Community Marriage Initiatives and Clergy: 
The Impact of Support and Involvement on 
Clergy's Premarital Education Practices 

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COMMUNITY MARRIAGE INITIATIVES AND CLERGY:
THE IMPACT OF SUPPORT AND INVOLVEMENT ON CLERGY’S PREMARITAL
EDUCATION PRACTICES

By

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CMI = Community Marriage Initiative

PME = Premarital Education
ABSTRACT

Community Marriage Initiatives (CMIs) are a relatively new endeavor that emerged from the marriage education movement. Their goal is to strengthen marriages and reduce divorce rates by increasing access to marriage education and relationship skills-based programs within a local geographic area. Whereas CMIs consist of a collaboration of numerous community stakeholders, church institutions and their clergy are the primary partners. The purpose of this study was to discover the extent to which a national sample of practicing clergy were aware of CMIs’ supportive efforts, their subsequent participation in CMI-sponsored training, and the perceived influence of that training on their premarital education practices. Generally, clergy were aware of the Community Marriage Initiative (CMI), and the resources offered, and reported being somewhat involved, particularly in reading emails, letters, and newsletters, and answering or returning phone calls from the CMI. These clergy also were aware of trainings offered by the CMI. However, almost half did not attend due to the lack of time and other unspecified reasons. The clergy reported generally covering the same content in their relationship education practices, and, on average, use a similar format (number of sessions, minutes per session). Further, although clergy with training report using efficacious programs more than those without training, upon further examination, there is little difference regarding the frequency of implementation compared to their non-trained counterparts. Overall, many clergy never or rarely used programs following training. These findings question the potential contribution of CMIs in improving clergy’s premarital education practices, particularly in regards to programs.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Approximately 50% of first marriages and 60% of remarriages will end in divorce (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2001). Divorce and marital discord are costly situations, often causing a negative impact on physical health (Stanley, 2001), higher rates of depression, and lower productivity at work among adults (Forthofer, Markman, Cox, Stanley, & Kessler, 1996). In addition, there are serious outcomes for children, including increased likelihood of conduct disorders, anxiety, depression, and juvenile delinquency (Stanley). In a report from Utah State University, Schramm (2003) estimated that divorce directly and indirectly costs the nation $33.3 billion per year. These staggering statistics of marital dissolution and the costs involved have prompted local, state, and federal governments along with religious institutions to strive for divorce prevention and the promotion of marital quality through Community Marriage Initiatives (CMIs).

CMIs are a relatively new endeavor that emerged from the marriage education movement, and are designed to strengthen marriages and reduce divorce rates by increasing access to marriage education and relationship skills-based programs within a local geographic area. CMIs consist of a collaboration of numerous community stakeholders, with clergy and the faith community being primary partners in these initiatives. CMIs are multiplying across the country, and some are receiving public and private funding (Doherty & Anderson, 2004).

Those who lead CMIs understand the importance of local clergy involvement and reach out to them (The Lewin Group, 2003), as clergy frequently provide marriage education and relationship skills programs to couples, particularly in preparation for marriage (Jones & Stahmann, 1994). However, the types of support, (e.g., emails, letters, phone calls, newsletters, websites, meetings) and trainings for premarital education programs and inventories offered to clergy vary greatly across initiatives, and little is known about the success of these efforts.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine awareness of CMIs supportive efforts, subsequent involvement, and the influence of CMI training on practices in premarital education among a sample of clergy. Specifically, the study sought answers to several questions:

1. Of which supportive efforts from CMIs are clergy aware? If aware of them, to what extent are clergy involved (e.g., receive and read emails, newsletters, letters; answer or return phone calls, participate in meetings or luncheons; contribute financially)?

2. To what extent are clergy aware of CMI trainings offered in the community regarding premarital education resources (inventories and programs)? To what extent do clergy attend these trainings? For those that do not attend available trainings, what are the barriers to attendance?

3. For each training that clergy attend, how frequently do clergy implement this resource in premarital education?

4. Overall, what are the practices of clergy regarding premarital education (resources used, content covered, and format)?

5. Do clergy who attend available trainings have different premarital education practices (resources, content, and format) compared with those who do not attend?

Definitions

Clergy

Clergy included persons who conduct religious worship and perform other spiritual functions in a local congregation of parishioners. Only clergy involved in Christian denominations were examined in this study. The terms clergy, pastor, and minister are used interchangeably.

Premarital Education

Premarital education is “any process designed to enhance or enrich premarital relationships leading to more satisfactory and stable marriages with the intended consequence being to prevent divorce” (Stahmann, 2000, p. 104). Premarital education occurs either before or closely following a couple’s wedding. The terms premarital
education, premarital counseling, premarital therapy, and marriage preparation are considered synonymous and used interchangeably.

**Premarital Education Practices**

This concept refers to: (1) *resources*, (2) *content*, and (3) *format* utilized by clergy in premarital education. *Resources* are programs or inventories designed to educate or inform individuals about relationship topics and prepare couples for marriage. *Content* is any topic covered within premarital education, and *format* referred to the number and length of sessions.

**Community Marriage Initiative**

A Community Marriage Initiative (CMI), also known as A Community Healthy Marriage Initiative (CHMI), is “a broad-based coalition of groups or organizations with goals to help individuals form and sustain healthy marriages, and to promote cultural change in support of healthy marriages” (National Healthy Marriage Resource Center, 2005).

**Support**

Any efforts (e.g., emails, letters, phone calls, newsletters, websites, meetings), made by leaders or staff associated with CMIs to involve clergy in the coalition or provide additional information regarding marriage education practices.

**Awareness**

Awareness is defined as whether an individual recognizes that a resource was available within the community.

**Trainings**

Trainings are any form of informational workshop or class designed to disseminate information regarding marriage education programs or inventories.

**Clergy Involvement**

Clergy involvement reflect a clergy’s response to communication or participation in events and activities provided by Community Marriage Initiatives, as measured by clergy’s self report.

**Barriers**

Barriers are any perceived hindrance that prevents or discourages training attendance.
Region

Regions are broad geographic areas, encompassing numerous states. The U.S. Census Bureau (2002a) defined four regions, which were used in this study. These regions are separated further into divisions (see Figure 3 in the Methods section).

Division

A division is a cluster of several states within a similar geographic region. The U.S. Census Bureau (2002a) identified nine divisions.

Abbreviations

- CMI stands for Community Marriage Initiative, or Community Healthy Marriage Initiative (CHMI). These terms are interchangeable.
- PME represents premarital education.

Limitations

CMIs vary in the type and number of services and resources provided. Thus, it is impossible to know which of the specific resources, trainings, and supportive efforts are available to clergy in each respective CMI. Therefore, only perceptions of resources and training availability are measured rather than their actual availability. Further, I located a total of 63 CMIs that were potential sources of participants for study. The names of 48 initiatives were obtained from the National Healthy Marriage Resource Center (http://www.healthymarriageinfo.org/), 6 were obtained by word of mouth from Community Marriage Initiative leaders, and 9 were obtained from the Administration of Children and Families’ list of both government funded and nonfunded projects across the country. Although I recognize that more initiatives probably exist within the U.S., all of the CMIs could not be included in this study, because there is no centralized database of them. Only initiatives that maintained databases with clergy information were eligible to participate, and for each initiative, only clergy with valid email addresses listed were eligible to participate. Due to these constraints, results from this study cannot be generalized to the entire population of CMIs, nor to all of the clergy involved within these CMIs.

Delimitations

I only examined premarital education, which is a form of marriage education. Marriage education, defined as “skills-based group programs for the prevention and
remediation of marital distress and marital support groups” (Larson, 2004, p. 421), is a broader term that encompasses all types of enrichment services offered to single, engaged, and married couples at various developmental stages. Because marriage education entails such a broad range of services, I chose to limit the scope of this research to premarital education.

Assumptions

Two assumptions are inherent in this research. First, I assumed that participants honestly reported their awareness of and response to CMIs and supports available. Second, because observation was not possible, clergy were assumed to report their premarital education practices accurately.

Theory of Human Ecology

Ecology is “the study of the interrelationships between organisms or life and the environment, both organic and inorganic” (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993, p. 419). One basic premise of ecological theory is that the parts and wholes are interdependent. Thus, humans are dependent on their environment for sustenance, such as air, water, and food (White & Klein, 2002). Another assumption refers to the connection among humans, namely that humans are social and, therefore, are dependent on other humans. Therefore, individuals, the environment, and other individuals all reciprocally influence each other.

One of the key values in ecological theory is survival, thus, adaptation is a necessary means of survival for plants, animals, and humans due to changing environments (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993). Human ecological theory, a branch of ecological theory, is based on the interdependence and reciprocal influences between humans (individuals, families, groups, and societies) and the environment. The term environment refers to the physical, biological, social, economic, political, and structural mechanisms that surround people. As such, the environment is a context that can create limitations, constraints, possibilities, and opportunities for individual and family development.

One of the most recognized theories of human ecology was established by Bronfenbrenner (1979). In his model, Bronfenbrenner emphasized the importance of examining human development in context. He noted that a developing person is a
dynamic being that is involved in reciprocal processes of mutual accommodation with the environment. The environment includes the immediate setting in which the person is involved, the interconnections among settings, and the larger environmental surroundings.

In regards to context, Bronfenbrenner described an ecological environment that has levels: the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystem. These ecological environments, or systems, are “conceived as set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 3). Each level reciprocally influences the other levels, as processes that occur in one context affect other related contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1992). Bronfenbrenner explained that human behavior is a result of interaction between the environment and the person; therefore, the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystem all influence and are influenced by humans as well. These systems are described more in depth in the following sections.

Microsystem

A microsystem is defined as “a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by a developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical and material features, and containing other persons with distinctive characteristics of temperament, personality, and systems of belief” (Bronfenbrenner, 1992, p. 226). A developing person is the central focus of the microsystem. Within this system the individual is surrounded by his or her immediate context of family members, friends, school, and the workplace. The microsystem includes individual development, biological sex, temperament, attitudes, and personality, all of which impact and are impacted by larger systems, namely, the meso-, exo-, and macrosystems. In the context of this study, clergy are considered to be the developing person.
Mesosystem

The microsystemic context is embedded within the larger mesosystem. Mesosystem is defined as “the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25). A mesosystem is the linkages and processes that occur between two or more settings containing the developing person (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). These linkages, or networking of sites (Hall, 1995) can be between home, work, school, friends, peers, social clubs, and organizations, (e.g., church and other religious affiliations). Therefore, one person may have numerous mesosystems, or linkages, that exist between different settings. A primary link is formed when the developing person enters a new setting for the first time. For example, when clergy begin work at a new church, a mesosystem between home and church is formed. Similarly, when a clergy enters training with a CMI, a mesosystem between church and the local CMI is created. Hall (1987) suggested that the mesosystem is valuable because of its attention on context, process, and action simultaneously.
Exosystem

The exosystem is similar to the mesosystem, as it essentially contains the same contexts, but the difference is the location of the context relative to the individual. Bronfenbrenner (1992) stated:

The exosystem encompasses the linkage and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not ordinarily contain the developing person, but in which events occur that influence processes within the immediate setting that does not contain that person. (p. 227)

In short, the exosystem includes aspects of the environment that affects the individual, but is not directly connected to the individual. Regarding the linkage and processes that take place between settings, religious denominations or communities might encourage clergy to attend premarital education classes, and this linkage indirectly affects the process that occurs between couples and clergy when premarital education is provided.

Macrosystem

The macrosystem is the largest system of the ecosystem and encompasses and influences all of the smaller subsystems. The macrosystem is an abstract system that contains the beliefs, ideology, and values of a particular culture or subculture, and it includes resources, dangers, lifestyles, opportunity structures, and patterns of social interchange that are embedded in each of these systems (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Therefore, if the macrosystem contains the micro-, meso-, and exosystems, it is logical that these beliefs, values, and ideologies exist and are carried out within these subsystems.

Person-Process-Context-Time Model of Human Development

As stated previously, Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) work reflects the impact of contextual influences on human development. In 1992, Bronfenbrenner updated his model to include explanations of individual characteristics and processes that influence development. This revised model, known as the person-process-context-time model of human development, is based on the notion that developmental processes and outcomes are a function of both characteristics of the environment and of the individual.
(Bronfenbrenner, 1992). Therefore, the *person* elements refer to behavioral and psychological characteristics of the individual, such as cognition, temperament, and personality. The concept of *process* refers to the actions, operations, or series of changes that occur both within the individual, between the individual and environment, and between the individual and others. *Context* refers to the ecosystemic climate (the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystem) in which individuals carry out these processes. In this model, Bronfenbrenner emphasized the importance of time, and he refers to it as the *chronosystem*. The chronosystem accounts for the historical time and context, because at any time, an event can alter everything that happens at each ecological level. In addition, the individual, environment, and processes that occur between the two change over time; thus, time should be considered regarding development (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993).

![Figure 2](image)

*Figure 2*

*Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) Ecological Model Applied to Clergy and Couples Within the Community*
One of the key concepts noted by Bronfenbrenner is development. He defines development as “a lasting change in the way in which a person perceives and deals with his environment” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 3). Developmental change occurs in both perception and behaviors of the developing individual. In this study, the impact of CMIs’ support and clergy’s involvement is believed to impact their development; specifically, their premarital education with couples (e.g., length and number of sessions, type of content, format).

Many of Bronfenbrenner’s hypotheses describe situations or characteristics that can increase the developmental potential of the developing person. Employing Bronfenbrenner’s (1992) concept of the person-process-context-time model, for the purpose of this study, clergy are the identified developing persons. There are two interactions being examined: (a) the processes between clergy and CMIs, and (b) the processes between clergy and the couples with whom they work. These processes create two mesosystemic relationships. Regarding context, the environment in which the clergy and CMI interacts, and the environment in which the clergy interacts with couples should be examined. Bronfenbrenner posited that development never takes place in a social vacuum; therefore, the developing person’s actions in the immediate microsystem influences and is influenced by the broader settings, such as the meso-, exo-, and macrosystems. The mesosystem and exosystem are the primary focus of this study. Specifically, the connection that exists between church and Community Marriage Initiatives are examined. For this study, clergy represent the church microsystem. Clergy have either direct or indirect contact with a CMI. When clergy are involved in both the CMI and their church, this linkage creates a mesosystem. When clergy do not participate or do not have direct contact with a CMI, an indirect linkage exists because the clergy are in the community setting and the Initiative influences the environment in which the clergy exist. This indirect linkage is an exosystem, as the events that occur in the community environment affect the developing person. Finally, time spent in interaction with CMIs (through luncheons, meetings, emails, trainings, and letters) likely vary among clergy, as well as does time spent with couples in premarital education. Regarding historical time, there have never been so many CMIs, and in the United
States there is considerable funding available for these initiatives, which might not always be the case (Doherty & Anderson, 2004). This particular historical context warrants further examination of CMIs and the involved clergy.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) offered several hypotheses that can be applied when discussing either the mesosystem or exosystem. Bronfenbrenner (1979) noted the importance of examining the relative strength of the link between two microsystems. He hypothesized the more information, people, or communication going back and forth between systems, the stronger the linkage, and, therefore, the greater likelihood of impacting the development of individuals. This proposition is the basis for this study, as several authors noted the linkages between community, church, and families (Thomas & Cornwall, 1990; Thornton, 1985).

Within some communities, CMIs exist to promote healthy relationships and do so by employing numerous activities. These activities that result from the Initiative influence all areas of the community, including clergy and churches. Because couples and families often are connected with a church or clergy, particularly when weddings occur, the support services that CMIs provide to clergy indirectly influence couples. Consequently, to understand the influence of CMIs on couples, the influence of CMIs on clergy who provide many of the direct services to couples must be examined.

**Research Questions and Hypothesis**

The purpose of this study was to assess the extent to which clergy are aware of CMIs premarital resources, clergy’s subsequent use of those resources, and the influence of involvement on their practices in premarital education. Specifically, the study addressed the following questions:

1. Of which supportive efforts from CMIs are clergy aware? If aware of them, to what extent are clergy involved (e.g., receive and read emails, newsletters, letters; answer or return phone calls, participate in meetings or luncheons; contribute financially)?

2. To what extent are clergy aware of CMI trainings offered in the community regarding premarital education resources (inventories and programs)? To what extent do clergy attend these trainings? For those that do not attend available trainings, what are the barriers to attendance?
3. For each training that clergy attend, how frequently do clergy implement this resource in premarital education?

4. Overall, what are the practices of clergy regarding premarital education (resources used, content covered, and format)?

5. Do clergy who attend available trainings have different premarital education practices (resources, content, and format) compared with those who do not attend?

Hypotheses

Because most of the data are descriptive, no hypotheses were generated for research questions 1-4. Regarding research question 5, Bronfenbrenner (1979) hypothesized that face-to-face contact has the most opportunity to influence development, and one way development is demonstrated is through behavior. Therefore, I hypothesized that clergy who attend available CMI trainings compared with those who do not will use more research-based materials, such as efficacious premarital education programs, and inventories that are research-based and recommended for premarital education. These clergy will also cover more content areas and will provide additional and longer sessions in premarital education than their counterparts.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

As stated, approximately 50% of first marriages will end in divorce, and for those
that remarry, 60% or more of these relationships end in divorce (Center for Disease
Control and Prevention, 2001). Also, earlier estimates were one out of every six adults
experiences two or more divorces (Cherlin, 1992). In a decade review, Amato (2000)
synthesized the research concerning divorce and concluded that divorced adults were
more likely to experience lower levels of psychological well-being and happiness, more
psychological distress, poorer self-concepts, and greater health problems and risk of
mortality compared with married individuals.

Over half of all divorces that occur involve children under the age of 18 (Amato,
2000), and estimates show that over one million children experience parental divorce
annually (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1999). There is a plethora of literature that
suggests that divorce has negative consequences for children. Amato’s (2001) meta-
analysis of 67 studies regarding children and divorce and discovered that children of
divorced parents scored lower on measures of academic achievement, conduct,
psychological adjustment, self-concept, and social relations compared with children of
continuously married parents.

