eligible for a drawing of a \$50 dollar gift certificate to a local business.

### *Ethical Considerations*

Approval of this study was granted by the Utah State University Institutional Review Board (see Appendix B). Couples were informed in writing that the general intent of this study was to gain a better understanding of premarital education use and how it relates to marital satisfaction. Couples also were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. Couples were assured that their responses were confidential and that their names would not be associated with any specific results or findings generated from this study and that they would not be contacted regarding their responses.

### *Data Management and Research Question Analysis*

All data management and analysis was performed using SPSS 10.0 for Windows statistical software. Survey responses were entered into SPSS and 10% were randomly checked for data entry accuracy. ID numbers were assigned to each couple so that responses could be matched for specific analyses by couple.

1. *Types and quantity of formal premarital education.* Descriptive statistics were used to describe the types and quantity of formal premarital education reported by couples. The level of formality was based on four factors: (a) the amount of time spent in premarital education, (b) the number of topics covered during premarital education, (c) use of premarital testing, and (d) the training level of the person performing the premarital education. Post hoc categories were attempted but no clear patterns emerged. With the majority of couples engaging in no premarital education and the remainder containing little variability, no clear group differences could be detected.

2. *Formal premarital education effectiveness.* The effectiveness of the types and quantities of premarital education couples use were examined at the discrete level: couples either did or did not participate in premarital education. At this level, correlations and independent *t* tests were conducted in relation to scores on the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale as a measure of marital satisfaction. It was not possible to conduct a logistic regression at the discrete level due to insufficient sample size.

3. *Attitudes about premarital education.* Attitudes about premarital education and its perceived effectiveness were gathered from both couples who did and did not participate in premarital education. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize and

present responses. For couples who did participate in premarital counseling, their scores on perceived helpfulness of their premarital education experience were compared to their marital satisfaction scores through use of ANOVA.

4. *Seeking help for marriage.* Couples who did and did not participate in premarital education were compared in terms of their willingness to seek help for their marriage should problems arise. This was done using independent *t* tests and ANOVA. A couple's willingness to seek help for problems during their marriage may be related to their level of satisfaction with their premarital education experience. Couples who indicate that they participated in premarital education also were analyzed for willingness to seek help according to satisfaction with services received. This was done through an ANOVA.

5. *Willingness to invest in marriage.* Couples who did and did not participate in premarital education were compared in terms of their reported willingness participate in marriage promoting behaviors. This was done using independent *t* tests.

## CHAPTER IV

## RESULTS

## Psychometric Properties of the Measure Variables

Internal reliability estimates, commonly referred to as "alpha coefficients" or "Chronbach's alpha," estimate how consistently respondents tend to answer in certain ways across individual items within each measure. This analysis assesses how each question contributes to or detracts from the total reliability within each of the measures (Miller, 1986). Higher alpha coefficient's reflect higher consistencies and tend to infer a more stable and reliable measure. Table 2 presents the internal consistency estimates for each measure used in this study.

*Idler Religious Values Measure*

An estimate of internal consistency was obtained for the 3 items from the Idler Religious Values Measure (Idler, 1999) for both husband and wife. Already reported to have high content validity, the Idler Religious Values Measure demonstrated high

Table 2

*Internal Reliability Estimates for Measure Variables (n = 143)*

Measure	Husband $\alpha$	Wife $\alpha$	Total $\alpha$
Idler Religious Values Measure	.79	.78	.84
Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale	.89	.87	.93
Willingness to Invest in Marriage Scale	.83	.84	.89

internal reliability in this study, with a Chronbach's alpha coefficient of .84. From a possible low score of 3 to a possible high score of 15, both husbands ( $n = 143$ ,  $M = 12.05$ ,  $SD = 2.78$ ) and wives ( $n = 143$ ,  $M = 12.70$ ,  $SD = 2.57$ ) scored relatively high on religiousness using this measure. It is possible that the internal reliability score and the group mean may be underreported, as many respondents might have fallen into a response pattern, not noticing the second of the three items was reverse coded. Approximately 9% of both husbands and wives exhibit a pattern of rating themselves very highly on the first and third items and very low on the second item.

Reports of higher religiosity for those married in the LDS temple was found in this sample for both husbands,  $F(4, 138) = 14.44$ ,  $p = .00$ , and wives,  $F(4, 138) = 10.66$ ,  $p = .00$ , with those married in the LDS temple scoring significantly higher on the *Idler Religious Values* measure than couples who were married in other settings. With a possible range of scores from 3 to 15, Table 3 outlines husband and wife mean scores and the location of the couples wedding ceremony.

#### *Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale*

As reported earlier, the RDAS (Busby et al., 1995) has demonstrated high levels of internal reliability, as well as construct and predictive validity. In the present study, the RDAS has a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .93. This suggests a high consistency in individual's responses across the 28 items. The RDAS also classified 42 couples (28.8%) as having distressed marriages by scores from the husband, the wife, or both being below 48.

Table 3

*Idler Religious Values Scores and Location of Wedding Ceremony (N = 143)*

Location	<i>n</i>	Husband		Wife	
		<i>m</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>SD</i>
LDS Temple	104	12.95	2.05	13.45	1.75
Facility (e.g., country club)	17	10.06	2.88	10.53	3.20
Other (e.g., outdoors, park, etc.)	10	10.00	3.23	10.80	3.43
County clerk office	1	9.00	--	13.00	--
Church	11	8.73	3.41	10.64	3.64

*Willingness to Invest in Marriage Scale*

In this study, Form A of the WIMS was used for efficiency purposes. Scores higher than 24 are meant to represent "high" levels of commitment to invest in the marriage (Katz et al., 1995). Cronbach's alpha for the WIMS was .89. In the present study, both husbands ( $n = 144$ ,  $M = 26.22$ ,  $SD = 4.18$ ) and wives ( $n = 144$ ,  $M = 25.76$ ,  $SD = 3.74$ ) in this sample reported high levels of willingness to invest, with the most frequently reported score for both husbands and wives being the highest possible score of 30.

The present study also supported construct validity of this measure, as couples' scores on the WIMS correlated significantly with their scores on the RDAS. Husbands' scores on the WIMS Form A and the RDAS correlated moderately at  $r = .44$  ( $p = .01$ ) and wives' scores correlated at  $r = .33$  ( $p = .01$ ). Further, as shown in Table 4, husbands

Table 4

*Independent Samples t-Test Analysis of Distressed and Nondistressed Husbands' and Wives' Willingness to Invest in Their Marriage*

	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>ES<sup>a</sup></i>
Husbands						
Not distressed	117	27.12	3.45	6.04	.000	0.50
Distressed	27	22.30	4.83			
Wives						
Not distressed	113	26.25	3.61	3.00	.004	0.29
Distressed	31	24.00	3.71			

<sup>a</sup> Effect size calculated  $r_{V\lambda} = d/\sqrt{(d^2+4)}$

and wives who report higher willingness to invest had significantly lower incidence of distressed marriages, according to scores on the RDAS.

#### Research Questions

##### *Research Question 1: Types and Quantity of Formal Premarital Education*

In evaluating the types and quantities of formal premarital education used by study couples, 45.6% of couples surveyed indicated some kind of premarital education experience, though what couples considered formal premarital education varied widely, while 54.4% of couples reported no premarital education experience. The variance in



premarital education experience is described in terms of the "Four Ts" of premarital education: time, topics, testing, and training.

*Time.* As shown in Table 5, couples who reported participating in premarital education spent approximately 10.6 hours on average in some kind of premarital intervention. This number is somewhat skewed by a relatively small sample size and one couple that reported 60 hours of premarital education, an amount nearly double that reported by any other couple. When recomputing after removing the outlier couple, the mean drops to 9.6 hours, while the median and mode remain unchanged.

When examining the median and mode, a clearer picture of couple's premarital education experience emerges. The most frequently reported amount of time couples (18.6%) spent in premarital education was 1 hour. The second highest response, at 10.8% of couples that reported premarital education experience, was 4 hours.

The trend towards little time spent in premarital education became even more apparent when couple's reports were categorized according to the time factor, as shown in Figure 1. Of couples who participated in premarital education, the largest group spent 5 hours or less in premarital education activities. By comparison, the PREP premarital

Table 5

*Time Spent in Premarital Education in Hours*

<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mode</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min/Max</i>
67	10.6	6	1	10.9	0.5 – 60

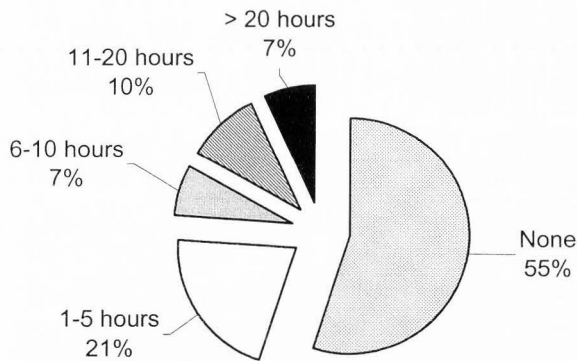


Figure 1. Time spent in premarital education by categories in hours ( $N = 146$ ).

education program requires a minimum of 12 hours of combined instruction and practice (Markman et al., 1986).

*Topics:* On average, most couples reported covering several topics related to marital stability during their premarital education experiences. Of the 67 couples reporting premarital education, the average number of topics covered was 4.9 ( $SD = 1.9$ ). Table 6 presents the frequency of topics that were covered in premarital education.

It is interesting to note that in a correlational analysis, no significant relationship existed between the time spent in premarital education and the number of topics covered. With a modest positive correlation ( $r = .22, n = 67$ ), couples who reported spending 1 hour or less in premarital education indicated covering as many topics as couples reporting 20 or more hours spent in premarital education.

*Testing.* Premarital assessments have been shown to be powerful tools in

Table 6

*Frequency of Topics Covered During  
Premarital Education (n = 67)*

Topic	Frequency
Communication	92.4%
Religion	87.9%
Finances	72.7%
Children	69.7%
Conflict resolution	65.2%
Intimacy/sex	53.0%
Family of origin	34.8%
Wedding plans	12.1%

predicting later marital quality. Some are able to reliably predict which couples will be happily married for at least the first five years of marriage approximately 85% of the time (Meredith & Holman, 2000). Even with this kind of empirical support, many researchers view premarital assessment as a vital strategy in identifying strengths and challenges in new marriages, rather than as screening tools to indicate who should or should not get married (Holman et al., 2000). Only 4.5% of respondents in this study who participated in premarital education indicated taking any premarital assessments, surveys, or questionnaires.

*Training.* As can be seen in Figure 2, the vast majority of premarital education was provided in religious settings, with nearly 54% of respondents indicating that their religious leader had provided their premarital education, and another 43% of respondents reporting that their premarital education came through a religious class. The other 3% of couples reported reading relationship and marriage enhancement literature, and meeting with parents and family to discuss important issues related to marital satisfaction. No couples reported using a professional counselor or marriage therapist as a provider of premarital education.

