



Theses and Dissertations

2005-07-07

Beliefs, Practices, and Training in Marriage Preparation: A Comparison Between Members of the Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychotherapists (AMCAP) and Select Protestant Clergy

Samuel L. Ashton
Brigham Young University - Provo

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Family, Life Course, and Society Commons](#)

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Ashton, Samuel L., "Beliefs, Practices, and Training in Marriage Preparation: A Comparison Between Members of the Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychotherapists (AMCAP) and Select Protestant Clergy" (2005). *Theses and Dissertations*. 532.
<https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/532>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

BELIEFS, PRACTICES , AND TRAINING IN MARRIAGE PREPARATION:
A COMPARISON BETWEEN MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF
MORMON COUNSELORS AND PSYCHOTHERAPISTS (AMCAP)
AND SELECT PROTESTANT CLERGY

by

Samuel L. Ashton

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science

Marriage and Family Therapy Program

School of Family Life

Brigham Young University

August 2005

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Samuel L. Ashton

This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

Date

Robert F. Stahmann, Chair

Date

James M. Harper

Date

Jeffry H. Larson

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Samuel L. Ashton in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

Date

Robert F. Stahmann
Chair, Graduate Committee

Accepted for the Program

Robert F. Stahmann
Chair, Marriage and Family Therapy

Accepted for the School

James M. Harper
Director, School of Family Life

ABSTRACT

BELIEFS, PRACTICES , AND TRAINING IN MARRIAGE PREPARATION:
A COMPARISON BETWEEN MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF
MORMON COUNSELORS AND PSYCHOTHERAPISTS (AMCAP)
AND SELECT PROTESTANT CLERGY

Samuel L. Ashton

Marriage and Family Therapy Program

School of Family Life

Master of Science

A sample of 127 members of the Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychotherapists (AMCAP) responded to a questionnaire regarding their beliefs, practices and training in premarital counseling (PMC). This study was a replication of a previous study of 226 clergy premarital counselors from four Protestant denominations by Jones, E.F., & Stahmann, R.F. (1994). The results of this study were compared with the results of the Jones & Stahmann study. Findings suggest that AMCAP members were less likely than Protestant clergy to believe that PMC should be required of all couples before marriage. AMCAP members and Protestant

clergy both rated Enrichment, Testimony/Evangelism, and Education as the three most important topics/roles they focus on when providing PMC. No difference was found between AMCAP members and Protestant clergy in the number of first marriage couples seen for PMC during a 12 month period. AMCAP members saw an average of one couple more than Protestant clergy for PMC with remarriages during a 12 month period. AMCAP members reported the use of group formats and assigned reading materials more frequently than Protestant clergy. Protestant clergy reported the use of individual couple formats and tests or assessments more frequently than AMCAP members. There was no difference in the amount of training between AMCAP members and Protestant clergy with nearly 40% of both samples practicing PMC with no specific training in PMC.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indeed grateful to all those individuals who helped me complete this thesis. This truly is a work I could not have accomplished on my own. I would like to thank Dr. Robert Stahmann for his many hours of meeting with me, reading the rough drafts, and providing me with valuable feedback. I would also like to thank Dr. James Harper and Dr. Jeffrey Larson for their help with the statistics and for their ideas and suggestions to further better this thesis. All of my committee members proved to be very available for me to ask questions and to give me helpful advice. Dr. Joseph Olsen also made himself very available to consult with me about how to code this data, even though he was not on my committee, and I am grateful for his help. Along the way there were many others who helped me by reading my rough drafts and providing me with invaluable information of how to make this thesis better. I am proud of this accomplishment, but the greatest accomplishment in my life is my family. I have a wonderful wife and two great children, Abby and Nathan who make all of this work worthwhile. This thesis could not have been accomplished without the support of my wife, Missy. Writing this thesis was very hard and discouraging at times but Missy encouraged me to persevere, and then the task never seemed to be too far out of reach. This is the end of a great milestone in my life. I am so grateful to all of those who have helped me throughout this journey.

Table of Contents

Graduate Committee Approval ii

University Approval iii

Abstract iv

Acknowledgments vi

Table of Contents vii

List of Tables ix

Chapter One: Introduction 1

Chapter Two: Literature Review 5

 Beliefs 5

 Practices 9

 Clergy 9

 Physicians 11

 Mental Health Workers 12

 Training 14

 Jones and Stahmann Study 18

 Why Study AMCAP Members? 19

Chapter Three: Methods 24

 AMCAP Sample 24

 Protestant Sample 26

 Instrument and Analysis 27

 Beliefs 27

Practices	30
Training	31
Chapter Four: Results	33
Beliefs	33
Practices	39
Training	43
Chapter Five: Discussion	44
Beliefs	44
Practices	47
Training	50
Limitations	51
Conclusion	52
References	54
MMPQ-AMCAP	Appendix

List of Tables

Table 1. “Chi-Square Test Results: AMCAP and Protestant Clergy Personally Believe that Marriage Preparation (MP) Should be Required Before Marriage” 33

Table 2. “Mean Value Scores for Marriage Preparation Programs for Persons Anticipating First Marriages and Remarriages by AMCAP Members and Protestant Clergy” 35

Table 3. “Mean Scores, Standard Deviations (SD), and Ranges for Importance Ratings by AMCAP Members and Protestant Clergy of Eight Possible Topics or Roles in Premarital Counseling” 36

Table 4. “Rank Order of Eight Possible Roles or Topics” 37

Table 5. “Mean Differences* and Tukey Test Results of the Eight Topics/Roles as Rated by AMCAP Members and Protestant Clergy” 39

Table 6. “Number of Couples Seen by AMCAP Members and Protestant Clergy in Premarital Counseling During the Last 12 Months” 40

Table 7. “Marriage Preparation Activities Used by AMCAP Members and Protestant Clergy for First Marriages and Remarriages Including Chi-Square Results for Each Activity” 43

Table 8. “Training Received by AMCAP Members and Protestant Clergy for Premarital Counseling (PMC) Including Chi-Square Results” 44

Chapter 1

Introduction

Marriage is a critical role transition in the life cycle where two people come together and negotiate the formation of a new family. It is estimated the percentage of first marriages ending in divorce might be as high as 50% (Kreider & Fields, 2001). Many of those who divorce eventually remarry, but chances are even higher that there will be a second divorce (Clarke & Wilson, 1994). Many remarried individuals experience the same sort of problems that they had in their first marriages. In order to help with the transition to marriage, both in first marriages and remarriages, many people seek some form of marriage preparation (Stahmann, 2000; Stanley, 2001). Marriage preparation is defined as anything done with the premarital couple in order to give them information or skill-based training to help them sustain and improve their relationship once they are married (Senediak, 1990).

Current literature shows the importance which society places on marriage through the developmental life course of an individual (Waite & Gallagher, 2000). Many people end up seeking therapy because of marital distress (Geiss & O'Leary, 1981). Premarital counseling is one method of intervening with a couple before the marriage. At the time couples prepare for a wedding, has and continues to be, the most popular point in time to give relationship training and education. Couples typically welcome training and education at this time because the impending wedding marks a significant change in their personal lives and their relationship. Education before a wedding is timely because couples often face significant challenges early in marriage (Halford, 2004).

The marriage preparation programs available today have many strengths. Halford, (2004) described some of the strengths of using inventories and skill-based training in relationship education as part of a marriage preparation program. Specifically, Halford discussed the most widely used inventories including FOCCUS, PREPARE, and RELATE. The first strength of these inventories is that each of them assess factors relevant to satisfaction in relationships and therefore they can predict the trajectory of relationship satisfaction in the early years of marriage. The second strength of inventories is they provide couples an opportunity to view strengths and weaknesses of their relationship. A third benefit to using these inventories is that structured training for the proper use and interpretation of them is readily available.

The first strength of skill-based training in relationship education is that skills which predict relationship outcomes can be learned through focused training. A second strength for skill based training is that once relationship skills are learned they remain with the client over time. Standardized training is also available to help people teach skill based programs, making it easier to disseminate the information (Halford, 2004).

It is important to understand the beliefs counselors have concerning premarital counseling because their beliefs will effect which topics they will focus on, what role they will take as a therapist, and whether they will even choose to provide any premarital counseling.

Understanding the practices counselors use in providing premarital counseling is also important. This can help know which activities are most frequently used in providing premarital counseling along with showing which forms of premarital counseling may need further research or training. How counselors are trained to provide premarital counseling is important to understand so

universities and theological seminaries can know how to better train those who will be providing premarital counseling.

There is some literature about Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish beliefs, preparation, and practices regarding premarital counseling (Anderson, 1998; Jones, & Stahmann, 1994; Markey, 1998; Dalin, 1998). However, a review of the literature revealed no information regarding the beliefs, preparation, and practices of those providing premarital counseling to the population of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS). The LDS population is unique because they tend to value marriage and family highly when compared to other groups (Cobb, Larson, & Watson, 2003). LDS members believe that marriage and family are central focal points in God's plan for the eternal destiny of His children (Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2005c).

Typically, marriage preparation within a religious denomination is provided by the local religious leader prior to the wedding but this is not the case with the LDS population. LDS members are organized into local congregations called wards. The leader of the congregation is the bishop. A bishop is different from a leader of another church in that he did not go to a theological school to become a bishop but was a regular church member before becoming a bishop. Bishops are not paid for their service but donate their time to serve the congregation (Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2005b). A bishop is not trained to provide professional counseling to those within his ward but can refer the members of his ward to other professional counselors when he feels it is needed. When a bishop refers a member to a professional counselor it is most likely he will refer the member to an LDS counselor. The Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychotherapists (AMCAP) members

are in a unique position to provide premarital counseling to the LDS population because they are themselves LDS.

Although, most LDS counselors are not members of AMCAP, AMCAP does consist of a significant group of professional counselors providing services for the LDS population. This study was designed to better understand the premarital services provided by AMCAP members by obtaining their direct input from responses to a questionnaire. Specifically, this study has three objectives: 1. Gain an understanding of AMCAP member's beliefs about the role of premarital counseling, 2. Describe the practices of AMCAP members in marriage preparation including the number of couples for whom they provide premarital counseling and the format they use for premarital counseling, and 3. Learn how many AMCAP members received training in premarital counseling and to what levels.

This study was also designed to replicate a study by Jones and Stahmann (1994). In 1994 Jones and Stahmann published the results of a study that assessed the beliefs, practices, and training in marriage preparation of clergy from four Protestant denominations. This study replicated Jones and Stahmann by using many of the same questions to determine the beliefs, practices, and training in marriage preparation of the AMCAP population. Because of the high value the LDS population places on marriage and family it is interesting to compare the beliefs, practices, and training of AMCAP members to the result of the Jones and Stahmann study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This literature review covers five main sections. The first section reviews some general beliefs about premarital counseling. The second reviews the practices of premarital counseling. The third section reviews the training counselors receive who are involved in premarital counseling. The fourth section reviews finding of the Jones and Stahmann study. The fifth section reviews why it is important to learn about the beliefs, practices, and training of AMCAP members.

Beliefs

Only one article by Jones and Stahmann, (1994) which will be discussed later could be found specifically discussing the beliefs counselors have about the importance of premarital therapy, or the attention they give to different topics/roles in their delivery of marriage preparation. There are greater amounts of literature which discuss the importance of marriage in the life cycle of an individual. The literature also discusses community marriage initiatives which are being used to help premarital couples lower the risk of divorce and make marriage more satisfying. Much of the research is based on the assumption that premarital counseling is good because it will make the possibility of a happy successful marriage more likely. This section of the literature review focusses on demonstrating the importance of marriage preparation by showing the importance of marriage generally and the activities aimed at trying to make marriage more lasting and satisfying.