Some researchers (see Amato, 2000, for review) suggest that some of these
negative consequences for adults and children of divorced are attributed the effect of
marital conflict prior to the divorce. Gottman and Notarius (2000) reviewed the literature
from the 1990s regarding marital distress and noted that marital distress is associated
with suppressed immune function, increases in stress-related hormones and
cardiovascular arousal. Consequently, marriage has a buffering effect against health
problems for men and women.

Surprisingly, it is estimated that 80-90% of all divorcing couples have not
consulted a therapist for their marital problems (Halford, Markman, Kline, & Stanley,
2003), which indicates a need for prevention before problems occur. There are three
types of prevention: primary prevention (focused on people who do not currently have a
problem), secondary prevention (people at risk for developing problems are targeted), and tertiary prevention (those who already have a problem are targeted to help them through the problem and prevent future occurrences) (Heller & Monahan, 1977). The ideal approach is primary prevention (Gardner & Howlett, 2000), because couples with little or no distress respond better to enrichment or therapeutic services than do those already in distress (Van Widenfelt, Markman, Guerney, Behrens, & Hosman, 1997). Most premarital education is primary prevention, although recently scholars noted a need for secondary prevention by reaching out to those individuals or couples most at risk for marital distress and divorce and other relationship problems (Halford et al.; Markman et al., 2004).

**Premarital Education**

Premarital education is “any process designed to enhance or enrich premarital relationships leading to more satisfactory and stable marriages with the intended consequence being to prevent divorce” (Stahmann, 2000, p. 104). Premarital education programs aim to help couples (a) become aware of the existing relationship strengths and weaknesses and (b) acquire and utilize new skills and resources to increase the likelihood of marital stability and marital satisfaction and prevent or decrease discord (Carroll & Doherty, 2003). Premarital education is a popular method of prevention, because many patterns in a relationship are formed before marriage (Tiesel & Olsen, 1992). For example, researchers agree that the quality of premarital communication is one of the best predictors of marital satisfaction and future outcomes for a relationship (Markman, Floyd, Stanley, & Storaasli, 1988; Markman & Hahlweg, 1993).

**History of Premarital Education**

Evidence of the first premarital prevention program dates back to 1932 at the Merrill Palmer Institute in Detroit and the Philadelphia Marriage Council was the first to implement a standardized program in 1941 (Carroll & Doherty, 2003). Clergy were among the first to implement some form of premarital services by educating couples about the meaning of marriage and marital roles. In 1962, Father Gabriel Calvo initiated the Roman Catholic Marriage Encounter Program as an effort to help couples and families communicate better with one another (Bowling, Hill, & Jencius, 2005). However, the concept of marriage preparation was not widely recognized until the 1970s.
(Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997), and during this time use of premarital programs became more common (Carroll & Doherty). In 1973, Mace and Mace organized the Association for Couples for Marriage Enrichment (ACME), designed to help enrich marriages and initiate community services to promote successful marriages (Bowling et al.). In the 1980s, premarital programs, such as PREPARE (Olsen, Fournier, & Druckman, 1986) and Catholic Pre Cana, served numerous couples, and other programs were in development (Doherty & Anderson, 2004). By the mid-1990s, a renewed interested in marriage education occurred, and the marriage education movement began. Diane Sollee founded the Coalition for Marriage, Family, and Couples Education in 1995 in an effort to promote marriage education programs. She achieved marked success, gaining national attention, media coverage, and promoting, Smart Marriages, a marriage education conference that continues today. By the turn of the century, community coalitions were formed in which mental health professionals, clergy and community leaders collaborate to promote marriage education. To date, these community coalitions continue to develop across the country (Doherty & Anderson).

**Premarital Education Programs**

Premarital education programs often are designed for nondistressed couples and aimed to help prevent future distress by providing an awareness of potential problems that may occur and the information, skills, or resources needed to prevent or improve these issues (Carroll & Doherty, 2003). There are numerous premarital education programs available. Examples include Relationship Enhancement Program (RE; Guerney, 1987), Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP; Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg, 2001; Stanley et al., 2001), Strategic Hope-Focused Enrichment (SHFE; Ripley & Worthington, 2002), Couple Communication (CC; Butler & Wampler, 1999), Relationship Education (RE; Nordling, Scuka, & Guerney, Jr., 1998), and Practical Application of Intimate Relationship Skills (PAIRS; DeMaria & Hannah, 2002).

**Content.** Most premarital education programs are geared at lowering the risk of marital discord or divorce by creating a strong marriage before it starts (Halford et al., 2003). Researchers identified several factors believed to increase the risk of divorce and marital discord, including lower level of education, early age at marriage, lower income, lower occupation, negative family-of-origin experiences, parental divorce,
previous divorce, different religious backgrounds, high levels of marital distress, communication problems, and destructive marital conflict (Carroll & Doherty, 2003; Halford, Sanders, & Behrens, 2001). Although some of these cannot be changed (e.g., income), there are some risk factors that can be lowered through skills-based training. Content areas within premarital education programs often mirror identified predictive risk factors for marriages and contain content regarding communication skills, conflict resolution, realistic expectations, and positive expressions of affection (Halford et al., 2003). Other topics frequently covered include roles in marriage, commitment, financial management, sexuality, parenting expectations, and partners' families of origin (Stahmann & Salts, 1993).

Format. Premarital education programs are offered in a variety of formats, ranging from one-day workshops, weekly meetings for 5-6 weeks, or weekend seminars, and are offered to groups of couples or to individual couples. In addition, the number and length of sessions vary across formats and programs. Interestingly, there is a dearth of research regarding the impact of these various formats on premarital education effectiveness. A notable exception is the Hahlweg, Markman, Thurmaier, Engl, and Eckert (1998) study. In their three-year, longitudinal study (N = 128), they examined the impact of program format by offering either a weekend format or six weekly sessions for about two and a half hours each. They found that the weekend format was as effective as was the six-week program in improving relationship functioning. However, no research was found that assessed the impact of length of individual sessions on program effectiveness.

Effectiveness of Premarital Education Programs

Researchers have evaluated the effectiveness of premarital education because of its popularity in the prevention of marital distress. In a recent review, Halford, Markman, Kline, and Stanley (2003) examined 12 controlled trials of programs with follow-up assessments of six months or more. Of these 12 controlled trials, 5 trials were based on PREP, 3 on Relationship Enhancement (RE), and the remaining 4 trials were based on Minnesota Couples Communication Program (MCCP), EPL (a German version of PREP) and Couple Care. Overall, Halford and colleagues found that these
programs were associated with improved couples’ communication skills and relationship satisfaction.

Stanley and Markman (1997) reported that people who had participated in premarital education in the past five years felt more confident about their future as a couple and were less likely to have thoughts about divorce than were those couples who did not participate. Nickols, Fournier, and Nickols (1986) evaluated a preparation for marriage workshop and found that couples experienced improvement in communication and their sexual relationships. Other researchers found that prevention programs for marital instability and discord produce consistent improvement in relationship functioning (Giblin, Sprenkle, & Sheehan, 1985; Hahlweg & Markman, 1988; Sullivan & Bradbury, 1997).

Carroll and Doherty (2003) argued that it is difficult to assess and compare the effectiveness of various premarital programs, as they may use different teaching methods, content, and formats, and assess effectiveness in disparate ways. For these reasons, they conducted meta-analysis of the outcome research regarding premarital programs. Although 13 experimental studies were conducted since 1971, they concluded that only 7 of these studies contained sufficient data to be included in the meta-analysis. An effect size of .8 was found, meaning that participants in these programs experienced greater relationship improvement after the program than 79% of the people who did not participate (Carroll & Doherty). Therefore, these results suggest that premarital education programs are generally effective in enhancing communication skills and relationship quality for the majority of participants, with most effects lasting up to three years. These effects might be sustained longer; yet, few longitudinal studies exist to determine such lasting effects. Notable exceptions include five longitudinal studies conducted with PREP, and three longitudinal studies conducted using RE (see Halford et al., 2003).

Although researchers (Carroll & Doherty, 2003; Halford et al., 2003) found premarital programs to be effective, Williams, Riley, Risch, and Van Dyke (1999) conducted a study to assess participants’ perceptions of the helpfulness of their premarital program. Due to the nature of this study, no comparison group was included. Over 1,200 individuals married for 1-8 years were surveyed, using a Likert-scale
measure. Seventy-five percent of respondents were Catholics, most were White (91%), in their first marriage, and well educated; therefore, generalizability is not possible. Williams and colleagues found that two-thirds of the sample perceived premarital education to be a valuable experience, although the perceived helpfulness declined with length of marriage. These results can be interpreted in two ways. First, their findings might indicate that premarital education programs are best suited to help couples with the initial transitions into marriage. Second, it might be that participants forget what was learned or emphasized in premarital education, so the value wanes over time, indicating a need for “booster sessions” over time (Williams et al).

Empirically-Supported Treatments

Jakubowski, Milne, Brunner, and Miller (2004) conducted a review of 13 empirically-supported programs and attempted to classify specific premarital programs as efficacious, possibly efficacious, and empirically untested. For a program to be considered as efficacious, the following five requirements had to be met: An empirically supported treatment (EST) must meet five requirements:

(a) at least two good between-group design experiments, or (b) a large series of single-case design experiments demonstrating efficacy, (c) experiments must be conducted with treatment manuals or equivalent clear descriptions of treatment, (d) characteristics of samples must be specified, and (e) effects must be demonstrated by at least two different investigators or teams. (Chambless & Ollendick, 2001, p. 689)

Chambless and Hollon (1998) identified three categories that treatments can fall into: efficacious (E), possibly efficacious (PE), and empirically untested (EU), and Jakubowski and colleagues (2004) used these classifications. They identified four couple education programs as efficacious: Premarital Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP; Stanley et al., 2001), Relationship Enhancement (RE; Guerney, 1987), Couple Communication Program (CC; Butler & Wampler, 1999), and Strategic Hope-Focused Enrichment (SHFE; Ripley & Worthington, 2002). Three programs were labeled as possibly efficacious because they did not meet all criteria for an efficacious program and required further replication (Couple CARE; Halford, Moore, Wilson, Farrugia, & Dyer, 2004; ACME; Dyer & Dyer, 1999; CCET; Bodenmann & Shantinath,
Six programs lacked randomized control studies and were labeled as empirically untested programs (Structured Enrichment; L’Abate, 1999; Marriage Encounter; Silverman & Urbaniak, 1983; PAIRS; Gordon & Durana, 1999; Imago; Luquet & Hannah, 1996; Traits of a Happy Couple; Halter, 1988; SYMBIS; Parrott & Parrott, 1997). The Jakubowski et al. study was foundational to premarital education research, as it highlights efficacious programs and identifies the need for increased rigor in outcomes studies for programs labeled as empirically untested.

_Criticisms of the Empirical Literature_

A primary criticism concerning premarital education research is the lack of longitudinal studies (Larson, 2004). Findings show that programs are generally effective at producing short-term (6 months to 3 years) improvements in relationships (Carroll & Doherty, 2003); yet, long-term effects of many programs remain relatively unclear. Only five published studies used longitudinal designs with follow-ups longer than 12 months, and all are based on PREP (Halford et al., 2003). The lack of longitudinal research is problematic, given that the goals of premarital education are to promote relationship satisfaction and stability and prevent divorce (Stahmann, 2000). These outcomes should be effectively measured over longer periods of time.

A second common criticism is that most studies examining the effectiveness of premarital programs are conducted with White, middle-class Americans in their first marriage (Carroll & Doherty, 2003; Williams et al., 1999), with few low-income and minorities represented (Markman et al., 2004; Stanley et al., 2001). This is a fairly recent criticism, as often it was assumed that the foundational aspects of marriage education were universal and applicable to couples from diverse backgrounds (Ooms & Wilson, 2004). Public funding that currently is being channeled into marriage education efforts for low-income and minority groups will contribute to the development, implementation, and evaluation of culturally-relevant premarital programs for these populations. Many racial or ethnically diverse low-income couples are already parents and might experience relational (e.g., fear of divorce or termination of the relationship, lack of trust) or financial constraints (e.g., need for a dependable, steady job) that hinder marriage and their participation in premarital education (Ooms & Wilson). Also, current rates of marriage for Whites are higher than those for Hispanics and even more so for
Blacks (Seefeldt & Smock, 2004). Therefore, previous research of premarital studies based only on White, middle-class, first-marriage couples cannot be generalized to racially, ethnically and socioeconomically diverse couples. As such, future studies of premarital programs should include samples reflective of ethnic, cultural, racial, and socioeconomic diversities.

**Premarital Inventories**

Assessment inventories, used alone or in conjunction with premarital education programs, are designed to identify couples’ strengths and weaknesses in various relationship areas, such as beliefs and expectations about sexuality, children and parenting, spousal roles, and religion (Larson, Newell, Topham, & Nichols, 2002). Larson and Holman (1995) conducted one of the only reviews on comprehensive premarital education questionnaires. They evaluated these inventories based on whether they were: (a) designed for assessing premarital relationships, (b) included the most critical factors predictive of marital satisfaction and stability, such as family of origin dynamics, personality issues, communication skills, social support and conventionality (Larson & Holman, 1994), (c) were easy to administer, (d) were easy to interpret, and (e) were reliable and valid. Based on these criteria, Larson and colleagues (1995) deemed three of the assessments to be the best, respectively: PREmarital Personal and Relationship Evaluation (PREPARE; Olsen et al., 1986), Facilitating Open Couple Communication Understanding and Study (FOCCUS; Markey, Micheletto, & Becker, 1985), and Premarital Inventory Profile (PMIP; Burnett & Sayers, 1988). The RELATionship Evaluation (RELATE; Holman, Busby, Doxey, Klein, & Loyer-Carlson, 1997) was added to the list of recommended inventories based on the same criteria several years later (Larson et al., 2002).

**Clergy and Church**

There are numerous estimates that clearly indicate the importance of religion and church attendance in our society. For example, approximately 95% of married couples in the United States report some form of religious affiliation (Mahoney, Pargament, Tarakeshwar, & Swank, 2001). According to a national survey with a random sample of U.S. citizens in 2004, over 34% of respondents reported attending a religious service at least once a month, with nearly 27% attending religious services weekly (The
Association of Religion Data Archives [ARDA], 2006). Further, in 2004, the results of the General Social Survey (ARDA, 2006) showed that 59% of the population reported praying at least once a day, and over 31% claimed to pray more than once a day. These substantial rates of church attendance and religious affiliation or behaviors indicate that engaged and married couples have numerous opportunities to form and sustain a connection with both the church and clergy prior to attending premarital education.

Based on Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological approach, Connard and Novick (1996) stated that community settings can either promote or hinder healthy family functioning. They explained that families develop strong, weak, or no connections to community settings. Such connections are important because they link families to tangible and intangible resources in the community. Similarly, church attendance and participation in church activities serves as a connection to spiritual, emotional, and social resources provided within the church context.

Numerous studies note the positive impact of connection with church and religion. Religion and church attendance provide a sense of community and social support (Miller, 2000), as well as opportunities for social activities (Mahoney et al., 2001) through sermons, Sunday school classes, small groups, or retreats. For example, Robinson and Blanton (1993) noted that religious faith was reported as an important factor among couples married for over 30 years. Participants also noted the emotional, social, and spiritual support that church offered through friendship and participation in church activities. Other research shows that compared to non-religious people, those who are religious are more likely to have better physical and mental health (Miller) and better marital adjustment and higher levels of marital commitment (Wiggins Frame, 2000). Amato and Rogers (1997) conducted a longitudinal study starting in 1980 of 1,189 married persons and found that regular church attendees experienced lower incidence of marital problems. In addition, church attendance was negatively associated with jealousy, infidelity, and drinking and drug use. Therefore, it appears that religion, church attendance and related activities have a positive effect on family life.

The role of church is important for many racial and ethnic groups as well, but it is of particular importance for African Americans (Taylor, Chatters, Jayakody, & Levin,
For countless decades, churches and religious organizations have been highly trusted and respected, occupying a central position in Black communities (Taylor, Ellison, Chatters, Levin, & Lincoln, 2000). Data from the National Survey of Black Americans in 1992 indicated that 77% of African Americans considered church to be very important, and nearly 70% were members of a church (Billingsley, 1992). African American communities traditionally have received various types of human services within the context of religious organizations, such as substance abuse assistance, health screenings, education, and other physical and mental health services (Blank, Mahmood, Fox, & Guterbock, 2002; Taylor et al.). Importantly, scholars (Taylor et al.) note that the role of the minister is crucial to the implementation of these church-based services and programs.

Connection with Clergy

The U.S. Census Bureau (2002b) defines clergy as one who conducts religious worship, performs other spiritual functions associated with beliefs and practices of religious faith or denomination, and provides spiritual and moral guidance and assistance to members. For religious families, clergy often are an integral part of many major life transitions, such as births, funerals, weddings, and baptisms (Miller, 2000). Many people also turn to clergy for counseling with personal problems, such as substance abuse, depression, marital and family conflict, adolescent pregnancy, and legal issues (Mollica, Streets, Boscarino, & Redlich, 1986; Taylor et al., 2000). In fact, researchers (Glenn et al., 2002; Mollica, et al.) found that clergy most often helped with marriage, family, and psychological issues.

