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The Preparation of Pastors in Premarital Counseling

by

Jeffrey Karl Buikema

**A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

Major: Human Development and Family Studies (Marriage and Family Therapy)

**Program of Study Committee:
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ABSTRACT

Historically, clergy have been the primary providers of premarital counseling (PMC). But, over the past 50 years, while limited research has been conducted on PMC programs, even less research has been focused on the preparation needs of the pastors. While they might be the principal suppliers of PMC services, when asked, they claimed to feel inadequate in their role as providers. They cited the lack of adequate seminary training in PMC as the reason (Babb, 1992; Buikema, 1999; Ipes, 1982; Loskot, 1993; Olson, 1983; Schumm & Denton, 1979; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Summers & Cunningham, 1989).

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to examine the “lived experience” of pastors and their training needs in PMC by seeking direct input from them. Twelve long interviews were conducted. The researcher developed a 10-question protocol based on his previous research on PMC (Buikema, 1999) and the review of related literature. Using a qualitative research paradigm, and in particular, a phenomenological approach, an attempt was made to garner rich thick descriptions of the perceived training concerns of clergy in PMC.

Six domains emerged from the analysis of the verbal data: (1) the inadequacy of seminary training in PMC; (2) the responsibility of PMC; (3) the components of PMC training; (4) the potential role of professionals in PMC training; (5) the prospects of continuing education in PMC; and (6) the current practices of PMC ministries.

Several important results surfaced in the process of evaluating the participating pastors' responses. Firstly, the clergy in this study were not adequately prepared to deliver PMC services. Six of 12 had no seminary training in PMC. The thin descriptions of the remaining six respondents raised serious doubts about the depth of their seminary PMC education. This finding corresponded with the conclusion of the researcher's earlier quantitative study in which 86% of the pastors reported that their seminary experience proved inadequate to provide effective PMC services (Buikema, 1999). Secondly, 11 of 12

participants in the current study also felt that the seminaries were principally responsible for preparing candidates for the ministry in PMC. However, the responsibility was a shared one. The seminaries, the churches, the denominational agencies, and the pastors, all have a vital role to fill in the PMC training process. Thirdly, the respondents identified three important training components in PMC: basic premarital content, relational skills training, and exposure to assessment instruments. The content components included classic PMC topics: the biblical basis for marriage, communication and conflict resolution, marital expectations, relationship roles, personality issues, sexuality, and parenting skills. A corollary finding was the expressed need of pastors for more than education in the content aspect of communication; they wanted to learn the fundamentals of relational skills: empathy, good listen techniques, and the art of asking the right questions. Six of 12 participants indicated that role-play could be useful in this regard. In addition, 11 of 12 referred to assessments used in PMC. The most often mentioned was the TJTA (Taylor Johnson Temperament Analysis) (7), followed by PREPARE (Premarital Personal and Relationship Evaluation) (4), and then Myers-Briggs (2). Significantly, only two pastors were introduced to any assessment instrument in seminary, and only four pastors were using any kind PMC inventory in their current premarriage ministries. Fourthly, all 12 participants strongly affirmed the use of professionals, not only in their PMC services at church, but also during their seminary training. Fifthly, an important finding of the study was the desire of clergy to be involved in post-seminary education. They named several potential sources: the seminaries, the denominational agencies, the local church, community, and the Internet. A related finding was the pastor's responsibility to pursue continuing educational opportunities in PMC and other related ministry areas. The last finding was that there was no set pattern in the PMC practices of the pastors outside of the basic PMC content.

A large need exists for more research to be done on each of these six domains above. There also needs to be a concerted effort by all concerned parties to collaborate on designing

effective and measurable premarital and remarital training programs for pastors, the primary providers of PMC.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Origin of Research Question

Today both governmental and religious leaders recognize the need to seek ways to strengthen marriages and reduce divorce in society. The concern is global. In April 2000, clergy from across the state of Iowa encouraged an Iowa Senate committee to adopt a bill to make a marriage harder to dissolve. They advocated a covenant marriage license, requiring among other things, a mandatory six premarital counseling sessions or twelve hours of marriage preparation (Anderson, 2000). Louisiana and Arizona have adopted similar measures. Across the ocean, the UK Home Secretary, Jack Straw, released a consultation paper calling for more resources to shore up families. It proposed that churches, other faiths, and registration offices provide a pre-marriage packet to couples (Ford, 1998). Australia, Austria, and Canada have also developed prewedding preventive measures aimed at reducing marital breakups. Dr. Robert Stahmann, a leading researcher and writer in the field of premarital counseling, summed up the current climate, "There is much political interest in marriage preparation and premarital counseling as services provided in the community" (2000, p. 105).

Historically, three main groups have provided the vast majority of premarital counseling in the United States: clergy, mental health providers, and physicians (Jones & Stahmann, 1994; Schumm & Denton, 1979). Clergy have performed the greatest amount of formal and informal marriage preparation due to the natural connection between family and church (Olson, 1983; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Summers & Cunningham, 1989).

Williams (1992) found that engaged couples actually preferred a minister by three-to-one over the other two groups. According to a study conducted by Wright (1985a) of the 4,000 couples, who applied for a marriage license in Los Angeles County, nearly three-fourths selected a minister for premarital counseling. Albrecht, Bahr, and Goodman (1983)

reported that in 1977, nearly 80% of first marriages and over 60% of remarriages were conducted in a religious setting. Schonick (1975) found that in the State of California, the majority of couples seeking a marriage license sought marriage preparation from a pastor. Olson (1983) estimated that ministers were performing some kind of premarital counseling with two-thirds of those getting married. Giblin (1994) reported that between 60% and 80% of first marriages, and between 30% and 40% of second marriages, now occur in the church. Stanley (1997) cited a recent nationwide phone survey in which 36% of the respondents, those married in the last five years, claimed they had had some kind of premarital counseling in a religious context. Over 75% of these same respondents reported that it was helpful (Stanley, 1997).

Clergy continue to be the primary providers of marriage preparation and have an opportunity to have a major impact on the early development of marriages (Buikema, 1999; Stahmann, 2000). But, the central question of this dissertation is, "What kind of training do clergy need in order to provide effective premarital counseling ministries, and how will they receive it?"

Statement of the Problem

While pastors may be the preferred providers of choice, when queried, they indicated feelings of inadequacy in performing the prewedding ministries in their churches. They cited inadequate training in seminary as a major reason (Buikema, 1999; Givens, 1976; Hill, 1968; Jones & Stahmann, 1994; Schumm & Denton, 1979; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Stewart, 1977; Summers & Cunningham, 1989; Wiser, 1959). Hill (1968) reported from a national survey of Methodist ministers that 53% claimed that not enough emphasis was placed on premarital counseling in their seminary education. Schumm and Denton (1979) decried the lack of training for premarital counseling in both secular and religious graduate programs. Similarly, as late as 1979, not a single seminary across the United States and virtually no universities offered a course on premarital counseling (Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997). Othner's

research (1986) found that only 24% of pastors surveyed in a study of 1,200 United Methodist ministers claimed that their seminary training in pastoral counseling was adequate; and in the same study, 60% asserted that their primary source of knowledge in premarital counseling came from their personal experience.

More current studies support the earlier findings of clergy's sense of inadequacy relating to premarital counseling. In a study by Jones and Stahmann, approximately 50% of the pastors surveyed received no academic training in premarital counseling, leaving 50% of respondents providing such services without having had any formal education (1994). vom Eigen's study of Presbyterian ministers reached a similar conclusion and called for seminaries and theological graduate schools to address this concern (1993). This researcher's own experience adds credence to these findings. He cannot recall even a single reference being made to marriage preparation in the one required class of pastoral counseling that he took at a leading evangelical theological seminary in 1982. Thirteen years later, while working on his Doctorate of Ministry at another prominent seminary, a course on marriage and family was bereft of any emphasis on marriage preparation until this researcher suggested it. Furthermore, 86.4% of the respondents in an earlier study, conducted by the researcher with 103 graduates from this same seminary, reported that their pastoral training in premarital counseling was inadequate (Buikema, 1999).

Needless to say, many ministers, if not the majority, have discovered over the past half century that their seminary or theological graduate school training in pastoral counseling has been inadequate to meet the challenge of equipping them to deliver effective premarital counseling services (Buikema, 1999; Schumm & Denton, 1979; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Wright, 1992). Benner, in a recent study of pastors, found that 89% indicated a need for further training in pastoral counseling in general (1992).

Purpose of the Proposed Study

The purpose of this research project was to examine the “lived experience” of pastors, and particularly, their training needs in premarital counseling. Very little research to date has been conducted on this dimension (Buikema, 1999; Jones & Stahmann 1994). Jones and Stahmann (1994) contended that prior to their study there was no literature specifically on the beliefs and practices of clergy in prewedding counseling, and almost as little was discovered in the literature on the training of clergy for their prewedding ministries. This researcher has identified a few more studies on the broader topic of pastors and premarital counseling, with limited references to their training experiences (Babb, 1992; Fairchild, 1959; Ipes, 1983; Trott, 1990; Van Dussen, 1996; vom Eigen, 1983; Wiser, 1959).