In discussing why people marry, Stahmann and Hiebert (1997) discussed the social pressures that people experience to get married. They state that because people are not isolated

but live in a society they are influenced by those around them and are expected to model societies behavior. Stahmann and Hiebert reported that although divorce statistics are high, so are marriage statistics which include that nine out of ten adults will marry some time in their life. Even though there are many divorces, many people are also choosing to remarry. Nearly half of the marriages that happen today represent a second marriage for one or both of the spouses (Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Carroll & Doherty, 2003, Chadwick & Heaton, 1999).

Marriage can also be seen as very important and a highly valued goal for most Americans since ninety-three percent have rated “having a happy marriage,” as one of their most important objectives in life, (Carroll & Doherty, 2003). Carroll and Doherty, (2003) also reported that seventy percent of Americans believe marriage is a lifelong commitment which should be ended only in extreme circumstances. With marriage being such an integral part of the human existence anything done to prepare one for marriage and to make marriage more satisfying would be very important.

Due to increasing divorce rates and domestic violence rates many researchers have tried to find ways to help marriages last longer and be more satisfying. Professional counselors and community leaders have joined together to create community marriage initiatives to promote healthy marriages. Doherty and Anderson (2004), have written about the most prominent community marriage initiatives across the United States. The community marriage initiatives have attempted to bring together religious clergy and secular leaders in an effort to promote marriage. The religious effort has consisted of the clergy signing a “community marriage policy,” a “community marriage covenant,” or a “marriage and family agreement,” which set minimum guidelines for the preparation and education of engaged couples. Although the

guidelines are developed locally they generally include taking a premarital inventory in conjunction with four to six sessions of mandatory premarital counseling. Clergy are also responsible for finding mentor couples to be trained which can help mentor the premarital and newlywed couples before and after the wedding. Mentoring has been described as one of the single most important parts of one of the most prominent community marriage initiatives (McManus, 1995).

The community efforts of the marriage initiatives vary from community to community. These efforts generally include providing the latest information and research regarding premarital counseling to clergy and other professionals giving premarital education and counseling. The community will also help train clergy and other lay leaders to administer premarital inventories. The more diverse marriage initiatives also involve the community through workshops, radio features, newsletters, and posting information online (Doherty & Anderson, 2004).

One issue directly related to beliefs about premarital therapy is the effectiveness of the premarital programs in decreasing divorce and making marriage more satisfying. Doherty and Anderson, (2004) stated there is still little known about the effectiveness of community marriage initiatives. Marriage Savers, which helps communities adopt marriage policies, hired the Institute for Research and Evaluation to assess the effect of the marriage initiatives on the divorce rate in those communities which adopted a marriage policy. The study compared the divorce rates of the communities which adopted marriage policies to similar communities which did not adopt marriage policies. The findings indicated that the community divorce rates appear to decline more rapidly after the signing of a marriage policy than would be expected by the passage of time alone (Birch, Weed & Olsen, 2004). Other community marriage policies are

planning research projects to study if the marriage policy really does decrease the divorce rate in their community. Doherty and Anderson, (2004) concluded that much more research needs to be done and they outline ways the research needs to be conducted in order to show the effectiveness of the community marriage policies.

Carroll and Doherty, (2003) performed a meta-analytic review of 13 outcome studies pertaining to the effectiveness of premarital prevention programs. From their analysis they concluded that the average person who participated in a premarital prevention program was better off after the program than 79% of the people who did not participate in a similar program. Further, the results suggest premarital programs have a positive immediate and short-term effect on couples' relationships. Specifically, premarital prevention programs were effective in helping couples improve communication processes, conflict management skills, and overall relationship quality. Couples were also able to maintain these increases for at least six months to three years. More research needs to be done to assess the long-term effects of premarital prevention programs (Carroll & Doherty, 2003; Stahmann, 2000).

Many people do not view marriage as a long term relationship but merely a social contract between two people that can easily be broken. However, research has shown that marriages where there is a lot of distress negatively affects physical health, mental well-being, and work productivity (Stanley, 2001). One of the top three reasons that people end up seeking therapy is marital problems (Geiss & O'Leary, 1981). Many of the problems that couples experience in their marriage are due to inadequate preparation before marriage (Wright, 1977). Stahmann, (2000) has proposed that premarital counseling and alleviating divorce can be viewed as one of the primary tasks of mental health professionals.

Stanley, (2001) has argued that there are at least four benefits for premarital counseling. He states that premarital counseling can 1. Slow couples down to foster deliberation. 2. Send a message that marriage matters. 3. Help couples learn about options if they need help later. 4. Lower the risk for subsequent marital distress or termination (divorce, annulment) in some couples.

Practices

There are three main groups of professionals that currently provide marriage preparation activities: clergy, mental health workers and physicians (Stahmann, 2000). The research has shown that clergy provide more premarital activities than anyone else generally as an optional or mandatory marriage preparation program before a church wedding. Physicians generally provide only one meeting with the couple in order to provide contraceptive and sexual information. Mental health workers typically work with those who have been divorced and seek therapy to avoid a second divorce (Stahmann, 2000).

Clergy.

Clergy have changed their practices regarding premarital counseling through the years. Prior to WWII clergy usually met with a couple one time before the wedding. During this meeting the clergy would discuss the nature and meaning of marriage and then practice the marriage ceremony with the couple (Schumm & Denton, 1979; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997). Following WWII there was an upward trend in the number of times clergy would see couples before a wedding (Schumm & Denton, 1979). In addition to discussing the nature and meaning of marriage and practicing the wedding ceremony, clergy became responsible to identify whether couples were emotionally ready to become married (Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997).

Different religious groups have different ways of handling premarital counseling. In the Catholic Church, diocese and sometimes each parish, determines its own approach to preparing couples for marriage. Starting in 1946 and since then, many Catholic leaders have held “Pre-Cana” conferences to discuss marriage and what can be done to strengthen it. As a result of these conferences the Catholic church developed marriage preparation programs which could be used in several different diocese. The basic goals of this marriage preparation were to help individuals in a relationship know more about themselves, the other, marriage, and the skills needed to put together a successful marriage relationship. A diocese may require anywhere from four months to a year of premarital education before the wedding with most requiring six months. The number of times a couple meets with the clergy also varies. Research on these programs indicates that couples do not enjoy the premarital counseling when it is too short with only one or two sessions or if it is too long with twelve or more sessions (Markey, 1998).

In the Catholic Church there are a variety of ways to form sessions for premarital counseling. Often couples are involved in some large group or class activities as well as meeting in small groups or as individual couples with the clergy. Sometimes a premarital couple will meet with the clergy and a married lay couple together. Even with research indicating the effectiveness of groups it is most common for the clergy to meet individually with the couple (Markey, 1998).

Marriage preparation for a Jewish couple has primarily been the responsibility of the Rabbi. The Jewish have no set program as the Catholics do so it is up to the Rabbi to decide how much pre-wedding counseling or education is necessary. On the two extremes the minimalist will only talk about the ritual of the wedding ceremony where the maximalist will be heavily

involved with giving premarital counseling. There are a few set programs around the country which involve the Rabbi and a social worker meeting together with the couple or a group of couples to discuss some premarital issues. This allows for the social worker to lead the sessions with regards to the topics of the sessions and the Rabbi to make sure that Jewish teachings are integrated into all facets of the session (Dalin, 1998).

The Protestants conduct premarital or pre-wedding work which consists of education, counseling, theological reflection, and liturgical planning. Before WWII premarital work was mostly educational but since then it has become more of a way to check the emotional readiness and maturity of the couple to marry. Some ministers may use assessment instruments to find topics which would be helpful for the couple to discuss prior to marriage. The minister may also try to help the couple define what kind of marriage they want and then help them develop the skills to obtain it. With a focus on developing general skills in communication, clarification of expectations in marriage, compromising, and conflict resolution, specific topics are addressed such as sex, money, religion, gender roles, and in-laws. Meeting with the couple again after the wedding is helpful because before the wedding a couple is not disposed to reflect honestly and critically on their relationship. Meeting with the couple after the wedding also helps the couple understand that the development of a satisfying marriage is a process that requires effort over time (Anderson, 1998).

Physicians.

Physicians generally provide only one meeting with the couple in order to provide contraceptive and sexual information (Stahmann, 2000). Premarital couples do not expect the physician to become involved in their relationship unless there is some conflict regarding birth

control or sex. Premarital couples generally do not see a physician as a couple but individually because the medical field is oriented toward the individual and generally the purpose is for the bride's premarital physical exam. Physicians also do not have time to consult with each client for an extended amount of time because their patient load is so high (Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997).

Mental Health Workers.

Silliman and Schumm, (1999) conducted a review of issues specifically related to effectively designing marriage preparation programs. They conclude that it is best to do premarital counseling four to twelve months prior to the wedding to maximize the teachable moment. Couples less than two months from marriage took fewer risks talking about issues and developing new skills. Different premarital programs require different number of sessions in order to accomplish their tasks. School-based programs usually offer more than eight hours of training and research-based programs usually offer ten to thirty hours of training. Regardless of the number of sessions, a high quality premarital program with interpersonal skills training would require a minimum of several sessions of one to two hours each. There are many different formats for premarital programs including lecture, small-group discussion, and interactive couple exercises with couple-mentor interaction. Interactive methods including discussion, and role play exercises have typically been more successful than lecture methods. Marriage preparation programs may address a variety of topics but most will address communication, conflict resolution, egalitarian roles, sex, commitment, finances, and personality issues. Mental health workers also tend to focus on family of origin issues and couple problems.

Stahmann and Hiebert, (1997) presented an outline of structured sessions for professional mental health workers. They suggested having four to six two-hour sessions in order to cover all

the material. When problems do arise in the premarital counseling process it may be necessary to extend counseling and invite the couple into more intensive therapy for a few more sessions.

Four to six sessions should be adequate for couples with a relationship shorter than three years.

During the first session the counselor should make a plan with the couple indicating the number of sessions and the purpose of each session.

Stahmann and Hiebert, (1997) also outlined seven goals for conducting premarital counseling. The first goal is the clarification of self. The client's identity becomes more clear as he/she sketches out thoughts, feelings, beliefs and fantasies. The second is the clarification of others. Along with clients understanding their own identity more clearly they will also understand the other person more clearly as a separate individual with his or her own personality. The third goal for premarital counseling is alleviating anxiety. Many couples (or individuals) are anxious about the marriage and the continuation of their relationship after marriage. Through the counseling process the couple will have a better understanding of their relationship as it has evolved and will continue to evolve and they learn some skills to help them nurture their relationship after their wedding. The fourth goal is building adventure. As the counselor is inquisitive about the past and present of the couple's relationship the couple will begin to view their relationship as something that is not static but changing. The couple then can become excited about growing their relationship to be whatever they want it to be. The fifth goal Stahmann and Hiebert outline is communication. The skill-building counseling process will help each individual be aware of his or her own thoughts and feelings and be able to communicate them in a more effective way. The sixth goal is observation and prediction. The counseling process will help the couple be able to make predictions about patterns or dynamics in their

relationship and process the feedback they receive. This will help them to more effectively recognize a problem in the future and be able to handle it. The seventh goal is overcoming inhibitions. The counseling process is designed to help a couple talk about topics they had not or could not talk about before.