With over 90% of the sample reporting affiliation with the LDS church, the two largest providers of premarital education appear to be the local LDS lay clergy called Bishops and the LDS Institute of Religion's "Preparation for Eternal Marriage" class, commonly referred to as "marriage prep." In personal communication with two Bishops (P. Manning, personal communication, April 21, 2002; J. Barlow, personal communication, September, 15, 2001), and an Institute instructor (S. Leavitt, personal

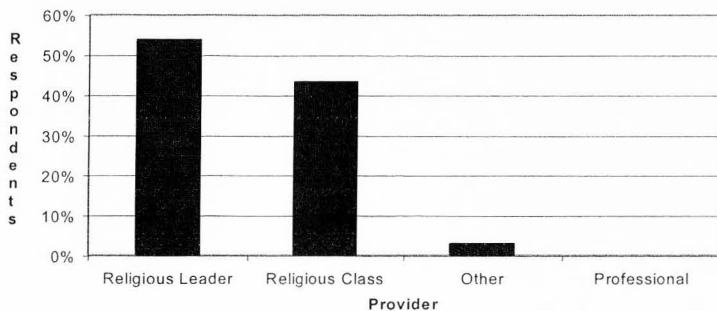


Figure 2. Providers of premarital education ( $n = 67$ ).

communication, October 30, 2001), it became clear that these providers had no training in premarital education. When asked about curriculum and training for his "marriage prep" class, the institute instructor indicated that at the present time there is no approved curriculum for the course and that each instructor teaches what they believe to be important and relevant. He added, "Currently, I am winging it."

Participating in a religious class could be of some benefit because of the time and structure involved. On average, couples who reported participating in a religious class reported an average of 18.6 hours in premarital education, while those who met with their religious leader reported an average of 3.9 hours. Ranging in hours from 3 to 60, the mode reported by religious class participants was 20 hours spent in marital preparations. When looking at the structure of the LDS Institutes "marriage prep" class, it is a two-semester hour class that should result in a minimum of 30 hours of class time. It is possible that respondents may have miscalculated or misunderstood how to report time spent in this setting.

In examining the types and quantities of premarital education in which couples participated, it appears that little formal premarital education took place. In a heuristic model of premarital education in Cache County, Utah, the profile for the typical couple in the present study who reported participating in premarital education is spending one hour covering four topics with no testing provided by a clergy member not trained in marriage preparation.

*Research Question 2: Formal Premarital Education Effectiveness*

At the discrete level of analysis, couples who reported participating in premarital education did not score significantly higher on any of the seven RDAS first order subscales (decision making, values, affection, stability, conflict, activities, and discussion), or the three RDAS second order subscales (dyadic consensus, dyadic satisfaction, and dyadic cohesion) for either husband or wife. There were also no significant findings for husbands,  $t(142) = -1.08, p = .282$ , or wives,  $t(142) = -.68, p = .499$ , on their total RDAS scores for couples who did and did not participate in premarital education.

When classifying couples according to their total RDAS scores as either distressed or nondistressed, 28.8% of all couples (husband, wife, or both) scored in the distressed range (total RDAS score < 48). Of the couples who scored in the distressed range on the RDAS, 62% reported no premarital intervention, while 38% reported some premarital education. Though this finding is interesting, it is not statistically significant, Pearson  $\chi^2(1, N = 143) = 1.44, p = .23$ , and is likely an effect of selection bias, and not a function of participation in premarital interventions.

Quantities of premarital education were analyzed according to time (hours spent in premarital education) by correlation and a one-way ANOVA, based on categories of time previously described in Figure 1. Correlational analysis showed no significant relation between the number of hours spent in premarital education and marital satisfaction outcomes for either husbands ( $p = .46$ ) or wives ( $p = .92$ ). Thus, using correlation analysis, it appears that spending 1 hour in naturally occurring premarital

education programs was just as effective for these couples as spending 20 hours in naturally occurring premarital education, or doing nothing. When analyzed by category of time spent in premarital education, no statistically significant difference in marital satisfaction exists between husbands ( $p = .75$ ) and wives ( $p = .99$ ) by time spent in premarital education and having no premarital education experience. Though not statistically significant, a pattern exists for couples participating in 6 to 10 hours of premarital education. This group scored consistently higher on the RDAS satisfaction subscale and total scores. This trend, displayed in Figure 3, shows a greater benefit for husbands than for wives in the "6 to 10 hours" category.

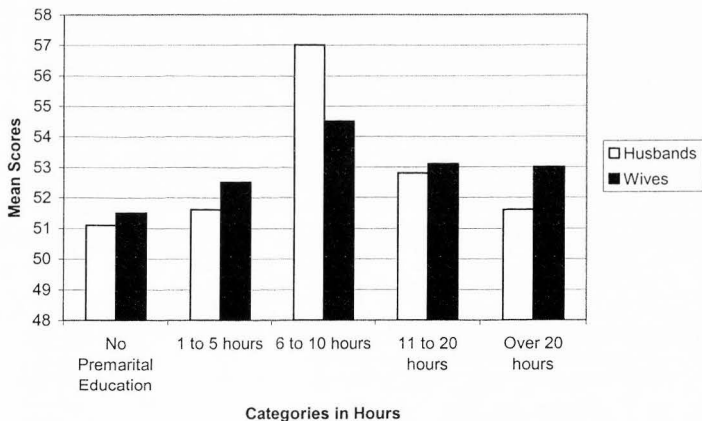


Figure 3. Mean RDAS total scores for husbands and wives by categories of time spent in premarital education ( $N = 146$ ).

In terms of topics covered, a modest but significant correlation between the number of topics covered and the wife's RDAS dyadic satisfaction subscale score ( $r = .24, p = .034$ ) was discovered, but no other significant results were found based on topics for either husband or wife marital satisfaction outcome.

In terms of training of providers, an independent samples t-test was used to analyze scores on the husband and wife RDAS dyadic satisfaction subscale scores and RDAS total scores. In all cases, scores were nearly identical and not statistically significant between the two major providers of premarital education, "religious leader" and "religious class" for husbands ( $p = .60$ ) or wives ( $p = .95$ )

Bivariate plots were used to detect any nonlinear relationships between key independent variables, such as hours spent in premarital education and topics covered, and outcome variables of RDAS total scores and satisfaction subscale scores for both husband and wife, with no discernable pattern found. Demographic variables, including husband and wife age at marriage, difference in age at time of marriage, husband and wife education levels, income, also were analyzed using bivariate plots, resulting in no discernable patterns related to marital adjustment or satisfaction as measured by the RDAS.

On closer examination, two variables did predict marital satisfaction better than participation in premarital education, though there were no significant interaction effects between premarital education and these variables. These factors were analyzed based on their relation to marital satisfaction and stability reported in previous studies (see Bradbury & Fincham, 1990; Heaton & Goodman, 1999). First, in examining the



couples's parents' marital status, the husband's parents' marital status was more related to both husbands and wives scores on the RDAS than was premarital education. For example, when husbands reported participation in premarital education, on average, their total RDAS score increased from 51.2 to 52.5 when compared to husbands reporting no premarital education. By comparison, husbands whose parents were married averaged total RDAS score of 52.2, while husbands whose parents were divorced averaged a total RDAS score of 47.6. Table 7 shows a significant difference for both husbands' and wives' total RDAS scores based on the husbands parents being either married or divorced. The same relation is not true for the wives' parents' marital relationship, with no significant relation found for either husbands or wives total RDAS or satisfaction subscale scores.

Table 7

*Independent Samples t-Test Analysis of Husband's Parents Marital Status and RDAS Total Scores for Husbands and Wives*

	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>ES<sup>a</sup></i>
Husband's RDAS total scores						
Husband's parent's married	105	52.2	6.89	.261	.010	.265
Husband's parent's divorced	22	47.6	9.65			
Wives RDAS total scores						
Husband's parent's married	105	52.7	6.49	2.39	.019	.235
Husband's parent's divorced	22	48.8	9.40			

<sup>a</sup> Effect size calculated  $r_{YX} = d/\sqrt{(d^2+4)}$

The second variable that produced significant results in terms of marital satisfaction was the place the couple reported being married. In looking at couple's classification as either having a distressed or nondistressed marriage, the strongest predictor of having a nondistressed marriage was being married in the LDS temple. Table 8 shows that couples who are married outside the LDS temple, in either a church or civil ceremony, have a nearly 50/50 probability of being in a distressed marriage, with slightly more couples being nondistressed. If a couple reported being married in an LDS temple, the probability of being in a nondistressed marriage increased to nearly 80%, with just over 20% distressed. This difference was found to be statistically significant, Pearson  $\chi^2(2, N = 146) = 8.60, p = .014$ .

*Research Question 3: Attitudes About  
Premarital Education*

Of the 67 couples who reported participating in some kind of premarital education, 53.7% reported being "somewhat interested" and 35.8% reported being

Table 8

*Crosstabulation Analysis of Marital Distress by Place of Marriage*

Variable	Place of marriage		
	LDS Temple ( <i>n</i> = 105)	Church ( <i>n</i> = 11)	Other ( <i>n</i> = 30)
Nondistressed	82 (78.1%)	6 (54.5%)	16 (53.3%)
Distressed	23 (21.9%)	5 (45.5%)	14 (46.7%)

"very interested" in premarital education at the time of the intervention. In terms of helpfulness to their marriage, nearly three fourths of couples reported their premarital education as being helpful to their marriage. One couple did indicate that their premarital education experience was "very unhelpful" to their marriage, but was removed from analysis after reviewing their responses to other items. This couple reported spending 24 hours in a class setting, covering eight relevant topics, being very interested in the class at the time, and willing to definitely recommend premarital education to other engaged couples, but indicated on the survey that their experience was "very unhelpful" to their marriage. This couple was removed from analysis because it is likely their last response was a mistake, as neither husband nor wife scored in the distressed range on the RDAS.

Participants in premarital education also were in favor of other engaged couples participating in similar activities. Just over 88% of couples indicated they "probably would" or "definitely would" recommend premarital education to engaged couples. In an analysis of variance, couples who participated in premarital education were significantly more likely than couples with no premarital education experience to endorse the use of a class prior to marriage. When asked to rate their level of agreement to the following statement: "I think couples should have some kind of class prior to getting married," husbands, Pearson  $\chi^2(3, N = 143) = 23.80, p = .000$ , and wives, Pearson  $\chi^2(3, N = 143) = 18.90, p = .000$ , were significantly more likely to agree or strongly agree with this statement when they had participated in premarital education.

