

PREMARITAL COUNSELING EFFECTIVENESS

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the
SCHOOL OF FAMILY AND CONSUMER RESOURCES
In Partial Fullment of the Requirements
For the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS
WITH A MAJOR IN COUNSELING AND GUIDANCE

In the Graduate College
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my sincerest appreciation to all those who have assessed me in this project over the last year. Special acknowledgment goes to the following people.

To my wife Jeri, and our children Reid and Heath. For their understanding for my missing too many dinners, baseball and soccer games.

To Dr. Oscar Christensen, his encouragement and sense of humor allowed me to keep this project in perspective and continue to meet the deadlines.

To Dr. Betty Newlon who patiently helped to get this project off the ground and who willingly shared her experience and insight.

To Dr. Jim Hine who took time out of his busy schedule to sit on my committee. His expertise and insight into the area of family and marriage was a great help.

To Glynn Laing - his friendship is greatly appreciated. His command of the English Language was invaluable. His willingness to look at "one more draft" will not be forgotten.

Lastly, to those couples who were willing to invest the time to complete and return the data so that this study could take place.

Dedication

With love to
Jeri Inman
her love and support was apparent
not only in word but in deed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	7
ABSTRACT	8
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION	9
Purpose of Study	13
Assumptions	14
Limitations	14
Definitions of Terms	15
Summary	17
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	19
Trying to Maintain a Marriage	19
Communication	22
Adlerian Communication Model	24
Behavioral Approach to Communication	26
Systems Approach to Communication	28
Marital Adjustment	28
Marriage Stability	30
Marital Satisfaction	30
Premarital Counseling	31
Summary	36
3. METHODS AND PROCEDURES	37
Engaged Encounter	37
Sample Selection and Distribution	39
Distribution of Instrument Packets	39
Instruments	40
The Dyadic Adjustment Scale	41
Reliability	42
Validity	43
Limitations of the Instrument	43
The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale	44
Validity	45
Reliability	46
Limitation of the Instrument	46

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Cont.)--

	Page
Demographic Survey and Questionnaire	46
Analysis of the Data	47
Summary	48
4. RESULTS	49
Introduction	49
Demographic Description of the Sample	49
Data Analysis of the Results from the Kansas Marital Scale	59
Additional Findings	60
Summary	64
5. SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	66
Purpose of Study	66
Population and Sample	67
Measurement	68
Summary of Findings	69
Discussion and Limitations	70
Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Research	73
APPENDIX A: LETTER TO THE PARTICIPANTS	76
APPENDIX B: LETTER OF INSTRUCTION	78
APPENDIX C: DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY	80
APPENDIX D: GENERAL QUESTIONNAIRE	83
APPENDIX E: KANSAS MARITAL SATISFACTION SCALE	87
APPENDIX F: DYADIC ADJUSTMENT SCALE	91
APPENDIX G: HUMAN SUBJECTS FORM	93
APPENDIX H: ENGAGED ENCOUNTER WEEKEND SCHEDULE	95
APPENDIX I: LETTERS OF PERMISSION	97
Selected Bibliography	100

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Biographical data of study sample	53
2. Summary of DAS and KMS and question 3 and question 7 from questionnaire one	54
3. Mean Scores of DAS and questions 3 and question 7 from questionnaire one based on gender and ethnicity	55
4. Marital satisfaction by ethnicity and gender using the KMS	56
5. The DAS looking at ethnicity and gender	57
6. Correlations	58
7. Critical areas ranked by importance in marriage preparation from question eight of questionnaire	63

ABSTRACT

Premarital training effectiveness of the Engaged Encounter program was examined through the use of self-report instruments. The Dyadic Adjustment Scale and the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale were used to measure marital adjustment and marital satisfaction of thirty-five couples by gender and ethnicity. A questionnaire specially designed for this study assessed the samples perceived effectiveness of the Engaged Encounters premarital training and rated the areas the sample felt most useful in preparing them for marriage. Suggestions for improvements were made.

Significant differences in marital adjustment were found by ethnicity. Ethnic couples in this sample appeared to have better marital adjustment in their marriages. These results must be viewed cautiously due to the fact that the Dyadic Adjustment Scale has not been normed for ethnic groups. The need for further study in this area is warranted.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Ben Franklin said: "Keep your eyes wide open before marriage, half shut afterward" (Ard, 1969, p. 3). Since the beginning of written history some form of marriage as an established practice has existed in almost all known societies (Stearn, 1985). In the book of Genesis 2:18, 21-24, the first book in the Bible, the practice of marriage is alluded to (Christopher, 1971). "Everywhere marriage is regulated. Even primitive tribes have rules. In advanced civilizations, laws cover certain aspects of marriage" (Albrecht, & Bock, 1969, p. 165). In this country each state has its own laws that govern marriage. Marriage, of course, is usually considered a happy occasion, but for many couples who enter into marriage unprepared, their cheerful celebrations often turn into a solemn funeral procession of marital rubble.

In the United States marriages are continuing to be dissolved at alarming rates (Bagarozzi & Rauen, 1981). This country has one of the highest marriage/divorce rates of all the industrial nations (Goode, 1987). Each year over two million spouses divorce (Tiemann & Danto, 1992). David Knox in his book Mega Trends (1980) identified trends in fifteen areas of marriage and the family. Among his

list was the prediction of a higher divorce rate (Spreadbury, & Hurzeler, 1983). The divorce rate (per year/thousand) of women over the age of fifteen has been steadily rising: 1920- 7.00, 1940- 8.5, 1960- 9.2, 1970- 15.0, 1980- 23.5 (Keaton, 1985). Divorce is projected to end approximately fifty percent of all young adult marriages (Grunlan, 1983).

The need for effective premarital counseling is easily illustrated by these divorce-rate statistics. Many couples enter into marriage with a variety of romantic notions about what married life will be like. Engaged couples hold many unrealistic expectations and untested assumptions about the nature of married life (Bagarozzi, 1981). The most common types of false expectations that couples have who are marrying for the first time are:

(1) "Love will conquer all." The engaged couple views that the love they hold for one another will allow them to forever overlook those "cute" little quirks of their partner. They believe the love they have will stand against the strongest of personal and social pressures.

(2) "My mate will always put me first." In many of the engaged-couples' relationships, the partner has put the other person at the center of their lives up to this point. Such couples naively believe this behavior will continue at the same degree.

(3) "Money will not matter much." This belief is very closely related to the "Love will conquer all" syndrome. They view that struggling together to make ends meet will be romantic, and draw them closer together. While this may indeed happen for some couples, this is not the norm. The stress of meeting the financial demands of a modern household has been the cause of untold marital problems.

(4) "Sex will always be exciting and intimate." They have not experienced the effect that problems in married life have on a couple's intimate relations. The ups and downs of excitement and sometimes lackluster have not been encountered yet.

(5) "We will hardly ever argue." Some couples have spent very few long periods of time together before they get married. They are willing to overlook many behaviors and attitudes in their partner that will greatly irritate them in the long run. As time progresses these small irritations have a way of multiplying (Buehler & Wells, 1981, p. 454-455).

In general, engaged couples tend to idealize and exaggerate their lover's positive attributes, and minimize and rationalize their negative attributes (Buehler & Wells, 1981).

Premarital counseling dates back to the early 1930's. The first premarital education program was developed at the Merrill-Palmer Institute in 1932 (Senediak, 1990). One of the first premarital counseling programs was established at the Philadelphia Marriage Counsel in 1941 (Bagarozzi, & Rauven, 1981). It allowed couples to gain a perspective on married life by giving them the opportunity to discuss interpersonal difficulties and information on married life.

Since those early beginnings premarital programs have been developed to meet the specific needs of a variety of populations, such as: Dating couples (Schlein, 1971), couples where one of the partners is a minor (Shonick, 1972), members of a particular religious population (Apple, 1970; Gangsei, 1971; Write, 1977), and teenage couples (Rolfe, 1976; Rue, 1972). Many states have enacted laws that encourage young couples under the age of 18 to seek some form of premarital counseling (Bagarozzi, & Rauen, 1981). Many religious denominations have taken note of the high divorce rates and now strongly encourage premarital counseling. An example of this is the Catholic Church which developed the Engaged Encounter and popular Marriage Encounter programs in an attempt to reduce divorce and strengthen marriages.

The goals for premarital programs are likely to be preventative and educational in nature rather than remedial

and therapeutic. This is primarily due to the fact that premarital intervention is usually practiced in the early developmental phase of a couple's life (Bagarozzi, 1981). The skills that will be the most useful tend to be utilitarian and easily generalized into the lives of the couples. Guldner (1971) believes that it would be more effective to work with couples shortly after they have been married for a while and after the honeymoon period has worn off. He feels that the couples would have more realistic attitudes and higher motivation in learning the skills necessary for a good relationship. At the very least the premarital programs should be designed to do follow up once the couple has married.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of the premarital training program known as Engaged Encounter. It was also the purpose of this study to more clearly understand what newly married couples felt about topics and skills that would be most useful in meeting their marital needs. It was hoped the results of this research could be generalized in helping premarital programs identify strengths and weaknesses in their training. It was also hoped the data from this research study could be used in the development of new premarital counseling and training programs.

Assumptions

The validity of this study rests upon the following assumptions:

1. The samples can be generalized.
2. The responses were honest and correct.
3. The instruments used were valid and reliable.
4. The self-designed instrument was valid and reliable.
5. All couples are still married.
6. Each spouse completed the instruments independently.
7. All subjects understand and read the English language well enough to correctly complete the instruments.
8. Engage Encounter's training has been consistent over the previous year during the time the sample participated in the program.