Justification and Importance of the Study

This study expanded on a previous quantitative dissertation project conducted by the researcher (Buikema, 1999). The earlier project surveyed pastors on three important dimensions of premarital counseling: preparation, perspectives, and practices. This research, along with the earlier study conducted by Jones and Stahmann (1994), left several questions unanswered about pastors and their preparation to provide effective prewedding ministries of the church. The focus of this new study was strictly limited to clergy and their training in marriage preparation. Using a qualitative research paradigm, and, in particular, a phenomenological approach, this researcher garnered rich, thick descriptions of the “lived experience” of clergy and their preparation needs in providing premarital counseling.

In 1993, this researcher’s denomination, the Presbyterian Church in America, commissioned the Report of the Ad-Interim Committee on Divorce and Remarriage. The report included a charge to commissioners, churches, and denominational agencies to enhance their marriage preparation ministries (Gilchrist, 1993). The challenge to pastors was three-fold: to pursue continuing education in premarital and marital counseling, to provide a minimum six-session premarital counseling program with post-marital sessions for their

churches, and to equip other members of their congregations to assist in the marriage ministries of the church. Noticeably absent from these directives was a call on the seminaries and the theological schools to play a more proactive role in the equipping of the ministers to provide premarital counseling during and after their formal pastoral training.

Clergy have continued to be the primary source of premarital counseling. Yet, they claim to be ill-prepared to meet the growing demands of providing effective marriage preparation ministries. The time has come for seminaries/theological schools and the churches to recognize this deficiency and begin to address it. The time for research in this vital area--research that listens to the voices of the clergy and their expressed training needs based on years of pastoral experience--is long overdue. This dissertation project aimed to give currency to their concerns and begin a dialogue with pastors, the primary providers of premarital counseling, and those who equip them, the seminaries and the churches.

The findings of this project will be made available to the clergy, the seminaries/theological schools, and the churches that help train them with the intent that it will advance their respective roles, cooperation, and work in providing the marriage preparation ministries of the church in the new millennium.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations are the processes by which the broad goals and objectives of a research study can be reduced in scope (Creswell, 1994, 1998; Krathwohl, 1998). This project proposed to limit its focus to a single phenomenological context. The context was the "lived experience" of clergy and specifically, their preparation to become providers of premarital counseling in a church setting. Mini-tour questions and sub-questions were used to narrow the grand tour question. These questions addressed, in detail, the training needs of clergy to provide the effective premarital counseling services. The time and resources needed to conduct the phenomenological interviews required the study be restricted to 10 to 12

interviews or the number necessary to reach saturation (Creswell, 1994, 1998; Krathwohl, 1998; Patton, 1990).

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate the lived experience of pastors, the primary providers of premarital counseling, and what preparation they thought would be required in order to provide effective premarital counseling ministries in their churches. The following review of related literature was designed to reflect primarily on the relevant research of clergy training in premarital counseling, or the lack thereof, over the past 50 years. The sources of these studies were naturally and principally pastoral journals and doctorate of ministry dissertations. Other fine books and literature reviews have previously focused on various aspects of the minister and marriage preparation, covering much of the same ground--history, programs, perspectives, and practices (Babb, 1991; Buikema, 1999; Davis, 1992; Ipes, 1982; Rutledge, 1966, 1968a; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Senediak, 1990; Trathen, 1995; Wright, 1981, 1992). The review of literature for this study was limited largely, but not exclusively, to an overlooked dimension of premarital counseling--the actual training needs of clergy in premarital counseling. The research studies on pastoral training in premarital counseling and related literature were reviewed historically, from the most current to the least current, dating back to the earliest one conducted by Mace (1951, 1952).

Historical Overview

The most recent research project on premarital counseling investigated three integral components: pastoral preparation, perspectives, and practices (Buikema, 1999). The researcher expanded and used, by permission, Jones and Stahmann's original survey of clergy and premarital counseling (1994). The survey was mailed to 150 randomly selected graduates of Covenant Theological Seminary. The graduates had attended the seminary between the years of 1975-1995. To be part of this study, the graduates had to have had a minimum of five years of full-time pastoral experience and had to have conducted premarital

counseling with a minimum of three engaged couples per year. There was a 69% return rate, with 103 surveys returned and usable for the study. The findings of the study were statistically and practically significant, and pointed particularly to a need for further research on the specialized training of clergy in marriage preparation.

In keeping with previous research, most of the pastors in this study--to be exact 86%-claimed that their seminary preparation in premarital counseling was inadequate (Givens, 1976; Hill, 1968; Jones & Stahmann, 1994; Schumm & Denton, 1979; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Stewart, 1977; Summers & Cunningham, 1989; von Eigen, 1983; Wiser, 1959). Thus, it was not surprising that 89 out of 99 respondents, or over 85%, felt ill prepared to conduct their premarital counseling ministries (Buikema, 1999). Interestingly, this researcher and pastor has yet to run across even a single study or article in which clergy felt that their seminary education sufficiently prepared them to offer quality premarital counseling services. In the researcher's earlier study, less than 25% of the respondents had a seminar or a unit dealing with premarital counseling during their seminary education. It was not surprising, and yet highly significant, that the majority of the unsolicited comments at the end of the survey instrument centered on the paucity of formal training in premarital counseling. Below are samples of their remarks:

Informant #102: *"I encourage seminaries to pay more attention to this subject."*

Informant #117: *"I graduated from Covenant Theological Seminary in 1983 with an M.Div. degree. 'The longer I am away from the seminary, the more I appreciate the education I received. There were, however, some gaps due to the neglect of the seminary. I believe premarital counseling falls into that latter category.'"*

Informant #145: *"I would like to see a premarital counseling course replace an exegetical or homiletics course at Covenant Theological Seminary. However, to be offered as an elective would be great."*

Informant #171: *"Premarital counseling training should be part of the core*

curriculum of the seminary, not simply a unit or an elective."

Informant #179: *"I wish that premarital counseling and other appropriate counseling courses had been more a part of the core curriculum. I was not as motivated to take counseling courses as a newly married 25-year-old"* (Buikema, 1999, pp. 71, 72).

These comments underscored the necessity of reconsidering the core curriculum in pastoral counseling for the ministerial students at Covenant Theological Seminary. A closer look at this earlier research study revealed deficiencies in four important components of marriage preparation training for clergy: exposure to premarital counseling programs, content, assessment aids, and clergy roles in prewedding services. Firstly, few pastors in this study were introduced in seminary to any of the premarital counseling programs that were available at the time. Only 19% were exposed to any kind of structured program. Prior to 1987, only five participants in this earlier study utilized two of Wright's books on premarital counseling, Before I say, "I do" and So You're Getting Married (1977, 1985b). His textbook, titled, Premarital Counseling Handbook (1992), was published too late for the majority of the participants to utilize as a text during seminary. With the publishing of Eyrich's Three to Get Ready in 1987, and Dr. Eyrich, himself, teaching at the seminary, the students began reading his manual on premarital counseling instead of Wright's works in the required course on marriage and family. Fifteen respondents claimed to have used Eyrich's Three to Get Ready during their seminary training. But, the vast majority of participants in this earlier study, or over 80%, were not acquainted with Eyrich's premarital counseling manual or any others by the time they had graduated. Interestingly, not one of the pastors indicated that they had used the premier premarital counseling text of Stahmann and Hiebert (1987). The researcher reached several conclusions from this earlier study. One, seminaries ought to require premarital counseling as part of the core curriculum. Two, a unit on premarital counseling ought to include introducing students to the existing marriage preparation programs, materials, and resources. Three, more research still needed to be

conducted on what premarital programs, materials, and texts were being used at the various seminaries and theological schools across the country and how effective were they (Buikema, 1999).

Secondly, and even more startling than the lack of formal exposure to marriage preparation programs in seminary, was the fact that the pastors in this study overwhelmingly felt that the seminary did not do a credible job in equipping them to deal with the varied content typically covered in premarital counseling. Utilizing a Likert scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not very good, and 5 being very good, the highest number on any premarital counseling topic was a 3. This was in the area of religious faith. Husband and wife roles came in a close second, followed by couple communication skills, marital expectations, and couple conflict skills. Still, all of the means for these topics likewise were lower than what was anticipated by the researcher. Financial management and sexual relationship were near the very bottom of the table, with mean scores under 2. These scores strongly suggested that those who attended seminary during these two decades received very little formal instruction or training on the subject matter of premarital counseling. The pastors who participated in this earlier study felt unprepared to address these topics. This led the researcher to another important conclusion--that the seminary needed to cover the basic content of premarital counseling in a unit on marriage preparation in the required marriage and family course (Buikema, 1999; Burkart, 1950; Dicks, 1963; Eyrich, 1987; Oates, 1958; Mace & Mace, 1974; Mitman, 1980; Morris, 1960; Rutledge, 1966, 1968b; Stahmann & Salts, 1993; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Worthington, 1990; Wright, 1992). In addition, there was a need for further research to be conducted on what other seminaries across the country include in the content component of premarital counseling (Buikema, 1999).