It was hypothesized that couples who expressed greater satisfaction with

premarital education would benefit from it more than couples who expressed dissatisfaction. This hypothesis was tested with an analysis of variance based on category of level of how helpful they thought the premarital education was currently to their marriage. No statistically significant differences existed between those who reported premarital education as being somewhat unhelpful to their marriage ( $n = 2$ ) and couples who reported premarital education being very helpful ( $n = 10$ ) in terms of total RDAS scores for husbands ( $p = .231$ ) or wives ( $p = .131$ ). The lack of statistical significance is most likely due to small sample size in the categories. The information in Figure 4 clearly shows a trend of higher scores on the RDAS among couples who reported higher levels of helpfulness from their premarital education experience. In fact, for wives, there is a 10-point difference between those who said premarital education was somewhat unhelpful to those who said it was very helpful.

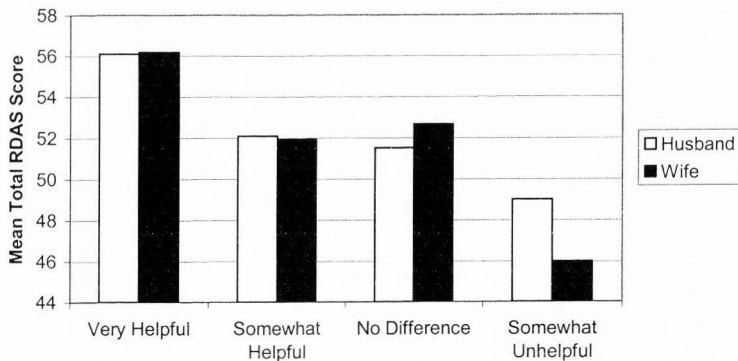


Figure 4. Mean total RDAS scores for husband and wife by category of helpfulness of premarital education.

Of couples who did not indicate any premarital preparation experience ( $n = 80$ ), 87% reported that no one had talked to them or offered them premarital education. Had they received a personal invitation to premarital education, 59.7% of couples indicated it was "somewhat likely" or "very likely" they would have participated. When asked what they would do if the individual performing the ceremony had asked them to participate in premarital education, 69.4% of couples said they would have participated. Of the couples who indicated reluctance to participate, 38.2% indicated a \$100 state tax credit would make a nice incentive. Another 38.2% indicated a gift certificate to a local business would have persuaded them to participate in premarital education. Only 2.8% of couples expressed complete refusal to participate in premarital education. The two most common reasons given for refusal to participate fell into the categories of "We were in love/Didn't need it" and "Too little time before the wedding/Short courtship."

In order to gain a clearer understanding of couples' perceptions of marital preparation in general, five questions were asked about their attitudes towards certain types of preparations, and how well they believed they knew their spouse prior to getting married. When asked how much they agree or disagree with the statement: "I wish I had known more about marriage before getting married," 60.8% of wives and 63.6% of husbands either disagreed or strongly disagreed. There was no significant difference for husbands, Pearson  $\chi^2(3, N = 146) = .70, p = .874$ , or wives, Pearson  $\chi^2(3, N = 143) = .58, p = .901$ , between those who did and did not participate in premarital education. Even though there is no significant difference between premarital education groups, nearly 40% of all couples in this study indicated they would have

liked to know more about marriage prior to getting married.

When asked how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement: "I think couples should have some kind of class prior to getting married," 76.2% of wives and 62.9% of husbands agreed or strongly agreed. As mentioned earlier, there was a significant difference for husbands, Pearson  $\chi^2(3, N = 143) = 23.80, p = .000$  and wives, Pearson  $\chi^2(3, N = 143) = 18.90, p = .000$ , with those who had premarital education more likely to endorse the use of a class over those who reported no premarital education experience.

The statement "I think couples should be required to pass a test before getting married," was overwhelmingly unpopular among all couples, with 93.0% of wives and 90.9% of husbands either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. There was no significant difference for husbands, Pearson  $\chi^2(3, N = 143) = 1.15, p = .765$ , or wives, Pearson  $\chi^2(3, N = 143) = 5.05, p = .168$  between those who did and did not participate in premarital education. It is still remarkable that 7% of wives and 9.1% of husbands agreed with mandatory testing prior to marriage, although this may be an example of socially desirable responses, rather than a true desire to regulate marriage more stringently.

When asked how much they agree or disagree with the statement: "I knew my spouse well before getting married," 89.5% of wives and 90.2% of husbands agreed or strongly agreed. There was no significant difference for husbands, Pearson  $\chi^2(3, N = 143) = 2.81, p = .422$ , or wives, Pearson  $\chi^2(3, N = 143) = 1.13, p = .710$  between those who had premarital education and those who reported no premarital education

experience, indicating the premarital education that was performed did not facilitate couples learning about one another. There is, however, a significant difference in responses to this statement when examining length of courtship. Both husbands,  $F(3, 142) = 8.02, p = .000$ , and wives,  $F(3, 142) = 9.30, p = .000$  were more likely to agree or strongly agree that they knew their spouse well if they had a longer courtship. Figure 5 shows a clear pattern of how well a respondent indicated they knew their spouse according to how long they courted.

Further, how well wives thought they knew their husbands prior to marriage is significantly related to marital distress, Pearson  $\chi^2(3, N = 143) = 8.56, p = .036$ , with wives who endorsed not knowing their spouse well before marriage more likely to

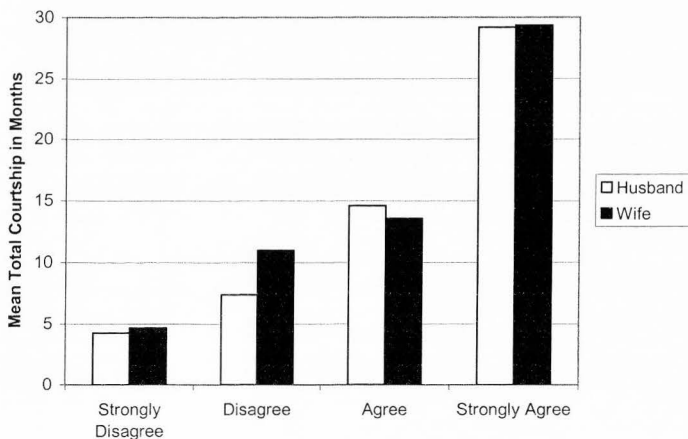


Figure 5. Level of agreement with the statement "I knew my spouse well before getting married" and length of courtship.

report being in a distressed marriage, based on RDAS scores. It is interesting to note that while couples with longer courtships report knowing their spouses better, and how well wives knew their husbands was related to marital distress, a trend in the data suggested distressed couples actually dated longer, an average of 6.5 months longer, than nondistressed couples,  $t(141) = -1.83, p = .069$ .

*Research Question 4: Seeking Help  
for Marriage*

Although husbands who participated in premarital education reported being significantly more likely to seek help should their marriages become distressed, Pearson  $\chi^2(3, N = 143) = 10.10, p = .018$ , neither husbands nor wives who participated in premarital education reported actually seeking help more often than couples who reported receiving no premarital education. With only 10.6% of couples who reported premarital education actually having sought help for their marriage, compared to 7.8% of couples who did not have premarital education, the differences again indicate slightly more proactive behaviors from couples who participated in premarital education, but the differences are small. It is also particularly interesting to note an overall reluctance to seek help for marriages. In couples whose total RDAS scores were in the distressed range ( $n = 43$ ), 82.5% of husbands and 77.5% of wives reported not having sought marriage counseling.

It is important to note that among survey participants, 75.0% of wives and 81.3% of husbands indicated never or rarely experiencing times in their marriage when they considered counseling. It is also important to note that as a group, both couples



who reported and did not report premarital education experience were relatively happily married, with 71.2% of all couples scoring in the nondistressed range on the RDAS. Therefore, it seems unlikely that many couples in either group would have sought marriage counseling at this point in their marriage.

*Research Question 5: More Likely to Invest in Marriage*

Compared to couples who did not engage in premarital education, couples participating in premarital education showed more willingness to invest in their marriage. The differences, shown in Table 9, are small but statistically significant for husbands, with a trend in the data for wives. It is not possible to determine if this is an

Table 9

*Independent Samples t-Test Analysis of Husbands' and Wives' Willingness to Invest in Their Marriage*

	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>ES</i> <sup>a</sup>
Husbands						
Premarital education	67	27.0	3.11	-2.13	.035	.18
No premarital education	77	25.5	4.85			
Wives						
Premarital education	67	26.4	3.71	-1.90	.062	.16
No premarital education	77	25.2	3.70			

<sup>a</sup> Effect size calculated  $r_{YX} = d/\sqrt{(d^2+4)}$

effect of premarital education, or if couples who participated in premarital education are more likely to invest in their marriage from the beginning. Even though the differences are statistically significant, it is interesting to note that scores on the WIMS for both husbands and wives who did not participate in premarital education are in the "high" willingness to invest range ( $> 24$ ).

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

#### Summary of Research Questions

This study explored couple attitudes about, participation in, and effect of premarital education on marital satisfaction in a sample of couples married 3 years. It was hypothesized that few couples would have participated in formal premarital education, and that participation in premarital education would result in higher levels of marital satisfaction relative to couples that did not participate in such programs. This study also assessed general attitudes of couples married 3 years regarding premarital education. Finally, it was hypothesized that couples who participated in premarital education would also report engaging in other relationship-enhancing behaviors in their marriage. The following sections discuss major findings and possible explanations for these findings.

#### *Types and Quantity of Formal Premarital Education*

In evaluating premarital education as it currently exists in Cache County, Utah, it appears from this sample that the majority of couples participated in no premarital education, with another significant proportion participating in relatively little such education. Over three fourths of couples in the sample reported five or less hours (including no hours) of premarital education. No couples sought professional assistance for premarital education, and very few completed any type of premarital inventory or

testing. In terms of the "Four T's" of premarital education, no couples in the sample participated in programs that met the requirements for existing formal premarital education programs (significant time, several topics, premarital testing, and a trained provider).

One important finding in this sample that is consistent with previous research relates to the provider of premarital education services. Of couples who participated in premarital education in the current study, the vast majority (97%) did so within a religious setting (clergy or religious class). Other studies have reported that the majority of premarital education was provided by religious leaders or in religious settings (Stahmann, 2000; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1980; Sullivan & Bradbury, 1997). This finding is important because most religious leaders lack formal training to perform such services. Even though churches "are logically conducive to preventive intervention" (Stanley et al., 1995, p. 393), research into the effectiveness of such naturally occurring interventions has not been supportive of their efficacy. Stanley et al. (2001) found an increase in negative communication in couples following participation in naturally occurring premarital education provided by untrained clergy. Their finding may be due to the surfacing of differences or issues between the couple with no skills-based training offered on how to deal with the new information. Stanley and colleagues found the most effective intervention to be provided by clergy who were trained in PREP, a formal, structured, skills-based program.