Limitations

The limitations of this study were:

1. Non-random sample
2. Scales used not being normed on parts of subject population
3. Size of sample and lack of generalization that can reliably take place
4. Shortness of samples' married life for significant problems to develop (less than one year)
5. Variables in the different leaders of Engage Encounter's program (different backgrounds and training)

Definitions

For the purpose of this study it is necessary to define specific terminology so the terms used will be clearly understood.

1. Program Effectiveness: Refers to (a) The degree to which the subjects were able to retain and implement information from their premarital counseling, and (b) The acknowledgement that the implementation of the learned material or skills made a measurable difference in helping the subject work out a favorable outcome.
2. Marital Satisfaction: Refers to a subjective happiness with the relationship and a desire for its continuance (Filsinger, 1984; L'Abate and Goodrich, 1980).
3. Marriage: Is a type of interpersonal relationship which a culture finds significant enough to regulate by law (Cushman & Cahn, 1985). It is the process by which a man and a woman make a public and legal declaration of their personal relationship to the community and family.
4. Marital Adjustment: For the purposes of this study is a process, the outcome of which is determined by the degree of (1) troublesome marital differences, (2) interpersonal tensions and personal anxiety,

(3) marital satisfaction, (4) dyadic cohesion, (5) consensus on matters of importance to marital functioning (Spanier, 1976).

5. Measurement: The reference standard of sample used for the measurement; quantitative comparison of properties (Morris, 1978).
6. Premarital counseling: The process of helping couples who are considering marriage to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their relationship, come to a realistic understanding of their preparedness to enter into a marriage commitment, to surface and eliminate potential problems, and teach helpful skills that will enhance the relationship.
7. Engagement: A specified period before marriage during which a couple announces their intent to be married and begin preparations to become married.
8. Engaged Encounter: Engaged Encounter began as an independent program from Marriage Encounter in 1968. Its goals include preparing couples of all ages for married life. In 1975 the Catholic Engaged Encounter became a national organization. Recently it has become an international premarital program. The program investigated in this study is the district 5, unit 1, CORE training group.

9. The Core: The CORE is the entire Engaged Encounter community consisting of priest, team couples who help lead, and support couples. The support couples help in the general running of the practical side of the program (e.g. writing letters, playing music, baby sitting, etc.).
10. Individual Counseling: One or both members of the couple attended individual premarital counseling.

Summary

Premarital counseling and educational programs have experienced rapid growth since the early 70's. Premarital programs have diversified and specialized to meet the needs of different populations. It is unclear how effective many of these programs are. Many of them lack a theoretical underpinning and are difficult to evaluate.

The divorce rate in the United States would seem to point to the necessity of a program where couples can evaluate their readiness for marriage, and have the opportunity to gain critical skills needed in a successful marriage. This study evaluates one of the programs attempting to prepare couples for marriage.

The following chapters present a review of the literature pertinent to this study, an overview of the methodology employed, the results and analysis of the

study, and finally a discussion of the implications and possibilities for further research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, a review of literature relevant to this study is described in two parts. The first section looks at marriage and issues pertaining to this institution. Problems of marriage maintenance are addressed. The Adlerian, Behavioral and Systems theory perspective of critical factors in marriage communication are considered. The concepts of marital satisfaction, marital adjustment and marriage stability are discussed.

Section two reviews the status of premarital counseling and educational programs. A survey of programs that have been studied and their findings are discussed. The question of the effectiveness of premarital programs and what they are actually teaching engaged couples is addressed.

Trying to Maintain a Marriage

Many barriers add to the already difficult task of maintaining a marriage in today's fast-paced and mobile society. Traditional support networks are often lacking as a resource due to the mobility of our society. In 1974 the average family moved every five years (Mace, & Mace 1974). The fact that many households have both partners working

makes the cultivation of their relationship difficult. Norman Wright (1981) in his book Premarriage Counseling, states four changes in our society have taken place, historically changing the nature of today's marriages. The first change is that the traditional extended family of the past no longer exists. People are busy striving for independence and self-fulfillment. Many couples have little interest in taking care of their aging parents themselves. Without this responsibility, couples have more freedom to leave their spouses. They have more financial power, and it is easier to leave the relationship.

The second change is that the choice of a mate is left entirely up to the individuals involved. While there is a lot to be said for individual choice, too many couples base their decision to marry entirely on romantic love. Romantic love is based on feelings only. This usually results in a shallow basis for an enduring marriage, and the relationship starts out unhealthy.

The third change is that the fixed roles of the relationship have become fluid. Couples have moved from a one-vote system to a two-vote system. Females have an ever increasing amount of power and authority in society and in marriage. Adjustment to these new roles causes confusion and ambiguity in each partner.

The fourth change that has effected marriage is that of sexual morals. Differences in sexual attitudes and behaviors in partners can cause marital difficulties.

Four other common factors attributed to why marriages fail are stated by Wright (1992). The first is that one or both persons fail to understand the developmental changes individuals go through and how these might effect their marriage. The second is that people have an inadequate basis upon which to build their security and identity. Thirdly, many persons come into marriage with unresolved family issues. They have acquired many of their families' dysfunctional behaviors. Lastly, some people enter into a marriage relationship that they were never prepared for and their expectations were totally unrealistic.

Freeman (1982) states that marriage is not a ready-made affair. It involves a developmental process which requires ongoing input throughout the family life span. He divides the stages a marriage goes through into four phases. The first phase is one of adjustment and realigning of expectations. A range of emotional and practical tasks have to be learned. The learning of skills and attitudes that will enable one to cooperate with his partner in working toward common goals is important.

The second phase is the child rearing phase. Learning to operate as a triad can be a difficult task for young couples. A whole new set of tasks involving being a mother and a father must be learned (Freeman, 1982). Parenting, like most behaviors, is a learned behavior.

The next phase is the middle phase. At this phase it is the task of the couple to begin to relinquish the emotional ties that may interfere with the maturation process of their teenagers. Their influence is greatly lessened and replaced by the child's peer group. The mother's domestic responsibilities lessen, and the couple start to have more time for themselves.

The final stage is called the child-leaving stage. Once again the couple is on their own, and the "empty nest" becomes a reality. Many couples are unable to rekindle the intimacy and companionship they had experienced early in their marriage. They must once again learn to adjust to a new set of developmental tasks.

Communication

The dominate American culture puts a great importance on sharing, open communication, and keeping romance in marriage (McGoldrick & Garcia-Preto, 1982). Romance, although not considered essential historically, is highly valued and expected in the United States (McGoldrick &

Garcia-Preto, 1984). The glue that holds marriages together is not romance, however, but communication.

Researchers are increasing the amount of attention given to the role that communication plays in the marital relationship. Satir (1972) perceived communication as an all-encompassing umbrella effecting everything that transpires between humans. She pointed out that because the communication process is learned, a person can learn new skills in communicating if taught adequately. If communication becomes degraded, Navran (1967) suggests the relationship will suffer. Communication is defined as: (1) to have an exchange of ideas; (2) to express oneself in such a way that one is readily and clearly understood; and (3) the exchange of thoughts, messages, or the like, as by speech, or writing (Morris et al., 1978).

Up to 65% of the meaning of a message may be transmitted through non-verbal communication (Cormier & Cormier, 1985). At least seven categories of non-verbal communication have been identified by Burgoon, Buller, and Hawes (1984): Kinesis (body movement), haptics (touch), physical appearance, artifacts (objects and environment), proxemics (distance), chronemics (time), and vocalics (voice dynamics). Also important to the accuracy of communication is the context of the message (Mehrabian & Reed, 1968). In a 1973 report by the American Psychiatric

Association, it was reported that communication problems were present in 85% of the marriages that were considered to be dysfunctional. Beck and Jones (1973) reported the areas most often reported by couples as causing difficulties were communication and sex.

While most couples and therapists agree that communication is one of the primary goals for maintaining a healthy marriage, it is another matter to reach agreement on how to go about teaching those skills. There is very little research data that demonstrates how long it takes for a couple to change their dysfunctional communication patterns, and then embrace a new pattern that will be more functional in the marriage (Adam & Gingras, 1982).

There are many different workshops and training programs teaching communication skills to couples. Different programs use different theoretical approaches. Three of the theoretical approaches to communication being presently used will be discussed. These are the Adlerian approach, the Behavioral approach, and the Systems approach to communication.

Adlerian Communication model

The Adlerian approach is very compatible with many other counseling systems. This is true with interpersonal and systems theories (Kern, Matheny, & Patterson, 1978). The teaching of communication skills in the Adlerian

communication model fits nicely with both a systems perspective (Satir, Bateson, et al.) and behavioral theory as described by Jacobson and Margolin (1979). In an Adlerian model, communication is based on equality and a sense of social responsibility. Hugh (1989) describes good communication as being "level", and poor communication as being "vertical". Level communication must be expressed with warmth, sincerity, empathy and respect. The components of level communication are: (a) disclosing thoughts by revealing what one thinks about oneself and ones partner, and things, places, or events; (b) teaching by giving facts, and by providing guidance and direction based on an authoritative source; (c) seeking to understand by paraphrasing, asking questions to clarify and hypothesizing about meanings; (d) negotiating by discussing alternatives, disagreeing in a respectful manner, making requests and compromising; (e) committing to a direction of decision; (f) encouraging by making empathic statements, paraphrasing feelings, recognizing the other person's efforts, and paraphrasing the other person's thoughts in the form of declarations; (g) disclosing feelings by revealing one's own feeling about self, the other partner and things, events or places (Kern, Hawes, & Christensen, 1989, p. 127-134).