One problem facing the practice of premarital counseling is that couples who are very close to the wedding date will actually not open up as much with each other or take as many risks because of fear that something will go wrong and they will have to call off the wedding (Silliman & Schumm, 1999; Anderson, 1998). Some people have proposed that until a couple has become reality oriented, that is oriented to the reality that marriage is not simply bliss, counseling or enrichment will do little or no long term good (Schumm & Denton, 1979). As a part of many premarital counseling outlines, a follow-up session is recommended between three to six months after the wedding (Schumm & Denton, 1979; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Silliman & Schumm, 1999; Stahmann, 2000).

Training

The universities and theological seminaries where professionals learn how to provide counseling typically do not provide adequate training for premarital counseling. Schumm and Denton (1979) suggested three reasons why seminaries and universities do not provide courses focusing exclusively on premarital counseling. First, the assumption that training in marriage counseling can be easily applied to the premarital situation. Second is that few counselors have a large premarital caseload. Third is that there is still a lack of research on issues like curriculum construction. Each of these reasons will be discussed individually.

The first assumption is that training from marital counseling can easily be applied to premarital counseling (Schumm & Denton, 1979). In some cases this assumption is true, in others it is not. When a couple prepares to marry they start to bond their lives together before the wedding date. In the couple's eyes their marriage relationship together does not start until the wedding but in reality they have been bonding their lives together much earlier during the dating and courtship process. By the time the couple comes to a counselor for premarital counseling they are already "psychologically married." In this case the couple views the counseling as premarital counseling but the counselor views the process as couple counseling (Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997). This supports the assumption that training for marital counseling can be applied to premarital counseling. Although the counseling process is similar for marital counseling and premarital counseling, the content, structure and goals of the therapy sessions may differ from marital and premarital counseling.

Stahmann and Hiebert, (1997) wrote their book to help professionals who perform premarital counseling. They did not write their book for the lay audience but for those who have received or are receiving a Masters Degree in a field of counseling or studying to become a clergy member. The authors recognize the need to educate people who are planning to perform premarital counseling. Stahmann and Hiebert do provide some skills training in their book which they have found helpful but that training is not sufficient for a lay person to perform premarital counseling.

Some premarital programs allow for a mentor couple to help with the premarital counseling process. The responsibility of the mentor couple usually includes administering an assessment instrument and then using it to discuss some positive areas and possible problem

areas in the relationship with the engaged couple. A mentor couple must be trained to administer the assessment instrument and some are trained in addition to provide communication and conflict-resolution education (McManus, 1995). One issue with training lay couples to provide counseling is that not all relationships can or should be saved. Couples trained to be mentor couples should also be trained when to appropriately refer the couple for more intense therapy and when continuing the relationship may not be in the best interest of the individuals (Doherty & Anderson, 2004).

The second assumption is that few counselors have a large premarital caseload (Schumm & Denton, 1979). This has partly been brought about through changes in the values of the American people. In the 1980's there was a change from valuing personal growth to valuing the consumer. This shift in values helped spur the formation of insurance agencies which held the power to direct patients to particular caregivers. With this change many therapists competed to be recognized as bonafide mental health providers for insurance panels and employee assistance programs. Since prevention therapy including premarital therapy and marital enrichment therapy were not reimbursable through insurance agencies many therapists have abandoned them in their practice (Doherty & Anderson, 2004). Neither the government nor the insurance agencies in the past have been willing to fund marriage education or premarital counseling (Silliman & Schumm, 1999). With added interest in prevention science and the increasing community marriage initiatives around the country it is possible that the government will help fund some marriage preparation activities in an effort to strengthen developing or existing marriage relationships (Carroll & Doherty, 2003; Brotherson & Duncan, 2004; Doherty & Anderson, 2004).

The third assumption is that there is still a lack of research which considers problems such as curriculum construction. Research for effective premarital programs is and will continue to be important as they strive to receive funding from the government and other outside sources (Schumm & Denton, 1979). There has been much more research on premarital programs with regards to their curriculum construction and their effectiveness in the years following 1979 (Silliman & Schumm, 1999; Carroll & Doherty, 2003). There continues to be a need for more research done in these areas especially concerning the long-term benefits of premarital programs (Carroll & Doherty, 2003).

Along with a lack of curriculum construction premarital education lacks a theoretical framework. Many times professionals get too narrow in their scope of delivering premarital education. In an effort to broaden the scope of marital education Hawkins, Carroll, Doherty and Willoughby, (2004) developed a comprehensive model for marriage education including premarital education as one portion of the model which considers many different stages over the life course. This model can help professionals broaden their thinking, and creativity in finding ways to deliver premarital education. This model can also help professionals fine tune their premarital education programs by considering other factors such as intensity, method, content, target population, delivery and setting of the program.

Carroll and Doherty, (2003) make the analogy that looking at the research is like looking at a glass as half empty or half full. Looking at the glass as half empty recognizes that there continues to be many questions regarding the effectiveness of premarital programs. Looking at the glass as half full is seeing that much of the research of the best programs consistently finds

positive outcomes and the research has identified some key processes and skills that can help a couple have a stable and successful marriage.

Jones and Stahmann Study

In order to better understand the beliefs, preparation, and practices of clergy, Jones and Stahmann (1994), sent 1,000 questionnaires to clergy from major Protestant denominations. 250 questionnaires were sent to clergy which were randomly selected from each denomination including Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, and United Church of Christ. Two hundred eighty seven questionnaires were returned, of which 231 were complete and usable for analysis (23% return rate). The questionnaires asked specific questions about the clergy's beliefs, preparation, and practices regarding premarital counseling.

In studying the beliefs of the clergy Jones and Stahmann found that ninety-two percent of the clergy in the study agreed with previous reports that they were the primary providers for premarital counseling. Thirty-one percent answered yes to the question which asked if their denomination required them to provide premarital counseling. When asked if they personally believed that premarital counseling should be required of all couples prior to the wedding, ninety-four percent reported yes. The clergy were asked to rate on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Not Important; 2 = Slightly Important; 3 = Somewhat Important; 4 = Fairly Important; 5 = Very Important) the importance of eight roles the clergy might play in marriage preparation including Facilitator (encourage couple discussion), Enrichment (relationship enhancement), Moral Teaching (sacred nature of marriage), Education (giving information), Evangelism (enrichment of personal faith), Screening (assessing preparedness for marriage), Rehearsal (preparation for the ceremony), and Resource Identification (to identify clergy and others). The average rating for

the roles of facilitator and enrichment were both greater than four suggesting the clergy viewed these roles as fairly important. The remaining six roles were rated in the three range suggesting the clergy viewed these roles as somewhat important.

The clergy sampled seemed to agree with the way they practiced premarital counseling. The clergy reported they primarily used individual couple counseling and individual couple education and rarely used group formats. Jones and Stahmann conclude the clergy may perform premarital counseling in this format because they perform only a few marriages a year and it would be impractical to wait for enough couples for group format. Also, the high divorce rate encourages the clergy to spend individual time with the couples to enhance their chances for marital success. Jones and Stahmann note it was a surprise that group format is not used more frequently since some premarital counseling literature has assumed group formats are more commonly used.

The questionnaire asked two questions regarding the clergy's training. The first question asked if the clergy had taken a course in premarital counseling. Thirty-nine percent indicated they had taken a course in premarital counseling. The second question asked if the clergy had taken a unit, or section within an academic course on premarital counseling. Almost 60% indicated they had taken a unit, or section on premarital counseling. Jones and Stahmann suggest there is a need for additional training in order to help equip the clergy to provide premarital counseling.

Why Study AMCAP Members?

Many different premarital programs have been developed in order to counsel different target populations (Schumm & Denton, 1979; Stahmann, 2000; Silliman & Schumm, 1999).

More research needs to be done in order to develop new programs for other target populations. The LDS religion is the fourth largest religious body (distinct church) in the U.S. (Adherents, 2005). With a large growth rate it is becoming more likely that a mental health professional will have LDS members among their clients (Koltko, 1990).

The LDS church desires for their members to get married in one of their temples. They believe that marriages that take place in the temple under the proper authority will last through eternity and not just “until death do you part” (Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2005a). Only members who have proved themselves worthy by keeping the commandments may enter the temple after it has been dedicated (Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2005d). When LDS members prepare for a wedding in an LDS temple they must have an interview with their bishop. This interview consists of the bishop asking questions regarding the preparedness and moral worthiness of the member to get married in the temple. A bishop may give advice and counsel to the premarital couple as he feels is needed, but it is not necessary for the interview. LDS members who choose not to marry in the temple may or may not have an interview with their bishop but this interview would not focus on the member’s worthiness to enter the temple. Although not all LDS weddings take place in a temple all weddings that do require passing an interview with the bishop prior to the wedding. If the bishop feels that additional counseling is needed for the premarital couple he can choose to refer the couple to a professional counselor. Bishops are lay church members and not usually trained to be professional counselors. When a bishop refers a member to a professional counselor it is most likely he will refer the member to an LDS counselor. Although most LDS counselors are not members of The Association of

Mormon Counselors and Psychotherapists (AMCAP), AMCAP members are in a unique position to provide premarital counseling to the LDS population because they are themselves LDS.

Not all LDS premarital couples who see an LDS counselor before their wedding are referred by a bishop. Some may choose on their own to receive premarital counseling. It is common for religious members who are seeking counseling to seek out a counselor with their same beliefs. When a counselor is familiar with clients' beliefs or faith the counselor can present content for the sessions within the culture and language of the clients' religious beliefs and practices (Hawkins, Carroll, Doherty, & Willoughby, 2004). AMCAP members are familiar with the LDS language, beliefs, and practices and may be a good choice for LDS members seeking premarital counseling.

AMCAP is an international professional organization of counselors, psychotherapists and others in helping professions whose common bond is adherence to the principles and standards of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Individual opinions and ideas do not necessarily reflect those of the AMCAP board or the general AMCAP membership. AMCAP is neither sponsored by nor does it speak for the LDS church or its leaders (AMCAP, 2005).

Given that AMCAP members are in a unique position to provide premarital counseling to LDS members raises some fundamental questions: What do AMCAP members believe about the importance of premarital counseling and the roles they play in providing this service? What type of format is used by AMCAP members to practice premarital counseling, and how many receive this service yearly? What training, if any, do AMCAP members receive specifically preparing

them to provide premarital counseling services? The answers to these questions would help prepare future professionals who will provide premarital counseling to LDS members.

The data gathered from the LDS counselors regarding premarital counseling were compared to data obtained from a national sample of Protestant premarital clergy counselors (Jones & Stahmann, 1994). Comparisons between the LDS counselors and the sample from four Protestant denominations (Jones & Stahmann, 1994), raises some more questions. How are AMCAP members and Protestant clergy similar and different in their beliefs, practices, and training regarding premarital counseling?

The results from the AMCAP sample and the Protestant clergy sample are not expected to be exactly the same. These two groups are very different in their religious and professional composition. Since the LDS religion and Protestant denominations studied stress the importance of marriage and families, it is expected that AMCAP members and Protestant clergy will both believe that marriage preparation activities are important.