With such a large base of religiously active couples, it would appear that training local clergy and other providers in an empirically tested, skills-based program,

such as PREP, could have significant impact on the ability of clergy to provide effective premarital education, especially to high risk couples. Such a training program could also increase the prevalence of couples deciding to participate in such programs by increasing the number of clergy who invite couples participate. Clergy awareness of premarital education resources and their ability to provide a quality service may be a factor in increasing the likelihood of their providing effective services. With such a large proportion of the population in Cache county (and in the broader Utah population) being affiliated with the LDS church, endorsement by the LDS of such training programs may serve to increase both clergy and couples' willingness to participate in such programs.

*Relation of Premarital Education to Marital Adjustment and Satisfaction*

One might conclude from this study that a premarital education program is not needed, as many couples elected to participate in premarital education and they appeared no better off in their marriages at 3 years than couples who did nothing. Given the profile of couples premarital education based on the "Four T's" of premarital education described above, it is not surprising to discover no significant difference in couples who did and did not participate in premarital education. Since many couples who reported participating in premarital education spent relatively little time, covered few topics, and did no testing with an untrained clergy member, it seems logical that there would be little difference between couples who reported premarital education and those who reported none. Further, with so many couples reporting being married in the

LDS temple, and with being married in the LDS temple having a stronger effect on marital satisfaction and adjustment than premarital education participation, it seems unlikely to have found any significant difference between the premarital education and nonpremarital education groups.

It may also be argued that an empirically tested, skills-based program is exactly what is needed because what is being done at the present time in terms of premarital education is no better than doing nothing. Even though couples reported covering many topics relevant to marital success, on average they did so in a relatively short time with an untrained religious leader. Furthermore, even though it was not statistically significant, a higher proportion of distressed couples did not participate in premarital education, suggesting that the premarital education that does exist naturally in the area is missing the high risk couples who would likely benefit the most from such services.

By training religious leaders in premarital education and by targeting high-risk couples, it may be possible to promote more healthy and stable marriages from their inception. Through the use of a premarital assessment, such as FOCCUS or RELATE, it may also be possible to reduce the numbers of high-risk marriages, as it has been shown that between 6% and 15% of couples choose to delay or break their engagement after completing such questionnaires (Meredith & Holman, 2000; Olson, 1983; Williams & Jurich, 1995). The key to success in these endeavors would be identifying at-risk couples and connecting them to a premarital education program. Again, clergy are the logical choice for this assignment, as many clergy work with couples prior to the

wedding and seem to have a proclivity for both premarital education and identifying which couples may benefit most from such interventions (Stanley et al., 2001).

*Attitudes of Couples About Premarital Education  
and Its Usefulness*

Overall, couples in this study were supportive of some form of premarital education, regardless of whether or not they had participated in any themselves. Very few couples were completely opposed to participating in premarital education. It is interesting to note that of the eighty couples that did not participate in premarital education, nearly 60% reported at least some interest if someone would have offered the service. If the person who offered the service was the same one who was performing the ceremony, nearly 70% of couples who did not participate in premarital education reported willingness to go through some type of program. Also of interest is that nearly 40% of all couples, including those who had already participated in premarital education, indicated they would have liked to know more about marriage prior to the wedding.

Some states have provided incentives to encourage couples to engage in premarital education. At the present time, both Florida and Arizona offer such enticements to couples who choose to participate premarital education. Florida offers a 50% reduction in the marriage license fee for couples who complete a marriage preparation course. Arizona offers a \$100 dollar state tax credit for couples who complete at least 6 hours of premarital education (Fagan, 2001). In the present sample, of the 23% ( $n = 34$ ) of couples who responded to the incentive question, their responses

were evenly split between a \$100 dollar tax credit and a gift certificate to a local business as the best incentives for participating in premarital education.

Couples that participated in premarital education were overwhelmingly supportive of its helpfulness in their marriage, with some indication that those who thought it was more helpful scoring higher on a measure of marital satisfaction and adjustment. These same couples also were in favor of engaged couples participating in some kind of class or other premarital intervention.

#### *Premarital Education and Seeking Help for Their Marriage*

Even though there is some indication that couples who participated in premarital education were more likely to seek help for their marriages than couples who did not participate in premarital education, there were no statistically significant results detectable in the present sample. Husbands who participated in premarital education did indicate more willingness to seek help for their marriage than husbands who had no premarital education, but this difference had not yet materialized into action, even though 28.8% of couples scored in the distressed range on the RDAS. Along with scores on the RDAS, the attitude of husbands who participated in premarital education towards seeking help may indicate husbands benefit more from premarital interventions than do wives. Similar differences have been noted in previous studies (Behrens & Halford, 1994 as cited in Stanley, 2001; Markman et al., 1993). There was an overall reluctance by all couples in the study to seek help for their distressed marriages. This



may be for a variety of reasons, including only one spouse perceiving the marriage as in trouble and the social stigma attached to being "in therapy."

*Premarital Education and Investing  
in Marriage*

Even though couples who participated in premarital education scored higher on marital investment, it is important to recognize that husbands and wives in both the premarital education and the nonpremarital education groups scored in the high investment range on the WIMS. This suggests that most couples in this study reported a willingness to engage in marriage investment behaviors.

Even with these data available, there remained a statistically significant difference between husbands who did and did not participate in premarital education in terms of their willingness to invest in their marriage. The mean scores for husbands with no premarital education experience (25.5) and those with premarital education experience (27.0) went from high willingness to invest to slightly higher willingness to invest. The same pattern was true for wives, though the difference was smaller. This suggests that couples who are already willing to invest in their marriage choose to be involved in premarital education. This finding may support the argument that it is not the premarital education that helps marriages; rather, couples who choose to enroll in premarital education are also those who are more willing to invest in their marriages overall. It also may be that the premarital education somehow enhanced the husband's desire to invest in their marriage, thereby increasing overall marital satisfaction.

The most significant finding from examining couples' willingness to invest in their marriages was that couples who reported higher willingness to invest experienced less likelihood of marital distress. Both husbands and wives who scored in the distressed range on the RDAS scored significantly lower on the WIMS than nondistressed couples, and below the cutoff score for high investment.

#### Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Any conclusions drawn from this study must be qualified by the limitation of the sample and research design. This study was not designed to represent the general population of the United States or even Utah as a whole. This study was specifically designed to sample rural Utah, specifically Cache County, and the need of couples early in their marriages for premarital education. The small sample size and its unique characteristics were affected by several factors.

First, the presence of an LDS temple in Cache County artificially increased the numbers of marriages in the county by couples traveling from outside the county and state to get married here. This is reflected in the marriage rate for Cache county (14.6/1,000 population), which is much higher than in the neighboring Box Elder (7.1) and Rich (5.6) counties, as well as being above the state average (10.9). The same pattern is present in other rural Utah counties where LDS temples are located, including Washington County (14.0) and Sanpete County (37.2; Utah Department of Health, 2000). The presence of Utah State University, with its over 23,000 students, also inflates the areas numbers of marriageable age young adults with generally transient

residents, possibly marrying and then moving. Based on figures available from the Utah Department of Health, there were approximately 470 too many marriages in Cache County in 1998 for a county with its population. Having couples come from areas outside of Cache County and couples who marry and then move made initial identification and location of potential study participants difficult.

Second, it is likely that relatively large subsamples of the total sample did not return the survey. For example, over 98% of respondents were still married. Based on figures from the Utah Department of Health (2000), approximately 10% of the sample couples should have been divorced or had marriages annulled. In examining marital satisfaction and adjustment scores in the sample, it also appears that the group that responded was over represented by couples who were very happy in their marriages. It is likely that most couples who were unhappy with their present marriage or who were already separated or divorced did not respond. Given the high rate of marital dissolution in the early years of marriage, it seems likely that many couples with unsatisfying or unstable marriages may have already separated or divorced and not returned the surveys. This under-representation of less satisfied and divorced couples is likely to have contributed to the overall inflation of marital adjustment and satisfaction scores as discussed in Chapter 4, thereby reducing the ability to find statistical significance in many of the analyses and reducing the variability of the couple's responses.

Despite having a small sample size, the unique characteristics of Cache County were represented in the sample. The largely LDS community with predominantly homogenous LDS temple marriages skewed the sample. Because previous research has

demonstrated extremely low divorce rates for LDS temple marriages (Heaton & Goodman, 1999), we should expect a largely happily married LDS sample, which is exactly what was found. Compared to other sources of information (American Religion Data Archive, 2002), however, the current sample was overly representative of the LDS population, thus under representing those of other religious denominations. Future studies should be designed to be more representative of Cache County's religious composition.

One more factor that could have lead to an inflation of socially desirable responses was the wording in the cover letter mailed with the survey. In describing the purpose of the study, the participants were informed that one aspect of the study was to examine what, if any, relation premarital education plays in marital satisfaction (see Appendix A). This information may have biased couples responses to the survey and presented on overly favorable view for premarital education.

One question that is raised by the present study concerns the present divorce rate in Cache County. As reported by Utah Office of Vital Records and Statistics, Cache County has a higher than average marriage rate and lower than average divorce rate when compared to Utah averages (Utah Department of Health, 2000). The higher marriage rate can be explained by the two factors previously addressed (i.e., presence of an LDS temple and Utah State University).

The question of what explains the lower than average divorce rate remains. Given the high stability of homogomous LDS marriages previously reported (Lehrer & Chiswick 1993), especially LDS temple marriages as reported by and Heaton and

Goodman (1999), and the prevalence of such marriages in Cache County found in the present study, one should expect a lower divorce rate than in other counties with more religious diversity. If, however, the nearly 72% LDS temple marriage figure is accurate for all Cache County marriages, one should expect an even lower divorce rate than 3.6/1,000 population.

Future studies may wish to examine the location of marriages (i.e., church, temple, county clerk, etc.) taking place in Cache County and around the state, but more importantly, to conduct a closer examination of who is divorcing and the reasons for the marital dissolution. If a relatively large segment of the population is experiencing a significantly lower than average divorce rate, then a relatively small segment of the Cache County population is experiencing an elevated incidence of divorce. The rationale for examining the divorcing/divorced population is to design an effective premarital intervention, addressing the specific needs and problems leading to the break up of marriages in the state.

### Conclusions and Implications

Even with the limitations of the present study, it is evident that many young couples may be interested in becoming better prepared for the transition to marriage. With many couples already choosing to participate in some kind of premarital education, and others expressing a desire for more information prior to marriage, the need for reliable and accurate exploration of issues relevant to marriage exists. Currently no training programs exist for the largest segment of providers of premarital

education (LDS clergy and institute instructors) to empower them with the skills and information that could prove helpful, both to themselves and the couples they serve.