Some parishioners are more likely to use the services of clergy more than doctors or mental health practitioners (Taylor et al., 2000; Veroff, Kulka, & Douvan, 1981). In fact, often ministers are the first, and perhaps only, professionals encountered by some individuals seeking mental or physical help (Taylor et al.). This could be due to the expense of seeking outside treatment from mental health or other professionals, as services provided by clergy typically are free. Another explanation might be that parishioners are more trusting of clergy compared with other professionals or mental health counselors, due to more rapport from a long-standing relationship.
Although no research could be found regarding the impact of existing rapport between clergy and parishioners on premarital education and other services provided, there is related research exploring the importance and impact of rapport in therapeutic and educational settings. For example, in a study of drug abuse treatment and outcomes (Joe, Simpson, Dansereau, & Rowan-Szal, 2001), rapport was associated with treatment outcomes and satisfaction with treatment. Specifically, lower levels of rapport during treatment predicted worse treatment outcomes. In another study (Benson, Cohen, & Buskist, 2005), rapport among teachers and students was positively associated with students’ enjoyment of the subject matter and the teacher. A similar study demonstrated that increased rapport among teachers and students was associated with better school performance in elementary school children (Feldman & Sullivan, 1971). Taken together, these studies clearly indicate the importance of rapport in various settings. Therefore, one can extend these findings and suggest that rapport is important in the context of premarital education as well. Interestingly, participants in two studies of premarital programs rated clergy as the most helpful providers compared with other providers (Halford et al., 2003; Williams et al., 1999). One explanation of this finding is the presence of an existing relationship or established rapport between the couple and pastor (Martin, Garske, & Davis, 2000; Taylor et al., 2000).

**Premarital Education and Clergy**

Estimates suggest that about 75% of first marriages and 33% of second marriages occur in a church or synagogue (Stanley et al., 2001). Hart (2003) reported that almost 86% of all weddings occur in church settings. Due to the strong link between family and church and the settings in which weddings occur, clergy provide the majority of premarital education to couples (Jones & Stahmann, 1994) and are considered pioneers of the premarital counseling field (Schumm & Denton, 1980).

Experts (Stanley, Markman, St. Peters, & Leber, 1995) suggest that clergy are in the most opportune position to facilitate premarital education as a method for prevention against marital discord and divorce. Faith-based organizations are ideally positioned for the dissemination of premarital services in three ways: (a) educating couples with skills training, (b) enhancing awareness and support within their religious organization, and (c) promoting pro-marriage positions and actions in their local area (Silliman, 2003).
Unfortunately, it is estimated that less than half of all religious organizations provide premarital services (Barlow, 1999), and little is known about the services that are provided (Jones & Stahmann, 1994). Most Protestant pastors insist on premarital counseling or education before the pastor will perform weddings; the Catholic church often uses a mentoring approach to help couples prepare for marriage (Stanley et al., 1995); and other denominations have implemented group premarital counseling or premarital Sunday School classes to prepare couples for marriage (Barlow, 1999). Some religious denominations require or encourage clergy to provide some form of premarital education for engaged couples, and many denominations fail to provide guidelines for clergy who perform these services, such as an outline of issues to be discussed or the number and duration of sessions (Barlow). Clergy often use individual discretion regarding the content and format of premarital education, often resulting in inconsistency in program format and delivery (Barlow). The content of programs provided by clergy is rarely documented, and the effects of most programs remain unevaluated (Halford, 1999).

Over the past several decades, little research was conducted regarding clergy practices. In the 1970s and 1980s, many universities and seminaries did not offer or require clergy to take premarital education or counseling courses (Schumm & Denton, 1979; Worthington, Jr., 1986). Givens (1976) surveyed 135 Church of Christ clergy regarding their attitudes and practices of counseling. Although it appears that a large percentage of clergy (70.3%) placed a high value on the courses they had taken, approximately 69% of clergy participated in only 1-3 classes, demonstrating that clergy receive fairly little training in counseling. Therefore, it is of little surprise that Worthington (1986) reviewed the literature regarding clergy's counseling practices and noted that clergy often feel ill-prepared for their counseling responsibilities and lack confidence in their counseling abilities. Lowe (1986) found that clergy acknowledged their need for additional training in counseling. In 1986, Orthner conducted a survey of United Methodist ministers and discovered that over 60% of clergy reported that personal experience was their primary source of knowledge for counseling sessions.

Jones and Stahmann (1994) conducted a survey with Protestant ministers to examine clergy beliefs, preparation, and practices in premarital education. From the
population of 187,000 clergy from Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, and United Church of Christ denominations, 250 clergy from each denomination were randomly selected to participate, and 231 surveys were returned and used in the analysis. These clergy were from 44 states, from all four denominations, with an average of 18 years in ministry and 17 years of experience in providing premarital education. On average, clergy reported performing 8 weddings per year. Ninety-four percent of the clergy believed that premarital education should be required for all couples, but only 31% reported that their religious denomination required them to provide premarital education to all engaged couples. Nearly 39% indicated taking a course in premarital education, and almost 60% reported receiving a section of premarital education within an academic course. Unfortunately, Jones and Stahmann did not assess the format or the content clergy covered in the premarital education they provided, or the effect of their training on their practices of premarital education.

Sullivan (2000) revisited the topic of clergy’s training in premarital education by surveying a convenience sample of Californian clergy from Christian churches. These 62 clergy were primarily affiliated with Baptist, Lutheran, Charismatic, Independent, and Nazarene denominations. The clergy’s average number of years providing premarital education was 17 years. Similar to Orthner’s (1986) study, 68% of clergy reported that personal experience was their primary source of knowledge for premarital education.

Wilmoth (2005) published the most recent research regarding the practices of clergy in marriage preparation in Oklahoma. In a sample of 424 clergy, he found that they question their effectiveness as premarital education providers and are generally open to receiving additional training regarding premarital education. The two prominent barriers they noted for providing premarital education were insufficient time and church finances. He also found that many clergy do not know what premarital education resources and curriculum exist (e.g., programs, inventories, books, and videos). Although this study was limited to clergy in Oklahoma, the findings suggest that additional methods are needed to increase clergy’s awareness and participation in premarital education training.

Some clergy might not have the resources or desire to acquire training and provide premarital education; therefore, increased collaboration with community mental
health providers might be a viable option to encourage couples’ attendance in premarital education. Halford and colleagues (2003) explained that collaboration can occur in two ways. First, mental health providers can act as consultants to clergy, providing them with relationship education training and support, as numerous clergy report a need for training and counseling skills (see Weaver, 1995, for review). Second, some researchers found that frequent church attendees report being seven times more likely to seek assistance from clergy (Privette, Quackenbos, & Bundrick, 1994), and, yet, clergy often feel unprepared to help (Orthner, 1986; Weaver, 1995). Therefore, clergy who feel unprepared could provide referrals to other providers for premarital or other services when necessary. Taken together, this research suggests the need for greater partnership among community professionals.

**Training for Clergy**

Compared to previous decades, training in empirically-based programs is more accessible to both practitioners and clergy, although little research exists regarding the extent to which clergy use the information taken from training in premarital education with couples (Markman et al., 2004; Stanley et al., 2001). In addition, few faith-based marriage education programs have been empirically evaluated (Stanley, 2001), which calls into question the effectiveness of some services being provided by clergy. These obstacles necessitate the use of empirically based, effective programs that can be easily administered by clergy or lay leaders. The developers and researchers of the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) are on the forefront of providing training and support to clergy (Markman et al., 2004).

The effectiveness of program delivery of PREP in religious settings was examined in four studies (Laurenceau, Stanley, Olmos-Gallo, Baucom, & Markman, 2004; Markman et al., 2004; Stanley et al., 2001; Stanley, et al., 2005). Stanley and colleagues (2001) recruited religious organizations in Denver, CO, to participate ($N = 105$), representing several denominations, including Baptist, Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, and others. Using cluster randomization, churches were randomly assigned into three groups: (a) PREP delivered by trained religious leaders (RO PREP), (b) PREP delivered by someone in the University of Denver team (DU PREP), and (c) naturally occurring premarital intervention services. A total of 138
couples chose to participate and received premarital education through their respective clergy. Couples receiving PREP showed clear advantages in relationship functioning compared to couples receiving traditional, naturally occurring services. In addition, there were no differences between the DU PREP group and the RO PREP group, which highlights the competence of clergy and lay leaders to effectively deliver empirically supported premarital programs.

Markman and colleagues (2004) conducted a similar study, training 27 clergy and lay leaders from religious organizations to deliver PREP. The researchers conducted follow-ups for five years and found that over 80% of clergy members reported that they continued to use all or parts of the PREP program, although most chose to use only part of the program rather than the full program. The researchers speculated that parts of the program were omitted possibly because of time constraints or a desire to incorporate spiritual material and discard other materials considered less salient. Markman and colleagues (2004) expressed concerns of decreased program effectiveness as a result of using only part of the PREP program; yet, this hypothesis was not tested. Although Markman and colleagues had a relatively small sample and replication is needed, their results suggest that community leaders can be trained effectively to use programs and continue to use the programs over time.

Laurenceau and colleagues (2004) conducted a community-based trial comparing two versions of PREP (PREP delivered by trained religious leaders and PREP delivered by someone in the University of Denver team) and naturally occurring premarital intervention services. A total of 217 couples participated and were exposed to one of the three treatments. After a pretest, posttest, and one-year follow-up, the results showed that relationship functioning outcomes for couples exposed to either versions of PREP were better compared with couples who experienced naturally occurring premarital intervention services.

A similar study was conducted with PREP to investigate dissemination of the program with the Army (Stanley et al., 2005). Chaplains provided PREP to two samples of couples ($N = 380$ couples) in which one partner was on active duty. These samples were more ethnically and racially diverse and of lower socioeconomic status than most samples found in the premarital research literature, with more than 35% of the samples
comprised of African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans, and the modal annual income being $20,000-$30,000 and $5000 for males and females, respectively. After a one-month follow-up assessment, Stanley and colleagues found that men and women in both samples, regardless of ethnic or racial group or income, experienced a significant improvement in relationship satisfaction and other areas of relationship functioning. However, results should be interpreted with caution due to the relatively short time between intervention and assessment. However, this study is noteworthy because of the diversity of the couples represented and the naturalistic setting compared to the university setting. Although additional follow-ups are needed, results from these studies suggest that clergy recognize the value of an empirically based program for premarital services. They also suggest that clergy can be trained to use empirically-based programs and will continue using these premarital programs over time.

Strengths of the Current Literature

As Laurenceau and colleagues (2004) noted, most prevention programs delivered in the community have not been thoroughly evaluated. Therefore, the primary strength of this body of literature is that it provides information regarding the effectiveness of marriage education programs in a real-world context, in which nearly all program implementation occurs. These studies demonstrate that marriage education programs can still be effective in an environment that lacks scientific rigor and control.

Scholars note that there is little to no research regarding how research based services can be effectively disseminated into the community (Muehrer, Moscicki, & Koretz, 1993). Marriage education field studies such as those reported here are significant as they help us identify barriers of both implementation in the community and of studying the effectiveness of these programs once utilized in these contexts. This information can inform future research studies and help realize the ultimate goal of making marriage education more accessible.

Weaknesses of the Current Literature

The dissemination of empirically-based programs to religious organizations is in its early stages, and there are several weaknesses within this body of literature. First, there is a lack of theory driven research, as only one study used a theoretically sound
foundation to inform the research questions and hypotheses (Markman et al., 2004). Research and theory should be reciprocally related, as one informs and is refined by the other (White & Klein, 2002). Future research should be grounded theoretically.

Secondly, the results are based primarily on convenience samples, which raises issues of self-selection bias. Some researchers argue that convenience samples of couples participating in marriage education may represent those with greater motivation and relationship commitment compared to the overall population (Laurenceau et al., 2004). Others argue that the convenience samples frequently used represent specific groups that are not reflective of the greater population of couples seeking marriage education. However, given that this dissemination research is exploratory and in its early phases, generalizability to the population may not be essential, so, convenience samples are more acceptable (Sprenkle & Piercy, 2005).

Thirdly, numerous researchers advocate for more diverse samples in marriage education studies, as most samples consist of Caucasian, middle-class couples (Carroll & Doherty, 2003; Jakubowski et al., 2004). Stanley and colleagues (2005) used a substantially racial and ethnically diverse sample. Further, they involved a large sample of couples of low socioeconomic status, which is a population often underrepresented in marriage education research (Stanley et al.). Although this study demonstrates a greater range of sample characteristics, increased diversity of participants is still needed in future research.

**Community Marriage Initiatives**

Community Marriage Initiatives are designed to strengthen marriages and reduce divorce rates by increasing access to marriage education and relationship skills programs within a local geographic area. CMI’s consist of a collaboration of numerous community stakeholders, with clergy and the faith community being primary partners in the movement. Faith-based groups are obvious partners for CMI’s because of their complementary goals and investment in fostering healthy relationships and marriages (The Lewin Group, 2003). CMI’s employ in numerous activities to promote healthy marriage and relationships, including websites, media campaigns, marriage education classes, and marriage education training for clergy and lay leaders.
History of Community Marriage Initiatives

During the past two decades of the marriage movement, community coalitions formed, in which mental health professionals, clergy and community leaders collaborated to promote marriage education (Doherty & Anderson, 2004). These community coalitions, also referred to as Community Marriage Initiatives, continue to spread across the country. Some of the first signs of community-based marriage initiatives began in the mid-1990s with Michael McManus’ promotion of community marriage policies (CMPs; McManus, 1995)—a policy that groups of clergy within a local geographic area sign, agreeing not to perform any weddings unless the couple completed premarital education (Doherty & Anderson). Community Marriage Policies, also referred to as Community Marriage Covenants or Agreements, became popular over the past decade. To date, it is estimated that clergy in over 200 communities have signed a CMP (Michael McManus, personal communication, October 17, 2006). At times, CMPs serve as the springboard for launching a CMI, as it brings clergy together and solidifies clergy’s commitment to provide premarital education.

Currently, CMI’s are multiplying across the country. It is estimated that hundreds of CMIs exist or are being developed, some of which are receiving financial support from state or federal governments (Birch, Weed, & Olson, 2004; Doherty & Anderson, 2004). As a result, leaders within this field note the difficulty in knowing precisely how many initiatives exist and what services are being provided (Bill Coffin, personal communication, November 22, 2006; Macomber, Murray, & Stagner, 2005). Further, although CMIs are multiplying, they are not equally distributed based on population; therefore, many areas of the country are substantially lacking CMIs, whereas others have numerous CMIs in the region. (See Appendix A, for review)

Variability Among Initiatives

Although one of the goals of CMIs is to provide marriage education services to the community in efforts to reduce divorce and relationship discord, the integration within the community, staffing, and types and number of services vary greatly across initiatives (Macomber et al., 2005). Some programs have an established history and rapport and are integrated well within the community, whereas others are relatively new,
more self-contained, and have minimal collaboration with other community agencies and activities. The staff of CMIs varies greatly as well. The leaders of some initiatives are laypersons within the community with an interest in promoting marriage, and some are ministerial, family life educators, or mental health professionals. The services provided vary greatly. Some focus only on marriage preparation, and others focus on an entire gamut of activities, such as mate selection information for students in high school, services and information for singles, marriage enrichment, services for couples in crisis, and parenting.

As reported by the leaders of these initiatives, marriage preparation is promoted by numerous CMIs. However, the curriculum used within each initiative varies extensively. Some use standardized premarital education programs, such as PREP, Couple Communication, or Relationship Enhancement, and others use portions of one or more programs (Macomber et al., 2005), or they create a new program for marriage preparation. Some use inventories, such as FOCCUS, PREPARE, or RELATE, or a combination of inventories and programs. Within some CMIs, use of marriage mentors is popular, in which older married couples serve as models for newly married or engaged couples.

There are several reasons that such diversity of services and implementation exists within CMIs. Some of this variation is a result of funding, as some CMIs have accrued private funding, whereas others have federal grants or public funding, and some operate with limited or no external financial support. Another reason for this variation is the number of stakeholders involved. Some of these initiatives have one person heading the organization but minimal support from other community leaders. Others have multiple stakeholders involved, including business leaders, government officials, clergy, and mental health professionals. Consequently, greater networking and referrals are possible within the latter initiative because of the diversity of services provided by each sector. In addition, CMIs vary based on their community context, and the services provided are often based on local couples and families’ needs (Macomber et al., 2005).
Research about CMIs

Although some initial data suggests that CMIs are effective (Birch et al., 2004), to date, there is a great need for research about CMIs. In a preliminary search for such research, I found 30 websites of CMIs. The mission statement and goals were posted on many of these web pages, and no CMI provided any information regarding the effectiveness of their efforts of premarital education or, more broadly, marriage education.

As noted previously, many CMIs include a community marriage policy (CMP), and Birch and colleagues (2004) conducted one of the first evaluations of CMPs in 122 locations. The researchers compared these 122 counties with other comparison counties from the same state, with similar divorce rates and similar population. They discovered that divorce rates decreased by more than 2% per year in counties that had a CMP compared with those counties that did not. One limitation of the study was the inability to contact many of the leaders who originally organized the CMP; therefore, information about how the CMP was implemented and how many people were involved was not provided. The lack of this information prevents scholars and professionals from understanding and identifying the key processes of implementation that impacts the noted outcome; consequently, replication is needed.

Two initiatives, the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative (www.okmarriage.org), and Families Northwest (www.familiesnorthwest.org), conducted baseline surveys of their respective states. As part of the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative, the purpose of the baseline survey \((N = 2,323)\) was to understand Oklahomans’ attitudes and practices about marriage, divorce, and relationship-related issues (Johnson et al., 2002). They discovered that 58% of respondents were aware of the efforts by churches and religious communities to strengthen marriages and reduce divorces compared to only 18% of respondents that were aware of efforts only made by state agencies. This finding highlights the importance of utilizing the faith-based community in the delivery of services and the promotion of premarital education.

In 1997, as part of the initiative, Families Northwest published the Washington Marriage Report, a baseline survey about Washington residents’ views of marriage and divorce. In this survey, participants were asked the question, “Besides married couples
themselves, which of these (churches, schools, government, therapists, extended family, media, other) can do the most to promote strong, healthy marriages?” The two most frequently noted responses were extended family and churches. Specifically, 35% percent of respondents said extended family and 33% said churches. This finding underscores where individuals often look to find support for maintaining strong marriages.