Hugh (1989) describes vertical communication as:

(a) soliciting attention by means of behaviors such as bragging, interrupting, monopolizing conversation, tone of voice, etc.; (b) bossing by talking down to the other person, ordering or pushing, whining, or complaining of being ill, etc.; (c) punishing by blaming, demeaning, finding fault or using sarcasm; (d) distancing by acting as if disinterested, aloof, using humor that creates distance, wandering in conversation, or being secretive, etc.; (e) surrendering by abandoning one's own wants, always agreeing, always providing attention to an attention seeker, acting fearful; etc. (Kern et al., 1989, p. 131-132).

Couples learn to recognize these categories and then make appropriate behavior changes by practicing the newly learned communication skill. A number of techniques help to facilitate the process. Because the entire process is highly structured, regressing back into a dysfunctional communication pattern will be made difficult. Homework is often given so that the couple may practice what they learned in their natural environment and generalize the skills to their daily living.

Behavioral Approach to Communication

Behaviorists, Jacobson and Margolin, (1979) state that good communication consists of four primary goals. A

variety of techniques can be implemented to reach these goals.

The first goal is to have clear communication between the partners. Confusion can result when the content of the message sent is not interpreted with the same intent the sender anticipated. Couples must learn to ask for clarifications, and be willing to fully explain their position. Training the partners in empathic skills and non-verbal communication is often performed.

The second goal is to develop problem-solving skills. This can only be accomplished after there is clear communication going on between the couple. Specific negotiating skills are taught such as contingency contracting, responding directly to criticism, not using colored statements, paraphrasing and rehearsal.

The third goal is to promote positive verbal interaction. The couple is taught to actively seek out positive statements that can be shared with the partner. The statements need to not be vague and should be truthful.

The final goal of effective communication is to encourage the appropriate expression of feelings. Couples are taught in a progressive manner to express their feelings appropriately and without fear. The therapist will often model the working out of all four of the goals to enable the couple to learn.

Systems Approach to Communication

The basic approach of systems theory is to view the family as an interactive social system as opposed to discrete individuals (Sherman, & Dinkmyer, 1987). The family system is said to be in homeostasis when there is agreement, and the power is perceived as being in balance (Haley, 1976). Each time an inside force (a family member) or an outside force interacts on the system, homeostasis is lost. The response is either a positive or negative feedback loop (Piercy, & Sprenkle 1986). A negative feedback loop is one that operates to limit the deviation from the norm or homeostasis. A positive feedback loop increases the deviation from the norm.

"Within systems theory, faulty communication occurs when the message received is not the one sent" (Hawes, 1984; p. 46). The therapist's goals are to teach the couples about the presenting problem as defined by systems theory, to substitute positive interactional sequences, and to insure second-order change takes place (the entire system changes). (Sherman, & Dinkmyer, 1987, p. 185).

Marital Adjustment

The marriage relationship is often studied using concepts such as adjustment, satisfaction, marital quality, happiness and stability (Spanier, 1979; Sabatelli, 1988; Burnet, 1987). Spanier (1979) defined marital adjustment as

a process, the outcome of which is determined by the degree of troublesome dyadic differences, interpersonal tensions and personal anxiety, dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, and consensus on matters of importance to dyadic functioning. (p. 294)

In an attempt to evaluate and improve marital therapy, clinical workers began to study the concept of marital adjustment during the 1960s and 1970s (Filsinger, 1984). Burgess and Cottrell (1939) defined marital adjustment as "the integration of the couple in a union in which the two personalities are not merely merged or submerged, but interact to complement each other for mutual satisfaction and the achievement of common objectives. The emphasis is upon intercommunication, interstimulation and participation in common activities" (p. 10).

Other components offered by L'Abate and Goodrich that relate to marital adjustment are: (a) the level of education, the higher the education the better chance for marital adjustment; (b) socioeconomic factor, the lower the social class the better the chance for poor marital adjustment; (c) vocation factors; (d) ethnic/racial factors; (e) physical disorders, the better the health, the better material adjustment; (f) mental factors, such as psychiatric disorders can decrease marital adjustment; (g) evidence shows poor communication between couples is

related to the amount of marital adjustment they feel (p. 60-72).

Bahr (1982) reported other factors that also seem to effect marital adjustment. He adds the happiness of the parents' marriages and their level of education will effect their children chances for marital adjustment.

Marriage Stability

True marriage stability refers to a marriage that ends with the death of one or both spouses and not by divorce or separation (Lenthal, 1977). Stability is probably the result of internal and external effects. Stability is the result of the couple's willingness to work through problems based on the resources available to them, coupled with the degree of difficulty or lack of options to separate from the marriage. Bahr (1978) found the age couples marry and if they marry because of pregnancy, effects the stability of marital relationships.

Marital Satisfaction

Marital satisfaction, unlike marital adjustment, is based on a partner's attitude toward their mate. While marital satisfaction is subjective, and marital adjustment is presumably an objective measure (Burr, 1973). Marital satisfaction has more to do with the perceived amount of

happiness between the couple and their desire to remain together (Filsinger, 1984).

Premarital Counseling

Historically, helping couples assess and improve their relationships in the context of marriage has been accomplished by one of two methods: (1) Marital counseling and/or enrichment, and (2) premarital counseling and/or education. Senediak (1990) defines premarital education programs as a "skill-training procedure which aims at providing couples with information on ways to improve their relationship once they are married" (p. 26). She goes on to state that most of the programs are time limited and content specific. The program goals are usually educative and use leader oriented agendas (l'Abate, 1981).

There has been a concern by researchers that many of the premarital programs do not appear to be based upon any particular model or theory. Bagarozzi & Rauen (1981) seem to agree with the need of a program to be founded on some sort of model of human interactions. They state that a well- designed program would be expected to have a developmental orientation and take into account developmental tasks that all couples should attend to in marriage. Bagarozzi (1981) states Duvall (1971) lists a number of tasks a couple must attend to in order to have a successful relationship. They are:

(a) preparing for the physical maintenance of the couple; (b) securing, allocating and planning the use of financial resources; (c) devising patterns of authority and control; (d) arranging for the assignment of familial roles and tasks; (e) developing a mutually satisfying sexual relationship; (f) establishing a system of intellectual and emotional communication; (g) establishing a workable relationship with relatives and friends; (h) planning for a family, if desired; and (i) evolving patterns of decision making, problem solving and conflict negotiation. (p. 18)

Most of the premarital programs include a standard range of topics such as communication skills, conflict resolution, decision-making skills, financial planning, spirituality and family relationships. Many programs do not have the time to cover all the above topics, but almost, without exception, the area of interpersonal communication is presented.

There has been concern by some researchers (Senediak, 1990; Bagarozzi, & Rauen; Giblin, 1986) about the outcome studies many of the programs conduct. Criticism tends to focus on the lack of some form of developmental model on which to measure the program's content, the use of follow-up testing by self-report-paper-and-pencil instruments

only, and the short time frame in which the follow-up studies are conducted.

The question of, when is the correct time for helping couples who are going to be married has been raised. (Eastman, 1983). Premarital programs assume that a couple has enough experience in the relationship to be interested in the body of knowledge and skill which the experts say they need. As stated before, Guldner (1971) feels it would be more realistic to be in contact with the couple after they had been married for awhile, and have become more realistic in their outlook on marriage. Premarital programs also assume the couples are open to the interventions even though many couples are required by their church, parents or law to attend. The programs also seem to assume the couple's relationship and communication skill is at a level where they are willing to take new input, and make changes in their lives (Eastman, 1983).

Bagarozzi & Rauen (1981) studied thirteen programs in the United States, Senediak (1990) based her data on twenty-three premarital programs in Australia, Pino (1982) assessed three premarital programs including Engaged Encounter, and Giblin (1986) used eighty-five studies of premarital, marital and family enrichment. These studies concluded the following:

Bagarozzi & Rauen (1981) stated the most common means of communicating the program content and skills training was "(a) didactic lectures and discussions, (b) structured and unstructured group and dydactic experiences, and (c) a combination of both dydactic and experiential methods" (p. 18). It was also their opinion the premarital programs should have at least the following goals.

(1) To provide the opportunity to understand and discuss the developmental tasks they will face in marriage.

(2) To help couples to learn behavioral skills that will enable them to successfully resolve the developmental tasks that their relationship will encounter. These include conflict negotiation, problem solving, communication training, and positive behavioral-change strategies.

(3) To allow the opportunity for the couple to reevaluate their intent to marry (p. 14-18).

Senediak (1990) criticizes the lack of a theoretical basis from which course content was derived, the lack of voluntarism of couples who are referred by outside sources, and that few controlled studies of the programs are being done.

Giblin (1986) makes a number of relevant suggestions that would help a premarital program be more effective.

(1) His findings suggest that post-wedding

sessions would provide an effective supplement to the premarital component training during the first year of marriage. Mace (1984) agrees with this finding.

(2) Training given over a longer period of time than the usual weekend or week long training significantly improves the couple's conflict resolution skills (Bader, Microys, Sinclair, Willet and Conway, 1980).

(3) Premarital counseling was most effective when the marriage was imminent and both partners had a stated purpose for joining the program (Miller, 1971).