There is a traditional bond between weddings and church where once a couple is prepared to be married traditionally they seek out their local church leader to perform the ceremony. Some Protestant clergy may require couples to participate in premarital counseling before the clergy will agree to perform the wedding ceremony. Even those Protestant clergy who do not require premarital counseling generally meet with the couple one time before the wedding where some information, education, or counsel is given concerning marriage. LDS couples are required to pass an interview with their bishop in order to be married in the temple but these lay leaders are not usually trained to be professional counselors. LDS bishops may refer some couples for premarital counseling to an AMCAP member but receiving premarital counseling is not required

before any LDS marriage. AMCAP members, usually licensed mental health therapists, cannot receive financial compensation for premarital counseling from insurance agencies (Doherty & Anderson, 2004). For these reasons Protestant clergy will most likely continue providing more premarital counseling than AMCAP members.

The assumption is that both AMCAP members and Protestant clergy will receive some specific training whether an entire course or a unit within a course concerning premarital counseling since the possibility exists for both groups to be involved with premarital counseling. Since AMCAP members generally provide counseling as a profession it is assumed they will employ premarital counseling methods which can yield the greatest financial benefit to them. Since marriage could be seen as a very significant part of religion it is expected that Protestant clergy will employ premarital counseling methods which focus on the importance of marriage for the individual couple. Although AMCAP members and Protestant clergy are very different, comparing the AMCAP results with the Protestant results may yield some meaningful information such as how differently do AMCAP members and Protestant clergy believe that marriage preparation is a necessary part of getting married, what kind of methods are used most frequently for providing premarital counseling, and what could be done to better educate those who are providing premarital counseling.

Chapter 3

Methods

AMCAP Sample

The sample used in this study came from members of the Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychotherapists (AMCAP) living within the United States. A “Marriage Preparation Provider Questionnaire for AMCAP Members” (MPPQ-AMCAP) was sent to each of 847 AMCAP members living within the United States. A postage paid return envelope was included. Two weeks following the initial mailing of the questionnaires, a follow-up reminder was sent to each person indicating the importance of returning the questionnaire. In order to preserve anonymity of the AMCAP members surveyed, only two sets of mailing labels were generated with no identifying information kept by the researchers, so that additional follow-up to those who did not return a questionnaire was not possible.

Over a period of six months, 350 MPPQ-AMCAP questionnaires were returned (41% return rate). This response rate was determined to be acceptable, considering that the response rate for a major national study of marriage and family therapists was 34%, which was viewed as “typical for questionnaires sent to professionals” (Doherty & Simmons, 1996). Information from the second, third, and fourth pages was used for this study. The number of people who completed the questions on these pages varied from question to question. Fifty two questionnaires were dropped from the study because the AMCAP members either didn’t answer any questions, or they only answered questions on the first page. Doherty & Simmons (1996), suggest that there is variation in response rates on different parts of a questionnaire. That was confirmed by this study. The variation of responses to the questions of the MPPQ-AMCAP may

be attributed to the length of the questionnaire and the careful reading required for some of the questions (Adams & Stahmann, 2002).

One of the question in the MMPQ-AMCAP asked AMCAP members to identify whether they were presently involved in marriage preparation activities in their profession. In order to compare the results from the AMCAP sample with the results to the Protestant clergy sample with regards to premarital therapy, only those AMCAP members were included who indicated they were presently involved in marriage preparation activities in their profession. A total of 127 respondents were used for this analysis. Nearly all of the 127 respondents were married (118 or 92.9%) at the time they completed the survey. Of those married, 100 (84.7%) were currently married to their first spouse and 18 (15.3%) were remarried. Of those not currently married 6 (4.7%) were divorced, and 2 (1.6%) were widowed. One respondent (.8%) did not fill out his/her marital status. All respondents indicated membership in the LDS Church.

In response to professional identification approximately 93% identified themselves as mental health professionals. Of those identifying themselves as mental health professionals, 35 (27.6%) identified themselves as “social workers;” 33 (26.0%) identified themselves as “counselors;” 31 (24.4%) “marriage and family therapists;” 17 (13.4%) “psychologist;” and 2 (1.6%) “clinical sociologist.” Of the remaining 7%, 1 (.8%) did not fill in their personal identification and the remaining 6% identified themselves as something other than those already described.

The mean number of years of experience in these professions was identified as 17.3 years. The majority of respondents were male 90 (70.9%) with 36 (28.3%) female and 1 (.8%) not

filling in his/her gender. The mean age of respondents was 49.2 years. The mean number of years experience with marriage preparation activities was 14.0 years.

Protestant Sample

The results from the AMCAP sample were compared to the results of the Protestant sample from the Jones and Stahmann (1994) study. The author had access to the raw data from the Protestant sample making comparisons between the two samples possible. It is necessary to describe the Protestant sample to help account for similarities and/or differences observed between these two samples. Of the original 231 Protestant clergy from the Jones and Stahmann study only those Protestant clergy who had one or more years experience in premarital counseling were included in this comparison. Five of the Protestant clergy either had zero years of experience in premarital counseling or did not answer the question concerning experience in premarital counseling. The total sample included 226 clergy representing four denominations from 44 states and every geographical region in the United States. Of the 226 clergy 74 (32.7%) were Lutheran, 49 (21.7%) were Methodist, 57 (25.2%) were United Church of Christ, and 46 (20.4%) were Presbyterian clergy.

Nearly all of the 231 respondents were married (203 or 89.9%). Of those married most (178 or 78.8%) were married to their first spouse and the remainder (25 or 11.1%) were remarried. Of those not currently married 11 (4.9%) had never been married, 8 (3.5%) were separated, 1 (.4%) was widowed, 2 (.9%) were divorced, and 1 (.4%) did not identify his/her marital status. This sample is made up of 202 males (89.4%) and 21 females (9.3%), with three respondents not identifying their gender. The average age for the Protestant clergy was 46.5 years.

These clergy reported their average number of years in the ministry was 17.2 years. The clergy were not asked if they were presently involved in premarital counseling. However they were asked how many years they have been doing marriage preparation. The Protestant clergy reported they have been doing marriage preparation anywhere from 1 to 46 years with the mean at 17.1 years.

Instrument and Analysis

The “Marriage Preparation Provider Questionnaire for AMCAP Members” (MPPQ-AMCAP) was designed by Stahmann and a graduate student research team in order to collect information about AMCAP members’ demographic information, marriage preparation activities, training in marriage preparation, beliefs/values regarding marriage preparation, and the most common and harmful problem areas in marriage preparation (See Appendix for complete questionnaire). Information from the first four pages with the demographic information, marriage preparation activities, training, and beliefs about marriage preparation were used for this study. This study was designed to replicate the Jones and Stahmann, (1994) study of the Beliefs, Practices, and Training of Protestant clergy. Questions were selected from the MMPQ-AMCAP which replicated the Jones and Stahmann study. Outlined below are the questions which were used to analyze the beliefs, practices, and training of AMCAP members.

Beliefs.

The questions which were used to analyze the beliefs of AMCAP members regarding premarital therapy were:

(1) “Do you personally believe that marriage preparation should be required of all LDS couples before their marriage by Church authorities (ie. bishop, Temple, etc.)?
yes_____no_____.”

This question was chosen because it reflected a strong belief that marriage preparation is important if the subject responds with a “yes.” Although a “no” response does not mean the subject believes marriage preparation is not important it does mean that it is not so important it should be required of all LDS couples prior to their marriage. The answer to this question could also reflect an individual’s belief as to the answer to a high divorce rate. The LDS church values marriage a great deal and it is important to know if AMCAP members believe that marriage preparation could help prepare couples for the reality of marriage and make their marriage stronger.

To analyze this question the percentage of those who agreed with the question were calculated. A similar question was asked in the survey for the Protestant clergy. They were asked if they personally believe that marriage preparation should be required of all couples prior to the wedding. A chi-square test was used to compare the results of the AMCAP sample with the results of the Protestant Clergy sample. The null hypothesis in this case was that there would be no relationship between whether a person was an AMCAP member or Protestant clergy and if he or she believed that marriage preparation should be required before marriage.

(2) “On a scale of 1 (no value) to 5 (very important), indicate the value that you place on marriage preparation programs for persons anticipating:”

	<u>No Value</u>		<u>Very Important</u>		
-FIRST MARRIAGES	1	2	3	4	5

-REMARRIAGES 1 2 3 4 5

To analyze this question, first, the mean and standard deviation was computed for both first marriages and remarriages. In the previous study done by Jones and Stahmann, (1994) the clergy were also asked to indicate the value they place on marriage preparation programs for first marriages and remarriages. A two group t-test was used to test the relationship between the means and standard deviations of the AMCAP members and clergy members for the value they placed for both first marriages and remarriages.

(4) “In marriage preparation, how important is your attention to each of the following topics/roles? Use the following scale to rate each item in the blank spaces provided:

1(Not Important) - 5(Very Important)

- Education (giving information) _____,
- Enrichment (relationship enhancement) _____,
- Testimony /Evangelism (enrichment of personal faith) _____,
- Facilitator (encourage couple discussion) _____,
- Moral Teaching (sacred nature of marriage) _____,
- Rehearsal (preparation for the ceremony) _____,
- Resource Identification (to identify possible sources of support) _____,
- Screening (assess preparedness for marriage) _____,
- Other (specify) _____.”

The mean and standard deviation were computed for how important each of the roles was rated. Clergy were asked in a previous study to rate these same roles (Jones & Stahmann, 1994). A repeated measure ANOVA test with a Tukey post-hoc analysis was used to analyze this

question. The fixed variable for the repeated measure ANOVA was whether an individual was an AMCAP member or Protestant clergy. The repeating variable for the repeated measure ANOVA were the eight topics/roles which were rated on their importance. The repeated measure ANOVA with a Tukey post-hoc test was used in order to test first if there was any difference between the AMCAP members and the Protestant Clergy in how important their attention was to the eight topics/roles and second to test if there was any differences between the eight topics/roles.

Practices.

Below are listed the questions which were used to analyze the practices of AMCAP members regarding premarital counseling:

(1) “How many couples have you seen in premarital counseling during the past 12 months? # of first marriages _____ # of remarriages _____.”

The mean and standard deviation were computed for the number of couples seen in the past 12 months for both first and remarriages. A similar question was asked of the Protestant clergy. A two group t-test was then computed for first marriages and remarriages to find out if the difference of the means between AMCAP members and clergy are significant.

(2) “Please help us define marriage preparation for first marriages and remarriages by checking the activities that you do now for both types of marriages:”

	First marriages	Remarriages
-Use group couple education sessions,	_____	_____
-Use group couple counseling sessions,	_____	_____
-Use couple education sessions,	_____	_____

- Use couple counseling sessions, _____
- Use individual education sessions, _____
- Use individual counseling sessions, _____
- Use tests or assessment instruments, _____
- Assign materials for the couple to read, _____
- Give handouts/materials to the couple, _____

The percentage of AMCAP members who reported they perform each marriage preparation activity for first marriages and remarriages was computed. In order to compare the results of the AMCAP study with the clergy study a chi-square test was run for each of the formats for both first marriages and remarriages. In order to do this the assumption was made that if a member of AMCAP or clergy member did not mark that they performed one of these activities then they do not perform that activity even though there was not another space to mark they do not perform the activity on the questionnaire.

Training.