I believe that there are several potential reasons why research is lacking regarding CMIs: (a) new initiatives are working on implementation rather than evaluation; (b) variability of implementation across initiatives makes broad based evaluations increasingly complex (Doherty & Anderson, 2004); (c) some programs are led by leaders that do not value effectiveness research; and (d) initiatives lack funding to conduct sound research on effectiveness. Although summative evaluations measuring program outcomes might not be feasible for new or ongoing initiatives, formative evaluations, designed to provide information for program improvement, could be used to examine how well the program is being implemented within the community and what needs to change to improve effectiveness (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2004). Given that many of these initiatives receive public or private funding, it is imperative that funds are channeled to the sources, people, and activities that have the potential to be most productive. Because clergy are recognized as a priority group to be trained and provide services to couples (The Lewin Group, 2003), CMI leaders and government officials need to know what impact CMI supportive efforts and trainings have on their key providers. This information is vital to determine whether clergy and lay leaders are attending the trainings, being effectively trained, and disseminating their new knowledge to couples. This distal outcome contributes to the greater goal of ensuring that couples receive the necessary resources, training, and information to maintain healthy relationships.

Clergy and Community Marriage Initiatives

Those in leadership of CMIs understand the importance of local clergy involvement. Clergy have established rapport within the community, frequent contact with engaged couples, and can communicate the importance of marriage and marriage education through the dissemination of newsletters, announcements, and bulletins at
religious services (The Lewin Group, 2003). For these reasons, leaders in CMIs reach out to clergy and seek their involvement in the initiative. They often add these clergy to their databases, send emails, letters, and newsletters, make phone calls, and encourage participation in meetings, luncheons, and trainings regarding premarital education. However, these types of support offered to clergy vary greatly across initiatives and little is known about the success of these efforts. Therefore, I evaluated the impact of CMIs’ support of clergy and clergy’s participation in CMIs on clergy’s practices in premarital education.

**Summary**

In sum, given the negative outcomes of divorce and marital discord, there is an urgency for those in the field of marriage and family to implement what is already known about preventive efforts. Further, it is imperative that researchers understand the contexts in which marriage education can be effectively and efficiently implemented into community settings, and “how to get these interventions into the hands of people who can put them to use” (Markman et al., 2004, p. 504). Community Marriage Initiatives and their work with clergy puts us one step closer to this goal.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The staggering statistics of marital dissolution and the costs involved have prompted local, state, and federal governments along with religious institutions to strive for divorce prevention and the promotion of marital quality through Community Marriage Initiatives (CMIs). CMIs are a relatively new endeavor that emerged from the marriage education movement, designed to strengthen marriages and reduce divorce rates by increasing access to marriage education and relationship skills-based programs within a local geographic area. CMIs consist of a collaboration of numerous community stakeholders, with clergy and the faith community being primary partners in these initiatives. CMIs are multiplying across the country, and some are receiving public and private funding (Doherty & Anderson, 2004).

Those who lead CMIs understand the importance of local clergy involvement and reach out to them, as clergy frequently provide marriage education and relationship skills programs to couples, particularly in preparation for marriage. However, the types of support (e.g., emails, letters, phone calls, newsletters, meetings) and trainings for premarital education programs and inventories offered to clergy vary greatly across initiatives, and little is known about the success of these efforts.

The purpose of this study was to examine awareness of CMIs supportive efforts, subsequent involvement, and the influence of CMI training on practices in premarital education among a sample of clergy. More specifically, the purpose was to (a) describe the extent to which clergy were aware of the supportive efforts of CMIs, (b) understand the extent to which clergy were involved in CMIs, (c) describe the extent to which clergy were aware of trainings offered in the community regarding premarital education resources, (d) describe the extent to which clergy attended trainings offered in the local area, (e) identify barriers for training attendance, (f) describe the extent to which clergy report implementation of the resources gathered from trainings into their practice of premarital education with couples, (g) describe clergy’s premarital education practices
(resources, content, and format), and (h) examine the impact of clergy’s training attendance on premarital education practices (resources, content, and format).

**Instrument Development**

Because no studies were found regarding clergy involvement in CMI, I created a survey (see Appendix B). The questions asked about awareness and participation in available CMI resources, awareness and participation in premarital education trainings, training attendance barriers, practices regarding premarital education, and demographic information.

Premarital education practices were assessed by asking about format, resources, and content. Format referred to the number of sessions provided to couples and the number of minutes per session. Resources were the programs or inventories used in premarital education, and content included the various topics addressed with couples in premarital education. A list of numerous resources was obtained from Wilmoth (2005) and used with permission (see Appendix C). As a result of my conversations with CMI leaders about available resources, some additional programs and inventories were added to this list. Information regarding premarital education content also was taken from Wilmoth’s (2005) study, and no adaptations were made.

To explore face validity, the survey was distributed to three CMI leaders and one expert in the marriage education field. They were asked to assess whether the questions presented in the survey adequately represented the concepts being measured. After their input was obtained, the instrument was adapted as needed, and a pilot test was conducted with three local clergy from various Christian denominations to ensure that items were comprehensible. Again, the instrument was adapted as needed to reflect the questions or concerns of these clergy.

**Measures**

- **Research Question 1**: Of which supportive efforts from CMI are clergy aware? If aware of them, to what extent are clergy involved (e.g., received and read emails, letters, and newsletters, answered or returned phone calls, and participated in meetings or luncheons)?
Variables

Supportive efforts were any efforts (e.g., emails, letters, phone calls, newsletters, meetings), made by leaders or staff associated with CMI to involve clergy in the coalition or provide additional information regarding marriage education practices. Awareness was defined as whether an individual recognizes that a resource is available within the community. Clergy involvement was defined as a clergy’s response to communication or participation in events and activities provided by CMI, as measured by clergy self report.

Operational Definitions

A series of items asked about supportive efforts, awareness, and clergy involvement. Questions regarding awareness and involvement for each supportive effort were combined. For example, participants were asked to indicate of which forms of support they were aware, and how frequently they responded to these efforts. If they were not aware that the service or opportunity was available in their local geographic area, they were instructed to select Not Aware. If they were aware of the supportive effort (e.g., emails, letters, newsletters, phone calls, meetings, financial contributions), respondents were asked to report the frequency of involvement on a 5-point Likert-scale where responses ranged from 1 (never) to 5 (always) (see question 5 in Appendix B).

- Research Question 2: Are clergy aware of CMI trainings offered in the community regarding premarital education resources (inventories and programs)? If so, to what extent do clergy attend these trainings?

Variables

Trainings were defined as any form of informational workshop or class designed to disseminate information regarding marriage education programs or inventories. Resources referred to programs or inventories designed to educate or inform individuals about relationship topics and prepare couples for marriage.

Operational definitions

To assess their awareness and involvement in training and resources, participants were asked to report both awareness and level of involvement in the local trainings. If they were not aware of training opportunities available in their local geographic area, they were instructed to select Not Aware. If they were aware of
trainings, respondents reported the programs and inventories for which training was available, and whether they attended (see questions 7 and 9 in Appendix B).

- **Research Question 3**: For each training that clergy attend, how frequently do clergy implement this resource in premarital education? For those that do not attend available trainings, what are the barriers for attendance?

**Variables**

Premarital education was defined as “any process designed to enhance or enrich premarital relationships leading to more satisfactory and stable marriages with the intended consequence being to prevent divorce” (Stahmann, 2000, p. 104). Premarital education occurs either before or closely following a couple’s wedding. Barriers were defined as any perceived hindrance that prevents or discourages training attendance.

**Operational definitions**

Clergy were asked if they attended any of the trainings regarding premarital education programs or inventories offered by their local CMI. Participants responded by clicking yes or no. If the response was yes, then participants viewed a list of various premarital education programs and inventories and indicated all the trainings attended by checking the corresponding box. Next, these same items were provided, and participants were asked to indicate the frequency of use of the resource when working with couples during premarital education. Responses ranged from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Those who reported that they did not attend any of the available trainings were given a list of 11 barriers and asked to check any reason that hindered or prevented them from attending the available trainings. Sample choices were: “The material was not compatible with my belief system,” “I don’t have enough time to participate,” and, “The location was not convenient.”

- **Research Question 4**: Overall, what are the premarital education practices of clergy (resources used, content covered, and format)?

**Variables**

Premarital education practices referred to: (1) resources, (2) content, and (3) format utilized by clergy in premarital education. Resources were programs or inventories designed to educate or inform individuals about relationship topics and
prepare couples for marriage. *Content* was any topic covered within premarital education, and *format* referred to the number and length of sessions.

**Operational definitions**

Regarding resources, participants were provided a list of programs and inventories and asked to report the frequency of use on a 5-point Likert scale of ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). Regarding content, participants viewed a list of 19 topics commonly addressed in premarital education and were asked to indicate all of the areas they discuss with couples in premarital education. Examples of topics included: expectations, role perceptions, personality, communication, and conflict resolution (see Appendix B, question 25, for further detail). To inquire about the format clergy use in premarital education, participants were asked to respond to two open-ended questions: “On average, how many sessions do you have with couples?” and, “On average, how many minutes are your sessions?”

- **Research Question 5:** Do clergy who attend available trainings have different premarital education practices (resources, content, and format) compared with those who do not attend?

**Variables**

*Premarital education practices* refers to: (1) *resources*, (2) *content*, and (3) *format* utilized by clergy in premarital education. *Resources* refer to programs or inventories designed to educate or inform individuals about relationship topics and prepare couples for marriage. *Content* refers to any topic covered within premarital education, and *format* refers to the number and length of sessions.

**Operational definitions**

Clergy were asked if they attended any of the trainings regarding premarital education programs or inventories offered by their local CMI. Participants responded by clicking *yes* or *no*.

Questions of demographic information were also included. For example, respondents were asked about their age, sex, race, income, years of experience as a clergy, years of experience providing premarital education, and hours worked per week.
Procedure

A total of 63 initiatives from across the U.S. were contacted. The names of 48 initiatives were obtained from the National Healthy Marriage Resource Center (http://www.healthymarriageinfo.org/). Contact information for 6 other initiatives was obtained by word of mouth from CMI leaders. The names of 9 other initiatives were obtained through a list provided by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF, 2006). Although more initiatives probably exist, the lack of a centralized database of initiatives means the size of the population of clergy involved in CMIs is not known, and no sampling frame could be established.

The 63 initiatives (see Appendix A for the list) were divided into four regions and nine divisions, as established by the U.S. Census Bureau (2002a) and shown in Figure 3. For the data to be reflective of every division, I attempted to achieve at least 50% representation from each division for the sample. Attempts were made to contact the leaders of the 63 CMIs to request information about their initiative and obtain agreement to participate in the study. Leaders from 8 CMIs were unable to be contacted due to invalid email addresses and phone numbers. After multiple attempts, 7 CMI leaders could not be reached and were excluded, and 12 initiatives were excluded because there was no database with clergy contact information available. Of the remaining 36 CMIs, 35 leaders agreed to participate, and 50% or more representation was achieved from each division. See Appendix D for a graphical representation of all CMIs by region and division.

Prior to data collection, these 35 leaders were contacted again to explain the data collection procedure. Unfortunately, due to staff turnover, database or technology problems, time constraints, and lack of returned phone calls or emails, 10 CMIs did not participate when data collection began, and 3 additional CMIs were deemed ineligible because they did not have access to clergy information. As a result, 50% representation from each division was no longer possible. This was particularly a problem for divisions 7 and 8, as initially there were only one or two initiatives identified. However, a total of 22 CMIs chose to participate, and at least 50% participation from each region was obtained. (A detailed map of participation based on region is available in Appendix E.)
CMIs varied regarding how the database of clergy contact information was established and maintained. Some CMIs automatically registered all the clergy in the area and subsequently solicit involvement. However, most CMIs did not obtain contact information until clergy pursued involvement by verbally contacting the CMI or attending a conference, meeting, or luncheon hosted by the CMI. Other CMIs advertise their services, and clergy voluntarily sign up.

Contact information for approximately 13,868 clergy from various religious denominations was available from the 22 CMIs. For each CMI database, only clergy with email addresses listed were eligible for inclusion, which reduced the number of potential participants to an estimated 4,717 clergy.

Figure 3

*United States Regions and Divisions, as identified by the U.S. Census Bureau (2000)*
Table 1

Community Marriage Initiative Participation by Region and Division

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Number of initiatives listed</th>
<th>Number of initiatives excluded</th>
<th>Number of eligible initiatives</th>
<th>Number of initiatives NOT participating</th>
<th>Number of participating initiatives</th>
<th>Divisional participation based on eligible initiatives (Percent)</th>
<th>Regional participation based on eligible initiatives* (Percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>63</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To distribute the survey and collect data, an Internet based survey program, Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com), was used. The data collection process was informed by Dillman’s (2000) research regarding Internet surveys. To receive an optimal response rate, he suggests five contacts be made with the participant: one prenotice letter, a letter that includes the survey, and three reminders. Based on his suggestions, the data collection procedure was as follows (see Appendix F for Letter of Approval by Institutional Review Board):

1) I attempted to contact all of the CMI leaders who agreed to participate via email and/or phone to inform them of the process. I requested the leaders to
add my email address to their database, which allowed me to monitor when each email from the CMI was sent to respective clergy. I also inquired about how many clergy were in their database, and how many of the clergy had available email addresses.

2) I constructed an email (see Appendix G for a copy of all email communications) that contained information about the purpose of the study and informed clergy that a survey would be forthcoming. This email was sent to all the participating CMI leaders. Within a few days, the CMI leaders forwarded this information via email to all clergy in their databases. Because my email address was included, I received a copy of each email sent, and recorded this information. I also asked leaders to inform me of the number of emails designated as undeliverable by the Internet servers, as this would decrease the number of clergy who received the survey and impact the calculation of the response rate. Any leader who did not send the email during the time specified received a phone call and/or an email from me as a reminder.

3) One week later, I sent the leaders another email to forward to clergy, which included additional information about the study and a link to complete the survey.

4) One week later, I sent the leaders a follow-up email to forward to clergy and remind them to complete the survey.

5) One week later, I emailed the leaders with another follow-up reminder email for clergy to complete the survey. The CMI leaders forwarded this information to their clergy.

6) One week later, I emailed the leaders the last request for clergy to complete the survey. The CMI leaders emailed this information to the clergy on their database.
A total of 184 emails sent by CMI leaders were designated as undeliverable, which reduced the number of eligible participants to approximately 4,533. Unfortunately, 8 of the 22 CMI leaders failed to report how many emails the Internet servers designated as undeliverable, and many leaders did not send all five emails to their respective clergy. Appendix H provides an overview of the number of emails each CMI sent to clergy, and a breakdown of which of the five emails were and were not distributed. As shown in Table 2, over 82% of the potential participants only received three emails, much of which can be attributed to the largest CMI (3,150 potential participants), only sending three of the five emails. This CMI is in Region 4, and this region had significantly more eligible clergy than the other regions, yet the lowest response rate. As seen in Table 2, only 503 (11.1%) clergy received all five emails.

A total of 705 surveys were completed, with an overall response rate of 15.5%. Of these, 12.6% ($n = 89$) reported that they were not clergy and, therefore, would not participate in the survey, and 7.8% ($n = 55$) indicated that they were a clergy but did not wish to participate. Therefore, a total of 561 participants ($n = 561; 79.6\%$) identified themselves as clergy and agreed to complete the survey. Due to the exclusion criteria, two were removed from the sample, because they were not from a Christian denomination, resulting in usable data from a sample of 559 clergy. Upon examining a missing data analysis, I noticed that 31 participants answered only the first question (regarding whether or not the person will participate) in the survey, and therefore, these 31 cases were deleted from the sample. An additional 31 participants answered only the first question (regarding participation) and second question (regarding CMI affiliation), and all other questions were left blank. These cases were deleted as well, resulting in a final sample of 497 cases (see Appendix I for missing data analysis), and a 10.5% response rate.
Table 2

**Number of Clergy Receiving Emails***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number of Emails Sent</th>
<th>Number of Clergy</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3729</td>
<td>82.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>6.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>11.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4533</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Number of clergy was adjusted to reflect emails designated as undeliverable by Internet servers.

Table 3

**Sample and Response Rate by Region**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Participating Initiatives</th>
<th>Initial Eligible Participants</th>
<th>Returned Emails (Excluded)</th>
<th>Final Eligible</th>
<th>Completed Surveys*</th>
<th>Response Rate in Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>27.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>897</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>807</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>17.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3451</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3427</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>6.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4717</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>4533</td>
<td>455</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*A total of 42 clergy (8.5%) of the sample did not indicate a CMI affiliation, and, could not be designated to a region.
Description of Participants

Clergy from 23 states involved in CMIs from all four regions of the U.S. responded to the survey. Six were from Region 1 (1.2%), 73 from Region 2 (14.7%), 144 from Region 3 (29%), and 232 (46.7%) were from Region 4. Forty-two (8.5%) reported that they were unaware of a local CMI.

As seen in Table 4 and 5, participant’s ages ranged from 26 to 79, the average was 52 years ($SD = 9.62$). Most were male ($N = 389; 88.2%$), White ($N = 387; 89.6%$), and in a first marriage ($N = 367; 83.2%$). The majority of clergy represented were highly educated. Over 55% ($N = 248$) reported a Master’s degree or equivalent, and almost 15% ($N = 66$) reported having a doctorate degree.

The total number of years working as a clergy ranged from 0 to 53 years, with the mean of 20.67 ($SD = 11.78$). Clergy noted working an average of 46.5 hours per week ($SD = 16.28$) and reported congregation sizes ranging from 0 to 8,000 ($M = 652.37$, $SD = 1057.70$, median = 300). On average, clergy performed 3 weddings in 2006 ($SD = 3.73$). Years of experience providing premarital education ranged from 0 to 50 years ($SD = 11.21$), with a median of 18 years. A comparison of this sample to the greater population of clergy represented in the Census (2000b) data is presented in the Limitations section.