(4) Assessment of the couple's needs should be done in time frames of at least one year after the training (Schumm & Denton, 1979).

(5) Giblin (1986) also concludes,

The present study indicates that little change can be expected from a brief format. Greatest changes can be expected for those programs using an experiential, behavioral, rehearsal process; little change can be expected for the lecture and discussion process. If the program runs for twelve hours or longer they will likely show a greater change than the briefer formats. Finally, programs diminish over time, indicating a need to help the participants generalize their gains to the home setting, perhaps using some form of follow-up session(s) (p. 91)

Summary

The literature review was discussed in two parts. The first part looked at marriage and relevant issues, such as concepts of communication, marriage adjustment, marriage satisfaction, and marriage stability. Communication was discussed from an Adlerian, behavioral, and systems theoretical perspective.

In the second section the status of premarital programs was addressed. A survey and conclusions of studies involving premarital programs were discussed. Special attention was paid to recommendations for designing more effective premarital counseling programs.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of premarital counseling, specifically, premarital counseling in the Engage Encounter program through the Catholic Church. This program was chosen because it is a national program and because there is a concerted attempt to use the same materials at each location.

This chapter will describe the sample and the distribution used in the study; the content, reliability, and validity of the instruments and surveys; the procedures used to gather the data; the format and materials of Engage Encounter; and the data analysis. The Humans Subjects Committee at the University of Arizona exempted this research from review per [45 CFR Part 46.101 (b) (2)]. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Appendix G).

Engaged Encounter

Engage Encounter is the name of the premarital training program which this study assessed. The following is a brief description of the events which take place during the weekend training.

Once the couples arrive at the proper destination, the Engaged Encounter weekend begins. Presentations start promptly at 7:30 Friday night and end Sunday afternoon after the 1:00 PM Mass. The weekend is led by the priest, and the team couples. Team couples are divided up into the senior couple (married at least seven years) and a junior couple (married less than seven years). The presentations are developed with the aid of standardized guides by each of the team couples. The guides allow for the same basic content to be shared as it interfaces with the individual personalities of each team couple. The teams are asked to make their presentation as practical and personable as possible. The order of the presentations is strictly adhered to, although the time schedule is somewhat more flexible. The emphasis of the presentations is divided up into three areas: Self, as a couple, and in relationship to others (the world) (see appendix H). After each presentation the couples are given questions to answer apart from one another. They return back together to discuss their answers with their partners. During specific designated times group discussions are held also (see appendix H). The team couples serve as models for the other couples during the weekend. The schedule for the Sunday program takes on more of the religious tone of Catholic beliefs. Marriage is described as a sacrament. A

formal statement of betrothal is written and the day ends with attendance at Mass.

Sample Selection and Distribution

Data were obtained from a non-random sample of 249 couples who had completed the Tucson, Arizona based Engaged Encounter program between December 1991 and September 1992. Attempts were made to contact all the couples by the last phone number available when they had attended premarital counseling. One hundred thirty four of the couples were successfully contacted by phone and 115 of the couples could no longer be found by available data. Of the (134) couples who were successfully contacted, (104) agreed to participate in the study. All participating couples were volunteers. The total number of returned packets represented (36) couples or (72) Individuals.

Distribution of Instrument Packets

Instrument packets were mailed to all couples who agreed to participate in the study. The couples were asked to refrain from including their names on any returned forms so their identity would be secure and confidentiality maintained. Voluntary participation in the study was clearly addressed in the initial letter entitled " To the participants" (Appendix A). Each couple received an instrument packet containing the following materials:

1. Self-addressed, stamped envelope for the return of the packets;
2. Letter to the participant explaining the study and that participation was voluntary;
3. Letter of instructions explaining what the packets contained and how to answer the questions on the instruments (Appendix B);
4. One each of the Demographic Survey (Appendix C);
5. One each of the Custom Questionnaire (Appendix D);
6. One each of the Kansas Marital Adjustment Scale (Appendix E);
7. One each of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Appendix F);

The couples were asked to return the completed packets as soon as possible but no later than two weeks from the time they first received them.

Instruments

Two established instruments were used in this study along with a two-page demographic survey (Appendix C) and a five-page questionnaire (Appendix D). All instruments were self-report pencil-and-paper formats. The Dyadic Adjustment Scale and the Kansas Marital Adjustment Scale were used to measure the degree of marital adjustment and marital satisfaction. These two instruments were chosen

because the variables measured by these instruments reflect on how couples view the effectiveness of their premarital training.

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale

The Dyadic adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976) has been used in over 1,000 scientific investigations as a measure of quality of adjustment to marriage and similar dyadic relationships. The DAS has been translated into four languages: French, German, Spanish, and Polish (Spanier, 1989).

This instrument was developed by Spanier (1976) for use with couples living together. Spanier was interested in the adjustment achieved by a couple at any given point in time. Adjustment according to Spanier was the degree a couple was able to work through: 1) troublesome dyadic differences; 2) tensions and personal anxiety; 3) dyadic satisfaction; 4) dyadic cohesion; and 5) consensus on matters of importance to dyadic functioning (Sabatelli, 1988).

The test consists of 32 items that were reduced from an original pool of 300 items. These items were taken from already existing scales that had been used to measure marital adjustment (Spanier, 1976). A panel of judges reviewed the content of each item, being careful to eliminate any items with low variances or highly skewed

response patterns. Factor analysis confirmed the presence of the conceptual dimensions of adjustment, and only items that were able to discriminate between married and recently divorced people were allowed to remain (Sabatelli, 1988). The DAS consists of four subscales. The four subscales are Dyadic Satisfaction (10 items), Dyadic Consensus (13 items), Affectional Expression (4 items), and Dyadic Cohesion (5 items) (Spanier, 1976).

The respondents are asked to rate their degree of agreement or disagreement to the 32 items. The scores for the DAS range from 0 to 151. The higher scores represent a better adjustment to marriage and the lower scores less of an adjustment (Spanier, 1989). The test can be easily completed in under 15 minutes. It is a pencil and paper test. As a research instrument the DAS has been used in thousands of studies of marital adjustment and marital satisfaction (Spanier, 1989).

Reliability

The scale and subscale appear to be highly reliable. The Cronbach's alpha = .96 for the entire scale. The subscales range in the following: Dyadic Consensus .73 to .92, Dyadic Cohesion .72 to .86, Affection Expression .58 to .73, and Dyadic Satisfaction .77 to .94 (Spanier, 1989). Test-retest studies suggest that DAS score are stable over

time (Stein, Girodo, & Dotzenroth, 1982; Belsky, spanier, and Rovine, 1983).

Validity

The validity of the DAS has been measured and established through various means. Content validity was established by a panel of judges involved in the original selection of the 32 items. Concurrent validity was established with the correlation of the Locke-Wallas Marital Adjustment Scale (Locke and Wallace, 1959). Criterion-related validity was established using marital status as the criterion ($p < .001$).

Limitations of the Instrument

The most common criticisms of the DAS is that the four subscales do not clearly demonstrate four unique and distinct measures. The data from studies suggest the measure is unidimensional. As a more global measure of marital functioning the DAS is believed to be a valid and reliable instrument.

Problems also arise with the subscales having a different number of items and the items having different response categories (Sbatelli, 1988).

The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale

The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMS; Schumm et al., 1981) also has had wide use. Concurrent validity of

the DAS with the KMS has been validated in at least two other studies (Schumm et al., 1986; Grover et al., 1984). The KMS was found to correlate significantly with six of the seven items from the satisfaction subscale of the DAS (Grover et al., 1984). Five of the correlations were significant to ($p < .001$) and one to ($p < .04$). In another study (Schumm et al., 1986), the KMS was found to correlate significantly with the total DAS (.83) and with the dyadic satisfaction subscale (.72) with both correlations significant at ($p < .001$).

The KMS was designed to be a short and direct assessment of marital satisfaction. The theoretical foundation of the measure is based on Spanier and Cole's (1976) conceptual distinction between satisfaction with spouse, marriage, and the marriage relationship (Sabatelli, 1988). The scale consists of three items where respondents are directly asked how satisfied they are with their partner as a spouse, with their marriage, and with their relationship with their spouse (Schumm et al., 1981). The same seven response categories are used for all questions. The categories are as follows: extremely dissatisfied, very dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, mixed, somewhat satisfied, very satisfied, and extremely satisfied. The test is a paper-and-pencil test and can be completed in two to three minutes. Scoring for the scale is done by

simply adding up the score for each item with a possible total score for each item of 3 to 21 points (Schumm et al., 1981).

Validity

Concurrent validity for the KMS is derived from its correlations with the Quality Marriage Index (QMI) and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, and particularly the Dyadic Satisfaction subscale of the DAS (Grover et al., 1984; Schumm et al., 1986).

Criterion-related validity is evidenced for the KMS in the test's ability to discriminate between wives from intact marriages and wives who had recently separated (Schumm et al., 1985). The mean score for the 212 wives on the KMS was 17.29; of the group of 81 wives who scored zero on marital social desirability, they had a mean score of 14.68; the eight separated wives had a mean score of 10.13; and a mean score of 7.80 among the zero marital social desirability subgroup ($p < .01$) (Schumm, Anderson et al., 1985, p. 719). Schumm et al. (1986) concluded, "The scale seems to be able to assess one dimension of marital quality (satisfaction) with enough items to estimate internal consistency reliability while not requiring the space required for longer scales" (p. 385).