The questions which were used to analyze the training of AMCAP members regarding premarital therapy are:

(1) "Have you ever had an academic course on premarital counseling? yes _____
no _____"

(2) "Was a unit (part of a course) on premarital counseling taught in a counseling course that you took while obtaining your degree(s)? yes _____ no _____"

The percentage of AMCAP members who have had an academic course and a unit on premarital counseling were computed by dividing the total number of responses by the number of

AMCAP members who responded “yes” to the questions. Similar questions were asked in the survey to the Protestant clergy. They were also asked if they ever had an academic course and a unit on premarital counseling. A chi-square test was used to compare the results of the AMCAP sample with the results of the Protestant Clergy sample for both having had a course on premarital counseling and having had a unit on premarital counseling.

Chapter 4

Results

Beliefs

The first question regarding beliefs was whether AMCAP members personally believed that marriage preparation should be required of all LDS couples before their marriage by Church authorities? In response to this question 45.7% (n=116) of AMCAP members agreed that they personally believe that marriage preparation should be required of all LDS couples before their marriage by Church authorities. When a similar question was asked of the Protestant clergy, 96.4% (n=224) personally believed that marriage preparation should be required of all couples before their wedding. Table 1 shows the chi-square table and results from the comparison of whether a person is a member of AMCAP or a Protestant clergy and whether he or she believes marriage preparation should be required before marriage.

Table 1

Chi-Square Test Results: AMCAP and Protestant Clergy Personally Believe that Marriage Preparation (MP) Should be Required Before Marriage

Sample	Responses		Total
	No	Yes	
AMCAP	63 (54.3%)	53 (45.7%)	116 (100%)
Clergy	8 (3.6%)	216 (96.4%)	224 (100%)
Total	71 (20.9%)	269 (79.1%)	340 (100%)

$$X^2 = 119.09, p < .001$$

The results of the chi-square test were significant and show a relationship between whether a person is a member of AMCAP or a Protestant clergy and if he or she believes marriage preparation should be required before a wedding. Protestant clergy were much more likely to report they personally believe marriage preparation should be required before a wedding.

The second question regarding beliefs asked AMCAP members to indicate the value they placed on marriage preparation programs for persons anticipating first marriages and remarriages. The average rating given by AMCAP members to the value of marriage preparation programs for first marriages was 4.40 on a 5-point Likert scale (1=No Value; 5=Very Important). AMCAP members also rated how they valued marriage preparation programs for remarriages. The results indicated that AMCAP members valued marriage preparation programs for remarriages more than marriage preparation programs for first marriages with an average of 4.62. Table 2 shows the results to the ratings which AMCAP members gave to the value of marriage preparation programs for both first marriages and remarriages along with the ratings which Protestant Clergy gave to the value of marriage preparation programs for both first marriages and remarriages. Protestant Clergy indicated they valued marriage preparation programs for persons anticipating first marriages as important with a mean score of 4.67. Protestant clergy also valued marriage preparation programs for persons anticipating remarriage as important with a mean score of 4.50.

In order to compare the value placed on marriage preparation programs by AMCAP members and Protestant clergy a two group t-test was run for both first marriage mean scores and remarriage mean scores. As shown in Table 2, comparing the mean score for first marriages

$t=-3.14$ which was determined to be significant at the .01 level. This means that Protestant clergy valued marriage preparation programs for persons anticipating first marriages significantly more than AMCAP members. Comparing the means for remarriages $t=1.39$, which was determined to be non significant. This means that there was no difference between how AMCAP members and Protestant members valued marriage preparation programs for persons anticipating a remarriage.

Table 2

Mean Value Scores for Marriage Preparation Programs for Persons Anticipating First Marriages and Remarriages by AMCAP Members and Protestant Clergy

Sample	First Marriages				Remarriages			
	Mean	N	SD	Range	Mean	N	SD	Range
AMCAP	4.40	119	.86	1-5	4.62	119	.71	1-5
Clergy	4.67	224	.68	1-5	4.50	224	.84	1-5

First marriages $t=-3.14$, $p<.01$, $df=341$

Remarriages $t=1.39$, $p=.17$, $df=341$

Finally, the last question concerning beliefs asked AMCAP members to rate how important their attention was to eight topics/roles. Beliefs concerning the importance of eight roles that AMCAP members might play in marriage preparation were rated, again on a 5-point Likert scale (1=Not Important; 2=Slightly Important; 3=Somewhat Important; 4=Fairly Important; 5=Very Important). Table 3 contains the Mean scores, standard deviations (SD), and Ranges for each of the roles for AMCAP members, Protestant Clergy, and a combined total. AMCAP members ranked Education, Facilitator, and Enrichment above 4.0 indicating they believed these roles to be fairly important. The average ranks for AMCAP members for the roles

of Screening, Moral Teaching, Resource Identification, and Testimony/Evangelism were above 3.0 indicating they believed these roles to be somewhat important. AMCAP members ranked Rehearsal the lowest with an average of 2.01 which means that they believed the role of Rehearsal was only slightly important. Protestant clergy ranked Facilitator and Enrichment above 4.0 indicating they viewed these roles as fairly important. The remainder of the roles were ranked between 3.0 to 4.0 indicating Protestant clergy viewed them as somewhat important.

Table 3

Mean Scores, Standard Deviations (SD), and Ranges for Importance Ratings by AMCAP Members and Protestant Clergy of Eight Possible Topics or Roles in Premarital Counseling

Topic or Role	AMCAP (n=97)			Clergy (n=202)			Total n=(299)		
	Mean	SD	Range	Mean	SD	Range	Mean	SD	Range
Education	4.51	.74	1-5	3.71	.83	2-5	4.00	.88	1-5
Facilitator	4.45	.76	1-5	4.37	.74	1-5	4.39	.75	1-5
Enrichment	4.30	.97	1-5	4.24	.79	2-5	4.26	.85	1-5
Screening	3.87	1.14	1-5	3.45	1.12	1-5	3.58	1.14	1-5
Moral Teaching	3.66	1.29	1-5	3.71	1.11	1-5	3.69	1.17	1-5
Resource ID	3.54	1.16	1-5	3.25	1.07	1-5	3.34	1.11	1-5
Testimony/Evan	3.39	1.33	1-5	3.53	1.05	1-5	3.48	1.15	1-5
Rehearsal	1.81	1.10	1-5	3.28	1.04	1-5	2.80	1.26	1-5
Total	3.69		1-5	3.69		1-5	3.69		1-5

As shown in Table 3, the mean ratings for the eight roles, from highest ranking to lowest for AMCAP members were: Education (4.51), Facilitator (4.45), Enrichment (4.30), Screening (3.87), Moral Teaching (3.66), Resource Identification (3.54), Testimony/Evangelism (3.39), and Rehearsal (1.81). The average ratings of the eight roles, from highest ranking to lowest for

Protestant Clergy were: Facilitator (4.37), Enrichment (4.24), Education (3.71), Moral Teaching (3.71), Testimony/Evangelism (3.53), Screening (3.45), Rehearsal (3.28), and Resource Identification (3.25). The means of the eight topics/roles were used to construct a rank ordering of how important both the AMCAP members and Protestant clergy rated them as shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Rank Order of Eight Possible Roles or Topics

Rank	AMCAP	Clergy
1	Education	Facilitator
2	Facilitator	Enrichment
3	Enrichment	Education
4	Screening	Moral Teaching
5	Moral Teaching	Testimony/Evangelism
6	Resource Identification	Screening
7	Testimony/Evangelism	Rehearsal
8	Rehearsal	Resource Identification

A repeated measure ANOVA test with a Tukey post-hoc analysis was chosen for this analysis instead of doing eight two group t-tests or chi-square tests because doing multiple statistical tests could result in showing significance when there really was none. The repeated measure ANOVA test with a Tukey post-hoc analysis was used to test first if there was any difference between the AMCAP members and the Protestant Clergy in how important they considered the eight roles, and second, if there was any differences between the eight roles. In comparing the AMCAP members with the Protestant clergy there was no difference found in

how they answered the questions ($F=0.00$, $p=1.00$, $df 1, 297$). In comparing how the eight topics or roles were rated by both the AMCAP members and Protestant clergy together, the difference between the eight topics or roles was found to be significant ($F=649.73$, $p<.001$, $df 7, 291$). This means that both groups thought some topics/roles were more important than others. The Tukey post-hoc analysis compared the mean from each of the topics/roles with the mean of every other topic/role. With comparing the means with each other there was a total possible 28 comparisons. Table 5 lists the topics and roles and labels those specific mean comparisons which were found to be significantly different.

As shown in Table 5 of the possible 28 comparison of means 21 were found to be significant at $p<.001$. The mean comparisons which were found to be significant at the .01 level were moral teaching with resource identification and resource identification with screening. There was found to be a significant difference of only .05 between the means of enrichment with both education and enrichment. Enrichment may be closely identified with both education and enrichment. There was found to be no significant difference between the mean comparisons of testimony/evangelism with resource identification and moral teaching with screening.

Table 5

Mean Differences and Tukey Test Results of the Eight Topics/Roles as Rated by AMCAP Members and Protestant Clergy*

Topic or Role	Topic or Role						
	Enrichment	Testimony/ Evangelism	Facilitator	Moral Teaching	Rehearsal	Resource Identification	Screening
Education	-.16*	.65***	-.30***	.42***	1.56***	.72***	.45***
Enrichment		.81***	-.14*	.58***	1.72***	.87***	.61***
Testimony/ Evang			-.95***	-.23***	.92***	.07	-.20*
Facilitator				.72***	1.86***	1.02***	.75***
Moral Teaching					1.14***	.29**	.03
Rehearsal						-.85***	-1.11***
Resource ID							-.26**

p<.05* p<.01** p<.001***

* The mean of the topic/role in the column is subtracted from the mean of the topic/role in the row.

Practices

Data were also collected to study the practices of AMCAP members in premarital counseling. Table 5 shows the results to the question of how many couples were seen during the last 12 months seeking premarital counseling for first marriages and remarriages. AMCAP members saw an average of 5.31 couples preparing for a first marriage and 3.47 couples preparing for a remarriage in the last 12 months. Protestant clergy saw an average of 5.72 couples preparing for a first marriage and 2.52 couples preparing for a remarriage in the last 12 months. A two group t-test was run to determine if the difference between AMCAP members

and Protestant clergy was significant. The difference between the means of the number of couples seen in the last 12 months for first marriages was not significant ($t=-.44$, $p=.66$). It cannot be said that Protestant clergy saw on average more couples in the last 12 months preparing for a first marriage. The difference between the means of the number of couples seen in the last 12 months for remarriages was significant at $p<.05$ level ($t=2.12$). This means that AMCAP members saw on average a greater number of couples preparing for remarriage than did the Protestant clergy.

Table 6

Number of Couples Seen by AMCAP Members and Protestant Clergy in Premarital Counseling During the Last 12 Months

Sample	First Marriages				Remarriages			
	N	Mean	SD	Range	N	Mean	SD	Range
AMCAP	127	5.31	10.95	0-80	127	3.47	5.63	0-50
Clergy	226	5.72	6.69	0-70	226	2.52	2.84	0-20

First Marriages $t=-.44$, $p=.66$, $df=351$

Remarriages $t=2.12$, $p<.05$, $df=351$

Along with how many couples AMCAP members saw during the last 12 months, AMCAP members were also asked to check the counseling and educational activities that they used with both types of marriages. The results from the AMCAP data were compared with the results from the Protestant clergy sample and can be seen in Table 6. The counseling/educational activities used by AMCAP members when working with those entering first marriages from highest ranking to lowest was: Give handouts/materials to the couple (74.0%), Assign materials

for the couple to read (70.9%), Couple counseling sessions (70.9%), Individual counseling sessions (68.5%), Couple education sessions (53.5%), Individual education sessions (46.5%), Use tests or assessment instruments (46.5%), Group couple education sessions (19.7%), and Group couple counseling sessions (11.8%). The counseling/educational activities performed for first marriages by Protestant clergy from highest ranking to lowest was: Couple counseling sessions (95.1%), Give handouts/materials to the couple (70.4%), Couple education sessions (68.6%), Use tests or assessment instruments (65.5%), Assign materials for the couple to read (55.3%), Group couple counseling sessions (4.9%), and Group couple education sessions (4.9%).