Of the clergy reporting an affiliation, over 45 Christian denominations were represented (see Appendix J), with 217 (43.7%) being affiliated with an evangelical Protestant denomination, 91 (18.3%) clergy affiliated with a mainline Protestant denomination, 9 (1.8%) reported being Catholic, 61 (12.3%) were non-denominational, and 66 (13.3%) in an “other” denomination.

The reported annual household gross income for 2006 ranged from less than $30,000, to more than $100,000. Twelve (3.8%) reported income less than $30,000, 132 (33.1%) indicated income ranging from $30,001 to 60,000, 173 (43.2%) reported income between $60,001 and $90,000; and 83 clergy (20.8%) reported an income of over $90,000 (See Table 5).
### Table 4

**Demographic Characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>52.00</td>
<td>9.62</td>
<td>53.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years as a clergy</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>20.67</td>
<td>11.78</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average hours worked/week</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>46.50</td>
<td>16.28</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregational size</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8000</td>
<td>652.37</td>
<td>1057.70</td>
<td>300.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of weddings performed in 2006</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of experience providing premarital education</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>17.89</td>
<td>11.21</td>
<td>18.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 5

**Additional Demographic Characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>88.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N = 441)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>89.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N = 432)</td>
<td>Black, African American, or Negro</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
\textbf{Table 5—continued}  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>Single—widowed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((N = 447))</td>
<td>Single—never married</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Single—divorced</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Married—1(^{st}) marriage</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>83.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Remarried</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>8(^{th}) Grade or Below</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((N = 447))</td>
<td>High School Graduate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>College Graduate (4 years)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some Graduate School</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Master's Degree or Equivalent</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>55.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doctorate Degree</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Household</td>
<td>Under $30,000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>$30,001 to $40,000</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((N = 400))</td>
<td>$40,001 to $50,000</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$50,001 to $60,000</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$60,001 to $70,000</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$70,001 to $80,000</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$80,001 to $90,000</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$90,001 to $100,000</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than $100,000</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textbf{Missing Data}  
Several authors (Acock, 2005; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001) noted the importance of examining patterns within missing data. Tabachnick and Fidell suggested that the
pattern of missing data is more significant than the amount of data missing. As noted earlier, a summary of missing data patterns is shown in Appendix I.

Creating skip logic in the survey made it possible for participants to automatically skip questions that were irrelevant to them, based on responses to certain questions. Although this increases convenience for participants, skipped questions reduce the number of participants that respond to questions. Upon initial inspection of missing data, skip logic inflates the amount of missing data, which is reflected in the summary of patterns noted in Appendix I. As a result, legitimately missing data, (i.e., data missing due to skip logic, were accounted for and removed from the total number of cases to be analyzed. Therefore, only missing values due to participants choosing not to respond to an item are reflected in Table 6.

In regards to nonresponse, Acock (2005) noted that participants who choose not to respond should be compared with those who do respond. To compare these groups, data were recoded as 0 = missing, 1 = not missing for each variable, and Chi-square analyses were conducted. For each variable, participants with and without missing data were compared on age, sex, race/ethnicity, years as a clergy, years of experience providing premarital education, highest education level obtained, and annual household income. Results showed that that level of education significantly influenced whether or not participants responded to some of the questions.

Table 6

*Missing Data Due to Nonresponse*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of supportive efforts</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement—Emails</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement—Read letters</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement—Read newsletters</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6—continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Involvement—Phone calls</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement—Meetings</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement—Contributed financially</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of trainings</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trainings available</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training attendance</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers to attendance</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of PME programs</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of PME inventories</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content used in PME</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format—Minutes per session</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format—Number of PME sessions</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although imputation of data is an option for handling missing data, I decided not to do so for several reasons. First, less than 5% of data were missing for most variables, a small amount for which to use imputation. Second, due to skip logic (decisions trees) in the questions, imputing data for one question would require imputation for several subsequent questions, and such imputations become meaningless. Third, the questions were mostly descriptive, so missing data is not a concern with the analyses. Fourth, much of the data came from respondents in one region; therefore, imputing data for missing values for clergy in other regions would not be appropriate. Thus, although it is possible to impute missing data, it is not logical to do so.
Data Analyses

The data were analyzed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, Version 15 (SPSS 15). The dependent variable was premarital education practices, as measured by resources (programs and inventories), content, and format (number of sessions, minutes per session). The Independent variables were clergy’s awareness of CMI supportive efforts, clergy’s awareness of available trainings, clergy involvement in CMIIs’ supportive efforts, clergy’s training attendance, clergy’s perceived barriers to participation, and region.

Research questions 1-4 were analyzed by examining frequencies, descriptive statistics, and crosstabulations of the nominal data. The appropriate nonparametric statistical assessments were applied (Siegal & Castellan, Jr., 1988). Specifically, research question 1, regarding clergy’s awareness of CMI supportive efforts and clergy involvement, was answered by first computing frequency distributions regarding awareness of emails, letters, newsletters, phone calls, meetings, and the opportunity to contribute financially. To explore the extent to which clergy are involved in these supportive efforts, they reported the frequency of involvement in these same items. Frequency distributions and crosstabs were examined.

For research question two (2), I examined whether clergy are aware of CMI trainings offered in the community, and if so, to what extent clergy attend the trainings. Frequency distributions and descriptive statistics were first examined and then crosstabs were examined to explore the relationship between awareness and training attendance.

For research question three, to examine how frequently clergy implement a resource (program or inventory) in premarital education after being trained, frequency distributions regarding the degree of utilization in premarital education for each respective resource were computed for those who reported attending training(s). The mean and standard deviation for each program and inventory was computed. To examine the barriers for nonattendance, frequency distributions were examined for those reporting not attending training for each of the 11 possible barriers.

For research question four (4), concerning clergy’s overall premarital education practices (resources, content, format), frequency distributions were computed for each
item, and measures of central tendency (mean, median, mode, standard deviation, and range of responses) were computed for the premarital education format variables (number of sessions, minutes per session).

For research question five (5), I hypothesized that clergy who attend available trainings compared to those who do not will vary in the resources, content, and format utilized in premarital education. First, programs were classified into three categories: efficacious, possibly efficacious, and empirically untested, as identified by Jakubowski and colleagues (2004). Clergy who reported using a program rarely, sometimes, almost always, or always were coded as using the program, and those that reported never using the program were coded as not using the program. A 2 x 2 chi-square of training attendance by use of efficacious program was conducted to examine programs. Frequencies for each program by training were computed, and ANOVAs were used to further compare clergy who attended trainings with those who did not regarding the frequency of program use.

Similarly, inventories were categorized into those that are (a) well-established and recommended for premarital education and (b) those that are not (Larson & Holman, 1995; Larson et al., 2002). Chi-square analyses (2 x 2 table) was used to assess the differences between those clergy groups and type of inventories used in premarital education. ANOVAs were conducted to further examine differences between clergy who do and do not participate in training by frequency of inventory use.

To examine differences between clergy who attend training and those who do not regarding content, the total number of subject areas addressed by clergy in premarital education was computed and a new variable created. An Independent sample t-test was conducted to compare means between groups. In addition, crosstabulations and a chi-square analyses were conducted on each individual content area, to explore differences in content clergy choose by training.

To examine format, number of sessions and number of minutes served as interval variables. Two Independent Samples t-tests were conducted to examine the differences between clergy with training and those without training regarding format.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine awareness of CMI's supportive efforts, subsequent involvement, and the influence of CMI training on practices in premarital education among a sample of clergy. Specifically, the purpose was to (a) describe the extent to which clergy were aware of the supportive efforts of Community Marriage Initiatives; (b) understand the extent to which clergy were involved in CMI; (c) describe the extent to which clergy were aware of trainings offered in the community regarding premarital education resources; (d) describe the extent to which clergy attended trainings offered in the local area; (e) identify barriers for training attendance; (f) describe the extent to which clergy report implementation of the resources gathered from trainings into their practice of premarital education with couples; (g) describe clergy’s premarital education practices (resources, content, and format); and (h) evaluate the impact of clergy’s training attendance on premarital education practices.

Description of Variables

As stated previously, the Independent variables considered in this study were clergy’s awareness of CMI supportive efforts (emails, letters, newsletters, phone calls, meetings, and financial contributions), clergy’s awareness of available trainings, clergy’s involvement in CMI’s supportive efforts, clergy’s training attendance, barriers to participation, and region. The dependent variable was premarital education practices, as measured by resources (programs or inventories), content, and format (number of sessions, minutes per session).

Research Findings and Hypothesis

• **Research Question 1:** Which supportive efforts from CMI are clergy aware? If aware of them, to what extent are clergy involved?

Of the 495 respondents, 70-80% of participants were aware of email contacts (N = 399; 80.6%), letters (N = 371; 76%), newsletters (N = 351; 70.4%), phone calls (N = 351; 71.8%) meetings (N = 389; 79.4%), and the opportunity to make financial
contributions to the CMI (N=381; 77.6%). Clearly, most clergy are aware of supportive efforts provided by local CMIs.

For those clergy who were aware of CMIs’ supportive efforts, many reported being most involved in reading letters and newsletters and answering or returning phone calls from the CMI (see Table 7). Although aware of CMI meetings, clergy were much less involved in this aspect of CMIs. In fact, about 56% reported never or rarely attending meetings. Clergy were least likely to contribute financially than be involved in various other aspects; specifically, 78% reported never or rarely doing so.

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Involvement with CMI’s Supportive Efforts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read Emails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read Letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read Newsletters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer/Return Phone Calls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend Meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribute Financially</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(a\) 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = almost always, 5 = always

- Research Question #2: Are clergy aware of CMI trainings offered in the community regarding premarital education resources (inventories and programs)? If so, to what extent do clergy attend these trainings? Of the 493 respondents, 304 (61.2%) reported being aware of trainings in the community for premarital education programs or inventories. Of clergy (\(N = 304\)) who indicated being aware of trainings, they also were asked to specify which trainings were
available and of these, which ones they attended. Of the 304 clergy, 270 clergy (88.9%) identified specific program(s) for which trainings were available, and of these clergy, 151 (55.9%) attended at least one training. Table 8 provides specific detail regarding the number of trainings of which clergy were aware in relation to the number of trainings attended. On average, participants reported being aware of 1.5 trainings ($SD = 2.29$), and attended 0.57 trainings ($SD = 1.16$).

Table 8

*Number of Trainings Which Clergy Were Aware and Subsequent Training Attendance*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of trainings which clergy were aware</th>
<th>Number of Trainings Attended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 59 40 0 1 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 24 20 10 3 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 20 13 7 4 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 3 4 3 5 4 1 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 8 2 4 2 4 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 0 2 2 2 0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 3 1 2 0 1 1 1 1 0 0</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 2 0 1 0 1 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 1 0 1 0 0 0 0 0 1 0</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 0 0 1 0 1 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 1 0 0 1 0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 0 1 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong> 121 83 31 18 11 2 1 1 1 1</td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong> 121 83 31 18 11 2 1 1 1 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• **Research Question #3**: For each training that clergy attend, how frequently do clergy implement this resource in premarital education? For those that do not attend available trainings, what are the barriers for attendance?

Participants reported most frequently being trained in PREP \((n = 17)\) and Marriage Savers \((n = 17)\), and, on average, report using these programs at least *sometimes*. This finding highlights that although clergy are trained in programs, they do not always use them. Further, clergy reported that some programs were never used following training, such as CCET, Strategic Hope-Focused Enrichment, Couple Care, and Cana Institute (see Table 9).

Among clergy who reported using inventories, PREPARE and FOCCUS were the two most frequently used inventories in premarital education among this sample of clergy, and on average, these clergy reported using the inventories *almost always*. These two inventories are research-based and recommended for premarital education (Larson et al., 1994, 1995). Thus, it appears that clergy more frequently implemented an inventory following training rather than premarital education programs. However, some clergy attend trainings for inventories, but never use them in practice (PMIP, Cleveland Diocese, MIRROR) (see Table 10).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Frequency of Use of Programs in Premarital Education Following Training**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean (^a)</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREP</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage Savers</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Enhancement</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple Communication</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>2.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAIRS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACME</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

56
Table 9—continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean a</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structured Enrichment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imago</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traits of a Happy Couple</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight Habits of a Successful Marriage</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCET</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Hope Focused Enrichment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple Care</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cana Institute</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = almost always, 5 = always

Table 10

Use of Inventories in Premarital Education Following Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inventory</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean a</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREPARE</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOCCUS</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor-Johnson</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meyers-Briggs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELATE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMIP</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland Diocese</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIRROR</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = almost always, 5 = always
Regarding barriers of training attendance (see Table 11), of the list of 11 barriers, the most frequently reported barrier was the lack of time to participate ($N = 42; 15.3\%$). Interestingly, 55 (20.1\%) reported other barriers, but offered no additional information.

Table 11

*Barriers to Training Attendance in Frequency and Percent* ($N = 274$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t have enough time to participate.</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The location was not very convenient.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The training cost too much.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like another program better.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t like the material being offered.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t think the facilitators are equipped enough to train.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The program was not compatible with my belief system.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation was a problem.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare was a problem.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t like the environment in which the training takes place.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Clergy could indicate more than one barrier.*

- *Research Question #4: Overall, what are the practices of clergy regarding premarital education: resources used, content covered, and format?*

*Resources: Programs*

Of those who provide premarital education services ($N = 449$), 329 (72.8\%) reported using a premarital education program (see Table 12). Because clergy could report the use of multiple programs, these categories were not mutually exclusive. Participants indicated that they *never or rarely* used these programs. Clergy used a self-
created program on average more frequently than the published programs, albeit the difference was between never and sometimes, suggesting limited use. These responses indicated the frequent use of programs in the empirically untested category.

Table 12

*Clergy’s Use of Premarital Education Programs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean a</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
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<td>.66</td>
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<td>Couple Care</td>
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<td>I created my own program</td>
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<td>1.05</td>
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<td>Engaged Encounter</td>
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<td>.75</td>
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<td>.69</td>
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<td>.45</td>
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<td>.43</td>
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<td>.39</td>
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Table 12—continued

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>N</th>
<th>Mean&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Imago</td>
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<td>.16</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>240</td>
<td>4.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = almost always, 5 = always

Resources: Inventories

A total of 343 (75.9%) of the 442 clergy reported using a premarital inventory in premarital education. Clergy were asked to specify which premarital inventory/inventories they used. Because clergy could report the use of multiple inventories, the categories were not mutually exclusive. The most utilized inventory that is research-based and recommended for premarital education was PREPARE. Most inventories were never or rarely used in premarital education, on average. Overall, it appears that clergy used PREPARE, “other” inventories, and FOCCUS more often than other inventories, although the use was infrequent.

Table 13

Clergy’s Use of Premarital Inventories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Inventory</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research-based and</td>
<td>PREPARE</td>
<td>285</td>
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<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recommended for PME</td>
<td>FOCCUS</td>
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<td>2.07</td>
<td>1.64</td>
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<td></td>
<td>RELATE</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>.86</td>
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<td></td>
<td>PMIP</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>.53</td>
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</table>
Table 13—continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Inventory</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean(^a)</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not research-based or recommended for</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>1.75</td>
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<td>Taylor-Johnson</td>
<td>212</td>
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<td>1.35</td>
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<td>Meyers-Briggs</td>
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<td>1.65</td>
<td>1.06</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cleveland Diocese</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>.29</td>
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<td></td>
<td>MIRROR</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = almost always, 5 = always

Content

Regarding content, clergy (N = 452) could report multiple topics covered in premarital education. Communication (N = 421; 93.1%), expectations (N = 420; 92.9%), relationship to God (N = 418; 92.5%), and conflict resolution (N = 407; 90.0%) were the most frequently covered areas. The results appear in Table 14.

Table 14

*Topics Covered in Premarital Education in Frequency and Percent (N = 452)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
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<td>93.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>92.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to God</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>92.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Resolution</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>90.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Perceptions</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>88.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finances</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>87.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Relations</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>85.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Dimensions</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>84.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 14—continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wedding Ceremony</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>83.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children and Parenting</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>82.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality/temperament</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>80.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Laws</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>77.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family of Origin</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>74.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>73.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>62.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>56.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Planning</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>54.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Issues</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Format**

Regarding format, on average, clergy reported providing approximately 5 sessions for couples during premarital education ($N = 384$, $M = 5.48$, $SD = 2.57$). The number of sessions reported ranged from 0 to 22 (Median = 5, Mode = 6). A total of 447 clergy reported on the length of sessions. On average, clergy provide sessions ranging from 30 to 1110 minutes long, with an average of 80 minutes ($SD = 61.91$, Median = 67, Mode = 60). Clergy reported some sessions that were extremely long, and they noted that these were weekend retreats.

- **Research Question #5:** Do clergy who attend available trainings have different premarital education practices (resources, content, and format) compared with those who do not attend?

Bronfenbrenner (1979) hypothesized that face-to-face contact provides the greatest opportunity to influence development, demonstrated by a change in behavior. Thus, I hypothesized that clergy who attend available trainings compared with those who do not will vary in the resources (programs and inventories), content, and format utilized in premarital education.
Programs

Again, programs were categorized into efficacious, possibly efficacious, and empirically untested to examine the impact of training.

**Efficacious programs.** A $2 \times 2$ chi-square was used to assess training attendance and efficacious program utilization, and a significant difference was found $\chi^2(1, N = 196) = 8.25, p < .05$. The results are presented in Table 15. Clergy who reported attending trainings in programs categorized as efficacious were more likely to use efficacious programs than those who did not. However, most clergy do not use efficacious programs, regardless of training.