It has been argued that clergy are the logical choice for training because they already work with many couples getting married and already provide much of the existing premarital education. Further, there seems to be a tacit assumption that clergy have the capacity for such education due to their ascribed roles as advisors and confidants relative to their religious status. It has also been demonstrated that most clergy possess a natural propensity to be effective premarital educators, provided they are trained in an effective program. Additionally, clergy seem a logical choice for the facilitation of premarital education due to their accessibility as lay counselors in their respective congregations.

The findings of this study do not support naturally occurring premarital education as a buffer or preventive factor in divorce. The relation between premarital education and marital satisfaction is neither definitive nor conclusive, based on the results of this study. Through future research into the processes and mechanisms that prevent or mediate marital distress, the author can develop effective education materials for use in premarital education. While "an ounce of prevention" is not always equated with "a pound of cure," it seems clear that well conceived education materials targeted at the Four T's of premarital education should be the next logical step in this evolution.

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APPENDICES



Appendix A  
Cover Letter and Survey Instrument

IRB Approval 11/20/01

# Utah State UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT  
College of Family Life

November 20, 2001

Attitudes, participation, and efficacy of premarital education in Cache County, Utah.

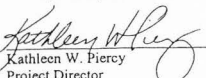
Dear Survey Participant,

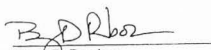
You have been selected to participate in a survey on premarital education and how it relates to marital happiness. Premarital education typically involved couples meeting with clergy or a professional counselor to discuss topics important for successful marriages and help couples make informed decisions. Your names were obtained from marriage license information as public records provided by Cache County and you have been selected based on the length of your marriage. Even if you are no longer married we want to hear from you. Simply complete your survey and return it in the preaddressed envelope.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide to not participate or not complete this survey at any time with absolutely no consequence to you. All your responses are confidential. You have been assigned an identification number which only the project director and researcher have access to. Your names and identification numbers will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked room. Your names and personal information will not be associated with your responses in anyway. When the study is done, this information will be destroyed. There will also be no attempt to contact you about your responses. Please **DO NOT** put your names on the survey.

This survey takes about 25-30 minutes to complete. By completing and returning this survey, you are giving your consent to use your responses in this study. When you complete all sections of the survey, please return them in the preaddressed envelope.

If you have any questions about this survey, feel free to call us at the numbers listed below. Thank you for your time in this important process.

  
Kathleen W. Piercy  
Project Director  
Utah State University  
(435) 797-2387

  
Bryan D. Ramboz  
Researcher  
Utah State University  
(435) 797-6927





At Utah State University, we are interested to learn about your marriage and how your experience may help couples planning on getting married in the future.

All of the questions on this survey are in regards to the marriage that took place in 1998. If you are still married please start on the section below and then complete the husband and wife forms. If you are no longer married (annulled, separated, divorced, or widowed), please complete the first two sections (A & B) only. Please remember, all responses are confidential. **Please do not put your names on the surveys.** Everyone who returns the survey within 2 weeks will be eligible for a drawing of a \$50 gift certificate from Super Walmart. Thank you.

- A. The first section asks general information about you as a couple. It can be completed by husband or wife. If possible, we encourage you to take a few minutes and complete it together.

Please indicate who is completing this section of the survey:

- 1 Husband     2 Wife     3 Both

1. Husband:    Age: \_\_\_\_\_    Number of this marriage:  1st     2nd     3rd or more  
 2. Wife:        Age: \_\_\_\_\_    Number of this marriage:  1st     2nd     3rd or more  
 3. What is your approximate present household annual income?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Less than \$10,000   | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 \$25,000 to \$29,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 \$10,000 to \$14,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 \$30,000 to \$39,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 \$15,000 to \$19,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> 7 \$40,000 to \$49,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 \$20,000 to \$24,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> 8 More than \$50,000   |



- |   | Age   | Gender  | From which marriage  |
|---|-------|---|--|
| 4. Please list the age and gender of all children currently residing with you.                                | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female | <input type="checkbox"/> Current <input type="checkbox"/> Previous |
| Please indicate if children are from the current marriage (by birth or adoption) or from a previous marriage. | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female | <input type="checkbox"/> Current <input type="checkbox"/> Previous |
|   | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female | <input type="checkbox"/> Current <input type="checkbox"/> Previous |
|   | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female | <input type="checkbox"/> Current <input type="checkbox"/> Previous |
|   | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female | <input type="checkbox"/> Current <input type="checkbox"/> Previous |
|   | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female | <input type="checkbox"/> Current <input type="checkbox"/> Previous |

Please answer the following questions about your engagement and marriage.

5. About how long did you date prior to becoming engaged? \_\_\_\_\_ days / weeks / months  
(circle one)
6. How long was your engagement? \_\_\_\_\_ days / weeks / months  
(circle one)
7. Date of marriage: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Where were you married?
- 1 County Clerk's office/Justice of the Peace chambers  
 2 Church, Synagogue, Mosque  
 3 LDS Temple  
 4 Other facility (alumni house, country club, etc.)  
 5 Other: \_\_\_\_\_



Please continue to the next page. →

9. Premarital education typically involves couples meeting with clergy or a professional counselor to discuss topics important for successful marriages and helping couples make good decisions. Did you participate in any premarital education?

- 1 Yes (Proceed to question 10)  
 0 No (Skip to question 19 on the next page)

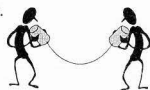
10. Who provided the premarital education? If more than one, please choose the one you felt was most beneficial.

- 1 Religious leader (clergy, Bishop, Pastor, Priest, etc.)       3 Professional counselor (therapist, agency, etc.)  
 2 Religious class (marriage prep class, etc.)       4 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

11. Approximately how many total hours did you spend in premarital education? \_\_\_\_\_ hours

12. What topics did you cover in premarital education? Check all that apply.

- 1 Children and Family Planning       6 Religion/Spirituality  
 2 Communication       7 Sex/Intimacy  
 3 Conflict Management       8 Wedding planning  
 4 Family Backgrounds       9 Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 5 Finance Management



13. If a fee was charged for the premarital education program, how much did you pay for it?

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

14. Which of the following formats did you use for premarital education?

- 1 Just you and your spouse.       3 Class setting (5 or more couples)  
 2 Small groups (2-4 couples)       4 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

15. Did you take any type of premarital test or survey such as RELATE, PREPARE, FOCCUS, etc.?

- 1 Yes       0 No       3 Don't remember

16. At the time, how interested were you as a couple in premarital education?

- Very Interested      Somewhat Interested      Somewhat Uninterested      Very Uninterested  
 4       3       2       1

17. How much do you think premarital education has helped your marriage?

- Very Helpful      Somewhat Helpful      No Difference      Somewhat Unhelpful      Very Unhelpful  
 5       4       3       2       1

18. How likely is it that you would recommend premarital education to engaged couples?

- Definitely Would      Probably Would      Probably Would Not      Definitely Would Not  
 4       3       2       1

If you are still married, please skip the following sections and complete the husband (blue) and wife (yellow) forms. If you are no longer married (annulled, separated, divorced, or widowed), please skip to section B on the following page.

19. During preparations for your marriage, did anyone talk to you about or offer you premarital education?

- 1 Yes (Skip to question 21)  
 0 No (Proceed to question 20)

Please continue to the next page. ⇒

20. Had you been offered premarital education, how likely is it that you would have participated?
- |                            |                            |                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Very likely                | Somewhat likely            | Somewhat Unlikely          | Very Unlikely              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |

If you are still married, please skip the following sections and complete husband (blue) and wife (yellow) forms. If you are no longer married (annulled, separated, divorced, or widowed), please skip to section B on the following page.

21. Could you briefly describe why you chose not to participate in premarital education?

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22. If the person performing the marriage ceremony had asked you and your spouse to participate in premarital education, what would you have done?

- 1 Participated in premarital education.  
 2 Found another person to perform the ceremony.  
 3 Postponed or canceled the ceremony.  
 4 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

23. Of the following incentives, please check the ONE that would have most likely motivated you and your spouse to use premarital counseling.

- 1 50% discount on the marriage license fee  
 2 100% discount on the marriage license fee  
 3 \$100 tax credit on state income tax  
 4 Gift certificate to local merchant or business  
 5 Certificate of recognition from the Governor.  
 6 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

If you are still married, please skip the following section and complete the husband (blue) and wife (yellow) forms. If you are no longer married (annulled, separated, divorced, or widowed), please proceed to section B below.

**B. This section is only for those who are no longer married. Please complete the questions then return this form in the envelope provided.**

24. In regards to the marriage that took place in 1998, which of the following best describes your current marital status?
- 1 Annulled (Please proceed to the next question.)  
 2 Separated (Please proceed to the next question.)  
 3 Divorced (Please proceed to the next question.)  
 4 Widowed (Thank you for completing the survey. Please stop here and return the survey.)  
 5 Remarried (Please proceed to the next question.)
25. Approximately how long were you married before you separated? \_\_\_\_\_ days / weeks / months  
(circle one)

Please continue to the next page. ⇨

26. How many times did you and your spouse separate (including the last time)? \_\_\_\_\_
27. Did you seek marriage counseling as a means to helping your marriage?  1 Yes  0 No
28. If your marriage was annulled or divorced, approximately how long after separation was the marriage officially dissolved? \_\_\_\_\_ days / weeks / months  
(circle one)
29. What is your highest level of education?
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Some high school             | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 Associates degree            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 High school graduate         | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 Bachelors degree             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Technical school/Certificate | <input type="checkbox"/> 7 Higher than bachelors degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 Some College                 |   |
30. Please indicate your parents present marital status.
- |                                    |                                      |                                     |                                    |                                      |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Married | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Separated | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Divorced | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 Widowed | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 Remarried |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
31. Please indicate your present religious affiliation.
- |  |
|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Catholic  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Conservative Protestant (Lutheran, Baptist, Church of God, Church of Christ, Jehovah's Witness, Pentecostal, Seventh Day Adventist, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Liberal Protestant (Methodist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, etc.)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 Mormon (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5 Other (Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Zen, etc.)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 No Religion   |

**Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning religion:**

32. My whole approach to life is based on my religion.
- |                            |                            |                            |                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Strongly Agree             | Agree                      | Not Sure                   | Disagree                   | Strongly Disagree          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |
33. Although I believe in my religion, many other things are more important in life.
- |                            |                            |                            |                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Strongly Agree             | Agree                      | Not Sure                   | Disagree                   | Strongly Disagree          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
34. My faith helps me know right from wrong.
- |                            |                            |                            |                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Strongly Agree             | Agree                      | Not Sure                   | Disagree                   | Strongly Disagree          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |

**Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.**

- |   | Strongly Agree             | Agree                      | Disagree                   | Strongly Disagree          |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 35. I wish I had known more about marriage before getting married.            | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |
| 36. I think couples should have some kind of class prior to getting married.  | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |
| 37. I think couples should be required to pass a test before getting married. | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |
| 38. I knew my spouse well before getting married.                             | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |

Please continue to the last page. ⇨

39. According to the most recent research, approximately 75% of people will remarry within 5 years of their divorce. If you were to remarry, how likely are you to use premarital education?