Thirdly, the exposure of participants in this earlier study to marriage preparation assessment instruments during seminary did not fair much better. Only one-third, or about 36%, of the informants indicated that they were introduced to any assessment tool during

their seminary experience. But, in 1999, the year this project was completed, nearly 60% of the participating pastors were now using some kind of assessment measure as part of their premarital counseling activities. The most popular instrument was the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis (Taylor, Morrison, Morrison, & Romoser, 1980). Thirty-two pastors learned how to use this assessment aid in seminary, and 38 pastors reported that they were still using it as part of their premarital counseling program. At the time of this earlier research PREPARE was the leading premarital assessment tool for premarital counseling, and yet, only eight pastors in the entire study reported ever using it in their prewedding ministries (Olson, Fournier, & Druckman, 1998; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Wright, 1992). Another conclusion of this earlier project was that further research was required to determine what assessment instruments pastors were utilizing, and which ones if any should be included in seminary curriculum in premarital counseling. Furthermore, research still needed to be done to determine what other seminaries were doing to equip their students to use assessment instruments (Buikema, 1999).

Fourthly, the researcher identified eight pastoral roles based on previous research by Jones and Stahmann (1994). There was no point in reinventing the wheel. Ipes (1982) and Eyrich (1987) claimed that their research showed that pastors viewed their primary role in premarital counseling as providing moral teaching or, in this context, the biblical basis of marriage to an engaged couple on marriage. According to this earlier study (Buikema, 1999), the informants ranked moral teaching first, followed by facilitator, evangelist, enricher, and educator. The last four were identical in score. However, the previous research project found that the spiritual development of an engaged couple was listed third as a reason for providing premarital counseling behind enhancing the early years of marriage and preventing divorce. It was interesting to note that the role of facilitator and providing enrichment ranked above moral teaching in Jones and Stahmann's study (1994). Again, the

graduates of Covenant Theological Seminary and participants in this study put a premium on their role of preparing a couple spiritually for marriage.

Other provider roles need to be briefly noted. The role of screener, which was so prominent during the late 1950's and 1960's, was not viewed as nearly as important by the time of this earlier study (Olson, 1976; Rutledge, 1966; Stewart, 1977; Tingue, 1958; Trainer, 1979). The role of enricher, facilitator, and educator reflected the new thinking of the past three decades (Clinebell, 1966; 1975; Guernsey, 1977; Mace & Mace, 1976, 1986; Stahmann & Salts, 1993; Rolfe, 1975; Trathen, 1995; Wright, 1977, 1985a, 1992). The focus of premarital counseling programs has shifted from screening to enhancing and educating a couple in communication and conflict resolution skills. The aim was to assist them in achieving a higher level of marital satisfaction (Davis, 1992; Giblin, 1994; Giblin, Sprenkle, & Sheehan, 1985; Guernsey, Brock, & Coufal, 1986; Ridley, Jorgenson, Morgan, & Avery, 1982; Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg, 1994; Stanley & Trathen, 1994). This earlier study concluded that more attention needed to be given to research on the various roles of pastors during seminary education (Buikema, 1999).

The perspective of the vast majority of pastors in Buikema (1999), or about 95%, was that clergy continue to be the primary providers of premarital counseling. Approximately 91.3% of the participants also believed that marriage preparation should be required of all engaged couples. The main reasons for requiring premarital counseling was that it prevented divorce (80.6%), encouraged the spiritual development of the couple (79.6%), enhanced the early years of marriage (75.7%), fostered a pastoral relationship (69.9%), and fulfilled the pastoral duty (62.1%). Thus, pastors in this early research project felt responsibility to provide effective premarital ministries. Given the findings of this study, the researcher concluded that more research on the training of clergy in premarital counseling was required and especially, in measuring the outcomes and effectiveness of their training and delivery of marriage preparation ministries (Bader, Microys, Sinclair, Willet, & Conway, 1980;

Bagarozzi & Rauen, 1981; Giblin et al., 1985; Olson, 1983; Parish, 1992; Summers & Cunningham, 1989; Wright, 1985a, 1992). Furthermore, the seminaries, in cooperation with churches, needed to assume the responsibility to equip pastors in this vital area of ministry. These findings from the researcher's earlier study prompted the current study on pastors and their training needs in premarital counseling.

Van Dussen (1996) claimed to have heard the directive from the Discipline of the United Methodist Church for pastors to provide premarital counseling. She also realized that many clergy have inadequate training to counsel engaged couples. Thus, she set out to design a program for her dissertation project to help train and assist clergy in marriage preparation. Van Dussen contended, "...while all pastors received some training for conducting premarital counseling sessions in seminary, many clergy do not have adequate training to counsel engaged couples" (1996, p. 2).

The title of her research appeared promising, A Program for Training and Assisting Pastors with Premarital Counseling. Her training program was predicated on the results of two surveys, one conducted with engaged couples and one with pastors. Two hundred and forty couples completed the first survey. Nearly half of the couples had a single premarital counseling session with a pastor. One hundred and ninety-one couples, or 80% of the participants, had three marriage preparation sessions or less. While the couples' survey revealed that most pastors provided a minimal amount of premarital counseling, the overall judgment of the participants was that premarital counseling was helpful in the success of their marriage.

There were a total of 478 responses to the second survey, the pastors' survey. It was designed to rank in order of importance 15 "generic" marital issues: communication skills, problem solving, the marriage covenant, relationship building, finances, family planning, theology of the wedding, personality dynamics, effects of life style, stages of marriage, marital sex, family of origin issues, addictions, careers, and mixed marriages. The pastors

indicated that the main item that they would like addressed in a workshop was communication skills. Finances, problem solving, and the marriage contract were also items high on their priority list.

This survey also asked if the pastors would like to participate in a workshop on premarital counseling. Only 40 pastors responded in the affirmative and choose to attend the workshops. It was not altogether clear from the dissertation that all 478 pastors, who filled out the survey, were invited to participate in the premarital counseling training seminar. The seminar covered the theological/biblical basis for marriage. There was a discussion of what is adequate premarital counseling. They were given a guide to premarital counseling, outlining a four one-hour session program. The content included many of the common subjects covered in premarital counseling programs by pastors: the couple's backgrounds, expectations, communication, marital dynamics, and issues concerning sexuality, work, children, friends, relatives, community, and faith.

One outcome of the clergy seminars was the development of premarital counseling seminars for engaged couples. However, Van Dussen concluded that one of the major weaknesses of the program was the inability to convince pastors to send couples to the seminars; attendance at the seminars was small. Unfortunately, the evaluation results for the pastors' seminar and the couples' seminar were not listed in the dissertation. The forms were given, but not the self-report outcomes. In fact, the complete statistics for both surveys were not recorded in the dissertation either. The reliability and validity of Van Dussen's findings was questionable. The researcher failed to disclose the actual number of clergy and couples who were sent surveys. She merely stated how many people returned them. There was no return rate reported in the dissertation. In fact, this study lacked a chapter on methodology. Furthermore, in Appendix E, the Van Dussen (1996) cited the purported latest statistics for the success rates of marriages: marriages outside the church, 40%; church marriages, 55%; and church marriages with "adequate" premarital counseling, 72%. What was lacking was a

reference for these statistics; the definition of “adequate” premarital counseling was not stated either.

Seminars for clergy may be one way to equip ministers to provide more comprehensive and effective premarital counseling ministries. Van Dussen (1996) might have shed some light on the value of such seminars if the pastors’ evaluation of the seminars would have been included in the study. Further research needs to be done on what might be the most effective approach with which to deliver premarital counseling training to clergy (Bader et al., 1980; Bagarozzi & Rauen, 1981; Baum, 1977; Buikema, 1999; Buckner & Salts, 1985; Clinebell, 1975; Fowers & Olson, 1986; Giblin et al., 1985; Glendening & Wilson, 1972; Gurman & Kniskern 1977; Ipes, 1982; Olson, 1985; Parish, 1992; Schumm & Denton, 1979, 1980; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Stewart, 1977; Worthington, 1990; Wright, 1985a).

Trathen (1995) took up the challenge of determining the effectiveness of two Christian counseling programs: the Christian Preparation and Relationship Enhancement Program and the Christian Information Program. The research question was, “Which program was more effective--the skill-based program or the information--based program?” The researcher for the current study on clergy training in premarital counseling spent nearly a year trying to track down a copy of this dissertation so that it might be included in this review of related literature. He even called the author in a futile effort to acquire a copy of it. His hope was to determine if even one of the hypotheses of the study would revolve around the training of the clergy to deliver the two programs and their level of competency in providing premarital counseling. Unfortunately, the answer was “NO.” Nevertheless, the study was enlightening and relevant. This writer has considered using the Christian Preparation and Relationship Enhancement Program as a possible program for equipping pastors to deal with communication and conflict resolution.

Seventy-seven couples participated in Trathen's study. Each of the couples was randomly assigned to one of three groups: the two experimental groups and the control group. The couples were assessed at pretest and posttest, using seven measures to record shifts in relationship quality, confidence, dedication, commitment, communication, quality, and treatment satisfaction.