**Possibly efficacious programs.** A chi-square was conducted to compare clergy who attend training and those who do not regarding the use of possibly efficacious programs, and no significant relationship was found, $\chi^2(1, N = 193) = 0.89, p > .05$, n.s. Another $2 \times 2$ chi-square was conducted to compare the impact of training with use of empirically untested programs, and no significant difference was found between clergy that attend training and those that do not, $\chi^2(1, N = 150) = 0.94, p > .05$, n.s. Detailed information of type of program by training is available in Appendix K.

Table 15

*Use of Efficacious Programs Based on Training*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of efficacious program(s)</th>
<th>Do not use</th>
<th>Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Training No:</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>(67.5%)</td>
<td>(40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes:</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>(32.5%)</td>
<td>(60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2(1, N = 196) = 8.25, p < .05$
The frequency of which people used the programs was assessed further with ANOVA. It appears that clergy with training are not using efficacious programs more frequently compared with those without training. Clearly, clergy never or rarely use the programs regardless of training. The results from these analyses are presented in Table 16. There was a significant difference in frequency of use based on training among those who reported using PREP and Strategic Hope-Focused Enrichment. Certification training in the PREP program is mandatory prior to implementation, so it is of little surprise that those with training more frequently implement this program compared with those without training; however, they report on average using it rarely ($M = 2.00, SD = 1.49$). Clergy who attended one or more trainings for premarital education report using Marriage Savers more frequently. Surprisingly, those with training more frequently use a self-created program compared to those who did not attend training(s).

Table 16

*Frequency of Program Use Based on Training*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Training</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean $^a$</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>F</th>
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</thead>
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<td>1.49</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.31</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.76</td>
<td>3.31</td>
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<td>1.15</td>
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<td>Category</td>
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<td>Mean a</td>
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<td>-----</td>
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Table 16—continued

<table>
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<th>Category</th>
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<th>Training</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean *</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.09</td>
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<td>Emotional Intelligence</td>
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<td>1.06</td>
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<td>2.02</td>
<td>1.52</td>
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<tr>
<td>Created Own Program</td>
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<td>2.58</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>10.29*</td>
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<td>1.73</td>
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<td>100</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05

a 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = almost always, 5 = always

Inventories

To examine the impact of training on inventory use, inventories were categorized into those that are research based and recommended for premarital education and those that are not.

Inventories that are research based and/or recommended for premarital education. A 2 x 2 chi-square analysis was conducted to determine differences between training attendance and the use of research-based inventories. A significant difference was found, \( \chi^2 (1, N = 173) = 0.94, p < .05 \), between clergy that attend trainings versus those that do not and the use of research based and recommended inventories (see Table 17). Specifically, those without training are more likely to use research-based inventories than those with training.
Table 17

*Use of Research-Based/Recommended Inventories Based on Training*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Attendance</th>
<th>Do not use</th>
<th>Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No:</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>(78.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes:</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>(21.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 (1, N = 173) = 0.94, p < .05$

*Inventories not research based and/or recommended for premarital education.* A second chi-square was conducted to examine differences in the use of inventories not recommended for premarital education by training. There appeared to be no difference between the groups and the use of inventories not recommended for premarital education $\chi^2 (1, N = 140) = 0.79, p > .05$, n.s.

Upon closer examination of the individual inventories (see Table 18), results of ANOVA show that with the exception of the FOCCUS inventory, clergy with training are not using research based inventories more frequently than their untrained counterparts. Overall, these analyses demonstrate that although clergy with training more often use a research-based inventory in premarital education compared with those without training, the frequency of use for these inventories is minimal and similar for both groups. Regardless of training, clergy reported using the PREPARE inventory most frequently.
Table 18

Frequency of Inventory Use Based on Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Training</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREPARE</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOCUS</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>48.46*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELATE</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMIP</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland Dioceses</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meyers Briggs</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor Johnson</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIRROR</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> *p < .05
<sup>a</sup> 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = almost always, 5 = always

Content

An Independent samples *t*-test was conducted to compare means of those clergy with and without training regarding the number of content areas covered in premarital education. No significant difference was found between the two groups *t*(492) = .287, *p*
To examine if clergy with and without training cover different topics, chi-square analyses were conducted for each content area. No significant differences between groups were found for any content area.

*Format*

To examine the impact of training on the number of sessions clergy provide in premarital education, an Independent samples $t$-test was conducted. No significant difference was found, $t(382) = -0.142$, $p > .05$, between those who did not attend trainings ($M = 5.46$, $SD = 2.61$) and those who did ($M = 5.5$, $SD = 2.52$). Another Independent samples $t$-test was conducted to examine differences in minutes per session among clergy with and without training. Again, no significant difference was found between those attending trainings ($M = 83.61$, $SD = 47.01$) and those that did not attend ($M = 78.55$, $SD = 71.74$) regarding the length of time per premarital education session $t(445) = -.858$, $p > .05$). Although the average length of sessions was similar, there is more variation among clergy without training versus those with training.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Summary of Study

Because clergy frequently provide marriage education and relationship skills programs to couples, particularly in preparation for marriage, a primary goal of the CMIs has been to reach out to them and influence the relationship education and counseling that they provide. However, little is known about the success of these efforts to recruit local practicing clergy and influence that which they do. The present study attempted to fill this void. The results are summarized below:

- Generally, clergy were aware of the Community Marriage Initiative (CMI), and the resources offered and reported being somewhat involved, particularly in reading emails, letters, and newsletters, and answering or returning phone calls from the CMI.
- These clergy also were aware of trainings offered by the CMI. However, almost half did not attend due to the lack of time and other unspecified reasons.
- The clergy reported generally covering the same content in their relationship education practices, and, on average, use a similar format (number of sessions, minutes per session). Further, although clergy with training report using efficacious programs more than those without training, upon further examination, there is little difference regarding the frequency of implementation compared to their non-trained counterparts. Overall, many clergy never or rarely used programs following training.

Discussion

Several researchers (Orthner, 1986; Weaver, 1995; Worthington, 1986) noted that clergy often feel ill-prepared for their counseling responsibilities and lack confidence in their counseling abilities. Lowe (1986) found that clergy acknowledged their need for additional training in counseling, and Wilmoth (2005) noted that clergy are generally open to receiving additional training regarding premarital education. However, findings from this study indicate that even when aware of local trainings, about 50% of clergy
reported not attending. Thus, as other scholars noted (Lee, 2007), targeted consumers may not take advantage of valuable resources available within the community.

For those that do take advantage of such services, once trained, these results showed that clergy rarely implement the programs into their premarital education, although inventories were implemented somewhat more frequently. This finding is contrary to the research of Stanley and colleagues (2005), as they found that trained clergy implement the programs in premarital education over time. There are several potential reasons why clergy do not frequently implement such resources following training: (a) clergy, or the couples whom they serve, do not like the programs, (b) there is a lack of consistency in clergy’s premarital education services, because premarital education is individualized and, thus, the resources used with each couple varies, (c) clergy do not believe that certain skills-based training is necessary for every couple, or (d) there are unspecified barriers to implementation. However, the findings from this study do not allow more than speculation.

Importantly, many clergy reported implementing resources or ideas not from mainstream and empirically-validated programs. Most often they employ self-developed relational curricula and training exercises. This is problematic, given that the majority of clergy in this study reported using programs considered not efficacious, and researchers (Laurenceau et al., 2004) have demonstrated that couples’ relationship functioning outcomes are better after completing an empirically-based program.

Time was noted as a barrier to attending trainings for many clergy, a finding similar to Wilmoth’s (2005) study of Oklahoma clergy. Given that clergy in this study reported working an average of 46 hours per week and likely have large congregations (300 or more members), it is not surprising that time is considered a barrier. Interestingly, one of the most-used programs after training among these clergy was Marriage Savers, a mentoring program that trains clergy to use couples in their congregation who have long-term marriages to serve as mentors for engaged or newly married couples. Such a program provides an opportunity for clergy to delegate some of the responsibility of providing premarital education, and it appears that clergy subsequently implement this in premarital education fairly frequently. However, this program is not categorized as efficacious.
Limitations

These findings must be understood within the limitations of the study (e.g., potential geographic and educational biases, etc.). The average clergy in the sample was a 52-year-old, White male. He had a Master’s degree, was in his first marriage, and worked nearly 47 hours a week, on average. He had been a clergy for approximately 20 years, had provided premarital education for approximately 17 years, and had conducted three weddings in the last year. Comparison of the clergy in this sample with clergy from the Census (2000b) in terms of sex, race, and educational level found no difference regarding sex \( (df = 1, N = 389366), p. > .05 \), but of higher education and different race (more likely White). Thus, the respondents do not reflect the population.

There are several other limitations to this study. First, there were limitations due to sampling. Dillman (2000) referred to coverage error as an error that results because the list from which the sample was drawn did not include all potential participants in the population. Coverage error exists here at both the CMI level and the participant level. There is no central database listing all the CMIs in the United States, so no sampling frame could be established. Consequently, I cannot be sure that the participating CMIs represent CMIs in general, nor can findings be generalized from participating clergy to all clergy involved in CMIs. Also, although many CMI leaders use email and the Internet as a primary method of communicating with the local clergy, not all clergy that participate in CMIs have access to the Internet or email. Further, numerous clergy involved in CMIs with access to email or the Internet, do not list their email address with a CMI and, thus, were unable to participate. Also, some clergy listed on the CMI databases had invalid email addresses and were excluded. Only about 34% of all clergy on CMI databases were eligible to participate because they had email addresses, which may reflect their advantage or resources. However, it may also be that CMI databases are not current. There is likely some degree of coverage error (Dillman).

Dillman (2000) also noted that a sampling error occurs when only some, as opposed to all, of the elements of the survey population are surveyed. This study had sampling errors at the CMI level. That is, 36 CMIs initially agreed to participate. However, due to staff turnover, database or technology problems, time constraints, and lack of returned phone calls or emails, 10 CMIs chose not to withdraw when data
collection began, and an additional 3 CMIs were deemed ineligible, making it impossible to obtain 50% representation from each division, so generalizations to all CMIs cannot be made from these results, although there was at least 50% participation from each region. Many of the survey respondents were from Region 4 (West), as the largest CMI was in this region. Thus, these results may be primarily reflective of this particular region, rather than representative of the other regions as well.

Dillman (2000) noted that nonresponse error is often a problem for Internet based surveys. Nonresponse error refers to “when a significant number of people in the survey sample do not respond to the questionnaire and have different characteristics from those who do not respond, when these characteristics are important to the study (p. 11). Because the demographic characteristics of nonresponders are unknown, nonresponse error cannot be fully explored. However, I estimate that 4,533 clergy had the opportunity to participate, 705 chose to respond, and only 497 completed the survey. Thus, the response rate was 10.5%. Due to the low response rate, generalizations cannot be made to all clergy involved in CMIs. However, given that 89 (12.6%) of the 705 respondents in this survey indicated they were not clergy, I assume that the CMI databases from which contact information for 4,533 people were obtained did not contain exclusively clergy information. This makes it impossible to calculate how many clergy had the opportunity to participate.

In addition to sampling limitations, there are several limitations in methodology. Because I was dependent upon the CMI leaders to send the emails, the data collection process was somewhat inconsistent. Leaders went out of town, had computer problems, or forgot to send the emails in a timely manner. For those leaders who forgot to send the emails, I called or emailed to remind them. However, some CMI leaders did not send all five emails, despite reminders. Other CMI leaders failed to add me to their database, so I did not receive a copy of the email. However, a follow-up email or phone call revealed they had sent the emails. In addition, it was difficult to obtain an exact number of (a) clergy on each CMI database, (b) clergy with emails listed on the database, and (c) emails designated as undeliverable by the Internet servers. This information was repeatedly requested from CMI leaders. This lack of information made it difficult to estimate an exact response rate. Further, because the CMI leaders sent the
emails to their respective clergy, I had no record of which clergy completed the survey. Therefore, clergy who completed the survey during data collection still received the reminder emails (emails 3, 4, and 5) with the clergy who had yet-to-complete the survey. Some clergy were confused about why they received additional emails after completing the survey.

Internet-based surveys have several limitations. Dillman and Bowker (2001) identified numerous issues that may prevent survey completion. For example, firewalls or other security settings may block an email with a link or may prevent users from clicking on the link and accessing the survey. Clergy with limited computer knowledge, time, or patience might have elected not to unblock the link. Further, a slow Internet connection speed or a screen configuration that makes it difficult to view questions and responses at once can hinder response rates.

**Implications**

Following are implications for practice, theory, and future research drawn from this study.

*Implications for Practice*

These findings provide numerous implications for practice. First, the success of the Healthy Marriages Initiative clearly is tied to the success of the CMIIs. If CMIIs can recruit clergy, clergy will recruit couples. Therefore, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and Administration for Children and Families (ACF) want to know what barriers and resources exist in the recruitment of clergy across the country through CMIIs. The findings from this research can be used to improve services by further assessing clergy’s need for premarital education resources, as few utilize these following training. Perhaps CMIIs are not offering the resources that clergy value or need, or perhaps clergy do not distinguish between research-based resources and those that are empirically untested. Clergy may prefer programs using a scriptural or doctrinal perspective, rather than based on research. If this is true, these programs, which clergy prefer, should be empirically evaluated.

Of greater concern is the potential for clergy to provide premarital services that lack effectiveness. Given the individual, familial, community, and federal costs associated with marital discord and divorce, it is imperative that the premarital education
programs and inventories used by clergy and others in the community correspond with those supported by existing research. Clergy in this study who attended trainings did not frequently use better quality premarital education programs and inventories compared to their untrained counterparts. Overwhelmingly, most clergy do not use efficacious programs, regardless of training. Further, many clergy know about available trainings but do not attend. Although time may be the primary reason for nonattendance, another reason for lack of attendance may be that CMIs are offering resources that are of little value to clergy. If this were the case, a needs-based assessment of clergy would be beneficial to CMIs.

If couples are to receive quality, effective premarital education, then clergy must be encouraged to use quality programs. This can be promoted by the CMIs. Many of the CMI leaders are lay leaders in the field, some even lack formal education in marriage education; thus, they may be uninformed about the empirical differences among programs. As a result, CMI leaders should obtain specific training and should subsequently aim to provide trainings in efficacious programs and research-based inventories.

Some CMI leaders may value empirically-supported resources, but lack the funding to purchase these resources or secure training from the program/inventory experts. Fortunately, some CMIs recently received funding through the National Healthy Marriage Initiative, and as a result, there may be better trainings offered in those CMIs in the future. Other CMIs are new, and their leaders likely need training regarding how to better recruit clergy and increase the likelihood of CMI involvement and training attendance. New CMI leaders could benefit from modeling their CMIs after some of the more established, successful CMIs, such as Families Northwest (Washington) or First Things First (Tennessee).

Third, as this study only measured the extent of awareness among clergy of available programs, the extent to which CMIs offer efficacious programs rather than those possibly efficacious or empirically untested is unknown. Given the range of diversity in leaders of CMIs (i.e., marriage and family professionals, businessmen, clergy, lay leaders, volunteers), it is possible that the leaders themselves lack knowledge about the efficacy of premarital education programs. If knowledge is lacking
in this area, increased education and training for CMI leaders about effective and/or efficacious programs/inventories is needed.

Fourth, to intervene at the federal, state, and community levels, stakeholders must understand what is currently happening in the microsystems of clergy/couple and clergy/CMI relationships. This research provides a basic understanding of participating clergy’s involvement and premarital education practices. With this information, stakeholders can provide better support and appropriate resources to help clergy conduct effective premarital education. Also, providing answers to questions about marriage education program attendance and use of programs will allow CMI leaders to revise/improve their marketing, advertising, and service delivery.

From this study, the following suggestions are made to CMI leaders:

1. Solicit more involvement from clergy. This may require securing external funding (public or private) to increase advertising and marketing.

2. Provide increased advertising regarding trainings, as some clergy are not aware of available trainings. Implement different advertising and marketing strategies to attract those clergy who are aware of trainings, but never or seldom attend.

3. To increase the likelihood of clergy providing effective services, CMI leaders should offer training only for efficacious programs and inventories that are research based and recommended for premarital education. Further, CMI leaders and training facilitators should stress the importance of adherence to the program models, as inconsistency compromises treatment fidelity.

4. Because time was noted as a barrier for clergy to attend trainings, CMI leaders need to emphasize to importance of clergy providing sound premarital education, and encourage them to make this a priority in their ministry. Further, CMI leaders should aim to be as time efficient as possible during trainings, meetings, and luncheons, to increase the likelihood of clergy involvement.

Implications for Theory

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), developmental change can be measured by the behaviors of the developing individual. This research does not support the hypothesis (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) that face-to-face contact enhances the developmental potential of clergy, as clergy that attended trainings (face-to-face
contact) did not necessarily provide better quality premarital education programs in regards to programs and inventories than their counterparts.

The findings from this study should be explored in context of Bronfenbrenner’s (1992) person-process-context-time model of human development, which is based on the notion that developmental processes and outcomes are a function of both characteristics of the environment and of the individual. Therefore, in regards to the person elements, clergy have their own personal beliefs about the value of premarital education and CMIs. Age, education level, race, or socioeconomic status may influence whether clergy are aware of or choose to be involved in the CMI and respond to the supportive efforts. Further, clergy’s congregation and their views about the importance of premarital education can influence clergy’s support of and involvement in a CMI. All of these factors warrant further investigation.

Regarding process, there were two interactions being examined in this study: the processes between clergy and CMIs, and, the processes between clergy and the couples with whom they work. These processes create two mesosystemic relationships. It is unclear whether processes taking place between the CMI and clergy (i.e., training) influenced the processes that occur between clergy and couples in premarital education, as clergy who attend trainings do not provide efficacious programs to couples more frequently than do their non-trained counterparts. Perhaps clergy’s involvement with couples has resulted in the recognition of need for additional training, although this is only speculation, and further research would be needed to confirm this idea.