The counseling/educational activities performed for remarriages by AMCAP members from highest ranking to lowest was: Give handouts/materials to the couple (67.7%), Individual counseling sessions (64.6%), Couple counseling sessions (63.8%), Assign materials for the couple to read (62.2%), Couple education sessions (41.7%), Use tests or assessment instruments (41.7%), Individual education sessions (40.9%), Group couple education sessions (12.6%), and Group couple counseling sessions (10.2%). The counseling/educational activities performed for remarriages by Protestant clergy from highest ranking to lowest was: Couple counseling sessions (92.9%), Give handouts/materials to the couple (63.3%), Couple education sessions (61.1%), Use tests or assessment instruments (58.0%), Assign materials for the couple to read (49.6%), Group couple counseling sessions (4.4%), and Group couple education sessions (4.0%).

Protestant clergy were not asked if they used individual education sessions or individual counseling sessions for first marriages or remarriages. A chi-square test was run for each format except individual education sessions and individual counseling sessions between the AMCAP members and Protestant clergy for both first marriages and remarriages to determine if the

observed differences were significant. As shown in Table 6 it was found that AMCAP members were more likely than Protestant clergy to use group couple education sessions, group couple counseling sessions, and assign materials for the couple to read with both first marriages and remarriages. Protestant clergy were more likely than AMCAP members to use couple education sessions, couple counseling sessions, and use tests or assessment instruments with both first marriages and remarriages.

Table 7

Marriage Preparation Activities Used by AMCAP Members and Protestant Clergy for First Marriages and Remarriages Including Chi-Square Results for Each Activity

Format	First Marriages			Remarriages		
	AMCAP (n=127)	Clergy (n=226)	X ²	AMCAP (n=127)	Clergy (n=226)	X ²
Group couple education	19.7%	4.9%	19.49***	12.6%	4.0%	9.17**
Group couple counseling	11.8%	4.9%	5.75*	10.2%	4.4%	4.51*
Couple education	53.5%	68.6%	7.91**	41.7%	61.1%	12.24***
Couple counseling	70.9%	95.1%	40.75***	63.8%	92.9%	47.69***
Individual education	46.5%			40.9%		
Individual counseling	68.5%			64.6%		
Tests or assessments	46.5%	65.5%	12.14***	41.7%	58.0%	8.59**
Assign reading materials	70.9%	55.3%	8.26**	62.2%	49.6%	5.24*
Give handouts/materials	74.0%	70.4%	.54	67.7%	63.3%	.70

p<.05* p<.01** p<.001***

Training

The amount of training received by AMCAP members and Clergy members is summarized in Table 7. Forty two percent of the AMCAP members reported taking a course in premarital counseling and 52% had at least a unit on premarital counseling. Forty percent of the Protestant clergy received a course in premarital counseling and 62% received a unit on premarital counseling. A chi-square test was run between the AMCAP members and the Protestant clergy for both having had a course and a unit in premarital counseling. There was no significant difference found between AMCAP members and Protestant clergy with how many had a course in premarital counseling ($X^2=.16$, $p=.69$). Neither, was there any difference found between AMCAP members and Protestant clergy with how many had a unit on premarital counseling ($X^2=3.12$, $p=.08$).

Table 8

Training Received by AMCAP Members and Protestant Clergy for Premarital Counseling (PMC) Including Chi-Square Results

Training	AMCAP			Clergy		
	Frequency	n	% of n	Frequency	n	% of n
(a) Had a course in PMC	52	123	42%	89	222	40%
(b) Had a unit on PMC	61	118	52%	135	219	62%

Had a course in PMC $X^2=.16$, $p=.69$, $df=1$

Had a unit on PMC $X^2=3.12$, $p=.08$, $df=1$

Chapter 5

Discussion

Beliefs

The results of this study showed that AMCAP members (46%) were much less likely than Protestant clergy (96%) to “personally believe that marriage preparation should be required of all couples” before the wedding. There were very few Protestant clergy who reported they did not personally believe that marriage preparation should be required before a wedding. In the past, premarital counseling performed by clergy consisted of one session where the clergy member discussed some issues with the couple (Schumm & Denton, 1979; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997). Typically, mental health workers who are involved in marriage preparation activities have suggested that between six to eight sessions of counseling are necessary in order to sufficiently prepare a couple for an upcoming wedding (Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997). The historical differences between the number of sessions a counselor or clergy will typically meet with a couple for premarital counseling could help explain the high percentage of Protestant clergy who personally believe that marriage preparation should be required before marriage.

Protestant clergy may view providing premarital counseling as a part of their ministry making it easy for them to believe that premarital counseling should be required before a wedding. If this was the case, requiring premarital counseling would not put an extra burden upon them because it is a service they already provide. Protestant clergy may be driven by what they believe their calling is supposed to be. AMCAP members would be most likely to be driven by financial reasons. Typically, AMCAP members cannot receive financial compensation for preventative work they provide. AMCAP members also do not have the authority with the LDS

church to require its members to receive premarital counseling no matter how firmly they believe it should be required. It would seem much easier for Protestant clergy who have local control over their congregation to require premarital counseling especially when they are the ones officiating the wedding ceremony.

Both AMCAP members and Protestant clergy reported that they believed that marriage preparation programs for persons anticipating first and second marriages were important. Although there was a statistically significant difference between how the AMCAP members (rating 4.4 of 5.0) and the Protestant clergy (rating 4.7 of 5.0) rated the value of marriage preparation programs for persons anticipating first marriages the difference between the means was less than .3, and thus does not seem to be clinically significant. This means that the difference between how AMCAP members and Protestant clergy value marriage preparation programs for persons anticipating first marriages doesn't help distinguish which individual counselors are more interested in premarital counseling. There was no statistical difference found between how the AMCAP members and Protestant clergy valued marriage preparation programs for persons anticipating remarriage. AMCAP members (rating 4.6 of 5.0) and Protestant clergy (rating 4.5 of 5.0) both valued marriage preparation activities for persons anticipating remarriage as important. Both groups believed that marriage preparation programs were important for persons anticipating first and second marriages. This means that both AMCAP members and Protestant clergy believe that premarital counseling could be an important thing for couples to invest their time and effort in before a marriage. These results could be partly explained by the LDS and Protestant beliefs about marriage and its role in an individuals

existence. Both seem to believe that marriage is important and that premarital counseling could be one way to ease the transition from being single to being married.

It can be informative to look at the similarities with how both groups ranked the importance of the eight possible topics or roles. It is interesting to note that Education, Facilitator, and Enrichment were the top three roles for both groups. This means that an individual seeking premarital counseling from an AMCAP member or Protestant clergy could expect to receive some education about marriage, have discussions with his/her fiancé, and have their relationship strengthened from the counseling experience. Education would seem to be a logical topic/role for a counselor providing premarital counseling because the couple is about to have a life changing experience. The beginning of a marriage is a large transition for an individual to make and education about that transition could help to normalize the changes they experience. Much of couple counseling includes facilitating discussions between the couple in order for the couple to practice tools they have learned and for the counselor to observe the dynamics of the relationship. Having facilitator be such a highly ranked topic/role could mean that it is also beneficial for couples to discuss issues they have before they are married as a way to practice new ways of handling any differences that arise after they are married. It is very understandable that enrichment would also be a highly ranked topic/role for AMCAP members and Protestant clergy especially when the relationship is viewed as something that is formed before the actual wedding ceremony. The couple already has a relationship and it would seem to be logical that the counselor wants to help enrich the relationship and help the relationship strengthen even before the marriage. Both AMCAP members and Protestant clergy

The last similarity that is of note is that Rehearsal was ranked in the bottom two for both groups. This is understandable for the AMCAP members since they are typically not the ones in charge of providing the wedding ceremony. To see Protestant clergy rank this role relatively low is surprising because in the past the premarital counseling received from a clergy member emphasized rehearsing the actual wedding ceremony since the clergy was also the one performing the wedding. Ranking this topic or role low could indicate a shift in the duty of a Protestant clergy from being one who simply performs weddings to one who supports and bolsters couples to protect them from the distress of a strained or failed marriage. Although it can also be interesting to note the differences with how AMCAP members and Protestant clergy rated the roles in the middle, it cannot be inferred that these differences arise because of differences between AMCAP members and Protestant clergy.

Practices

There was no statistically significant difference found between the number of couples entering first marriages seen by AMCAP members or Protestant clergy in the last 12 months. The mean number of couples seen in the last 12 months for both groups was between five and six with Protestant clergy on average reporting to have seen .41 more couples in the last 12 months than AMCAP members. However, there was found to be a significant difference between the number of couples entering remarriage seen by AMCAP members or Protestant clergy in the last 12 months. This could be brought about by the way in which AMCAP members and Protestant clergy seek clients for premarital counseling. AMCAP members involved in premarital counseling may seek premarital clients through advertising where Protestant clergy may wait for couples who want to be married by the clergy to seek them out. AMCAP members may also

provide premarital counseling to people not of their faith whereas Protestant clergy would most likely provide premarital counseling to those of their faith who will be married by them.

AMCAP members on average reported to have seen almost one more couple in the last 12 months than Protestant clergy. Stahmann, (2000) notes that mental health workers typically work with those who have been divorced and seek therapy to avoid a second divorce. This could explain the difference between the AMCAP members who are professional counselors and Protestant clergy. Another possible meaning could be that LDS members have a higher remarriage rate than members of the Protestant faith although specific data are not available.

The second question asked of AMCAP members and Protestant clergy requested them to check the counseling and educational activities which they use for premarital counseling for both first marriages and remarriages. AMCAP members used group couple education sessions, group couple counseling sessions, and assigned materials for the couple to read significantly more than Protestant clergy. Jones and Stahmann, (1994) noted that the Protestant clergy's limited use of group formats was an important finding since previous research assumed group formats were more widely used. Although AMCAP members used the group format significantly more than Protestant clergy they also used them less than any of the other formats. Jones and Stahmann state that a possible reason for using group formats infrequently could be because counselors did not have enough couples at the same time to form a group. Protestant clergy may not get enough training about groups to feel comfortable providing group counseling sessions. A possible explanation for the difference with how AMCAP members and Protestant clergy use group formats could be finances. AMCAP members would tend to use group formats because it makes the counseling more economical for the couples involved while at the same time the AMCAP

member receives the same amount of money or possibly more money than he/she would by doing an individual session with one couple. Protestant clergy may view their ministry as being focused on the individual making them feel like they need to put the extra time and effort into having individual sessions with the couple rather than put couples together in a group format.

AMCAP members assigned reading materials for clients significantly more than Protestant clergy. This could indicate that AMCAP members are more inclined to use bibliotherapy in their counseling rather than solely relying on their own counseling, or knowledge of specific information such as finances, family planning, or other related topics. AMCAP members may also refer couples to reading materials when the couple cannot afford couple counseling. It would be interesting to compare the types of reading materials that AMCAP members and Protestant clergy refer their clients to read in a future study.