The findings contradicted earlier studies that maintained that premarital counseling that used enhancement-based programs had a more positive outcome on relationship adjustment than did information-based programs (Bader et al., 1980; Avery, Ridley, Leslie, & Milholland, 1980; Rutledge, 1968b;). Trathen found no statistical difference between the two experimental groups on any of the seven measures. Davis, conducting similar research, reached the same conclusion (1992). As a result Trathen concluded that long-term follow-up with couples was necessary to determine lasting relationship change. Furthermore, more research would be needed to determine if one program was truly more effective than another. One of Trathen's final remarks was relevant to the present study: "such findings may impact the time and energy that seminaries spend in providing future pastors with premarital preparation training" (1995, p. 145). If a program could be shown to be more effective than another, it would behoove the seminaries to consider using it to train clergy in premarital counseling.

Stahmann, over the past three decades, has written numerous books and articles on premarital counseling ministries (1977a, 1977b, 1987, 2000; Jones & Stahmann, 1994; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1987; Stahmann & Salts, 1993; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997). His focus has included clergy and their premarital counseling training. In 1994 he conducted a major research project with one of his doctoral students at Brigham Young University. Together, they sought to investigate three aspects of premarital counseling: beliefs, practices, and training of the pastors. Their research was an attempt to fill in the gap in the literature on clergy and premarital counseling. These researchers contended that no literature was found

on clergy beliefs and practices in premarital counseling prior to 1994, and there was almost as little literature on the training of clergy.

The study was an effort to understand premarital counseling ministries better by gathering direct input from clergy. One thousand clergy addresses were randomly selected out of a total population of 187,000 clergy in four major Protestant denominations: the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., the United Methodist Church, the Lutheran Churches in America, and the United Church of Christ. Self-report questionnaires containing 34 questions about premarital counseling were sent to them. Two hundred and thirty-one surveys, or about 23%, of the surveys were completed and usable for the study.

The percentage of returns was low, or 23%. The researchers argued that this return was deemed satisfactory due to the fact that no follow-up was planned or possible to insure confidentiality. This author disagreed. He was likewise concerned with confidentiality when he did a similar study using an expanded version of their survey (Buikema, 1999). A follow-up card was simply sent to the entire sample of 150 clergy. In Jones and Stahmann's study, this could have been done; but, admittedly, the cost for the postage and materials for 1000 people might have been somewhat prohibitive. The low return rate raised the question of the validity and reliability of the study's findings.

Turning to the results of Jones and Stahmann's study, 92% of the respondents from all four denominations maintained that clergy were the primary providers of premarital counseling. Ninety-four percent of all the participating pastors believed that premarital counseling should be required of all engaged couples before the wedding. Findings on the training aspect of premarital counseling were different than this researcher and pastor would have predicted. About 39% of the clergy reported having taken a class in premarital counseling, and approximately 60% claimed to have had a unit in marriage preparation. Although the latter statistic seemed reasonable, the first one, 39% of those surveyed having taking a full class on premarital counseling, seemed high. But, even if this statistic was

invalid, the other one, that 60% of the respondents received a unit in premarital counseling, was highly significant. It might indicate that these denominational seminaries were doing a better job of equipping their ministers to deliver prewedding ministries than other groups. Only 23% of the clergy in this researcher's early study had a unit in premarital counseling (Buikema, 1999).

The data on the actual premarital counseling practices of these respondents was enlightening and pertinent to this researcher's new study. Jones and Stahmann's study reported that over 60% of the clergy claimed to be using inventories and assessment instruments in their prewedding ministries. This is much higher than this author would have anticipated, and it raised the question about what the clergy in these four denominations were introduced to by way of assessment aids in seminary. That specific question was not included on their questionnaire. These two researchers concluded from this finding that clergy needed to be trained in using test and assessments.

There were several other significant findings. The clergy felt that all eight premarital counseling roles were important. Two roles, enricher and facilitator, were rated higher than the other six roles. They also concluded that the use of individual couple counseling and educational formats suggested the need of formal seminary training in these methods. Ninety-four percent of the pastors preferred individual group counseling sessions to group sessions.

Jones and Stahmann concluded from the findings of their study that there was a definite need for additional preparation and training in premarital counseling for clergy. Since the public at large is looking to pastors to provide marriage preparation, it should be seen as a motivation to continue to improve the premarital counseling coursework and experience during and after seminary. Jones and Stahmann stated, "An emphasis on premarital counseling training in pastoral education would be in the interest of both public and clerical concerns" (1994, p. 186).

Loskot (1993) conducted related and important research titled, Roman Catholic Priests as Counselors: Perceived Effectiveness and Actual Preparedness. The study raised two relevant questions. Firstly, how adequate do Roman Catholic priests perceive the training they have received to perform in counseling situations that are part of their ongoing ministries? Secondly, to what extent are the seminarians being prepared currently for their future counseling ministries? Sixty-four priests participated in the study. Exactly how many were sent the survey was not reported. A limitation of the study was that the response rate was 43%. The results, as reported in the study, might not accurately reflect the priests in the diocese and generalize to the wider population of priests.

The majority of the 64 Roman Catholic priests in the study were trained at the same Roman Catholic seminary. They felt less than adequately prepared for their counseling ministries. About two-thirds of the respondents claimed that 20% of their ministry was spent doing counseling. This finding was consistent with relevant literature researching the amount of time spent by Protestant ministers counseling their parishioners (Gilbert, 1981; Lowe, 1986; Wright, 1985a). For example, in Lowe's study, 89% reported engaging in marital counseling with parishioners (1986).

Marriage counseling was the most common counseling matter encountered by the priests in the study. Over half of the participants also reported providing premarital counseling, crisis, grief, and family counseling. Premarital counseling was the second most frequent kind of counseling service provided. Loskot contended, given the fact that marriage and premarital counseling are common situations presented to the Roman Catholic clergy, "more research is needed to investigate the specific adequacy of training in the seminary for marriage and family counseling" (1993, p. 185).

The clergy in this study indicated clearly that training in the seminary should be increased. Eighty-three percent of the respondents stated that they would attend seminars on counseling skills. Seventy-three percent claimed that they would welcome discussions with

experienced counselors and therapists. The 64 priests also stated that they would be very open to participate in continuing education that would enhance their counseling ministries. Loskot asserted that more attention should be given to grounding the clergy in systems theory, the dynamics of family development, and interpersonal skills (Loskot, 1993).

Babb (1992) conducted valuable research on the premarital counseling practices of pastors in the Wesleyan Church in the United States. The purpose of his study was to modify and/or develop premarital counseling services within the denomination based on the current practices of pastors in the denomination. Surveys were sent to 538 pastors randomly selected from the Wesleyan Church International Center in Indianapolis, Indiana. Seventy-two percent, or 386 surveys, were returned and usable for the study. The participants were required to have provided premarital counseling to at least four couples each year for the past 10 years. Highly significant for this current study was the finding that a mere 10.6%, or 40 participants, agreed that they had adequate training in premarital counseling. Babb aptly stated:

“Data collected from respondents in the study sample has led the writer to conclude that most pastors of the Wesleyan Church believe their educational program for the ministry has not adequately prepared them for premarital counseling. This has resulted in more pastors with less confidence in their ability to effectively perform the tasks of premarital counseling. The implication was that the Wesleyan Church should adequately prepare and train its pastors for premarital counseling” (1992, p. 96).

The researcher devised the Pastoral Pre-Marital Inventory (PPMI) that covered premarital counseling topics, practices, and policies. It covered seven aspects of marriage preparation to which the informants were asked to report the extent of their agreement. Eight out of 10 pastors, or 77.9%, agreed that they were responsible for providing effective premarital counseling to the members of their churches. Forty-four percent, or nearly half of the participants, claimed to have no opinion on how adequate the quality and the content of

their premarital counseling programs were. Of those pastors who did express an opinion, 143, or 80%, claimed that their premarital counseling was inadequate. Another interesting finding was that the great majority of the pastors, 78.7%, did not agree that the ordination requirements for the pastoral ministry in the Wesleyan Church provided adequate training for effective premarital counseling. In addition, the vast majority of the sample, or 86%, agreed that the districts of the Wesleyan Church should provide counseling resources to pastors.

The results on the content, listed in order, were interesting, too. Marital commitment, love, and a biblical overview of marriage filled out the top three positions. Financial management was fourth, followed by children and marriage, and then, surprisingly, communication. Interestingly, the review of related literature seemed to indicate that a large number of pastors viewed communication as a high priority subject in premarital counseling (Buikema, 1999; Bienvenu, 1975; Jones & Stahmann, 1994; Olson, 1991; Ridley, Avery, Harrell, Leslie, & Dent, 1981; Roche, 1986; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Wright, 1992). Sexuality followed in the eighth position. Conflict resolution and realistic expectations were ranked 9th and 10th, respectively. Eighty percent of the pastors identified six topics as particularly important in a premarital counseling program: the couple's faith, communication, conflict resolution, finances, roles, and sexuality. When asked to write their own description of the most important content in premarital counseling, the respondents listed finances, marital commitment, and spiritual growth/development.

In addition, just over half of the sample, or 52.9%, indicated that they have never used a professionally designed inventory or premarital assessment tool as part of their premarital counseling. An even higher percentage, or 74.1%, did not utilize any standardized testing to assess personality traits. Babb concluded that the Wesleyan Church needed to provide more structure with regard to topics as well as practices in premarital counseling.