Reliability

Research on the KMS indicates its reliability to be very good. Cronbach Alphas ranging from .89 to .93 were consistently seen in a series of studies (Schumm et al., 1981; Grover et al., 1984; Schumm, Scanlon, et al., 1983).

Test-retest reliability over a 10-week period was found to be .71 (Mitchell et al., 1983). This represents a very acceptable stability between pre and post tests scores.

Limitation of the Instrument

Two problem areas of the KMS tend to be commonly brought to bear on its use. The first concern was brought up by Schumm regarding its tendency to depart significantly in normality in terms of skewness and kurtosis (Schumm, Nichols et al., 1983). A second common concern has to do with the tendency of the test takers to respond in socially desirable ways (Schumm et al., 1983). Despite these shortcomings, the scale's ease of use and good validity make it an attractive instrument for this study.

Demographic Survey and Questionnaire

The remaining instruments were specifically designed for this study. The demographic survey's (Appendix C) design was based upon observations and suggestions from pertinent research in the field (Senediak, 1990; Giblin,

1986; Pino, 1982). There were no standardized norms with which to compare results. Ten changes were made to the original surveys based on criticisms from subjects who participated in a pilot study. These changes were incorporated into the final form of the surveys sent to the studies' participants.

The Questionnaire (Appendix D) consisted of 15 pencil-and-paper questions designed to assess the subjects' attitude toward their premarital training, and what they found useful and not so useful. The demographic survey allowed a look at who was responding to the survey. Both instruments take approximately 25 - 35 minutes to complete.

Analysis of the Data

Each husband and wife packet returned, was coded so all responses were numerical variables. The data from all (35) couples were entered into the data file as a single case. This allowed the data to be used for single individuals or for couples. Data were analyzed using Pearson Correlation Coefficient, descriptives, cross tabs, frequencies, variance and t tests in SPSS-PC+ Batch System program. Demographics were outlined by the use of cross-tabs and descriptive tables.

Summary

This chapter discussed how the sample was selected, how the data were collected, and a discussion of the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale. In addition the Dyadic Adjustment Scale was presented along with the survey instruments. Finally, the methods for analysis of the data were delineated.

In Chapter 4 a discussion of the results of the study and how it relates to the effectiveness of premarital counseling will be presented.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of the premarital training program known as Engage Encounter through the self report of couples who had participated in the program. Marital adjustment and marital satisfaction were measured by the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, and the Marital Satisfaction subscale of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale.

A demographic description of the sample couples is given first. This will be followed by a discussion of the data analyses of the sample ($N = 36$) couples using the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale. Lastly, a discussion of the results from the questionnaire will be presented. Because one set of data was incomplete, data analyses was completed on ($N = 35$) couples.

Demographic description of the Sample

Participants in this study were married heterosexual couples, all married less than one year. All couples had attended the weekend marriage training of Engage Encounter and had completed the training. Couples attended the

training at District 5, Unit 1 which is located in Tucson, Arizona. Of the 249 original couples, 53.82% were successfully contacted. Of the 134 who were contacted 30 or 22.39% declined to participate. The most common reason for not participating in the study was not being married yet (N = 12 or 40%). Of the twelve couples who were not married, two stated they had broken up partially due to what they had learned at Engaged Encounter and two others had broken up stating that Engage Encounter had no influence on their decision. The remaining eight were still preparing for their wedding.

The second most common reason for non-participation was stated as lack of time (N= 11 or 36.67%). The third most common reason was that the couple would be traveling during the time-window the data needed to be returned (N = 5 or 16.67%).

The total number of couples who agreed to participate, who could be contacted, was 104 or 80%. This was 41.76% of the original 249 couples who attended Engage Encounter during the time period being analyzed in this study. Of the 104 couples who were sent the instruments, 36 or 34% returned them within the required time frame. Three more sets of instruments were returned at a later date but were not used in the data analysis.

The couples ranged in age from 20 to 39 years. The mean age was 26.25 with a standard deviation of 3.85 (see table 1). The husbands were slightly older (26.63) than their wives (25.63), and Caucasians tended to be slightly older (26.59) than their minority counterparts (25.25). The older age of the couples (mid-twenties) was probably due to the fact the majority of the couples were being married for the first time, and 51.5% of the sample had four or more years of college. The sample reported 10 Associates degrees, 31 Bachelor degrees, and four Masters degrees. Of the men 58.82% has a Bachelor degree or higher and 51.43 of the women subjects had a Bachelor degree or higher. There was a larger difference seen in educational background when broken down by ethnic origin.

Based on education 66.66% of the Caucasian sample had a Bachelor's degree or higher, and 34.78% of the minority sample had a Bachelor's degree or higher.

Birth order ranged from first-born to the eighth-born. 87.1% were born in the first three positions. The sample showed 45.7% were first-born, 22.85% were in the second birth-order position, and 18.57 were in the third birth-order position. Broken down by ethnicity 93.47% of the Caucasian sample were born in the first three birth-order positions and 75% of the minority sample had been born in the first three birth-order positions.

The average annual household income was in the range of \$30-35,000. Seven or 21.4% of the sample reported a household income of \$55,000 yearly. On the lower end of the income scale, 32.8% had an income ranging from \$10,000 - 25,000 yearly income. Due to the way this question of income was asked on the questionnaire no further break-down could be performed.

Satisfaction Scale showed no statistically significant differences by gender or ethnicity (see tables 4 and 6). A comparison of the means of the males and the females answering question two of the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (How satisfied are you with your husband/wife as a spouse?) was performed using a T-test.

Table 1. Biographical data of study sample

Variable	*N	Mean	SD
Gender	68	1.5	.5
Age	68	26.3	3.8
Education	68	3.2	1.1
Birth Order	68	2.2	1.6
Income	68	6.3	2.9
Ethnic	68	1.3	.5

* Individuals

Table 2. Summary of DAS and KMS scores and Questions 3 and 7 from Questionnaire One

Variable	Cases	Mean	SD
KMS 1	68	6.5	.7
KMS 2	68	6.6	.7
KMS 3	68	6.4	.8
DAS 1	67	51.1*	6.9
DAS 2	67	53.4*	6.0
DAS 3	67	52.3*	2.4
DAST	67	55.34	7.5
Q1	67	6.6	2.3
Q2	67	6.3	2.4

* Based on t scores

Table 3. Mean Scores of DAS and Questions 3 and Question 7 from Questionnaire One based on Gender and Ethnicity

Variable	Gender		Ethnicity	
	Women	Men	Caucasian	Minority
DAS 1	51.20	51.06	49.80	53.67
DAS 2	52.86	53.68	52.52	54.74
DAS 3	52.63	52.20	50.76	55.58
DAS 4	62.15	61.97	60.71	64.58
DAS Total	55.18	55.56	54.04	57.96
Q 3	6.89	6.63	6.80	6.67
Q 7	6.14	6.54	6.52	6.00

Table 4. Marital Satisfaction by Ethnicity and Gender using the the KMS

Variable	*N	Levels of Marital Satisfaction								
		MS1			MS2			MS3		
		M	T	P	M	T	P	M	T	P
Caucasian	46	6.5			6.7			6.3		
			-.12	.91		.62	.54		.72	.15
Minority	24	6.5			6.5			6.5		
Male	35	6.6			6.8			6.5		
			1.3	.18		1.9	.06		1.0	.31
Female	35	6.4			6.5			6.3		

* Individuals

Table 5. The DAS looking at ethnicity and gender

Variable	N	DAS1			DAS2			DAS3			DAS4			DAS5		
		M	T	P	M	T	P	M	T	P	M	T	P	M	T	P
Caucasian	46	49.8	-2.32	.02	52.5	-1.47	.15	52.8	-2.47	.02	60.7	-2.12	.04	54.0	-2.09	.04
Minority	24	53.7			54.7			5.56			64.6			58.0		
Male	35	51.1	-1.47	.15	53.7	.57	.57	52.2	-.22	.83	62.0	-.10	.02	55.6	.21	.84
Femae	35	51.2			52.9			52.6			62.1			55.2		

M=mean
T=T value
P=prob

Table 6. Correlations

Variable	Gender	Age	Education	Birth order	Income	Ethnic
DAS1	.822	.455	.373	.200	.211	.031
DAS2	.550	.834	.864	.617	.747	.112
DAS3	.909	.269	.357	.826	.002	.011
DAS4	.677	.900	.853	.248	.047	.089
DAS Total	.856	.928	.546	.432	.184	.043
KMS1	.181	.119	.307	.123	.394	.861
KMS2	.060	.272	.446	.812	.148	.581
KMS3	.308	.281	.563	.418	.133	.434
KMS Total	.133	.181	.401	.351	.167	.856
Q 3	.610	.073	.160	.901	.803	.666
Q 7	.567	.018	.084	.467	.705	.250

Data analysis of Results from Kansas Marital Scale

Although the measures were different, they were not statistically significant but were approaching significance ($t = 1.9$, $P = .06$). This may suggest that males were more satisfied with their spouses than the females were with their spouses.

Data analysis of the results from the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (see tables 5 and 6) showed a positive correlation ($P = .031$) between Ethnicity and Dyadic Consensus (Scale 1). There was also a statistical significance between ethnicity and the Affectional Expression Scale (Scale 3) of $P = .011$. It would appear the ethnic minority couples showed a higher dyadic consensus and affectional expression in their marriages, based on this sample, than do their Caucasian counterparts.

Dyadic consensus assesses the level of agreement between couples on important matters such as money, religion, friends, recreation, household tasks and time spent together. Affectional expression measures the individual's satisfaction with the expression of affection and sex in the marriage.