Definitely Will

4

Probably Will

3

Probably Not

2

Definitely Not

1



● Stop! You are finished. ☺ Thank you for your time. Please place the survey in the preaddressed envelope and mail. The winner of the gift certificate will be notified in approximately 3 weeks.

## WIFE'S SURVEY

C. This section is just for wives. Husbands complete the blue Husband Survey form. Please complete your sections separately. When you are finished, please seal it in the plain white envelope provided and place the white envelope in the preaddressed envelope provided. Please remember that all your answers are confidential. **Please do not put your name on the survey.**



- What is your highest level of education?
 

<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Some high school	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Associates degree
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 High school graduate	<input type="checkbox"/> 6 Bachelors degree
<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Technical school/Certificate	<input type="checkbox"/> 7 Higher than bachelors degree
<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Some College	
- Please indicate your parent's present marital status. If one or both are remarried, please indicate remarried.
 

<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Married	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Separated	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Divorced	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Widowed	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Remarried
------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	-------------------------------------	------------------------------------	--------------------------------------
- How often have you experienced times in your marriage when you considered counseling?
 

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	More often than not	Most of the time	All the time
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
- Have you ever sought counseling for your current marriage?
 

<input type="checkbox"/> 0 No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	If Yes, with whom?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Religious leader
			<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Professional counselor
- If you experienced difficulties in your marriage, how likely is it that you would seek help?
 

Very likely	Somewhat likely	Somewhat Unlikely	Very Unlikely
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
- Have you ever separated during your current marriage?
 

<input type="checkbox"/> 0 No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	If Yes, how many times have you separated? _____
-------------------------------	------------------------------	--
- 6a. How long had you been married when you first separated? \_\_\_\_\_ days / weeks / months
- Please indicate your present religious affiliation.
 

<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Catholic
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Conservative Protestant (Lutheran, Baptist, Church of God, Church of Christ, Jehovah's Witness, Pentecostal, Seventh Day Adventist, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Liberal Protestant (Methodist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Mormon (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)
<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Other (Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Zen, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/> 6 No Religion

Please continue to the next page. ⇨



**Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning religion:**

8. My whole approach to life is based on my religion.  
 Strongly Agree  5    Agree  4    Not Sure  3    Disagree  2    Strongly Disagree  1
9. Although I believe in my religion, many other things are more important in life.  
 Strongly Agree  1    Agree  2    Not Sure  3    Disagree  4    Strongly Disagree  5
10. My faith helps me know right from wrong.  
 Strongly Agree  5    Agree  4    Not Sure  3    Disagree  2    Strongly Disagree  1

**Please answer the following questions about your marriage as it is today. Please be as honest as you can. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.**

- |   | Strongly Agree                                | Agree   | Disagree  | Strongly Disagree                               |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11. I wish I had known more about marriage before getting married.                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> 4                    | <input type="checkbox"/> 3                        | <input type="checkbox"/> 2                          | <input type="checkbox"/> 1                      |
| 12. I think couples should have some kind of class prior to getting married.                          | <input type="checkbox"/> 4                    | <input type="checkbox"/> 3                        | <input type="checkbox"/> 2                          | <input type="checkbox"/> 1                      |
| 13. I think couples should be required to pass a test before getting married.                         | <input type="checkbox"/> 4                    | <input type="checkbox"/> 3                        | <input type="checkbox"/> 2                          | <input type="checkbox"/> 1                      |
| 14. I knew my spouse well before getting married.   | <input type="checkbox"/> 4                    | <input type="checkbox"/> 3                        | <input type="checkbox"/> 2                          | <input type="checkbox"/> 1                      |
| 15. How interested are you now in taking a free class designed for couples at your stage of marriage? | Very Interested<br><input type="checkbox"/> 4 | Somewhat Interested<br><input type="checkbox"/> 3 | Somewhat Uninterested<br><input type="checkbox"/> 2 | Very Uninterested<br><input type="checkbox"/> 1 |

**Most couples have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list.**

- |   | Always Agree               | Almost Always Agree        | Occasionally Agree         | Frequently Disagree        | Almost Always Disagree     | Always Disagree            |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 16. Religious matters                               | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 0 |
| 17. Demonstration of affection                      | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 0 |
| 18. Making major decisions                          | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 0 |
| 19. Sex relations                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 0 |
| 20. Conventionality<br>(Correct or proper behavior) | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 0 |
| 21. Career decisions                                | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 0 |

Please continue to the next page. ⇨

22. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship?

All the time <input type="checkbox"/> 0	Most of the time <input type="checkbox"/> 1	More often than not <input type="checkbox"/> 2	Occasionally <input type="checkbox"/> 3	Rarely <input type="checkbox"/> 4	Never <input type="checkbox"/> 5
--	--	---	--	--------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

23. How often do you and your partner quarrel?

All the time <input type="checkbox"/> 0	Most of the time <input type="checkbox"/> 1	More often than not <input type="checkbox"/> 2	Occasionally <input type="checkbox"/> 3	Rarely <input type="checkbox"/> 4	Never <input type="checkbox"/> 5
--	--	---	--	--------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

24. Do you ever regret that your married?

All the time <input type="checkbox"/> 0	Most of the time <input type="checkbox"/> 1	More often than not <input type="checkbox"/> 2	Occasionally <input type="checkbox"/> 3	Rarely <input type="checkbox"/> 4	Never <input type="checkbox"/> 5
--	--	---	--	--------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

25. How often do you and your mate "get on each others nerves"?

All the time <input type="checkbox"/> 0	Most of the time <input type="checkbox"/> 1	More often than not <input type="checkbox"/> 2	Occasionally <input type="checkbox"/> 3	Rarely <input type="checkbox"/> 4	Never <input type="checkbox"/> 5
--	--	---	--	--------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

26. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together:

Everyday <input type="checkbox"/> 4	Almost everyday <input type="checkbox"/> 3	Occasionally <input type="checkbox"/> 2	Rarely <input type="checkbox"/> 1	Never <input type="checkbox"/> 0
--	---	--	--------------------------------------	-------------------------------------



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

27. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas

Never <input type="checkbox"/> 0	Less than once a month <input type="checkbox"/> 1	Once or twice a month <input type="checkbox"/> 2	Once or twice a week <input type="checkbox"/> 3	Once a day <input type="checkbox"/> 4	More than once a day <input type="checkbox"/> 5
-------------------------------------	--	---	--	--	--

28. Work together on a project

Never <input type="checkbox"/> 0	Less than once a month <input type="checkbox"/> 1	Once or twice a month <input type="checkbox"/> 2	Once or twice a week <input type="checkbox"/> 3	Once a day <input type="checkbox"/> 4	More than once a day <input type="checkbox"/> 5
-------------------------------------	--	---	--	--	--

29. Calmly discuss something

Never <input type="checkbox"/> 0	Less than once a month <input type="checkbox"/> 1	Once or twice a month <input type="checkbox"/> 2	Once or twice a week <input type="checkbox"/> 3	Once a day <input type="checkbox"/> 4	More than once a day <input type="checkbox"/> 5
-------------------------------------	--	---	--	--	--

**For each of the following statements, please mark True (T) if you would act in the manner described by the statement, and False (F) if you would not act in the manner described by the statement. Be sure to take the indicated obstacle into account when deciding whether or not to act in the described manner.**

1 T or F  0 30. I would be willing to share more of my "wants" and "feelings" with my spouse even if my spouse had greatly displeased me.

1 T or F  0 31. I would be willing to ask for a specific criticism from my spouse, even if it made me feel extremely embarrassed

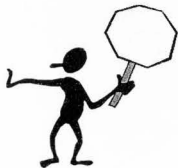
Please continue to the next page. ⇒

- 1 T or F  0 32. I would be willing to engage in light conversation, even if my spouse had been critical of me recently
- 1 T or F  0 33. I would be willing to speak more quickly, even if it made me somewhat angry to "have" to do this.
- 1 T or F  0 34. I would be willing to interrupt less often, even if my spouse had greatly displeased me earlier.
- 1 T or F  0 35. I would be willing to ask for clarification of what my spouse is saying, even when I'm in doubt and if my spouse had greatly displeased me earlier.
- 1 T or F  0 36. I would be willing to give more compliments, even if I was angry at my spouse at the time.
- 1 T or F  0 37. I would be willing to reassure my spouse that I care about him/her, even if I was angry at him/her at the time.
- 1 T or F  0 38. I would be willing to compromise with my spouse on a difficult issue, even if my spouse had greatly displeased me earlier.
- 1 T or F  0 39. I would be willing to agree as much as I honestly could about my spouse's position when we disagree about something, even if my spouse had been complaining about something earlier.
- 1 T or F  0 40. I would be willing to look for the things my spouse and I both enjoy, even if my spouse had been nagging me about something earlier.
- 1 T or F  0 41. I would be willing to try to see my similarities to my spouse, even if my spouse had greatly displeased me earlier.
- 1 T or F  0 42. I would be willing to try to recall nice times my spouse and I have had, even if I had to overcome being angry at him/her to do so.
- 1 T or F  0 43. I would be willing to try not to respond immediately with a negative behavior when my spouse did something negative, even if my spouse and been nagging me about something earlier.
- 1 T or F  0 44. I would be willing to admit that I do things to contribute to problems in our relationship, even if my spouse had greatly displeased me earlier.
- 1 T or F  0 45. I would be willing to do more things to show caring to my spouse, even if my spouse had been critical of me recently.
- 1 T or F  0 46. I would be willing to compromise on disagreements about finances, even if it made me feel extremely embarrassed.
- 1 T or F  0 47. I would be willing to share more fun activities with my spouse, even if it made me feel extremely embarrassed.



Almost done! © Please continue to the last page. ⇨

- 1 T or F  0 48. I would be willing to pleasantly surprise my spouse more often, even if my spouse had greatly displeased me earlier.
- 1 T or F  0 49. I would be willing to lecture or nag my spouse less often, even if my spouse had greatly displease me earlier.
- 1 T or F  0 50. I would be willing to give my spouse more "room" to do things alone when he/she wants, even if it would make me somewhat uncomfortable.
- 1 T or F  0 51. I would be willing to engage in hugging and kissing without expecting intercourse, even if it might be upsetting to me.
- 1 T or F  0 52. I would be willing to plan for our retirement, even if my spouse had greatly displeased me earlier.
- 1 T or F  0 53. I would be willing to go on more "dates" with my spouse, even if my spouse had been nagging me about something earlier.
- 1 T or F  0 54. I would be willing to go for a walk with my spouse, even if my spouse had greatly displeased me earlier.
- 1 T or F  0 55. I would be willing to build on proposals my spouse makes about how to solve a problem more often, rather than just suggesting alternatives, even if my spouse had greatly displeased me earlier.
- 1 T or F  0 56. I would be willing to work to accept my spouse's complaints as valid indications that we need to work together to solve a problem, even if I thought my spouse might still be angry at me anyway.
- 1 T or F  0 57. I would be willing to encourage my spouse to tell me what is pleasing and displeasing sexually, even if my spouse had been complaining about something earlier.
- 1 T or F  0 58. I would be willing to spend more time with my spouse, even if it made me angry to "have" to do this.
- 1 T or F  0 59. I would be willing to share my positive feelings more freely with my spouse, even if I thought it meant "giving in" to my spouse at the time.