“The Wesleyan Church should assess pastoral needs to provide effective premarital counseling for members of the church they serve, review the curricula of colleges and

seminaries where pastors are taught to assure that courses are available in premarital counseling; provide seminars and in-services in premarital counseling for pastors at the district or zone levels of the Wesleyan Church; establish resource centers that provide pastors with materials for self-improvement and use in premarital counseling” (1992, pp. 96-97).

Williams’ (1992) research was not directly related to the training of clergy and premarital counseling, but it raised legitimate concerns that the seminaries/theological schools should keep in mind when designing their educational program for pastoral students. He surveyed what engaged couples perceived their premarital needs were. His study revealed some previously overlooked content issues. When the respondents were asked an open-ended question on what content should be part of marriage preparation programs communication and finances were clearly the two most important. This was in agreement with the literature in the field (Schumm & Denton, 1979, 1980; Silliman & Schumm, 1989; Silliman, Schumm, & Jurich, 1992; Stuckey, Eggerman, Eggerman, & Moxley, 1986), but when Williams asked couples to specify their needs and concerns the findings were significantly different. Heading the list was dealing with stress at work, followed by the stress of children on a marriage. The next item was how to keep romance alive in the relationship. Another concern was dealing with anger and depression. Helping couples manage the demands of careers and marriage appeared to be a hot topic for them as well. Careers were seldom mentioned as a content area in premarital counseling programs, yet with the steady increase of two-income families, perhaps more attention and research should be directed to address these issues.

On the subject of whether or not premarital counseling should be required, Williams’ study had some interesting points to make. First, 80% of the couples surveyed felt that premarital counseling would be beneficial. Second, approximately 80% said they would participate in marriage preparation even if it were not required. A main motivation for participating in premarital counseling was not compliance, but that it reduced the chance of

marital distress and divorce (Hahlweg & Markman, 1988; Lenthall, 1977; Markman & Hahlweg, 1993; Markman, Renick, Floyd, Stanley, & Clements, 1993; Stanley, Markman, St. Peters, & Leber, 1995). Seventy-two percent indicated that a quality premarital counseling program would reduce the chances of their marriage ending in divorce. Several other findings of Williams' research were pertinent to clergy and the present study. For instance, couples preferred to do premarital counseling with a minister by three-to-one. Given this statistic, at the end of the article, he challenged family therapists to donate their time and talents to a local church--helping to train pastors, assisting in coordinating the church's premarital counseling program, and providing workshops. Perhaps local clergy would be open to receiving the training while not giving up the privilege and responsibility of performing premarital counseling.

Williams' study also showed that engaged couples preferred two formats for premarital counseling sessions. The first was a weekend retreat in a small group, and the second was meeting alone with the pastor. The latter was what Jones and Stahmann (1994) and Buikema (1999) discovered, too. In addition, making the sessions interesting and protecting privacy were important format considerations. These findings would support engaged couples' preference for individual couple sessions with the pastor to group settings.

Admittedly, the results of Williams's research, while interesting, were somewhat suspect. His article did not include any information on the size of his sample, how the data were collected, or the return rate.

Hamilton (1991) designed a premarital counseling manual for the Open Door Evangelical Church, like others have done in recent years for their respective church communities (Eyrich, 1987; Hionides, 1990; Shadle, 1991). The value of Hamilton's program was limited by the fact that it was not based on any empirical research. It presented some interesting statistics on marriage and divorce in Canada. Unfortunately, the only evaluation of the sessions, the content, and the process of each was carried out by the writer.

The content of the program has some relevance to clergy and premarital counseling training. The topics included the biblical view of marriage, relationship roles, communication, resolving conflicts, finances, in-laws, family worship, the marriage ceremony, and lastly, sexuality in marriage. These are standard premarital counseling subjects covered in many secular and Christian books/workbooks on marriage preparation (Berg-Cross & Jackson, 1986; Biegert, 1976; Crowson, 1987; Dobson, 1993; Esau, 1990; Eyrich, 1987; Harden & Sloan, 1992; Huggett, 1981; Mack, 1977, 1986; Prokopchak & Prokopchak, 1994; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Stanley, Trathen, McCain, & Bryan, 1998; Wright, 1985a, 1992, 1997, 1998).

Trott (1990) conducted a study on couples from two different religious orientations. His research project compared Seventh-Day Adventist and Roman Catholic couples and their experiences and theology, and seven concepts of Murray Bowen's family system theory to premarital counseling. Two hundred and seventy-one surveys were sent out, and 105 surveys were returned. The return rate was 39%. Of the 105 returned surveys, 77 were alumni from Atlantic Union College, and 28 were from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Worcester. Individually, the return rate for both groups fell below the percentage needed for a reliable study. Nevertheless, when so few studies have been done, even a study like this takes on some practical significance. Of particular interest was the premarital experience of the respondents and the insight they yielded concerning the preparation of clergy in premarital counseling.

According to Trott's research, 34% of the respondents did not receive premarital counseling before the marriage. Atlantic Union College alumni and the Diocese of Worcester respondents showed practically identical percentages of no premarital counseling at 33%. Twenty-four couples claimed to have filled out the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis, and six used PREPARE. Another six used a family of origin inventory. Five used the California Marriage Readiness Inventory. Only one used the Catholic Pre-Cana

handbook and classes. No one used the Sex Knowledge Inventory. The implication of this was that clergy needed to be equipped in their educational training for the ministry to utilize premarital surveys and assessment instruments. It was surprising that none of the Catholic couples claimed that they used FOCCUS, an inventory similar to PREPARE, and often used by the Catholic Church in America (Markey, Micheletto, & Becker, 1997).

In addition, Trott's study reported that the more time spent in marriage preparation, the more positive was the evaluation of the premarital counseling experience. Of those, who spent six hours or more in premarital counseling, 47% indicated a positive or very positive assessment of the program. Sixty-six reported a positive experience if their marriage preparation was performed by a priest or pastor. A significant finding from Trott's research is that 101 respondents, or 96%, claimed that premarital counseling was valuable for couples prior to the wedding and by the same percentage recommended that all engaged couples participate in marriage preparation.

Another important contribution that this study made was that Trott attempted to relate family systems theory, particularly Bowenian theory, to premarital counseling. A common criticism of premarital counseling programs in general has been that so many of them have little to no theoretical basis (Bagarozzi & Rauen, 1981; Becvar & Becvar, 1996; Crowson, 1987; Giblin, 1994; Giblin et al., 1985; Kemp, 1982; Mitchell & Anderson, 1981; Muncy, 1983; Stahmann & Salts, 1993; Wood, 1990). Seven concepts were applied to premarital counseling: differentiation of self, triangles, nuclear family emotional system, family projection process, multigenerational transmission process, sibling position or birth order, and emotional cutoffs. He stressed that further research needed to be carried out on the impact of these concepts to understand the intricate process of working with engaged couples in premarital counseling.

Several significant research studies were conducted in the 1980's. Orthner (1986a) studied clergy and their pastoral counseling experiences, attitudes, and needs. It was an

attempt to provide the United Methodist's leadership with accurate information upon which pastoral counseling training, enrichment programs, and services could be investigated and improved. A total of 3,000 surveys were sent out. Approximately 2,000 were returned. Unlike Jones and Stahmann's research (1994), a follow-up card was in the mail one week after the survey was sent out. The response rate was a respectable 65%.

When asked to state how competent the participating pastors felt in a number of typical pastoral roles, the fewest number of ministers felt competent in two important areas of pastoral counseling--premarital guidance and marriage and family counseling. Only 24% of the pastors reported that they received enough information in pastoral counseling in seminary. Nearly 300 pastors wrote responses that expressed the need for more pastoral counseling training in seminary. Orthner concluded, "Some pastors feel that the seminary training they received in pastoral care is totally inadequate in preparing them to assume even the part-time role of pastoral counselor (1986a, p. 12).

In a companion report to the earlier study, Orthner (1986b) included the comments voluntarily made by pastors. The verbal data they provided complimented the statistical information and illustrated the findings of the first report. Over 1,200 of the 2,000 clergy who returned their surveys included comments on three primary themes: pastoral counseling training, counseling for pastors, and church administration issues. Nearly 300 ministers provided comments on pastoral counseling training. Their comments underscored the need for more pastoral counseling training in seminary.

"Better seminary training...my seminary did not prepare me adequately for the demands of pastoral care. I think the basic curriculum for pastoral care needs to be strengthened and expanded. Clinical and supervised experience should be made available to all seminarians. The traditional required courses (Bible, worship, preaching, theology ethics, education) do not prepare one adequately for the dominant tasks of pastoral care in the parish" (1986b, p.13). Associate Pastor of a large church, 31.

Other pastors recommended that seminary training in pastoral counseling include the use of outside resource people, professionals and seasoned pastors with practical experience and expertise.

“Seminary education should make use of those who have practical experience...The experienced gained by a pastor who has “been there” in the local church is sometimes should be utilized. It can be extremely valuable” (1986b, p. 13). Pastor of a medium sized church, 41.