Statistical significance for ethnicity was also found for Total Dyadic Adjustment (total of scales I to IV) at $P = .043$. This may indicate that the Minority couples had a better marital adjustment than the non-minority couples in

this sample. As a group, the mean scores of all groups studied (male, female, minority and Caucasian), using the DAS indicate an average to slightly above average adjustment to marriage. T-scores on the DAS have a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10.

Looking at the frequency responses of individual questions on the DAS, a number of interesting features stand out. In response to question #29, twenty-six individuals or 37.14% responded that they had been too tired for sex in the past few weeks. The highest set frequency responses in the category of occasionally disagree and frequently disagree were in the areas of recreation (25.74%) and leisure-time interests and activities (26.47%) (questions #2 and #14). Many individuals also indicated that they had disagreements in the following areas: conventionality (32.35%), ways of dealing with parents and in-laws (25%), handling family finances (23.52%), religious matters (23.52%), household tasks (20.58%), and friends (20.58%).

Additional Findings

The majority of the subjects (91.42%) felt that premarriage counseling was important in preparing for marriage. Of the individuals who did not feel premarriage counseling was important, 33.33% felt one had to learn from

life experiences first-hand, and marriage skills could not be readily acquired by attending premarital training.

The questionnaire asked the couples to indicate if they had attended individual counseling along with the Engaged Encounter weekend. The Caucasian men indicated that 57.59% had attended both group and individual counseling. Only 28.57% of the minority men indicated that they had attended both. Of the wives, 50% of the Caucasian wives and 53.33% of the minority wives had attended both individual and group premarriage counseling/training. This may indicate some reluctance on the part of the minority men to seek individual premarital training.

The most frequently cited areas of training the sample found most useful were in the areas of communication and finances. The next most frequently cited area was information received on planning for and the raising of children. Religious concerns were seen as the next most useful. It should be noted that there were some individuals who adamantly felt that religion and the area of sex were the least useful and are private matters. Caucasian women mentioned problem solving-strategies as their fifth highest frequency response. None of the other sample categories had rated this area (i.e. problem solving strategies) as high.

In answering question six (i.e. list areas of premarital preparation that were not covered that you wish

were covered), minority men responded by requesting training in the area of blended families and family dysfunctional issues such as spousal abuse. The highest frequency response for minority women was for additional training in finances. Many of the Caucasian males who responded, wanted more information on working with in-laws and problem-solving strategies.

Question eight asked the subjects to rate in order of importance the areas they perceived as most vital in preparing them for marriage (See table seven). Caucasian males (2.19) and minority women (2.42) rated communication skills the highest, followed next by knowing the values and beliefs of your partner. Caucasian women rated budgeting and finances (2.41) as the most important followed by communication skills. Minority men rated knowing the values and beliefs of your partner (2.0) the highest followed by communication skills.

The most often cited skills learned in premarital counseling that were presently being used in marriage by the couples were: communication skills, conflict resolution, planning and setting goals, life giving. Several of the women also mentioned family- planning issues.

All groups reported that they felt the most effective learning method (question #13) was one-on-one exercises

Table 7. Critical areas ranked by importance in marriage preparation from question eight of questionnaire.

Variable	Caucasian		Minority	
	*Male	*Women	*Women	*Men
a.	3.08	2.86	3.21	2.00
b.	3.84	3.24	3.64	3.78
c.	2.19	2.76	2.43	2.11
d.	8.91	10.10	10.36	9.67
e.	7.33	2.41	6.50	7.78
f.	8.29	8.25	9.23	10.63
g.	3.84	3.81	4.21	3.89
h.	11.46	10.62	11.50	11.00
i.	4.67	5.10	5.57	6.56
j.	8.08	7.52	7.21	7.11
k.	10.42	9.90	8.50	9.44
l.	7.17	7.95	8.43	8.78
m.	10.17	10.52	9.07	9.00

* Based of average ratings of item response

with their partner. Caucasian men and women and minority men rated interactive discussion with the leaders as the second most effective method. Caucasian women rated their second choice as small-group interaction.

All groups responded that the use of video and audio were the least-liked method of learning premarital skills. The most popular method for minority men and women and Caucasian men was role- playing followed by open discussion. The Caucasian women rated written exercises as their first choice. I believe that many had the "trading of letters" exercise in mind when choosing this item. Their second choice was feedback from test instruments.

Summary

The analysis of the data indicated the marriages of the sample (n =70) were rated average to slightly above average in marital satisfaction as measured by the Dyadic Adjustment Scale. Minority couples reported higher levels of dyadic consensus and affectional expression in their marriages than did their Caucasian counterparts. Minority couples also reported higher over-all marital adjustment.

Premarital counseling was considered important for preparing for marriage by 91.41% of the subjects in the sample population. The most common skills the sample found useful were in the areas of communication and finances followed by family planning and religious matters. Conflict

resolution, as well as planning and setting goals also were rated high.

One-on-one exercises with the subjects partner were rated the most effective and useful method of learning marriage skills. Role-playing, open discussion, and letter writing were the most popular modes to carry this out.

The majority of the criticisms came from subjects who felt the area of sex and religion should be presented in a more neutral way or not at all. Some of the subjects felt that people could not learn marital skills effectively except by actual experience in the marriage.

In chapter five, there follows a review of the findings, discussion of the findings, and conclusions from the findings, limitations of the study and recommendations for futher study.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

An overview of the study is presented first. It is followed by a summary of the findings from the study. Conclusions are drawn from the results and recommendations for further research are suggested.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of the premarital training program known as Engage Encounter. There has been extensive research into the areas of premarital counseling and marital adjustment (Filsinger, 1984; Bagarozzi & Rauen, 1981). Much of the discussion has centered around what skills and knowledge are needed for successful marital adjustment. Through self-report, this study examined the skills married couples felt they needed to maintain good marital adjustment.

To assess the status of the marriages, two measures of marital adjustment were used. The first instrument was the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976) and the second was the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (Schumm et al, 1981). If the measures of the sample marriages were rated as average or above, it was assumed that the skills the couples were presently using were helping in their marital adjustment and feelings of marital satisfaction.

It is hoped that the data gathered in this study will later be assimilated into data in later studies and help other premarital training programs identify their strengths and weaknesses.

Population and Sample

The sample was drawn from a population of 249 couples who had attended the premarital training offered by Engage Encounter at Tucson, Arizona. The couples had attended an intensive weekend retreat format. They would arrive Friday evening and depart Sunday afternoon. All the couples had attended the Engage Encounter weekends between the dates of December, 1991 and September, 1992.

The sample ($N = 70$ individuals, or 35 couples) ranged in ages from 20 to 39 years of age. All the couples who participated had been married under a year. Minorities represent 34.3% of the sample and Caucasians represented 65.7% of the sample group. Birth order ranged from first born to eighth born. Annual household income varied from a low of \$10,000 to a high of over \$55,000. Education ranged from a G.E.D. to a M.A. degree. Over half (51.4%) of the sample population had a four year degree or higher. This is probably due to the influence and proximity of the Newman Center to the students desiring to be married at the University of Arizona.

The population represented a fair cross section of the those who attend the Engage Encounter weekends during the time period being studied.

Measurement

A pencil and paper demographic questionnaire and a general questionnaire were mail to those couples who indicted a willingness to participate in the study. All couples were first contacted by phone to see if they were interested in participating in the study. A total of 208 individual instrument packets were mailed to the couples.

The demographic questionnaire elicited general sample characteristics such as age, gender, income, and education levels. The general questionnaire elicited information and opinions about the premarital training the couples received during Engage Encounter and individual counseling.

Marital adjustment and marital satisfaction were measured by the Dyadic Adjustment Scale and the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale. The Dyadic Adjustment Scale is a well researched pencil and paper questionnaire. It furnishes a total score for marital adjustment and four subscales. The four subscales are: Dyadic consensus; Dyadic Satisfaction; Affectional Expression; and Dyadic Cohesion. Scores for the full scale range from 0 to 151.

The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale is also a paper and pencil test that can be completed in two or three

minutes. The total possible score ranges from 3 to 21. Concurrent validity of the DAS and the KMS has been validated in other studies (Schumm et al., 1986; Grover et al., 1984). The KMS was found to correlate with six of the seven items from the satisfaction scale of the DAS (Schumm et al., 1986).

Because there has been little research performed using these scales with ethnic groups, there is little in the way of hard data regarding the norming of ethnic samples with these instruments. This fact should be kept in mind when interpreting the results of this study.

Summary of the Findings

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale indicated the sample marriages were average to slightly above average. The DAS did not show any significant differences in responses between gender. Between ethnicity, however, a significant difference was found. A positive correlation was found between ethnicity and dyadic consensus (scale 1) and between ethnicity and affectional expression (scale 3). On the measure of the Total Dyadic Adjustment Scale (the totals of scales I to IV), a positive correlation was also found. These findings appear to indicate that in this sample the ethnic couples had better overall marital adjustment in their marriages. They had higher agreement on important

issues that confront marriages, and showed more affectional expression than the Caucasian sample.

On the KMS, the mean score of the sample was 19.5. No significant differences were found between gender and ethnicity for marital satisfaction. A difference between gender was approaching significance at $P=.06$ level for question two.