● **Stop!** You are finished. ☺ Please seal the survey in the envelope labeled "Wife's Survey" and place that envelope in the preaddressed envelope. Remember to include Section A when you return the survey. Thank you for your time. The winner of the gift certificate will be notified in approximately 3 weeks.

### HUSBAND'S SURVEY

D. This section is just for **husbands**. Wives complete the yellow Wife's Survey form. Please complete your sections separately. When you are finished, please seal it in the plain white envelope provided and place the white envelope in the preaddressed envelope provided. Please remember that all your answers are **confidential**. **Please do not put your name on the survey.**



1. What is your highest level of education?
 

<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Some high school	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Associates degree
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 High school graduate	<input type="checkbox"/> 6 Bachelors degree
<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Technical school/Certificate	<input type="checkbox"/> 7 Higher than bachelors degree
<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Some College	
  
2. Please indicate your parent's present marital status. If one or both are remarried, please indicate remarried.
 

<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Married	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Separated	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Divorced	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Widowed	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Remarried
------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	-------------------------------------	------------------------------------	--------------------------------------
  
3. How often have you experienced times in your marriage when you considered counseling?
 

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	More often than not	Most of the time	All the time
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
  
4. Have you ever sought counseling for your current marriage?
 

<input type="checkbox"/> 0 No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	If Yes, with whom?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Religious leader
			<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Professional counselor
  
5. If you experienced difficulties in your marriage, how likely is it that you would seek help?
 

Very likely	Somewhat likely	Somewhat Unlikely	Very Unlikely
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
  
6. Have you ever separated during your current marriage?
 

<input type="checkbox"/> 0 No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	If Yes, how many times have you separated? _____
-------------------------------	------------------------------	--
  
- 6a. How long had you been married when you first separated? \_\_\_\_\_ days / weeks / months
  
7. Please indicate your present religious affiliation.
 

<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Catholic
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Conservative Protestant (Lutheran, Baptist, Church of God, Church of Christ, Jehovah's Witness, Pentecostal, Seventh Day Adventist, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Liberal Protestant (Methodist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Mormon (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)
<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Other (Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Zen, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/> 6 No Religion

Please continue to the next page. ⇨

**Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning religion:**

8. My whole approach to life is based on my religion.  
 Strongly Agree  5    Agree  4    Not Sure  3    Disagree  2    Strongly Disagree  1
9. Although I believe in my religion, many other things are more important in life.  
 Strongly Agree  1    Agree  2    Not Sure  3    Disagree  4    Strongly Disagree  5
10. My faith helps me know right from wrong.  
 Strongly Agree  5    Agree  4    Not Sure  3    Disagree  2    Strongly Disagree  1

**Please answer the following questions about your marriage as it is today. Please be as honest as you can. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.**

- |   | Strongly Agree                                | Agree   | Disagree  | Strongly Disagree                               |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11. I wish I had known more about marriage before getting married.                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> 4                    | <input type="checkbox"/> 3                        | <input type="checkbox"/> 2                          | <input type="checkbox"/> 1                      |
| 12. I think couples should have some kind of class prior to getting married.                          | <input type="checkbox"/> 4                    | <input type="checkbox"/> 3                        | <input type="checkbox"/> 2                          | <input type="checkbox"/> 1                      |
| 13. I think couples should be required to pass a test before getting married.                         | <input type="checkbox"/> 4                    | <input type="checkbox"/> 3                        | <input type="checkbox"/> 2                          | <input type="checkbox"/> 1                      |
| 14. I knew my spouse well before getting married.   | <input type="checkbox"/> 4                    | <input type="checkbox"/> 3                        | <input type="checkbox"/> 2                          | <input type="checkbox"/> 1                      |
| 15. How interested are you now in taking a free class designed for couples at your stage of marriage? |   |   |   |   |
|   | Very Interested<br><input type="checkbox"/> 4 | Somewhat Interested<br><input type="checkbox"/> 3 | Somewhat Uninterested<br><input type="checkbox"/> 2 | Very Uninterested<br><input type="checkbox"/> 1 |

**Most couples have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list.**

- |   | Always Agree               | Almost Always Agree        | Occasionally Agree         | Frequently Disagree        | Almost Always Disagree     | Always Disagree            |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 16. Religious matters                               | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 0 |
| 17. Demonstration of affection                      | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 0 |
| 18. Making major decisions                          | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 0 |
| 19. Sex relations                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 0 |
| 20. Conventionality<br>(Correct or proper behavior) | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 0 |
| 21. Career decisions                                | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 0 |

Please continue to the next page. ⇒

22. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship?

All the time	Most of the time	More often than not	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

23. How often do you and your partner quarrel?

All the time	Most of the time	More often than not	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

24. Do you ever regret that your married?

All the time	Most of the time	More often than not	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

25. How often do you and your mate "get on each others nerves"?

All the time	Most of the time	More often than not	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

26. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together:

Everyday	Almost everyday	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0



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

27. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas

Never	Less than once a month	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Once a day	More than once a day
<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

28. Work together on a project

Never	Less than once a month	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Once a day	More than once a day
<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

29. Calmly discuss something

Never	Less than once a month	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Once a day	More than once a day
<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

**For each of the following statements, please mark True (T) if you would act in the manner described by the statement, and False (F) if you would not act in the manner described by the statement. Be sure to take the indicated obstacle into account when deciding whether or not to act in the described manner.**

- 1 T or  0 F 30. I would be willing to share more of my "wants" and "feelings" with my spouse even if my spouse had greatly displeased me.
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Please continue to the next page. ⇨

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Almost done! © Please continue to the last page. ⇨



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- 1 T or F  0 49. I would be willing to lecture or nag my spouse less often, even if my spouse had greatly displeased me earlier.
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● **Stop!** You are finished. ☺ Please seal the survey in the envelope labeled "Wife's Survey" and place that envelope in the preaddressed envelope. Remember to include Section A when you return the survey. Thank you for your time. The winner of the gift certificate will be notified in approximately 3 weeks.

Appendix B

Utah State University IRB Approval

# Utah State UNIVERSITY

VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH OFFICE  
1450 Old Main Hill  
Logan UT 84322-1450  
Telephone: (435) 797-1180  
FAX: (435) 797-1367  
Email: vpr@cc.usu.edu

November 27, 2001

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Kathleen Piercy  
Bryan Ramboz

FROM: True Rubal, IRB Administrator *T. Rubal*

SUBJECT: Attitudes and Interest in Premarital Counseling in Cache County, UT

Your proposal has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board and is approved under exemption #2.

- X There is no more than minimal risk to the subjects.  
There is greater than minimal risk to the subjects.

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file for the period of one year. If your study extends beyond this approval period, you must contact this office to request an annual review of this research. Any change affecting human subjects must be approved by the Board prior to implementation. Injuries or any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board.

Prior to involving human subjects, properly executed informed consent must be obtained from each subject or from an authorized representative, and documentation of informed consent must be kept on file for at least three years after the project ends. Each subject must be furnished with a copy of the informed consent document for their personal records.

The research activities listed below are exempt from IRB review based on the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regulations for the protection of human research subjects, 45 CFR Part 46, as amended to include provisions of the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, June 18, 1991.

- Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (a) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through the identifiers linked to the subjects; and (b) any disclosure of human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

*UMC 2905*  
*Approved 11/20/01*



DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT  
College of Family Life

*IRB addendum  
approved 2/5/02*

February 5, 2002

To: True Rubal, IRB

From: Kathy Piercy and Bryan Ramboz

Re: Amendment to study procedures

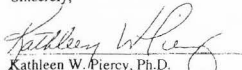
Dear True,


We would like permission to amend the procedures used in our study of premarital education in Cache County. We have encountered a particularly low response rate to our original mailing. We have learned through an anonymous telephone call from a local post office that "many" surveys were never delivered due to "insufficient address" information. After following up with two post offices in the area, this translates to no apartment numbers on some of the envelopes. Since we cannot determine which of the potential survey participants this pertains to, we propose to do the following:

1. Call all non-responding couples to determine if they received the survey.
2. Ask if they would be willing to participate at the present time.
3. Confirm their address.
4. Send new surveys to couples who are agreeable to participate.
5. Send a follow-up postcard.

Thank you for your time in reviewing this matter.

Sincerely,

  
Kathleen W. Piercy, Ph.D.  
797-2387

  
Bryan D. Ramboz, M.A.  
797-6709



Appendix C  
Demographic Information

Table C-1

*Number of Current Marriage*

Respondent	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Husband	90.4%	8.2%	1.4%
Wife	89.7%	10.3%	
Both	86.3%		

Table C-2

*Mean Age At Marriage*

Respondent	Mean age at 1 <sup>st</sup> marriage			Mean age at 2 <sup>nd</sup> marriage		
	Sample	National <sup>a</sup>	Difference	Sample	National <sup>a</sup>	Difference
Husband	23.3	26.9	-3.6	37.8	40.7	-2.9
Wife	21.7	25.0	-3.3	32.7	37.0	-4.3

<sup>a</sup> Source: Clarke, S.C. (1995). Advance report of final marriage statistics, 1989 and 1990. *Monthly Vital Statistics Report*, 43(12), suppl. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.

Table C-3

*Courtship Measured in Months*

Courtship	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Min/Max
Dated	15.1	7.0	6	19.26	0.5 - 96
Engaged	4.2	3.0	3	3.27	1.0 - 30
Total	19.3	12.0	9	20.33	1.5 - 102

Table C-4

*Location of Marriage Ceremony*

Location	<i>n</i>	%
County clerk's office	1	0.7
Church	11	7.5
LDS Temple	104	71.9
Other facility	17	13.0
Other	10	6.8
Total	143	100.0

Table C-5

*Number of Children*

Number	<i>n</i>	%
0	33	22.8
1	72	49.7
2	32	22.1
3	4	2.8
4	2	1.4
5	1	.7
6	1	.7

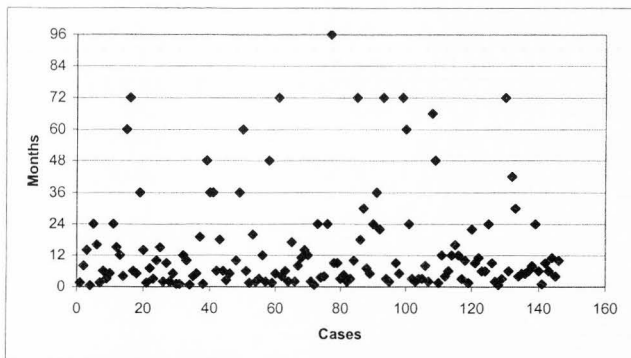


Figure C-1. Scatter-plot of dating in months.