Still other respondents claimed that the denomination could do more to provide continuing educational opportunities and workshops. In fact, over 400 ministers commented on the need for more seminars in pastoral counseling.

“Continuing education for the parish minister should require counseling workshops and clinical supervision” (1986b). Pastor of a large church in a small city, 64.

“Continuing education opportunities...with subjects dealing with premarital counseling, marriage and family counseling...” (1986b). Pastor of a large, suburban church, 51.

Some pastors claimed that sufficient opportunities for professional growth in pastoral counseling existed and must be taken advantage of. Clergy have a responsibility to pursue them.

“I have found ample opportunities for continuing education, once in the field. It simply depends on the motivation of each minister and the desire to grow. There is much one learns in the field which cannot be taught in seminaries or elsewhere. Again, I believe there are ample opportunities for growth experiences for those who will take advantage of them” (1986b). Pastor of a large, urban church, 64.

Two other findings were pertinent to this study on clergy and training in premarital counseling. Only 15% of ministers rarely or never referred cases to other professionals. Ministers must be taught the guidelines about when to refer and to whom. Lastly, the

pastors in this study felt that secular values tend to dominate the training and thinking of ministers involved in pastoral counseling. Many called for a greater emphasis on theological training (Orthner 1986b; Orthner & Morley, 1986).

Harrington (1984) surveyed pastors of the United Methodist Church from the Louisiana Annual Conference and other members of the clergy from various denominations within the Greater New Orleans Metropolitan Area. Three hundred and fifty-five questionnaires were returned and usable. Sixty-eight percent of them represented the responses of the United Methodist's ministers, and 28.8%, were from pastors from a number of other denominations. A surprising finding was that 81% of the Methodist respondents required premarital counseling, but they were not convinced that it was very helpful to engaged couples. Three-fourths of all the pastors, while setting the standards and requirements of engaged couples, expressed skepticism about the effectiveness of premarital counseling programs.

vom Eigen (1983) used a random sample of 25 names drawn from a pool of Presbyterian ministers within the Presbytery of Genesee Valley. Twenty consented to be interviewed. Over 60% of the informants expressed a desire for the presbytery to provide training on premarital counseling. Eighty-five percent of the respondents believed that premarital counseling was either very important or somewhat important to their pastoral ministry. Nearly the same percentage, or 80%, reported that premarital counseling played an important role in the success of a couple's marital relationship. The more hours spent conducting marriage preparation yielded a greater impact on the engaged couple. Ninety-five percent believed that premarital counseling should be required. vom Eigen concluded, "the findings of this study indicate that few pastors are trained in the area of premarital counseling. This may be due in part to their general lack of training in the entire field of pastoral care. They are generally without specific education for premarital counseling...and without a well-organized format for premarital counseling. Pastors agree on the need and

importance of premarital counseling, but appear to be unable to put that interest into formal practice” (1983, pp. 65-66).

Ipes (1982) provided one of the most informative and relevant studies to this research project on clergy training in premarital counseling. He was the Director of the Christian Counseling and Educational Center, Inc. In his research at Lancaster Theological Seminary, Ipes investigated the premarital counseling ministries of 100 pastors in the Ohio and Potomac Conferences of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. The data were collected through a mailed questionnaire. One hundred ministers returned the survey completed and usable. There was no mention of how many received the survey and failed to return it.

Ninety-four percent of the respondents indicated that premarital counseling services were very important. Yet, 18% of the ministers felt competent to do premarital counseling. Less than one in five participants claimed that their seminary education adequately prepared them to conduct premarital or marital counseling. Eighty-four percent of the respondents reported that they did not have a specific, structured marriage preparation program. Not surprising was the fact that the pastors claimed that the most important topic in premarital counseling was religion (Clinebell, 1977; Coleman, 1991; Haug, 1998; Mace, 1951; Mack, 1986; Prokopchak & Prokopchak, 1994; Sproul, 1986; Warren, 1992; Wright, 1990). Interestingly, the respondents in Ipes’ study said that they used almost exclusively Adventist materials in their premarital counseling programs. He too, concluded that there should be more emphasis on marriage preparation and marriage and family counseling in the Adventist church.

Fairchild (1959) was a relatively large study. Surveys were sent to 3,541 Presbyterian ministers and 2,645 returned them. The return rate was an impressive 74.7%. This percentage was quite remarkable in itself, given the exceptionally large size of the sample. The pastors in this study ranked the following topics according to their appropriateness in a premarital counseling program: religious responsibilities of the new

family (82%); religious background of the couple (71%); the symbolism and meaning of the ceremony (68%); and interpersonal relations between partners after marriage (57%). Even more interesting are the percentages on topics that were seldom considered appropriate for a premarital counseling interview: in-law relationships (30%); family backgrounds of the couple (35%); economic arrangements (43%); and sexual information and attitudes (44%). Fairchild reported that pastors from rural pastorates were more likely to avoid dealing with these latter subjects than pastors in urban or suburban settings. "The sociological dimension cannot be ignored" (1959, p. 13).

In the same year, Wiser (1959) reported findings from his research among Methodist pastors. Questionnaires were sent to 179 Methodist ministers in the Baltimore Conference. Ninety-one were returned and three were not usable, giving a total return of 49.2%. The demographics were very interesting. Over 60% of the participating pastors in this study were from the city, and only 10.2% were from a rural setting. The median size of the churches was 499, and the average church membership was 609.

Concerning premarital counseling activities, only 5.5% of the pastors reported having a definite marriage preparation program. Over 65% conducted only one premarital counseling interview, and about 25% conducted two. Eight weeks prior to the wedding was the maximum time for beginning their premarital counseling interviews. The sessions lasted between 30 and 90 minutes for 85% of the pastors. Nearly 100% of the ministers felt that the church had a definite responsibility in preparing couples for marriage.

On topics in premarital counseling, 92% of the respondents in this study covered the following: the spiritual basis for marriage, finances, couples and parents living together, relation of sex to love, and the size of family and birth control. On the topic of couples and parents living together, Rolfe wrote several years later about the necessity of drawing up a contract before the wedding--spelling out expectations and responsibilities in a number of areas (1977). According to Wiser, two to four interviews were conducted. Reflecting the

field of psychology of his time, Wiser claimed that if a couple brought in an actual problem, the counseling would have to be done on an individual basis.

Mace (1952) carried out the earliest known research on clergy and premarital counseling. He conducted his research at Drew University. He sent a questionnaire to 2,400 ministers representing six Protestant denominations. Eight hundred and five questionnaires were completed and returned for a return rate of 33%. Pertinent to the present study was the finding that he believed the greatest opportunity for enhancing premarital counseling seemed to exist in providing more effective training in the seminaries. Only one pastor in four was offering marriage preparation to the couples that requested it. Very little work was being done to prepare couples for marriage.

A Persistent Problem

One rather large cloud still hovers over the landscape of premarital counseling. How effective are marriage preparation training programs? Emily Mudd was one of the early pioneers in the field of premarital counseling who attempted to measure the effectiveness of these programs. Back in the early 1940's she framed this concern well when she asked, "How far can one help to prepare another person for an experience he has never had before?" (1940, p. 114). During the 1970's and early 1980's many researchers were asking similar questions and wondering about the effectiveness of premarital counseling programs outside the church and premarital counseling ministries within the church (Bader et al., 1980; Bagarozzi & Rauen, 1981; Ball & Henning, 1981; Baum, 1977; Clinebell, 1975; Fowers & Olson, 1986; Giblin et al., 1985; Glendening & Wilson, 1972; Gurman & Kniskern 1977; Ipes, 1982; Olson, 1983; Schumm & Denton, 1979, 1980; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Stewart, 1977; Summers & Cunningham, 1989; Wright, 1985).

Clinebell (1975) revisited the issue and asserted that part of the problem of evaluating existing marriage preparation programs stems from the little use of objective measures and control groups. Most evaluations of premarital counseling programs relied exclusively upon

the couple's self-report. These often were taken shortly after the wedding and normally were positive. Research by Glendening and Wilson (1972) confirmed that couples that volunteer for premarital instruction uniformly give high marks to programs. Stewart (1977) raised serious doubts about the effectiveness of programs in the church and the qualifications of the minister to perform such counseling. The majority of pastors who took his survey indicated that they questioned the true effectiveness of marriage preparation ministries.

In the 1970's, substantial work in the area of communication was done through enrichment programs. Gurman and Kniskern (1977) contended that even using pre-test and post-test, these programs yielded mixed results. The same was true for different kinds of treatment programs. Baum (1977) compared the overall effectiveness of a structured group format with a self-help bibliotherapy approach and found little difference in effectiveness. By 1980, no single model had yet to establish itself as the most effective. In fact, the long-term effect of any program remained in question. Schumm and Denton described 57 premarital counseling programs across a wide spectrum and how they were evaluated (1980). They concluded that no premarital program they studied had an impact that lasted more than a year. They called for a more systematic evaluation.