Context refers to the ecosystemic climate (the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystem) in which individuals carry out these processes. Bronfenbrenner posited that development never takes place in a social vacuum; therefore, the developing person’s actions in the immediate microsystem influences and is influenced by the broader settings (e.g., the meso-, exo-, and macrosystems). Although all ecosystemic levels were not explored here, it is important to recognize that the degree to which value is placed on premarital education by clergy, their congregations, community, state, and nation, greatly influences the establishment, efforts, and subsequent success of CMIs.
In addition, the extent to which clergy are aware of and involved in CMIs are influenced by the ecosystemic climate as well.

Implications for Research

This study demonstrates the difficulty in achieving a high response rate from this specific population using an Internet survey. Dillman (2007) reported that mail surveys tend to have better response rates than surveys using other modes (e.g., telephone or Internet), and shifting from one mode to another (i.e., from email to mail) can increase response rates (see Dillman et al., 2001). In future research with this population, response rates may be improved by implementing these suggestions.

Because marriage education is broadly defined and can be useful for individuals and couples of various age groups and developmental levels, I focused only on premarital education among clergy. For future research, examining clergy’s involvement in other forms of marriage education, such as resources and programs for singles, middle- and high-school students, college students, single parents, divorced individuals, and stepfamilies may be of value.

This research serves as an overall formative program evaluation. Although all CMIs do not operate the same way, a general overview of how CMIs are progressing within their communities and areas for improvement were examined. Although many CMIs provide training for resources, many clergy do not participate. For those that do, evidence suggests that much of the information gleaned from training is not subsequently transferred to couples. Potential explanations are only speculative, and, thus, future studies should examine in greater detail perceived barriers to implementation. As little research currently exists regarding CMIs, this information adds to the current body of knowledge, but future research evaluating CMIs should be both formative and summative.

There has been a recent increase in evaluation of program dissemination into the community (Markman et al., 2004; Stanley et al., 2001; Stanley et al., 2005). Although many clergy use a well-known program in premarital education, most clergy implement resources or ideas not from these mainstream programs. Thus, the lack of adherence to the models and fidelity to program manuals raises question about the effectiveness of the programs being implemented. Further, some premarital programs (i.e., Christian or
Biblically-based programs, such as SYMBIS, PreCana, Engaged Encounter, Biblical Portrait of Marriage) used by some clergy may be effective, but they have not been empirically evaluated and need further examination.

In the future, researchers should examine the short- and long-term effects of clergy’s use of various types of premarital education programs (efficacious, possibly efficacious, or empirically untested) on couples relationship functioning, and how variations of program implementation affect the fidelity of the treatment.

**Additional Suggestions for Future Research**

Should this research study be replicated, there are several challenges and suggestions worth noting. First, obtaining a random sample of CMIs, with more representation from each region, is recommended. Second, developing a personal relationship with CMI leaders increased their likelihood of participating. Having this relationship may also increase the likelihood that CMI leaders send all five emails to clergy on the database. In the future, a relationship with each CMI leader should be established prior to requesting involvement in the study. Third, in this study, standardized emails were sent to each CMI leader to distribute to their respective clergy. Some CMI leaders thought it would be helpful to add their own message, encouraging clergy to participate in the study. Although this may result in a less standardized procedure, allowing CMI leaders to personalize the email messages may increase cultural relevance, as they have an established relationship with clergy in their geographic area, and this may improve the responses. Fourth, skip logic, which allowed participants to skip questions that were irrelevant to them, was convenient for the participants, but made it difficult to determine which data was legitimately missing (due to skip logic) versus missing (due to nonresponse). This caused some discrepancies in the data. Future research should avoid the use of skip logic.

Lastly, it would be worthwhile to examine demographic characteristics by region. For example, do clergy from the South have more training or implement different things in premarital education compared to those from other regions? Do mainline Protestant clergy have different premarital education practices than those who are evangelical Protestant? Are there demographic differences (i.e., age, race, education level, hours worked per week, income) between those who attend trainings versus those who do
not? Are there demographic differences between those who implement the trainings frequently and those who do not? Such information can inform CMI leaders of who is more likely to take advantage of the services provided, and identify those who may need additional, more specific marketing and advertising to solicit involvement.

**Conclusion**

We know that, if an intervention is to be successful, just being present in the community, with the constituency aware of it, is not enough. The target population has to want what is offered and be psychologically and logistically able to use it. CMI resources are available, and practicing clergy members are largely aware of them. However, such personal issues as wishing to use a self-developed program over another, and practical barriers such as available time can impede the use of these resources. The CMI is advised to use the information uncovered in this study to increase their implementation goals (e.g., provide training for efficacious programs, strive to reduce barriers of training attendance) and their outcome goals. Increased program implementation subsequently allows assessment of the changes facilitated by the program, as change unfolds over time (see Prochaska, 1999). Short-term attitudinal changes (e.g., awareness, curiosity, hope) often are precursors to intermediate changes (e.g., use of curricula proven to be efficacious), and hence to long-term changes (decreased divorce rates). This study is the important first step in this program of research.
APPENDIX A

Table 19
Community Marriage Initiatives Divided by the United States Census Bureau (2000a) Regions and Divisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region 1, Division 1: NEW ENGLAND (Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Vermont)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **ME** | State of Maine Marriage Resource Center  
Steve and Kathy Beirne  
Telephone: 207-775-4757  
sbeirne@maine.rr.com |
| **NH** | Community Marriage Initiative of New Hampshire  
Ron Tannariello  
rtannar@comcast.net  
Telephone: 603-372-1541 |
| **ME** | Family Builders New England  
Rev. Willie Batson  
Telephone: 207-361-1030  
wbatson@familybuilders.net |
| **CT** | Marriage and Relationship Network of Western Connecticut  
Daphne Clarke-Hudson  
Telephone: 203-546-8197  
dynamicdaphne@aol.com |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region 1, Division 2: MIDDLE ATLANTIC (New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **NJ** | New Jersey Healthy Marriage Coalition  
Rev. Darrel Armstrong, President  
Telephone: (609) 695-5700 |
| **NY** | Healthy Marriage Coalition of Central New York  
Patricia Ennis  
Telephone: 315-472-6728  
pat@thethirdoption.com |
| **PA** | Greater Philadelphia Healthy Marriage Coalition  
Philadelphia Area Marriage Resource Center  
Rita DeMaria, Ph.D.  
Telephone: 215-628-2450  
rdemaria@councilforrelationships.org |
| **PA** | Strengthening Families First-Berks County's Healthy Marriage and Family Coalition  
(Community Network)  
Telephone: (610) 376-6988 Ext. 207  
berkssff@hotmail.com |
| **PA** | Penn State Healthy Marriage Coalition  
Marilyn Corbin  
Telephone: 814-863-6109  
mcorbin@psu.edu |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region 2, Division 3: EAST NORTH CENTRAL (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>IL</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>IN</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Region 2, Division 4: WEST NORTH CENTRAL (Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota)</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IO</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marriage Matters of Iowa</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Hartwig, Ph.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone: (515) 263-3495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:mike@mikehartwig.com">mike@mikehartwig.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kansas Healthy Marriage Institute</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Duxler, Ph.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone: (316) 942-4291, ext. 2190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:duxler@newmanu.edu">duxler@newmanu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kansas City Community Marriage Declaration</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff Meyers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone: 913-345-9700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:jeffmeyers@clctogether.org">jeffmeyers@clctogether.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Building Strong Marriages, Inc.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marshall &amp; Nina Marley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone: 913-856-5714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:marleymw@juno.com">marleymw@juno.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MO</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ozarks Marriage Matters</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer Baker, Ph.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone: (417) 823-3469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:jbaker@forest.edu">jbaker@forest.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MO</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>St. Louis Healthy Marriage Coalition</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridget Brennan, Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone: (314) 832-0512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:marriage@slu.edu">marriage@slu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nebraska Healthy Marriage Initiative</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doris Lassiter, Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone: 402-320-2953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:dorislassiter@cs.com">dorislassiter@cs.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Omaha Marriage and Family Resources</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pat &amp; Janet Kahnk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone: 402-691-8278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:info@omahamarriageandfamily.org">info@omahamarriageandfamily.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SD</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sioux Empire Marriage Savers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony Trussell or Mary Mastick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone: 605-359-3590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:sems@marriagesavers.org">sems@marriagesavers.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region 3, Division 5: SOUTH ATLANTIC (Delaware, Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia, Florida, South Carolina, West Virginia, Maryland, District of Columbia)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Delaware Healthy Marriage Coalition</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rev. Robert P. Hall, Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone: 302- 225-1040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:deccf@aol.com">deccf@aol.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GA</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Georgia Family Council</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Jauregui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone: (770) 242-0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fax: (770) 242-0501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:john@gafam.org">john@gafam.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GA</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Whitfield/Murray Marriage Initiative</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone: 706- 313-0023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:marriageinitiative@optilink.us">marriageinitiative@optilink.us</a></td>
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Table 19—continued

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region 3, Division 5: SOUTH ATLANTIC (Delaware, Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia, Florida, South Carolina, West Virginia, Maryland, District of Columbia)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **NC** | First Things First of Gaston County Gastonia  
Bill Seabrook  
Telephone: 704-865-8460  
mrsea9332@aol.com |
| **NC** | Guilford County Marriage Resource Center  
Rebecca Starnes  
Telephone: 336-333-6890  
info@gcmarriage.org |
| **VA** | First Things First of Greater Richmond  
Bob Ruthazer  
Telephone: 804-288-3431 Ext. 11  
info@FirstThingsRichmond.org |
| **VA** | Marriage Alliance of Central Virginia  
Larry Compter, Executive Director  
Telephone: 540-587-6689  
info@marriagealliance.org |
| **VA** | West Virginia Healthy Marriage Coalition  
Mary Ellen Clonn  
Telephone: 304-293-2694 |
| **VA** | Hampton Roads Healthy Marriage Coalition  
Todd Areson  
Telephone: 757-265-3556 |
| **FL** | Live the Life Ministries  
Richard Albertson  
Telephone: 850-668-3700  
Richard@livethelife.org |
| **SC** | Heritage Keepers HMI  
Mary McLellan, Director  
Telephone: 843-863-0508 ext. 122  
mmclellan@heritageservices.org |

Region 3, Division 6: EAST SOUTH CENTRAL (Alabama, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi)

| **AL** | Alabama Community Healthy Marriage Initiative  
Francesca Adler-Bader, Ph.D.  
Telephone: 334-844-4151  
adlerfr@auburn.edu |
| **AL** | Madison County Coalition for Healthy Marriages  
Deborah Preece, Coordinator  
Telephone: 256-519-7100  
preece@comcast.net |
| **KY** | Bluegrass Healthy Marriage Initiative  
Eric Carlton, Project Director  
Telephone: 859-257-7734 |
| **KY** | Marriage Education and Resource Center, MERCY  
Penny and David Hudson  
Telephone: (502) 939-0121  
pdhud9@aol.com |
| **TN** | Families Matter  
Jim Hunter  
Telephone: 901-260-8521  
jim.hunter@christchs.org |
Table 19—continued

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<tr>
<th>Region 3, Division 6: EAST SOUTH CENTRAL (Alabama, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TN</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Things First (FTF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie Baumgardner, Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone: 423-267-5383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:ttf@firstthings.org">ttf@firstthings.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region 3, Division 7: WEST SOUTH CENTRAL (Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>OK</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma Marriage Initiative (OMI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone: 405-848-2171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.okmarriage.org">www.okmarriage.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **TX**                         |
| Greater Houston Healthy Marriage Coalition |
| Winnie Honeywell, Chair         |
| whoney@archgh.org               |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region 4, Division 8: MOUNTAIN (Arizona, Idaho, New Mexico, Nevada, Wyoming, Montana, Utah, Colorado)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AZ</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona Marriage Resource Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paula T. Wright, President &amp; CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone: 602-470-1587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:pwright@azparenting.org">pwright@azparenting.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **AZ**                         |
| Strong Families Flagstaff      |
| Bob Tures, Program Director    |
| Telephone: 928-773-7833        |
| skills@strongfamiliesflag.org  |

| **ID**                         |
| Healthy Families Nampa         |
| Andrew Stinson                |
| Telephone: 208-461-5475       |
| hfn@healthyfamiliesnampa.org  |

| **NV**                         |
| Las Vegas Marriage Resource Center |
| Roger Marcussen, Executive Director |
| Telephone: 702-286-0808          |
| roger@lvmrc.org                 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region 4, Division 9: PACIFIC (Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CA</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California State Healthy Marriage Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev. Dion Evans, Chairman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:cshmi@cshmi.org">cshmi@cshmi.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **CA**                         |
| Orange County Marriage Resource Center |
| Dennis Stoica, Executive Director |
| Telephone: 562-407-0340          |
| Dennis@OCMarriage.org           |

| **CA**                         |
| Sacramento Healthy Marriage Project |
| Carolyn Rich Curtis, Director    |
| Telephone: 916-972-9227          |
| Carolyn@SacramentoHealthyMarriage.Org |

| **CA**                         |
| San Diego Marriage Resource Center |
| Cathy Brown-Robinson, MA, LPC     |
| SanDiegoMarriage@cs.com          |

| **CA**                         |
| San Gabriel Valley Marriage Resource Center |
| Ken Allison                        |
| Telephone: 951-545-6146           |
| kla131@yahoo.com                  |
Table 19—continued

| Region 4, Division 9: PACIFIC (Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington) |
| CA | Stanislaus County Healthy Marriage Coalition  
Jim Steward  
Telephone: 209-606-0772  
jim@stancomarriage.org |
| CA | Los Angeles Healthy Marriage Initiative  
Helping Angelinos Live Optimistic (HALO)  
L. E. Mason, Jr.  
Telephone: 866-263-9954  
La_halo@yahoo.com |
| CA | Bay Area Healthy Marriage Alliance  
Dion Evans  
Telephone: 510-595-9896  
chosenvc@pacbell.net |
| OR | Every Marriage Matters: Marriage Resources for Clackamas County  
Tom and Liz Dressel, Directors  
Telephone: 503-655-1489  
ccmp@attbi.com |
| WA | Families Northwest  
Jason Krafsky  
Telephone: 425-869-4001  
jason.krafsky@familiesnorthwest.org |
Clergy, Premarital Education, and Community Marriage Initiatives

1. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey. If for some reason you have received this survey in error, please indicate so below. If not, please click on the last choice of this item and continue.
   - I am NOT a clergy, and therefore will not participate in the survey.
   - I am a clergy, but do NOT wish to participate in this survey.
   - I am a clergy and I am willing to participate in this study. (You must click on this answer if you wish to proceed with the survey).

A Community Marriage Initiative (CMI), also known as Community Healthy Marriage Initiative (CHMI), Marriage Coalition or Resource Center, is “a broad-based coalition of groups or organizations with goals to help individuals form and sustain healthy marriages, and to promote cultural change in support of healthy marriages” (National Healthy Marriage Resource Center, 2006).

2. Please click on the Community Marriage Initiative that you are most aware of in your state. If you cannot find an appropriate answer in the drop down menu, please indicate by clicking “other” and specify in the blank box provided below.

3. To what extent are you involved in the Community Marriage Initiative?
   - Never
   - Rarely
   - Sometimes
   - Almost Always
   - Always

4. How many months have you been involved with this initiative? (i.e., 3 years = 36 months)

5. In the last year, please indicate how often you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Not Aware</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read emails from the Community Marriage Initiative</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
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<tr>
<td>Read letters from the Community Marriage Initiative</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
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<tr>
<td>Read newsletters from the Community Marriage Initiative</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answered/returned phone</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Are you aware of trainings offered by your local Community Marriage Initiative for premarital education programs or inventories/ questionnaires?

☐ Yes
☐ No

7. Please check all the premarital education programs or inventories for which trainings were available to you through the Community Marriage Initiative.

☐ PREP: Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program
☐ RE: Relationship Enhancement
☐ CC: Couple Communication
☐ Strategic Hope-Focused Enrichment
☐ Couple CARE
☐ ACME: Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment
☐ CCET: Couple Coping Enhancement Training
☐ Structured Enrichment
☐ PAIRS
☐ Imago
☐ Traits of a Happy Couple
☐ The Cana Institute: Caring for the Soul of Marriage and Family
☐ Eight Habits of a Successful Marriage
☐ Marriage Savers Mentoring Program
☐ PREPARE (PREmarital Personal and Relationship Evaluation)
☐ FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study)
☐ RELATE
☐ PMIP (Premarital Inventory Profile)
☐ Cleveland Diocese Evaluation for Marriage (CDEM)
☐ Myers-Briggs
☐ Taylor-Johnson
☐ MIRROR
☐ Other (please specify)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>calls from those involved in the Community Marriage Initiative</th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attended meetings and/or luncheons sponsored by or regarding the Community Marriage Initiative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended meetings and/or luncheons sponsored by or regarding the Community Marriage Initiative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended trainings for premarital education offered by the Community Marriage Initiative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributed financially to the Community Marriage Initiative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. Of the trainings that were available to you in the community, did you attend any of these trainings?
☑ Yes
☐ No

9. Please indicate which of the following program/inventory trainings you attended:
☑ PREP: Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program
☑ RE: Relationship Enhancement
☑ CC: Couple Communication
☑ Strategic Hope-Focused Enrichment
☑ Couple CARE
☑ ACME: Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment
☑ CCET: Couple Coping Enhancement Training
☑ Structured Enrichment
☑ PAIRS
☑ Imago
☑ Traits of a Happy Couple
☑ The Cana Institute: Caring for the Soul of Marriage and Family
☑ Eight Habits of a Successful Marriage
☑ Marriage Savers Mentoring Program
☑ PREPARE (PREmarital Personal and Relationship Evaluation)
☑ FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study)
☑ RELATE
☑ PMIP (Premarital Inventory Profile)
☑ Cleveland Diocese Evaluation for Marriage (CDEM)
☑ Myers-Briggs
☑ Taylor-Johnson
☑ MIRROR
☑ Other (please specify)

10. Please check all the reasons listed below that prevented or hindered you from attending the available trainings for premarital programs or inventories.
☐ The material was not compatible with my belief system.
☐ I don’t like the material being offered.
☐ I don’t have enough time to participate.
☐ I don’t think the facilitators are equipped enough to train.
☐ I don’t like the environment in which the trainings take place.
☐ The location was not very convenient.
☐ Transportation was a problem.
☐ Childcare was a problem.
☐ The training cost too much.
☐ I like another program better.
☐ None--I attended all the available trainings
☐ Other (please specify)
This section is designed to understand if you provide premarital education (also known as premarital counseling or marriage preparation), and if so, how you normally provide this service.