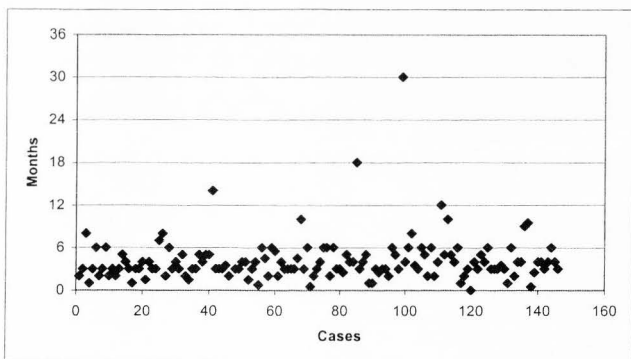


Figure C-2. Scatter-plot of engagement in months



Appendix D  
Instrument Use Permission

mailbox:/SuperMac%AA%20HD/System%20Folder/  
Preferences/Netscap%e%20Users/Bryan%20Ramboz/Mail/

**Subject: RE: RDAS****Date:** Tue, 16 Oct 2001 08:55:21 -0500**From:** "Busby, Dean" <DBusby@hs.ttu.edu>**To:** 'Bryan Ramboz' <brramboz@cc.usu.edu>

The RDAS is in the public domain

Dean M. Busby  
Professor and Chair  
Department of Human Development and Family Studies  
Box 41162  
Lubbock, Texas 79409-1162  
(806) 742 3000  
Fax (806) 742 0285  
Email: dbusby@hs.ttu.edu

-----Original Message-----

From: Bryan Ramboz [<mailto:brramboz@cc.usu.edu>]  
Sent: Monday, October 15, 2001 5:13 PM  
To: dbusby@hs.ttu.edu  
Subject: RDAS

Dear Dr. Busby,

I am anticipating using the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale in my dissertation research on premarital education. I have been advised to verify if the RDAS is in the public domain or if a license will need to be purchased in order to proceed. My proposal defense date is November 1st so any confirmation before then would be appreciated.

Respectfully,

Bryan D. Ramboz  
Family and Human Development  
Utah State University  
Logan, UT 84322-2905

## VITA

BRYAN D. RAMBOZ

**Addresses**

## Work:

Cinnamon Hills Youth Crisis Center  
770 East St. George Blvd.  
St. George, UT 84770  
(435) 656-7172

## Home:

2283 East 90 South  
St. George, UT 84790  
(435) 673-0987  
bryan@cinnamonhills.com

**Education**

1998-2003 UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY Logan, UT

Graduated: Doctorate of Philosophy, May 3, 2003  
Major field of study: Family & Human Development s  
Emphasis: Marriage and Family Relationship  
Dissertation: Premarital Education: Attitudes, Participation and Relation to  
Marital Adjustment in a Sample from Northern Utah.  
Supervising Professor: Kathleen W. Piercy, Ph.D.

1994-1996 PHILLIPS GRADUATE INSTITUTE Encino, CA

Graduated: Master of Arts, May 19, 1996.  
Major field of study: Marital and Family Therapy.

1990-1993 UNIVERSITY OF UTAH Salt Lake City, UT

Graduated: Bachelor of Science, June 6, 1993.  
Major field of study: Psychology.

**Teaching Experience**1998-2002 UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY Logan, UT  
Graduate Instructor Department of Family & Human Development

FHD 1500: HUMAN DEVELOPMENT ACROSS THE LIFESPAN, 3 semester hours, 1  
section.  
Class size: 115.

FHD 4220: FAMILY CRISES AND INTERVENTION, 3 semester hours, 4 sections (2 sections via satellite). Average class size: 70.

Teaching Assistant

FHD 3110: HUMAN SEXUALITY, 3 semester hours, 1 section. Class size: 168.

FHD 3530: ADOLESCENCE, 3 semester hours, 2 sections. Average class size: 100.

FHD 4240: SOCIAL AND FAMILY GERONTOLOGY: 1 section. Class size 63.

1997- 1998 SOUTHERN UTAH UNIVERSITY Cedar City, UT

Assistant Professor Department of Psychology

PSY 101: GENERAL PSYCHOLOGY, 5 quarter hours, 3 sections. Average class size: 100.

PSY 201: METHODS, MODELS, AND PROFESSIONAL ISSUES IN PSYCHOLOGY, 2 quarter hours, 2 sections. Team taught. Average class size: 45.

PSY 382: HUMAN RELATIONS AND GROUP DYNAMICS, 2 quarter hours, 2 sections. Average class size: 25.

PSY 431: ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY, 3 quarter hours, 2 sections. Average class size: 45.

PSY 434: INTRODUCTION TO PSYCHOTHERAPY, 3 quarter hours, 1 section. Team taught. Class size: 45.

PSY 499: SENIOR SEMINAR, 3 quarter hours, 1 section. Class size: 30.

1997 UTAH VALLEY STATE COLLEGE Orem, UT

Adjunct Faculty Department of Behavioral Science

PSY 101: INTRODUCTION TO PSYCHOLOGY, 3 semester hours, 2 sections. Average class size: 45.

1996 UNIVERSITY OF UTAH Salt Lake City, UT

Adjunct Faculty Department of Family and Consumer Studies

FCS 125: RELATIONSHIP FORMATION AND DISSOLUTION, 5 quarter hours, 1 section. Class size: 46.

## Research Experience

2001-2002 UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY Logan, UT  
Research Assistant Early Intervention Research Institute

Served as graduate research assistant on a national, multiphase evaluation project called Measuring and Monitoring Community-Based Integrated Systems of Care. The purpose of the project is to develop and implement a national strategy for monitoring and reporting progress toward Healthy People 2010's performance outcomes for children with special health care needs. Networked with representative from 6 states and Washington, D.C. Also worked on the Utah Collaborative Medical Home Project on survey design and analysis.

2001 UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY Logan, UT  
Research Facilitator Center for Persons with Disabilities

Served as facilitator for a Participatory Action Research team evaluating the home visiting component of Baby Watch, an early intervention program serving special needs children ages 0-3 years and their families. This team operated under the Interdisciplinary Training division of the Center for Persons with Disabilities. The team conducted program evaluation including design, collection, analysis, and dissemination of information.

2000-2001 UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY Logan, UT  
Research Assistant Department of Family & Human Development

Assisted Kathy Piercy with analysis of qualitative data on eldercare using QSR NUD•IST and SPSS software. Assisted in producing reports for funding agencies.

## Clinical Experience

License: Marriage and Family Therapist, Utah License Number 97-340976-3901. Exp. 9/2004

2002-Present Therapist/Education Leader Cinnamon Hills Youth Crisis Center  
 St. George UT

A privately owned residential treatment facility for youth. Performed individual and group therapies and treatment plans. Coordinated treatment with academic and group living departments as well as outside agencies. Also responsible for creating, updating, and presenting family reunification workshops for parents and students

1998-2000 Therapist-Outpatient Bear River Mental Health  
 Logan, UT

A not-for-profit agency providing sliding scale services to individuals, couples, and groups, adult and children services. Perform assessment, DSM-IV diagnosis, treatment plans, and on going therapy. Coordinated treatment with human services, vocational rehabilitation, juvenile and district courts, probation and parole, and local school districts.

- 1997-1998      Therapist-Adult Outpatient      Southwest Mental Health  
Cedar City, UT  
A not-for-profit agency providing sliding scale services to individuals, couples, and groups. Perform assessment, DSM-IV diagnosis, treatment plans, and on going therapy. Covered crisis intervention for county and state correctional facility.
- 1996-1997      Assessment/Crisis Counselor      Benchmark Behavioral Health Systems  
Midvale, UT  
A private psychiatric hospital serving adolescent, adult, and geriatric populations. Perform assessment and DSM-IV diagnosis. Patient admissions and discharges. Crisis intervention and hospital emergency room evaluations and consultations.
- 1996-1997      Employment Specialist      Easter Seals Society of Utah  
Salt Lake City, UT  
A not-for-profit agency working with disabled individuals. Perform assessment, job coaching, employment counseling, and networking. Liaison to Utah State Hospital Department of Vocational Rehabilitation.

## Professional Activities

### Professional Memberships

- National Council on Family Relations
- American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy
- Utah Council on Family Relations
- Utah Association of Marriage and Family Therapy

### Publications

- Ramboz, B. (2002). Parenting through a divorce. *Tips on Parenting*, 4 (3), Emma Eccles Jones Center for Excellence in Education, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

### Presentations

Ramboz, B. (2002, May). *Naturally occurring premarital education in rural Utah: Attitudes and effectiveness*. Presented at the Utah Conference on Family Relations, Weber State University, Ogden, Utah.

Ramboz, B. (2001, May). *The Family Life Educator's Role in Marital Preparation*. Presented at the Utah Conference on Family Relations, Weber State University, Ogden, Utah.

Ramboz, B. (2000, May). *The Use of Premarital Counseling in Adolescent Marriages: A Proposal*. Presented at the Utah Conference on Family Relations, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

Ramboz, B. (2000, May). *Revitalizing the Institution of Marriage through Preventive Measures*. Presented at the Revitalizing the Institution of Marriage National Conference, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

Ramboz, B. (1999, May). *Mandatory Parental Divorce Education: Does It Work?* Paper presented at the Utah Conference on Family Relations, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

### Service

Ramboz, B., Webb, N. & Wright, M. (1998-2000). *Shared Parenting for Divorcing Parents*. A mandatory parental education class on the effects of divorce on children emphasizing the importance of co-parenting. Class was offered bimonthly.

### Contract & Grant Proposals

Wentz, T. & Ramboz, B. (2000). *Mandatory Divorce Education for Parents Program*. Submitted to the State of Utah, Administrative Office of the Courts. RFP: RM0250.

Ramboz, B. (2000). "*Shared Parenting for Divorcing Parents*" Program: A proposal for updated presentation methods. Submitted to the Henry W. and Leslie M. Eskuiche Charitable Foundation. Total Request: \$4,873. Request for equipment.

### Honors & Awards

Utah State University Presidential Fellowship, 1998-1999.

Southern Utah University Teacher of the Year Finalist, 1997-1998.