A research team believed that their project with couples in a church setting showed that a well-designed marriage preparation program would yield significant results (Bader et al., 1980). Bagarozzi and Rauen (1981) evaluated 13 premarital counseling programs, of which only one was religious—Bader et al. (1980). They claimed that no empirical evidence existed to support the idea that premarital counseling programs did not decrease the incidences of divorce or separation, nor that couples that participated in marriage preparation were more satisfied with their marriage over the long term. They ended their article on a challenge, “A concerted effort should be undertaken by those individuals, who conduct premarital counseling programs, to evaluate their effectiveness” (1981, p. 27). They stressed using standardized procedures and intervention techniques, all of which could be measured

objectively. That is what Trathen (1995) attempted to do in his research, but his findings were inconclusive.

Not everyone was so pessimistic. A study by Wright (1981) showed that an eight-session premarital counseling program was beneficial to engaged couples. He surveyed 1,000 couples after their wedding and reported that couples who had at least six sessions in marriage preparation claimed that it was helpful; while those couples who had fewer than six sessions indicated that premarital counseling was not helpful. Wright cited successes in premarital counseling in the church setting, but the results were anything but objective or scientific.

Olson (1983) claimed that using an assessment inventory like PREPARE was more effective than using a traditional approach. He proposed three criteria for an effective premarital counseling program. First, couples would take an inventory like PREPARE. Second, couples could benefit from being in a group with other couples to share their concerns and feelings with each other. Third, they would receive training in communication and conflict resolution. Olson and his colleagues continued to do extensive research on the validity and reliability of PREPARE (Fowler & Olson, 1986; Larsen & Olson, 1989; Olson 1998).

A major work by Fowers and Olson (1986) demonstrated the effectiveness of PREPARE Inventory in premarital assessment. Larsen and Olson (1989) replicated the earlier study on PREPARE with 179 married couples. They concluded that the couples, who looked on various aspects of their relationship positively, were more likely to be satisfied with their marriages three years later. Their research findings were of particular interest to this pastor, who used PREPARE with each engaged couples. Over the last fifteen years, he has found PREPARE to be very effective in encouraging couples to discuss issues pertaining to marriage. The new and expanded version of PREPARE came out in 1998.

The issue of effectiveness of premarital counseling programs and ministries continued to be an unsettling question during the late 1980's and into the 1990's (Hahlweg & Markman, 1988; Hamilton, 1991; Larson & Olson, 1989; Nickols, Fournier, & Nickols, 1986; Parish, 1992; Ridley & Sladeczek, 1992; Sullivan & Bradbury, 1997; Trathen, 1995; Wright, 1992; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Williams & Jurich, 1995). However, some of these researchers demonstrated that they had gotten positive results from their premarital programs (Hahlweg & Markman, 1988; Larsen & Olson, 1989; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Van Dussen, 1996; Williams, 1993; Williams & Jurich, 1995).

Hahlweg and Markman (1988) discovered in their research that BPI (or Behavioral Premarital Intervention) was effective in improving the relationships of couples. They found that stronger effects were found for behavioral versus self-report measures. They ended by calling for a well-controlled, long-term outcome study much like Trathen called for in the conclusion of his study (1995).

According to Stahmann and Hiebert (1997), Hancock's group premarital couple format proved highly effective. His research interestingly noted that an engaged couple benefited more from the process than newly married couples. Unfortunately, many church-sponsored premarital counseling programs have not been subjected to being evaluated by objective means, even in the current decade.

Prokopchak & Prokopchak (1994) claimed that the vast majority of church-related premarital counseling programs still used brief self-reports to evaluate their effectiveness. What was and still is needed is systematic, longitudinal research that would determine the effectiveness of premarital counseling ministries. After nearly a half century of providing marriage preparation, one might have thought more research would have been conducted in this vital area.

Knowing the effectiveness of one program over another would aid seminaries and those in continuing education in premarital counseling training for pastors in determining what material would be most helpful in marriage preparation for clergy.

Furthermore, no literature to date has studied the relationship between clergy training in premarital counseling and their sense of competency in delivering this service in the church. The historical overview of the literature on premarital counseling shows the great need for additional research to be done on multiple aspects of the training of pastors to provide premarital counseling ministries.

Summary

The review of related literature underscored the scantiness of the research that has been conducted to date on the actual training of clergy in premarital counseling (Buikema, 1999; Ipes, 1982; Jones & Stahmann, 1994; Loskot, 1993; Orthner, 1986a; Schumm & Denton, 1979). Most of the research studies and books have focused on the premarital counseling practices, programs, and perspectives of pastors. Researchers largely have overlooked the preparation of pastors, the primary providers of premarital counseling.

This phenomenological study was intended to provide rich thick descriptions of pastoral training needs in premarital counseling training. The ultimate aim was to fill part of the gap in research on pastors and their educational and experiential training needs in marriage preparation. Hopefully, this study has laid a foundation upon which more advanced research can be conducted that will measure the effectiveness of clergy training in premarital counseling.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Rationale for Qualitative Research Paradigm

The investigative nature of this research project required the use of an exploratory or naturalistic methodology. The researcher conducting this study employed a qualitative or phenomenological paradigm, seeking to understand the emergent meaning of events, actions, and interactions of pastors and their preparation needs in premarital counseling in naturally occurring contexts from the participant's point of view (Boss, Dahl, & Kaplan, 1996; Brotherson, 1994; Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Gubrium & Holstein, 1993, 1997, 1997; Moon, Dillon, & Sprenkle, 1990; Joanning & Keoughan, 1997; Joanning, Newfield, & Quinn, 1987; McMillian & Schumacher, 1989; Moustakas, 1994; Oiler, 1986; Patton, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1989; Sprenkle & Moon, 1996; Vidich & Lyman, 1994; Wolcott, 1994). Moustakas explains the specific use of a phenomenological approach to research as determining...

“What an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it. From the individual descriptions, general or universal meanings are derived, in other words, the essence of structures of the experience” (1994, p. 13).

Patton describes it as follows:

“A phenomenological inquiry focuses on the question: “What is the structure and essence of experience for these people?” The phenomenon being experienced may be an emotion--loneliness, jealousy, and anger. The phenomenon may be a relationship, a marriage, or a job. The phenomenon may be a program, an organization, or a culture” (1990, p. 69).

This exploratory study focused particularly on the “lived experience” of clergy and their training needs in premarital counseling to discover the essential, invariant structure or

“essence” of this phenomenon (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). In other terms, this research project on pastors and marriage preparation sought the meanings that connected and the meanings that differentiated (Sprinkle & Moon, 1996).

Several salient reasons existed for selecting qualitative research methodology for this dissertation project. A main consideration in opting for an emergent design was that this researcher had employed a quantitative approach for previous research about clergy and premarital counseling, including a component on training (Buikema, 1999). This earlier study provided limited information in the form of summary statistics: that is, categories broadly describing pastoral experience with premarital counseling training. Employing a phenomenological approach in the second study yielded rich thick descriptions of the lived experience of clergy and their training needs in premarital counseling rather than summary data (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Geertz, 1993; Gubrium & Holstein, 1997; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McMillian & Schumacher, 1989; Vidich & Lyman, 1994; Wolcott, 1994). It also facilitated the learning of another method of social science research (Creswell, 1998; Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993; Krathwohl, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). Furthermore, the prior dissertation (Buikema, 1999) utilized a survey instrument with its inherent biases and limitations. The current research project used long interviews, allowing for more flexibility and giving greater voice to the lived experience of the informants.

An additional reason for using a qualitative design was that it yielded multiple realities and differing meanings within a particular setting or context (e.g., the respondent and the researcher). These perceptions permitted the exploration to become divergent rather than convergent as more was learned (Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Guba, 1981; Patton, 1990) and as new concepts and themes emerged from the respondents (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997; Joanning & Keoughan, 1997; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Moustakas, 1994). The earlier quantitative study was convergent in nature (Buikema, 1999). In the qualitative study, aspects of the phenomena were interrelated, dynamic, and impacting each other (Boss et al.,

1996; Brotherson, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Glaser & Strauss, 1965, 1967; Guba, 1981; Gubrium & Holstein, 1997; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McMillian & Schumacher, 1989; Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Vidich & Lyman, 1994; Sprinkle & Moon, 1996; Wolcott, 1994).

Another important consideration in favor of employing a qualitative approach was that researchers in the social sciences and the field of education have successfully utilized this kind of research design to study a variety of lived experience in their natural environments (Boss et al., 1996; Creswell, 1994, 1998; Erlandson et al., 1993; Gubrium & Holstein, 1993; Krathwohl, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Moon, Dillon, & Sprengle, 1990; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1994; Wolcott, 1994).

Assumptions of a Qualitative Research Paradigm

The Ontological Assumption

The selection of a qualitative research design carries five basic assumptions (Creswell, 1994, 1998). The first assumption is the ontological assumption. It relates to the researcher's core beliefs about the nature of reality. The quantitative researcher assumes that there is an "objective reality" that can be discovered by applying the appropriate parametric or non-parametric methods. As the data is collected and evaluated, there will be a convergence of reality. Compared to a quantitative design, a qualitative approach is distinctly different. The qualitative researcher assumes the multiple nature of reality (Boss et al., 1996; Brotherson, 1994; Creswell, 1994, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Guba, 1981; McCracken, 1994; Patton, 1990; Sprengle & Moon, 1996). "Multiple realities exist in any given situation, the researcher, those individuals being investigated, and the reader or audience interpreting a study" (Creswell, 1994, pp. 4, 6). Multiple perceptions of the same event or situation are important to hear (Gubrium & Holstein, 1993). A researcher reports these divergent realities or perceptions, relying on voices and interpretations of informants through extensive quotes, present themes, and meaning statements that reflect words used by

informants and advance evidence of different perspectives on each theme (Brotherson, 1994; Creswell, 1998; Gubrium & Holstein, 1997; McCracken, 1988; Moustakas, 1994).