Protestant clergy used Couple education sessions, Couple counseling sessions, and Tests or assessment instruments significantly more than AMCAP members used them. Historically, Protestant clergy have seen a couple one time before the wedding to review the wedding ceremony and go over additional counseling information from the clergy. It is not surprising that Protestant clergy reported they use couple counseling, and couple education sessions frequently with premarital counseling. Protestant clergy were not asked how much they used individual education sessions, or individual counseling sessions as part of their premarital counseling activities. Whereas AMCAP members might split their efforts for premarital counseling between individual sessions and couple sessions Protestant clergy were not allowed to make that distinction with their survey. It could be assumed that Protestant clergy would use more couple

format counseling than individual format counseling given their history of providing premarital counseling but without having it a part of their survey we do not know.

Protestant clergy reported using tests or assessments significantly more than AMCAP members. This difference may be because AMCAP members were not as likely to be trained to use specific premarital assessments such as PREPARE, RELATE, or FOCCUS. These premarital assessments were also developed in a church context and are marketed more towards the clergy than other professional counselors. AMCAP members may lack awareness of possible premarital assessment instruments which could help them out in delivering premarital counseling. There was no difference found between AMCAP members and Protestant clergy with their use of Giving handouts/materials to the couple. Both groups indicated a frequent use of giving handouts/materials to the couple. Future research could focus on the information on the handouts and which websites the counselors are referring their clients to view and read.

Training

AMCAP members and Protestant clergy were asked to report if they received training in premarital counseling through having a course in premarital counseling or a unit on premarital counseling. It was surprising to see that close to 40% of both AMCAP members and Protestant clergy, who are for the most part involved in some way with premarital counseling, received no training regarding premarital counseling. As previously stated, one explanation for the lack of specific training in premarital counseling could be that training in marriage counseling can be easily applied to the premarital situation, few counselors have a large premarital caseload, and there is a lack of research on issues like curriculum construction (Schumm & Denton, 1979). Even given these assumptions it would seem reasonable that an individual should receive at least

a unit considering premarital counseling. With so many AMCAP members and Protestant clergy providing premarital counseling without training future research could focus on what counselors are doing after school to receive training in premarital counseling. One area that could greatly benefit from training would be the use of specific tests and assessments for premarital couples. As stated earlier the inventories such as FOCCUS, PREPARE, and RELATE have many benefits which could help AMCAP members or Protestant clergy with their premarital counseling (Halford, 2004).

Limitations

The MMPQ-AMCAP questionnaire is a self report questionnaire about beliefs, practices, and training but does not measure the effectiveness of premarital counseling. This study was designed to explore the beliefs, training, and methods of providing marriage preparation by AMCAP members and not to study their perceived effectiveness of premarital counseling. Further research will need to be done to show the effectiveness of premarital counseling and to show what methods are rated most effective.

The MMPQ-AMCAP questionnaire was only given to AMCAP members and so the results cannot be generalized to the public or to other LDS therapists but only can be generalized to AMCAP members who perform premarital counseling. Further research needs to be done to compare the results from this study to similar studies done with other target populations such as marriage and family therapists, social workers, and psychologists.

As mentioned previously there was only a 41% response rate for the questionnaire. A higher response rate would be desirable, but when dealing with questionnaires it is never certain how many will be returned. This study only used two mailing labels and no identifying

information was kept by the researchers so there could not be additional follow-up mailings to those who did not return the survey. This survey was also long being six pages long and parts of it required long explanations to help the subject know what to do. In the future it may be helpful to break the research up into different surveys allowing the survey to be shorter and make the questions easier to read and follow which could help there be a higher response rate.

Conclusion

Premarital counseling is something that is done in order to ease the critical transition into marriage. By replicating the Jones and Stahmann study (1994) of beliefs, practices, and training of Protestant clergy, this study was designed to help explore the beliefs, training, and common marriage preparation activities of AMCAP members. The results were also compared with the Protestant clergy sample from the Jones and Stahmann study (1994). Major findings include that AMCAP members are less likely than Protestant clergy to believe that marriage preparation should be required before a wedding. AMCAP members and Protestant clergy both rated Enrichment, Testimony/Evangelism, and Education as the three most important topics/roles they focus on in premarital counseling. AMCAP members reported the use of group formats and assigned reading materials more frequently than Protestant clergy, and the use of individual couple formats and tests or assessments less frequently than Protestant clergy. Nearly 40% of both AMCAP members and Protestant clergy involved in premarital counseling received no training for delivering premarital counseling.

Premarital counseling continues to be a topic of research and study. Recently, a story of Jennifer Wilbanks, the “runaway bride” from Georgia, has had a great deal of publicity in the press. David Olson, (2005, May) a noted premarital counseling authority, was asked to comment

on this incident and stated the last three months before a wedding is focused more on the event than the relationship. He said that requiring premarital counseling before a wedding can help a couple discuss their fears and anxiety about marriage, and that premarital counseling or education should start about one year before the wedding. This can become very difficult for LDS couples because many LDS couples tend to have courtships and engagements that are less than one year from the first date to the wedding. In this study, when asked how long a couple should know each other before becoming engaged, the mean score response by AMCAP members was 8 months. When asked how long a couple should be engaged before the wedding the mean score response by AMCAP members was merely 5 months. When asked how long a couple should know each other before becoming engaged, the mean score response by Protestant clergy was 11 months. When asked how long a couple should be engaged before the wedding the mean score response by Protestant clergy was 7 months. Olson's recommendation would seem to be relatively unrealistic for the LDS population and very difficult even for the Protestant population. Since marriage is so important to the LDS faith, the LDS population continues to be an interesting population to study regarding marriage and what is done to help them prepare for marriage. More research will need to continue to be done to study this group of people.

References

- Adherents. (2005). Top ten largest religious bodies in the United States. Retrieved June 6, 2005, from http://adherents.com/rel_USA.html#bodies
- AMCAP. (2005). *Association of Mormon Counselors And Psychotherapists* web site. Retrieved February 25, 2005, from <http://www.amcap.net/>
- Anderson, H. (1998). Marriage preparation: A Protestant perspective. In H. Anderson, D. Browning, I.S. Evison, & M.S. Van Leeuwen (Eds.), *The family handbook* (pp. 114-117). Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Birch, P.J., Weed, S.E., & Olsen, J. (2004). Assessing the impact of community marriage policies on county divorce rates. *Family Relations*, 53(5), 495-503.
- Brotherson, S.E., & Duncan, W.C. (2004). Rebinding the ties that bind: Government efforts to preserve and promote marriage. *Family Relations*, 53(5), 459-468.
- Carroll, J.S., & Doherty, W.J. (2003). Evaluating the effectiveness of premarital prevention programs: A meta-analytic review of outcome research. *Family Relations*, 52(2), 105-118.
- Clarke, S.C., & Wilson, B.F. (1994). The relative stability of remarriages a cohort approach using vital statistics. *Family Relations*, 43, 305-310.
- Cobb, N.P., Larson, J.H., & Watson, W.L. (2003). Development of the attitudes about romance and mate selection scale. *Family Relations*, 52(3), 222-231.
- Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (2005a). Eternal marriage. Retrieved June 6, 2005, from <http://www.mormon.org/learn/0,8672,1299-1,00.html>

Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (2005b). Local congregations. Retrieved June 6, 2005, from

<http://www.mormon.org/learn/0,8672,1034-1,00.html>

Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (2005c).

Marriage is part of God's plan. Retrieved June 6, 2005, from

<http://www.mormon.org/learn/0,8672,1452-1,00.html>

Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (2005d).

Temples around the world. Retrieved June 6, 2005, from

<http://www.mormon.org/learn/0,8672,1583-1,00.html>

Dalin, R.A. (1998). Marriage preparation: A Jewish perspective. In H. Anderson, D. Browning, I.S. Evison, & M.S. Van Leeuwen (Eds.), *The family handbook* (pp. 111-113).

Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.

Doherty, W.J., & Anderson, J.R. (2004). Community marriage initiatives. *Family Relations*, 53(5), 425-432.

Doherty, W.J., & Simmons, D.S. (1996). Clinical practice patterns of marriage and family therapists: A national survey of therapists and their clients. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 22(1), 9-25.

Geiss, S.K., & O'Leary, K.D. (1981). Therapist ratings of frequency and severity of marital problems: Implications for research. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 7, 515-520.

Halford, W.K. (2004). The future of couple relationship education: Suggestions on how it can make a difference. *Family Relations*, 53(5), 559-566.

Hawkins, A.J., Carroll, J.S., Doherty, W.J., & Willoughby, B. (2004). A comprehensive framework for marriage education. *Family Relations*, 53(5), 547-558.

- Jones, E.F., & Stahmann, R.F. (1994). Clergy beliefs, preparation, and practice in premarital counseling. *The Journal of Pastoral Care*, 48(2), 181-186.
- Koltko, M.E. (1990). How religious beliefs affect psychotherapy: The example of Mormonism. *Psychotherapy*, 27(1), 132-141.
- Kreider, R.M. & Fields, J.M. (2001). *Number, timing, and duration of marriages and divorces: Fall 1996*. Current population reports, p 70-80. U.S. Census Bureau, Washington DC
- Markey, B. (1998). Marriage preparation: A Catholic perspective. In H. Anderson, D. Browning, I.S. Evison, & M.S. Van Leeuwen (Eds.), *The family handbook* (pp. 107-110). Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Olson, D.H. (2005, May). What we can learn from the runaway bride. Retrieved June 6, 2005 from the Prepare-enrich newsletters.
- Senediak, C. (1990). The value of premarital education. *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 11, 26-31.
- Schumm, W.R., & Denton, W. (1979). Trends in premarital counseling. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 5(4), 23-32.
- Silliman, B., & Schumm, W.R. (1999). Improving the practice patterns on marriage preparation. *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy*, 25, 23-43.
- Stahmann, R.F. (2000). Premarital counselling: A focus for family therapy. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 22, 104-116.
- Stahmann, R.F., & Hiebert W.J. (1997). *Premarital & remarital counseling: The professional's handbook*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Stanley, S.M. (2001). Making a case for premarital education. *Family Relations*, 50, 272-280.

Waite, L.J., & Gallagher, M. (2000). *The case of marriage: Why married people are happier, healthier, and better off financially*. New York: Doubleday.

Wright, H.N. (1992). *The premarital counseling handbook*. Chicago: Moody Press.

Appendix

Marriage Preparation Provider Questionnaire for AMCAP Members

We realize that you may or may not be involved or interested in marriage preparation. However, even if you are not planning to complete the entire questionnaire, please fill out the **DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION** section and return the blank questionnaire to us in the enclosed postage-paid envelope.

Are you involved or interested in marriage preparation in your profession or church calling? yes ___ no ___

Information provided by you will assist us in gaining important knowledge about the role that AMCAP members play in preparing people for marriage. We realize that the LDS Church is worldwide and encompasses many different cultures and peoples. In this questionnaire, please think of marriage preparation as it takes place in the U.S. or Canada. To help clarify the information you provide, please feel free to make any comments in the margins.