11. Do you provide premarital education (also known as premarital counseling or marriage preparation) to couples?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

12. If you do not provide premarital education, does someone else at your church provide this service?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

13. On average, how many sessions do you have with couples?
   

14. On average, how many minutes are your sessions?
   

15. Which format do you most often provide?
   - [ ] Group sessions--Seminar format
   - [ ] Group sessions--Classroom setting format (i.e., Sunday School) or small group/cell format
   - [ ] Group sessions--Mentor couple format
   - [ ] Individual couple sessions

16. Do you use a specific premarital program with couples in premarital education?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

17. Please indicate how often you use the following premarital education programs when working with couples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>NEVER use the program</th>
<th>RARELY use the program</th>
<th>SOMETIMES use the program</th>
<th>ALMOST ALWAYS use the program</th>
<th>ALWAYS use the program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREP: Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>RE: Relationship Enhancement</td>
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<tr>
<td>CC: Couple Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic Hope-Focused Enrichment</td>
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<td>Couple CARE</td>
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<td>ACME: Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCET: Couple Coping Enhancement Training</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
18. Do you use a premarital inventory with couples in premarital education?
   - Yes
   - No

19. Please indicate how often you use the following premarital education inventories when working with couples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inventory</th>
<th>NEVER use the inventory</th>
<th>RARELY use the inventory</th>
<th>SOMETIMES use the inventory</th>
<th>ALMOST ALWAYS use the inventory</th>
<th>ALWAYS use the inventory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREPARE (PREmarital Personal and Relationship Evaluation)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELATE</td>
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<td>PMIP (Premarital Inventory Profile)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>CDEM (Cleveland Diocese Evaluation for Marriage)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Myers-Briggs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Taylor-Johnson</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIRROR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
20. If you attended any of the premarital education trainings, but do not ALWAYS use the information or resources you received from these trainings, why not?
   - Not Applicable—I never attended any trainings
   - Not Applicable—I use all the information/resources I received
   - The material was not compatible with my belief system.
   - I didn't like the material.
   - I like another program better.
   - The population I work with did not relate well to the material.
   - The material is too costly.
   - Other (please specify)

21. Do you use any videos in your premarital education?
   - Yes
   - No

22. Please check all the videos that you normally use for premarital education. (Authors of the videos are in parentheses).
   - Before You Say ‘I Do’ (Wright)
   - Fighting for Your Marriage (Markman et al.)
   - Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts (Parrotts)
   - When Two Become One (Dobbins)
   - Other (please specify)

23. Are there certain books you use or require couples to read while in premarital education?
   - Yes
   - No

24. Please check the books you normally use in premarital education. (Authors in parentheses).
   - Before You Say ‘I Do’ (Wright)
   - Before ‘I Do’ (Krafsky)
   - The Five Love Languages (Chapman)
   - For Better and For Ever (Ruhnke)
   - Getting Ready for the Wedding (Parrotts)
   - Intended for Pleasure (What)
   - A Lasting Promise (Stanley et al.)
   - Love for a Lifetime (Dobson)
   - Love Life for Every Married Couple (Wheat)
   - Making Love Last Forever (Smalley)
   - Pre-Marriage Questions (Biehls)
   - The Most Important Year…(Woldgemuth & DeVries)
   - Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts (Parrotts)
   - Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work (Gottman & Silver)
   - So You’re Getting Married (Wright)
   - Ten Great Dates Before You Say ‘I Do’ (Arps)
   - Other (please specify)
25. **What content do you cover with couples? Please check all that apply:**
- The wedding ceremony
- Expectations
- Role perceptions
- Children/parenting
- Career
- Personality/temperament
- Relationship to God
- Communication
- Conflict Resolution
- Problem-solving
- Family of origin
- Finances/budgeting
- In-law relationships
- Friends
- Sexual relations
- Family planning
- Spiritual dimensions
- Legal Issues
- Other (Please specify)

26. **To what extent do you use mentor couples in your congregation to administer inventories or work with engaged couples?**
- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Almost Always
- Always

27. **To what extent are you satisfied with the materials you use for mentoring?**
- Very dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Neither dissatisfied or satisfied
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Not applicable—we do not use any specific materials

28. **What specific materials do you use during the mentoring process?**

29. **To what extent are you satisfied with the mentoring that takes place in your mentoring program?**
- Very dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Neither dissatisfied or satisfied
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied
30. To what extent are you satisfied with the process of recruiting and training mentors?
- Very dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Neither dissatisfied or satisfied
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

31. To what extent are you satisfied with the results from the mentoring program?
- Very dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Neither dissatisfied or satisfied
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

32. Have you ever signed a Community Marriage Policy (also known as a Marriage and Family Agreement, Community Marriage Agreement, Marriage Matters Agreement, or Community Marriage Covenant), agreeing to only perform weddings if a couple has completed premarital education?
- Yes
- No

33. To what extent do you follow all the guidelines specified within the Community Marriage Policy/ Agreement/ Covenant?
- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Almost Always
- Always

34. Please indicate your beliefs regarding premarital education and community support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Belief</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall, I feel as if the community supports my work in marriage education</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall, I feel that the community doesn't know about my work in marriage education</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>My church doesn't think I should be doing marriage education.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not feel adequately prepared to provide premarital education.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not feel adequately prepared to provide pastoral counseling.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>I believe premarital education is extremely important.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I believe premarital education effectively enhances couple relationships.

I am open to receiving training for premarital education from faith-based leaders.

I am open to receiving training for premarital education from people other than faith-based leaders.

I believe the premarital education that I provide effectively enhances couple relationships.

35. Please describe what type of marriage education services, if any, you (or others in your church) provide to married couples.

You are almost finished completing the survey!
This section is designed to understand the characteristics of clergy that are involved in Community Marriage Initiatives, and to ensure that we gather information from clergy with various backgrounds from across the country.

36. What state do you live in?

37. What city do you live in?

38. What county do you live in?

39. How many years have you been a clergy?

40. What is your current ministry position?
   - Senior pastor
   - Associate or Assistant pastor
   - Other (please specify)

41. How many months have you been in your current position? (i.e., 3 years = 36 months)

42. Approximately how many people (all ages) are active participants in your congregation?
43. With which religious denomination are you affiliated?

44. Are you licensed/credentialed within your organization?
   - Yes
   - No

45. How do you rate your involvement in the denomination of which you are affiliated?
   - Not applicable--no opportunities are available for involvement
   - Never involved
   - Rarely involved
   - Somewhat involved
   - Very involved
   - Extremely involved

46. Approximately how many years of experience do you have in providing premarital education?

47. Approximately how many weddings did you perform in 2006?

48. Approximately how many weddings did other clergy or staff members of your church perform in 2006?

49. Who coordinates the area of ministry in your congregation that would include marriage preparation/premarital education?
   - Senior Pastor
   - Associate/Assistant Pastor
   - Lay individual/couple
   - Other (please specify)

50. Approximately how many hours per week do you work as a clergy?

51. Are you a paid staff member at your local church, or a volunteer?
   - Paid staff member
   - Volunteer

There are just a few more questions left to go! Please answer the following questions about yourself, so we can ensure that we have information from clergy with various backgrounds from across the country.

52. What is the highest level of education you obtained?
8th grade or below
Some high school
High school graduate
Some college
College graduate (4 years)
Some graduate school
Master’s degree or equivalent
Doctorate degree

53. Did you attend seminary or a secular school for higher education?
   - Seminary
   - Secular college/university
   - Both seminary and a secular college/university

54. In college or seminary, how many classes did you take specifically about premarital education?

55. In college or seminary, how many classes did you take in which premarital education was not the entire focus, but was discussed to some extent?

56. In college or seminary, how many classes did you take specifically about counseling?

57. In college or seminary, how many classes did you take in which counseling was not the entire focus, but was discussed to some extent?

58. What is your age?

59. What is your race/ethnicity?

60. What is your sex?
   - Male
   - Female

61. What is your marital status?
   - Single--widowed
   - Single--never married
   - Single--divorced
   - Married--1st marriage
   - Married--2nd marriage
   - Married--3rd marriage or higher

62. How many biological, adopted, and/or stepchildren do you have?
63. What is your annual household gross income (before taxes)?

64. We recognize the important role that you, as a clergy, perform in the lives of many couples as they prepare for marriage and try to maintain a healthy marriage over time. Would you be willing to be contacted later by the researcher regarding further research of clergy’s premarital education practices and marriage education services? (Should you choose “yes,” your personal information will be kept private, and never distributed).

☐ Yes
☐ No

65. Thanks for agreeing to be contacted by the researcher. Please indicate your name, phone number, email, address, and best time to call. (Again, this information will be kept private, and never distributed).

66. The next step in our research is to examine the impact of specific premarital education programs and inventories on couples’ satisfaction and marital quality. Would you be willing to provide the names of some of the couples to whom you provided premarital education, in order for us to survey them about their experience? (This information will be kept private, and never distributed).

☐ Yes
☐ No

67. Thank you for agreeing to provide us with information about some of the couples with whom you have worked. Please provide your name, email address, address, phone number, and the best times to reach you. (Again, this information will be kept private, and never distributed). If you have already entered your contact information based on the previous question, you may leave this blank and continue.

PLEASE BE SURE TO HIT THE "DONE" BUTTON TO SUBMIT YOUR SURVEY BEFORE EXITING.

Thank you for your responses. Your completion of this survey can help improve the services and resources that Community Marriage Initiatives have available to clergy across the country. Thank you again.

Should you have any questions about the survey, you may contact Tabitha Staier at 904-654-5609, or trs04d@fsu.edu; or Dr. Robert Lee at 850-644-1412, or relee@fsu.edu.

Again, please be sure to hit the "done" button to submit your answers before exiting the survey. Thank you!
December 5, 2006

Tabitha Staier
Children’s Home Society of Florida
1801 Miccosukee Commons Drive
Tallahassee, FL 32308

Dear Ms. Staier:

You are very welcome to use any of the measures I developed in my study of the involvement of Oklahoma clergy in marriage preparation. I hope the measures will be useful as you complete your dissertation.

Of course, I would expect that you will give appropriate credit. In addition, I would like for you to send me information related to any measures you develop.

I wish you the best in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Joe D. Wilmeth, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Human Development and Family Studies

Mississippi State University
Figure 4

All CMI's according to geographic region and division
APPENDIX E

Figure 5

Participating CMIs according to geographic division and region

Note: 42 clergy did not indicate a CMI and could not be designated to a region.
APPENDIX F

Permission Statement from The Florida State University Institutional Review Board

Office of the Vice President For Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8673 FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 3/1/2007

To: Tabitha Staier

Address: 1907 Ted Hines Drive Tallahassee, FL 32308
Dept.: FAMILY & CHILD SCIENCE

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research
Community Marriage Initiatives and Clergy: The Impact of Support and Involvement on Clergy's Premarital Education Practices

The forms that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be Expedited per 45 CFR § 46.110(7) and has been approved by an expedited review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting research subjects.

If the project has not been completed by 2/28/2008 you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee.
You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report, in writing any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chair of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

Cc: Robert Lee, Advisor
HSC No. 2006.198
Email #1

Dear clergy:

A few days from now you will receive an email request to complete a brief questionnaire for an important research project being conducted by Tabitha Staier, a doctoral candidate at Florida State University.

It concerns the impact that (NAME OF INITIATIVE), a Community Marriage Initiative that is within your area, has on training and resources available to you in the community, and the influence that these resources have, if any, on your premarital education/counseling practices.

I am writing in advance because we know many people like to know ahead of time that they will be contacted. As a clergy, we recognize that you are the most likely professional to provide premarital services to couples. This study is important, because it will help government officials and community leaders understand whether your needs are being met regarding available training and resources for premarital education.

Thank you for your time and consideration. It is only with the generous help of people like you that our research can be successful.

Sincerely,

Tabitha Staier
Project Director
Florida State University
Email #2

Dear clergy:

I am writing to ask your help completing a survey of premarital education practices, resources, and training. We want to understand what impact the (NAME OF INITIATIVE) has on the premarital education practices of clergy. We are contacting clergy from initiatives across the country to ask what resources and training are available in your area and whether these influence your premarital education practices.

The link for the survey is: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=99833040926. Depending on your responses, the survey will take 5-20 minutes. If needed, you may begin the survey and return to it at a later time, and your responses will be saved.

The results may help leaders to better promote the initiative, and develop and implement other resources and training for clergy. Because clergy are the primary providers of premarital education, understanding your premarital education experiences will help us improve services to you and the couples with whom you work.

Your answers are completely confidential and will be reported only as general summaries, so no individual answers can be identified. Your name will never be connected to your answers in any way. Your participation is voluntary, and participation or refusal to participate will not have any effect on any future services you may receive from your local Community Marriage Initiative. However, by taking a few minutes to share your experiences and opinions about Community Marriage Initiatives and your premarital education practices, you can help us improve these efforts. If you prefer not to respond, or if by some chance you are not a clergy, please let us know by clicking on the link to the survey and indicating on the first question that you are not a clergy and/or do not wish to participate. If you do wish to participate, you can indicate consent by answering the first question, stating that you do wish to participate, and proceeding with the remainder of the survey.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 904-654-5609 or trs04d@fsu.edu, or Florida State University’s Institutional Review Board at 850-644-8633 or jth5898@fsu.edu.

Thank you very much for helping with this important study. Again, the link for the survey is: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=99833040926.

Sincerely,

Tabitha Staier
Project Director
Florida State University
Email #3

Dear clergy:

Last week a link to a questionnaire was sent to you. The questionnaire asks for your input about premarital education resources and practices and your involvement with (LIST YOUR INITIATIVE HERE).

If you have already completed the electronic questionnaire, please accept our sincere thanks. If not, please do so today. Only by asking people like you to share your experiences can we understand what premarital education resources you know about, which ones you use, and the influences it has on your premarital education with couples. Because a few clergy were invited to complete the questionnaire, each one is extremely important to be able to represent clergy in general.

Again, the web address to complete the survey is:
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=99833040926
If for some reason the link does not work, please copy and paste the website address into your browser and press “Enter.”

Thanks,

Tabitha Staier
Project Director
Florida State University
Email #4

Dear Clergy:

About two weeks ago I sent you a questionnaire to you via email that asked about your premarital education practices. If you have completed the survey, thank you very much. If not, please take a moment and complete the questionnaire. The link to the survey is: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=99833040926

The comments of people who have already responded include a wide variety of information about the resources they know about and what they do in premarital education or premarital counseling. We believe that the results are going to be very useful to community leaders and others.

We are writing again because of the importance that your questionnaire has for helping to get accurate results. Because we sent questionnaires to a few select clergy across the country, it is essential that those few respond so that we can be sure that the results are truly representative.

A few have written to say that they should not have received the questionnaire, because they are not a clergy or they do not wish to respond. If this applies to you, please let us know by answering only the first question on the survey.

Again, the link to the questionnaire is: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=99833040926

Sincerely,

Tabitha Staier
Project Director

P.S. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 904-654-5609 or trs04d@fsu.edu.
Email #5

Dear Clergy:

During the last month we have sent you several mailings about an important study we are conducting regarding premarital education resources and your premarital education/counseling practices.

The study is drawing to a close, and this is the last contact you will receive as part of the sample of clergy who we identified as part of (INSERT THE NAME OF INITIATIVE), a local Community Marriage Initiative.

We are sending this final contact because of our concern that people who have not responded may have different experiences than those who have responded. Hearing from everyone selected from across the nation helps assure that the survey results are as accurate as possible.

We want to assure you that your participation is voluntary. If you are not a clergy or you do not wish to respond, please let me know by answering only the first question in the survey. This would be very helpful.

Finally, I appreciate your willingness to consider our request as we conclude this effort to better understand clergy’s trainings and practices regarding premarital education. Thank you very much.

The link to the survey is:
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=99833040926

Sincerely,

Tabitha Staier
Doctoral Candidate and Researcher
Florida State University
Table 20

*Emails Sent By Each Community Marriage Initiative*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>No. of Clergy*</th>
<th>Total No. of Emails Sent</th>
<th>Email 1: Notice</th>
<th>Email 2: Survey Link</th>
<th>Email 3: Prompt #1</th>
<th>Email 4: Prompt #2</th>
<th>Email 5: Prompt #3</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

* = Email sent; O = Email was not sent. *Number of clergy adjusted to reflect emails that were designated as undeliverable by the Internet servers. **The number of clergy receiving emails was not provided to the researcher.
APPENDIX I

Table 21

Patterns of Missing Data (Includes Illegitimate and Legitimate Missing Data)

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<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>No. of Sessions*</th>
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*Variables influenced by skip logic.
APENDIX J

Table 22

*Religious denominations represented in the current survey*

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**TOTAL**

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## APPENDIX K

### Table 23

*Frequency of program use*

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## APPENDIX L

### Table 24

*Frequency of inventory use and training*

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<th>Inventory</th>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
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REFERENCES


Weaver, A. J. (1995). Has there been a failure to provide and support parish-based clergy in their role as frontline community mental health workers: A review. *The Journal of Pastoral Care, 49*, 129-147.


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Tabitha R. Staier

Education


Presentations


Certifications/Licenses

- American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (AAMFT) Supervisor Candidate, as of June 2006.
- Certified Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) Instructor. Completed 5/19/05.
- Certified Within My Reach (WMR) Instructor. Completed 6/22/06.