The general questionnaire found that couples cited the areas of communication and finances as the most useful training they had received. The skills most often used which the couples credited to their premarital training were: communication skills; conflict resolution; planning and setting goals, life giving and family planning. One-on-one exercises with their partner followed by small-group interaction with the group leaders were rated as the most effective learning methods. Areas of training which the sample couples wished more information on were: blended families; dysfunctional family issues such as spousal abuse; finances; problem-solving strategies; and problems with in-laws.

Discussion and Limitations

Examination of the results of this study reveal the majority of couples participating in premarital counseling felt that it was an important component in preparing for marriage. The average mean rating of the couples in

response to the question, "Please rate the helpfulness of the premarital counseling you received", was 6.64 on a possible scale of ten (ten meaning the greatest help). In response to question seven, " Reflecting on the premarital counseling you received, with the knowledge you now have about marriage, rate how effective you feel your premarital training prepared you for married life", the couples had a mean score of 6.25 on a scale of ten (a score of ten meaning "very well"). There were no significant differences in the responses by gender to these two questions. This seems to indicate that while the couples felt the premarital training they received was helpful, there is definite room for improvement.

The proving ground for any premarital training program is the answer to the question: "Is the quality of the marriage and the level of marital satisfaction improved as a result of the training received?" A control group of couples who have not received premarital training before marriage would be needed to compare against the responses of the couples who had received premarital training to answer this question with any clarity and objectivity.

The intent of this study was simply to gain a self report of the samples perceived effectiveness of the marital training they had received through Engage Encounter. A control group was not used.

Of course, in order for the couples to implement the skills learned in their premarital training, they must be able to recall the critical verbal and behavioral skills they learned. Questions four and twelve in the general questionnaire assessed this area.

The DAS and KMS Scales were used to assess the level of marital satisfaction of the sample so that it could be determined if the data received in the general questionnaire was from average to good marriages or from below average to poor marriages. It was assumed that data received from marriages rated average or higher would best report what skills worked effectively in raising the level of marital satisfaction.

Three cautions must be raised in interpreting the results of this study. First, the results are valid only to the extent that at least one partner is aware of significant problems in the marriage. Many of the couples in the sample had been married less than six months and may still be overlooking potentially harmful attitudes and behavior. Second, the degree of marital social desirability which may have skewed the couples answers to the questions on the instruments, was not controlled. There is a high degree of social and family pressure on marriages in their first year to be the "happy newlyweds". Couples may not always express the true state of their marriages in

self-report instruments. This concern is always a factor when relying on the subjective beliefs and impressions of subjects in a sample. Thirdly, the instruments used do not have a lot of research on their normative use with ethnic minorities.

Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Research

This study points to a number of possible useful suggestions in conducting premarital counseling. The utilization of one-on-one exercises used in connection with role playing and small group interactive discussion appear to be the most effective means to teach the skills needed for a successful marriage. Limiting the use of audio and video media should be considered during the training.

The skills most remembered and practiced in marriage which were accredited to premarital training should be studied as to why these skills were able to be assimilated into the couples' relationship while other skills were apparently disregarded or forgotten. It appears that the skills best remembered were those that were the most utilitarian and easiest generalized into the lives of the couple in that particular stage of their relationship.

Skills training should be made available for couples entering into blended marriages. Couples should be made

more aware of community resources which deal with serious family problems such as physical abuse and substance abuse.

More emphasis should be placed on how the couples can better spend their recreational time and other outside interests in ways that bring mutual satisfaction to their relationship. The management and priorities of how the couples spend time should be assessed. It should be recalled that over a quarter of the couples indicated that they had been too tired for sexual relationships during the last few weeks.

Caucasian couples might look at how they could more consistently show affectional expression in their marriages. They may need to be made more consciously aware their mate is feeling dissatisfied with the amount of expressed affection being offered.

The use of a control group would greatly strengthen the results of this study. A sample of recently married couples who had not received premarital training and who had similar demographic backgrounds would need to be found. This group could then be compared to this sample who has received premarital training to see if marital adjustment and satisfaction was significantly different.

A closer investigation appears warranted to answer the question: "What specific behaviors and attitudes accounted for the minority couples having significantly better

marital adjustment than the Caucasian sample?" Another interesting aspect to possibly investigate in the future would be to run the same sample through the Engage Encounter program at the one year mark of their marriages. There may be significant differences in what skills the couples feel are important to acquire and use in that stage of their marriage. They may be more open to learning and implementing more of the skills that the Engage Encounter is trying to teach. This might verify Guldner's (1971) hypothesis that it would be more effective to work with couple after the "honeymoon" period has worn off.

Interest in conducting research of marriage and marital issues is becoming popular. The future is sure to bring more effective and useful instruments that will help explore the inner workings of happy and successful marriages. Once these skills can be defined and identified, effective premarital programs can continue to be refined. This study is hoped to be nearly be a small beginning in the quest to develop a program that will meet the challenge of preparing couples for a happy marriage.

APPENDIX A
LETTER TO THE PARTICIPANTS

To the participants:

Your participation in this voluntary study is greatly appreciated. The purpose of this study is to better learn how to effectively prepare couples for a successful marriage.

The written results of this research study will contain no names of the participants and all completed forms will be confidential. You are under no obligation to complete these forms and your participation is completely voluntary. Please do not put your names on the forms. It is very important that each spouse complete their forms so that I will have one set from the wife and one set from the husband. If you have any questions please call the following number and I will get back to you as soon as possible: (747-9627) Completion time of all questionnaires will take approximately 45-60 minutes. Once again thank you for your participation. By completing and returning the forms in this packet your consent will be assumed and the data will be used in the research and publications.

Brett Inman,

Graduate Student
Dept. of Counseling and Guidance
University of Arizona

APPENDIX B
LETTER OF INSTRUCTIONS

Instructions

Enclosed in this envelope you should find a cover letter and two separate packets, one for each spouse. Please read the letter "To the Participants" and then fill out the accompanying questionnaires apart from each other.

Please postpone any discussion of your answers until after you have completed and returned the questionnaires (all the forms). When each spouse has completed their questionnaire, place them all together in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided in the packet, and mail the packet as soon as possible or within one week of receipt. Each spouse's packet should contain the following:

- (1) Demographic Survey
- (2) Dyadic Adjustment Scale
- (3) Kansas Marital Adjustment Scale
- (4) Questionnaire

By returning the questionnaires your consent will be assumed. I appreciate your willingness to contribute to the goals of this study.

Sincerely,

Brett Inman
Graduate Student
Dept. of Counseling and Guidance
University of Arizona

APPENDIX C
DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Demographic Survey

9. My Ethnic origin is:
(Circle One)

a. Hispanic

c. Black

e. Asian

b. Caucasian

d. Native American

f. Other

APPENDIX D
GENERAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire One

01. Do you consider Premarriage counseling important in preparing for marriage? (Circle one)

Yes

No

02. Which of the following did you receive as part of your marriage preparation? (Circle one)

a. Individual premarital counseling only

b. Group premarital counseling only

c. Both individual and group premarital counseling

03. Please rate the helpfulness of the premarital counseling you received. (circle your response on each scale that applies, leave blank if you did not receive.)

a. Individual premarital counseling component

(No help) 1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 (Great help)

b. Group premarital counseling component

(No help) 1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 (Great help)

04. Please indicate in order of importance the areas of premarital preparation training you feel were the most useful, (eg..Communication; finances etc..).

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

f. _____

h. _____

i. _____

Questionnaire

05. Please indicate in order of importance the areas you feel were least important in helping you prepare for marriage in your premarital training.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____
- f. _____

06. Please list areas of premarital preparation that were not covered in your training that you wish were covered. Please be as specific as possible.

- a. _____

- b. _____

- c. _____

- d. _____

- e. _____

- f. _____

Questionnaire

07. Reflecting on the premarital counseling you received, with the knowledge you now have about marriage, rate how effective you feel your premarital training prepared you for married life. Circle your response on the scale below.

(Not at all) 1---2---3---4---5---6---7---8---9---10 (Very well)

08. Please rate in order of importance the following areas as you perceive them in preparing a couple for marriage. (Use the number one (1) as being most important, 2 being the next most important, 3 etc...)

- | | |
|---|---|
| ___ a. Knowing values and beliefs of partner | ___ j. Personality issues |
| ___ b. Clarifying your own values and beliefs | ___ k. Common idealistic distortions about marriage |
| ___ c. Communication skills | ___ l. Child rearing |
| ___ d. Sex education | ___ m. Dual career |
| ___ e. Budgeting and finances | |
| ___ f. Clarifying husband/ wife role. | |
| ___ g. Problem solving/ conflict resolution | |
| ___ h. Dealing with in-laws | |
| ___ i. Clarifying life goals (housing, education, employment) | |

09. How much total time do you feel is needed to cover the important areas of marriage preparation? Circle the highest amount you would be willing to attend.

2-4 hours	6-8 hours	10-12 hours	14-16 hours
4-6 hours	8-10 hours	12-14 hours	16 > hours

10. How long did you know your spouse before you were married ?
(In Months) _____

Questionnaire

11. How long was your engagement? Circle closest number in months.

0-1 months 2-3 months 4-5 months 6-7 months 9-10 months
1-2 months 3-4 months 5-6 months 7-8 months 10-11 months
12 > months

12. List below any skills that you presently use in your marriage which you can specifically credit to your premarital training. If you need more space continue writing on the back of this page. If none write "none" on line "a".

- a. _____

- b. _____

- c. _____

- d. _____

- e. _____

- f. _____

Questionnaire

13. Rate in order of importance which learning method you felt was the most effective for you. If the method listed was not used in your training put "N/A" in the space next to it. Use the number one to indicate the most effective method and the number two for the next most effective and so on..