This is the only questionnaire that you will receive from us. Your responses are both **confidential and anonymous**, since we have no record of who does or does not return the questionnaire to us. If you would like a summary of the results, please send a **separate** postcard with your name and address and we will send a summary when the data are compiled.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION:

What is your present professional title? _____

Current License(s)? yes _____ no _____ Please List: _____

What do you consider to be your primary professional identification? (eg. Social Work, MFT, Counselor, etc.) _____

Years in this profession _____ Specialty? _____

What is your work setting? (Agency, hospital, private practice, etc.) _____

Are you LDS? yes _____ no _____ If not, your religious denomination is: _____

Present marital status: _____ never married _____ married to 1st spouse _____ widowed
_____ separated _____ divorced _____ remarried
Year: Institution: Major Field:

Age: _____ Gender: _____ Academic Degree(s): _____

We would like you to estimate what percent of LDS couples participate in some form of marriage preparation program before their wedding:

In your church congregation (ward, branch or stake) _____ % First Marriages & _____ % Remarriages
In your geographical area _____ % First Marriages & _____ % Remarriages

YOUR MARRIAGE PREPARATION ACTIVITIES

We think of **marriage preparation** as those activities that you do to prepare couples and individuals for successful marriage, whether it be a first marriage or a remarriage. The following questions will be asked regarding your marriage preparation activities in two different settings: in your **professional work setting** and in your **LDS Church setting/calling**.

Are you presently involved in marriage preparation activities in your **profession**? yes _____ no _____

If yes, for how many years? _____ Please describe what you do: _____

What is your current church job or calling? _____

Are you presently involved in marriage preparation activities in your **church calling**? yes _____ no _____
 If yes, for how many years? _____ Please describe your marriage preparation activities: _____

In which church job(s)/calling(s) that you've held were you **most involved** with marriage preparation and **how**? _____

How many couples have you seen in premarital counseling during the past 12 months?
 # of first marriages _____ # of remarriages _____

Please help us define marriage preparation for first marriages **and** remarriages by checking ✓ the activities that you **do now** and those you **think ought to be done** for both types of marriages:

1) In your professional work setting:

	First Marriages		Remarriages	
	You Do Now:	Ought to be done:	You do Now:	Ought to be done:
-Use group couple education sessions	_____	_____	_____	_____
-Use group couple counseling sessions	_____	_____	_____	_____
-Use couple education sessions	_____	_____	_____	_____
-Use couple counseling sessions	_____	_____	_____	_____
-Use individual education sessions	_____	_____	_____	_____
-Use individual counseling sessions	_____	_____	_____	_____
-Use tests or assessment instruments	_____	_____	_____	_____
-Assign materials for the couple to read	_____	_____	_____	_____
-Give handouts/materials to the couple	_____	_____	_____	_____
-Other? _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

2) In your LDS Church setting/calling:

	First Marriages		Remarriages	
	You Do Now:	Ought to be done:	You do Now:	Ought to be done:
-Use group couple education sessions	_____	_____	_____	_____
-Use group couple counseling sessions	_____	_____	_____	_____
-Use couple education sessions	_____	_____	_____	_____
-Use couple counseling sessions	_____	_____	_____	_____
-Use individual education sessions	_____	_____	_____	_____
-Use individual counseling sessions	_____	_____	_____	_____
-Use tests or assessment instruments	_____	_____	_____	_____
-Assign materials for the couple to read	_____	_____	_____	_____
-Give handouts/materials to the couple	_____	_____	_____	_____
-Other? _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

In what ways have you participated as a resource person doing marriage preparation activities in your ward/ stake?
 (eg. class teacher, seminars, firesides, institute or seminary, etc.) _____

Do you use assessment instruments or questionnaires in premarital counseling? yes _____ no _____
 If so, which ones do you use? (circle) PREP-M T-JTA MBTI PREPARE Others (please specify): _____

Please indicate the total number of hours and number of sessions (meetings) that a typical couple in your marriage preparation program(s) will obtain:

1. ___ hours & ___ sessions as an individual couple.
2. ___ hours & ___ sessions as part of a group of couples.
3. ___ hours doing "homework" as a couple from above format(s).
4. ___ hours & ___ sessions as an individual couple referred to an external provider (e.g. another premarital counselor, etc.)
5. ___ hours & ___ sessions as part of a group of couples referred to an external provider (e.g. hospital, social agency, etc.)
6. ___ other hours. Please specify doing what _____

Now circle the number of the activity/format above that you believe is the most effective method of marriage preparation for couples.

TRAINING IN MARRIAGE PREPARATION

Have you ever had an academic course on premarital counseling? yes _____ no _____

If yes, where? _____

Was a unit (part of a course) on premarital counseling taught in a counseling course that you took while obtaining your degree(s)? yes _____ no _____

Indicate the training in marriage preparation you have received in the last year from the following sources:

- Number of LDS oriented marriage preparation books read _____ .
- Number of non-LDS oriented marriage preparation books read _____.
- Number of LDS oriented magazine articles read related to marriage preparation _____.
- Number of non-LDS oriented magazine articles read related to marriage preparation _____.
- Number of audio & video tapes reviewed related to marriage preparation _____.
- Hours _____ and number _____ of marriage preparation workshops attended.

What other training experience in marriage preparation have you received in the past year? Please specify.

Of the training in marriage preparation you have experienced, which seemed the most helpful to you as a marriage preparation provider?

What other training experiences do you think should be made available to LDS marriage preparation providers?

YOUR BELIEFS/VALUES REGARDING MARRIAGE PREPARATION

Previous research has identified Protestant clergy as the primary providers of marriage preparation for non-LDS people. Do you agree? yes _____ no _____. If not, who do you believe is the primary provider of marriage preparation? _____

Who do you believe **should** be the primary provider of marriage preparation for non-LDS people? _____

Why? _____

Who do you believe are in **key positions** to provide marriage preparation for **LDS Church members**? (eg. Young Women's/Young Men's leaders, Relief Society/Priesthood leaders, etc.)

In your view, what could the LDS Church do to better prepare these key people you have identified for their role in marriage preparation? _____

What could AMCAP do to better prepare these key people for their role in marriage preparation?

What books, articles, etc. [author, title] would you recommend to **LDS couples** you see in marriage preparation?

Would you recommend different books, articles, etc. for **non-LDS couples**? yes _____ no _____

If yes, what are they [author, title] and why would you recommend different materials? _____

Other churches, such as the Roman Catholic Church, provide a structured marriage preparation program for all engaged couples (pre-CANA for Catholics). What is your personal view on what the LDS Church does or should do concerning marriage preparation for LDS couples? _____

Do you personally believe that marriage preparation should be required of all LDS couples before their marriage by Church authorities (ie. bishop, Temple, etc.)? yes _____ no _____ Why? _____

On a scale of 1 (no value) to 5 (very important), indicate the value that **you place** on marriage preparation programs for persons anticipating:

	<u>No Value</u>					<u>Very Important</u>
-FIRST MARRIAGES	1	2	3	4	5	
-REMARRIAGES	1	2	3	4	5	

In marriage preparation, how important is your attention to each of the following topics/roles?

Use the following scale to rate each item in the blank spaces provided:

<u>Not Important</u>	<u>Slightly Important</u>	<u>Somewhat Important</u>	<u>Fairly Important</u>	<u>Very Important</u>
1	2	3	4	5
		In your Professional Work	In your Church Job/Calling	
-Education (giving information)		_____		_____
-Enrichment (relationship enhancement)		_____		_____
-Testimony/Evangelism (enrichment of personal faith)		_____		_____
-Facilitator (encourage couple discussion)		_____		_____
-Moral Teaching (sacred nature of marriage)		_____		_____
-Rehearsal (preparation for the ceremony)		_____		_____
-Resource Identification (to identify possible sources of support)		_____		_____
-Screening (assess preparedness for marriage)		_____		_____
-Other (specify) _____		_____		_____

If you rated items differently depending on the setting, please explain your reasoning: _____

For each of the following items that might be a part of marriage preparation, please indicate how competent you feel in the following subjects as you work with premarital couples. Circle the number on the scale at the right that seems most applicable to you.

	<u>Not Very Competent</u>			<u>Very Competent</u>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict Resolution	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Financial Management	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Influence of Family of Origin	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Influence of Friends	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Leisure Activities	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Marital Expectations	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Psychological Closeness(Intimacy)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Couple Communication Skills	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Demonstration of Affection	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Human Anatomy	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Sexual Activity	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Sexual Relationships	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Sexual Response Cycle	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Family Planning	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Parenting	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Household Roles	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Decision Making	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Personality Issues	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____	1	2	3	4	5

Now, please check the box of those items above that you believe **should be** included in a marriage preparation program for **LDS couples**. (Do not check those that you **would not** include in LDS marriage preparation but would include for **non-LDS couples**.) ~~Cross-out~~ any items that you **would not** include in **any** marriage preparation program.

We are interested in **your opinion** on the following questions:

Generally, how long should most couples be acquainted before becoming formally engaged? _____ months
 Generally, for most couples, how long should they be engaged before the wedding? _____ months.
 Would your opinion on the length of acquaintance before engagement and the length of engagement before marriage be different for **LDS couples** than for **non-LDS couples**? yes _____ no _____ Why? _____

Even though many people would say that AMCAP members' answers to this next question could be accurately predicted, we would like your response and opinion so that we can compare AMCAP responses to other data that we have.

Generally, does living together before marriage lead to a better marriage? yes _____ no _____
 Why or why not? _____

Below is a list of 29 possible problem areas for marriage. Read through the list of problem areas and then rate each area for First Marriages and Remarriages.

For each list do the following:

FIRST MARRIAGES:

- a) First, estimate, in the space provided, the percentage of premarital LDS couples who would have problems/complaints in each of the areas.
[Note: total % for each area can range from 0% to 100%. (e.g. Communication=75%, Unrealistic Expectations=70%, etc.)]
- b) Next, check ✓ the box □ by the 5 problem areas you believe would be the most damaging to LDS marriages.
- c) Then, check ✓ the box □ by the 5 problem areas you believe would be the most difficult to deal with in marriage preparation with LDS couples.

REMARRIAGES:

- a) First, estimate, in the space provided, the percentage of premarital LDS couples who would have problems/complaints in each of the areas.
[Note: total % for each area can range from 0% to 100%. (e.g. Communication=75%, Unrealistic Expectations=70%, etc.)]
- b) Next, check ✓ the box □ by the 5 problem areas you believe would be the most damaging to LDS marriages.
- c) Then, check ✓ the box □ by the 5 problem areas you believe would be the most difficult to deal with in marriage preparation with LDS couples.

First Marriages	5 Most Damaging	5 Most Difficult		Remarriages	5 Most Damaging	5 Most Difficult
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-Communication	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-Unrealistic expectations of marriage or spouse	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-Demonstration of affection	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-Lack of loving feelings	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-Sex	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-Power struggles	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-Decision making/problem solving	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-Money management/finances	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-Value conflicts	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-Role conflicts	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-Children	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-Serious individual problems	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-Pre-marital affairs	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-Household management	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-In-laws/relatives	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-Conventionality	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-Jealousy	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-Employment/job	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-Recreation/leisure time	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-Alcoholism	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-Problems related to previous marriage	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-Psychosomatic problems	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-Friends	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-Addictive behavior other than alcoholism	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-Personal habits/appearance	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-Physical abuse	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-Religious differences	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-Health problems/physical handicap	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-Incest	_____ %	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

We thank you for completing the questionnaire. Your responses will assist us in understanding the current marriage preparation practices among AMCAP members. If you wish to make comments, we will appreciate them.
Marriage Preparation Research Project, Robert F. Stahmann, Ph.D., 240 TLRB, BYU, Provo, UT 84602