- a. ___ Small-group interaction. (Less than 10 people)
 - b. ___ Large-group interaction. (More than 10 people)
 - c. ___ Lecture from the leaders. (Little interaction between the couples and the leader)
 - d. ___ Interactive discussion with the leaders.
 - e. ___ One-on-one exercises with you mate. (Role play)
 - f. ___ Other, please list _____
-

14. Rate the following in the same manner as question thirteen.

- a. ___ Video (movies, slides, etc.)
- b. ___ Audio (tape recordings)
- c. ___ Lecture
- d. ___ Role playing (acting as if an event were really happening)
- f. ___ Open discussion
- g. ___ Filling out written exercises
- h. ___ Feedback from taking premarital and personality type tests
- i. ___ Couple counseling (just you, your mate and a counselor)
- K. ___ Assigned readings (articles, books)

15. You are: (Circle one)

Male

Female

APPENDIX E

KANSAS MARITAL SATISFACTION SCALE

Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale

Item	Extremely Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Mixed	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied
1. How satisfied are you with your marriage?	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
2. How satisfied are you with your husband/wife as a spouse?	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
3. How satisfied are you with your relationship with your husband/wife?	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

APPENDIX F
DYADIC ADJUSTMENT SCALE

DAS by Graham B. Spanier, Ph.D.

Name: _____ Sex: M F Marital Status: _____ Age: _____

Most persons have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list. Circle the star under one answer for each item.

	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occasionally Disagree	Frequently Disagree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
1. Handling family finances.....	*					
2. Matters of recreation.....		*				
3. Religious matters.....		*				
4. Demonstrations of affection.....		*				
5. Friends.....		*				
6. Sex relations.....		*				
7. Conventonality (correct or proper behavior).....		*				
8. Philosophy of life.....		*				
9. Ways of dealing with parents or in-laws.....		*				
10. Aims, goals, and things believed important.....		*				
11. Amount of time spent together.....		*				
12. Making major decisions.....		*				
13. Household tasks.....		*				
14. Leisure time interests and activities.....		*				
15. Career decisions.....		*				

	All The Time	Most Of The Time	More Often Than Not	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
16. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or termination of your relationship?.....		*				
17. How often do you or your mate leave the house after a fight?.....		*				
18. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?.....		*				
19. Do you confide in your mate?.....		*				
20. Do you ever regret that you married (or lived together)?.....		*				
21. How often do you and your partner quarrel?.....		*				
22. How often do you and your mate get on each others' nerves?.....		*				

	Every Day	Almost Every Day	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
23. Do you kiss your mate?.....	*				

	All Of Them	Most Of Them	Some Of Them	Very Few Of Them	None Of Them
24. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?.....	*				

How often do the following occur between you and your mate?	Never	Less Than Once A Month	Once Or Twice A Month	Once Or Twice A Week	Once A Day	More Often
25. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas.....	*					
26. Laugh together.....	*					
27. Calmly discuss something.....	*					
28. Work together on a project.....	*					

These are some things about which couples sometimes agree or disagree. Indicate if either item caused differences of opinions or were problems in the past few weeks

	Yes	No
29. Being too tired for sex.....	*	
30. Not showing love.....	*	

31. The stars on the following line represent different degrees of happiness in your relationship. The middle point, "happy," represents the degree of happiness of most relationships. Circle the star above the phrase which best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

Extremely Unhappy	Fairly Unhappy	A Little Unhappy	Happy	Very Happy	Extremely Happy	Perfect
*		*	*	*	*	*

32. Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the future of your relationship? Circle the letter for one statement.

- A I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and would go to almost any length to see that it does.
- B I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do all I can to see that it does.
- C I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do my fair share to see that it does.
- D It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but I can't do much more than I am doing now to keep the relationship going.
- E It would be nice if it succeeded, but I refuse to do any more than I am doing now to keep the relationship going.
- F My relationship can never succeed, and there is no more that I can do to keep the relationship going.

APPENDIX G
HUMANS SUBJECTS FORM

Human Subjects Committee



1690 N. Warren (Bldg. 526B)
Tucson, Arizona 85724
(602) 626-6721 or 626-7575

December 9, 1992

Brett Inman, M.A.
Department of Counseling & Guidance
Education Building, #218
Main Campus

RE: PREMARITAL COUNSELING EFFECTIVENESS

Dear Mr. Inman:

We received documents concerning your above cited project. Regulations published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2)] exempt this type of research from review by our Committee.

Thank you for informing us of your work. If you have any questions concerning the above, please contact this office.

Sincerely yours,

W.F. Denny
William F. Denny, M.D.
Chairman,
Human Subjects Committee

WFD:sj

cc: Departmental/College Review Committee

APPENDIX H
ENGAGED ENCOUNTER WEEKEND SCHEDULE

TUCSON ENGAGED ENCOUNTER
SUGGESTED TIME SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEKEND
Revised July 1991

<u>START TIME</u>	<u>TALK</u>	<u>TEAM</u>	<u>P</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>STAYS</u>
Friday Night:						
7:30	Introduction	All	40			
8:15	Encounter With Me	Jr.	20	20	20	Men
9:20	Encounter With We	Sr.	20	20	20	Women
Saturday:						
6:45	Wake up					
7:30	Mass / Prayer Service					
8:00	Breakfast					
8:45	Openness in Communications	Jr.	20	20	20	Men
9:50	Signs of Closed Relationship	Sr.	20	20	20	Women
10:55	Called To Be One	Jr.	20	20	20	Men
12:00	Lunch					
12:40	Marriage Morality	Sr.	20	20	20	Women
1:45	Break					
3:30	Decisions	Sr.	25	20	20	Men
4:40	Sex and Sexuality	All	30	15	15	Women
5:45	Dinner					
6:30	Family	Sr.	25	15	15	Men
7:30	Natural Family Planning	NFP	10		20	
8:00	Rap Session					
	Forgiveness	Sr.	20	10	10	
	Candlelight Service	All				
Sunday:						
7:00	Wake up					
7:30	Bagels/Cream Cheese/Juice/Coffee					
8:00	Sacrament	Sr.	20	15	15	Women
8:55	Betrothal	Jr.	20	25	20	Men
	(Before Brunch - explain the Mass symbol)					
10:10	Brunch					
11:00	Two By Two	Jr.	15	15	15	Women
11:50	Sharing the Vision	All	15		5	
12:10	Plan of Life	Jr.	15	10	10	
12:50	Wrap up					
1:00	Mass					

At night we must make a reasonable attempt to see that all our couples are in their respective dorms and, if not, we must look over the grounds to find them per recommendation of the Diocese Office and attorney.

APPENDIX I
LETTERS OF PERMISSION

MULTI-HEALTH SYSTEMS, INC.
 802 N. NIGARA FALLS BLVD. 65 OVERLEA BLVD. SUITE 210
 NORTH TOWNSHAND, NY 14120 TORONTO, ON M4H 1P1
 1-800-456-3003 (416) 424-1700 1-800-268-6011
 FAX 1-416-424-1738

INVOICE

NUMBER	DATE	PAGE
14781	1 26 93	1
DATE SHIPPED		
Jan 26 93		

SOLD TO
Brett Inman
 1117 Fordham Dr.
 Tucson, AZ
 85710

SHIPPED TO
Brett Inman
 1117 Fordham Dr.
 Tucson, AZ
 85710

ORDER NO.	ORDER DATE	CUST. NO.	SALES PERSON	PURCH. ORDER NO.	SHIP VIA	TERMS
rsa22301	Jan 26 93	85710C				Prepaid-VISA

QUANTITY			PART NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	UNIT PRICE	U/M	AMOUNT	
ORDERED	SHIPPED	B.O.						
1	1	0	DA1P	PU05 Dyadic Adjustment Scale Kit	35.00	ea	35.00	
1	1	0	DAS	Permission to photocopy 200 forms Shipping & Handling	80.00	ea	80.00	
							4.00	
							DR 0.00 %	0.00

1/27/93 MIC

Thank-you for your payment.

GST:	0.00
PST:	0.00
TOTAL	119.00

650-2-8108800413024-6469

College of Agriculture
 School of Family and Consumer Resources
 10/05/92

THE UNIVERSITY OF
ARIZONA
 TUCSON ARIZONA

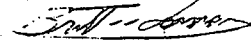
Family and Consumer Resources Bldg.
 Tucson, Arizona 85721
 Telephone: (602) 621-1075
 FAX: (602) 621-9445

Brett Inman
 1117 Fordham Dr.
 Tucson, Az 85710

Dear Dr. Schumm,

I am a graduate student in the Counseling and Guidance Department at the University of Arizona. I am in the process of doing research for my thesis and wish to use The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale as one of the instruments in the study. I am researching the effectiveness of premarital counseling and believe this instrument will be useful in my research. I am requesting your permission to use The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale to facilitate my research. Thank you for your help in this matter.

Sincerely,



Brett Inman

November 17, 1992

Dear Brett,

Permission is not necessary to use the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale for research purposes. You do have my permission to use the scale, however. As a professional courtesy, I request that you inform me of the results of your research. Please feel free to contact me if any questions about its use arise during your research. I am enclosing some recent information and reprints on the scale that may be of assistance.

Thank you for contacting me about the scale.

Please accept my best wishes for your future success!

Sincerely,



Walter R. Schumm, Ph.D.
 Professor of Family Studies
 Kansas State University

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