This study bore out the ontological assumption as the twelve informants reported different perceptions of what is necessary to equip pastors to provide effective premarital counseling ministries, and who is responsible to provide this specialized kind of pastoral training.

The Epistemological Assumption

The epistemological assumption relates to the relationship between the observer and the observed. In a quantitative design, a researcher attempts to assume an objective posture in relation to the participants. By contrast, the qualitative researcher interacts with those they study, whether this interaction assumes the form of interviewing, living with, observing informants over a prolonged period of time and/or actual collaboration (Brotherson, 1994; Creswell, 1998; Fontana & Frey, 1995; Guba, 1981; Patton, 1990). There is no layer of instrumentation between themselves and the participants. The emphasis on multiple realities and differing meanings includes the integral contribution of the researcher. “Researchers are not separate from the phenomena they study” (Boss et al., 1996, p. 85). The observer may create distance from the observed but only in a limited sense (Moon et al., 1990). In fact, Creswell states that in using a qualitative approach, “the researcher attempts to minimize the ‘distance’ or ‘objective separateness’ between the observed and the observer” (Guba & Lincoln, 1988, p. 94).

This research project found the researcher and the respondents, both pastors and providers of premarital counseling, collaborating in the process of collecting the responses to the questions during the interviews.

The Axiological Assumption

The axiological or value assumption is different for quantitative and qualitative investigators. While the former seeks to create a research context that is value-free and

unbiased, the latter acknowledges the value-laden context of social research. The qualitative researcher assumes that values and biases cannot be avoided and strives to make them transparent in order to keep straight what is the phenomenon being reported by informants and what is a value or bias of the researcher. In a qualitative study, the investigator admits the value-laden nature of the study and actively reports his or her values and biases as well as the value-laden nature of the information gathered from the field (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 1990).

In a phenomenological design the posture of the researcher is important. There is a concerted and systematic effort by the investigator to set aside prejudgments and biases regarding the phenomenon being investigated (Moustakas, 1994). This is known as “bracketing” or the “epoch process” (Creswell, 1998; Holstein & Gubrium, 1994; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1990). Spiegelberg regards, “the emancipation from preconceptions” as the primary tangible contribution of phenomenology and “perhaps the most teachable part” (1976, pp. 656-657). Oiler acknowledges that identifying and eliminating the assumptions with which we see the world is a difficult task (Oiler, 1986). This researcher does not believe that “bracketing” or “epoch” is possible because preconceived notions and prejudices are inherent in an inquirer’s psychology. In addition, biases and preconceptions are inherent in all types of research irrespective of the approach used (Boss et al., 1996). Qualitative researchers concede that complete objectivity is impossible in the process of collecting data (Brotherson & Goldstein, 1992; Creswell, 1998; Holstein & Gubrium, 1994; Joanning & Keoughan, 1997; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1990). “Observers are never objective but bring their subjective points of view to the observation of the object” (Newfield, Sells, Smith, Newfield, & Newfield, 1996, p. 29).

Since qualitative research is reflexive in nature, it will undoubtedly involve the researcher’s biases, lenses, and filters, and thus influence the quality of the data collected (Boss et al., 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1994). This

researcher has conducted previous quantitative research on the topic of clergy and training in premarital counseling (Buikema, 1999). In the introductory letter to the second project, he stated upfront the purpose of the subsequent study and his perceived need for further research specifically on the training component of premarital counseling. Using a phenomenological approach, with its sensitivity to this concern, assisted in launching this study. The researcher attempted to be aware, as far as possible, of his preconceived ideas and knowledge of the phenomenon from prior experience. This awareness allowed the researcher to alert the reader to how his biases could influence his interpretation of the data.

The Rhetorical Assumption

The rhetorical assumption shows through when reading a qualitative study where instead of internal validity, external validity, generalizability, and objectivity, the reader will encounter credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, as well as the more personal and engaging style of writing. The quantitative researcher favors an impersonal voice, more formal language, and the use of terms or previously defined concepts from a theory in descriptions of an experience. The qualitative researcher tends to prefer the informant's idiosyncratic language and embraces an evolving set of meanings. Thus, in a qualitative design the investigator once again seeks to reduce the distance between the respondent and researcher. The qualitative researcher ultimately desires to understand the human phenomena arising from the lived experience of the research informants (Brotherson, 1994; Creswell, 1994, 1998; Gubrium & Holstein, 1997; Joanning, Newfield, & Quinn, 1987; Moustakas, 1994).

The Methodological Assumption

The methodological assumption builds on the previous assumptions by relying on an emergent design and the use of inductive reasoning for a qualitative approach as opposed to a preset design and deductive reasoning in a quantitative approach in carrying out research as well as analysis of data. As was true in this research study, the strength of the qualitative

approach was the opportunity it affords the researcher to adapt in response to changing contexts and perceptions of respondents as the study progresses. Overall, the qualitative researcher works inductively, such as when he or she develops summary statements, categories, and themes from informants rather than specifying them in advance of the research (Creswell, 1994, 1998; Joanning & Keoughan, 1997).

In qualitative methodology, the researcher becomes the principal instrument for data collection and analysis (Creswell, 1994, 1998; Erlandson et al., 1993; Guba, 1981; McCracken, 1988; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1990). The imperfect human serves as the research tool for data collection instead of imperfect surveys, inventories, or questionnaires (Fielding & Fielding, 1986; Merriam, 1988; Tesch, 1990). The human instrument works in dialogical interaction with the informant in the emerging process of data collection. The researcher evolves and enhances his or her ability to gather data (Stainback & Stainback, 1984). The research process in the qualitative paradigm is a recursive process, whereby the researcher as an instrument is evolving while multiple meanings are emerging from the respondents during the course of the interview. The recursive interaction of the researcher and the respondent in the interview context encourages data to arise that otherwise might be overlooked with less context-sensitive methods (Creswell, 1994, 1998; Erlandson et al., 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McCracken, 1988; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1990; Sprenkle & Moon, 1996). The researcher is responsive to the respondent in his/her context and allows the research design to evolve, even changing the line of questioning and data collecting as the study progresses (Moon, Dillon, & Sprenkle, 1990). In this project, for example, the verbal data about utilizing the pastoral internship as a context to train clergy, as proposed by one informant, was shared with other respondents and yielded valuable information.

The primary focus for the researcher is on the ways in which the participants in the project perceive their lived experience of the phenomenon. Thus, the respondent rather than the researcher sets the direction of the interview, disclosing information most relevant and

descriptive of their experience with the phenomenon (Brotherson, 1994; Creswell, 1998; Fielding & Fielding, 1986; McCracken, 1988). The researcher raises one overarching question commonly known as a “grand tour question.” This provides the research participant with the maximum flexibility and incentive in providing full and rich descriptions of their lived experience (Creswell, 1998; Fielding & Fielding, 1986; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McCracken, 1988). The researcher for this project used the grand tour question in this manner, encouraging the informants to offer their perceptions of the training needs of clergy in premarital counseling.

The qualitative investigator utilizes a multiplicity of approaches to data collection. Two main methods are participant observation (Newfield et al., 1996; Vidich & Lyman, 1994) and the long interview (Erlandson et al., 1993; McCracken, 1988; Patton, 1990; Spradley, 1978). The central focus of each method of data collection is the setting or context. In participant observation, the setting is located in the perceptions of the researcher as he or she watches the unfolding of events in the lives of the participants in a particular setting (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 1990; Newfield et al., 1996; Wolcott, 1992). In phenomenological interviews, the setting is located in the perceptions of the primary interviewer as he or she participates in social conversation with the informants about their awareness of a lived experience (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1990). In both instances, the data collection is geared to evoking a comprehensive account of the research participants’ experience of the phenomenon yielding rich, vital, substantive descriptions. This study employed an interview protocol with 10 questions, moving from the most general to the specific.

Context of This Research Project

This project was grounded in the tradition of phenomenology--with its emphasis on listening to and hearing informants describe their lived experience. In this case, the marriage preparation needs of pastors were the phenomenon being investigated (Creswell, 1998;

Moustakas, 1994). While there are many different types of qualitative data collection methods, this study used a variation of the long interview (Creswell, 1998; McCracken, 1988; Moustakas, 1994; Spradley, 1979). Eleven clergy were interviewed about their lived experience in delivering premarital counseling ministries, and specifically, what kind of training pastors need in order to provide effective premarital counseling. The researcher presented the grand tour question to each informant followed by mini-tour questions and sub-questions to guide the flow of the conversation (Creswell, 1998; Krathwohl, 1998; McCracken, 1988; Moustakas, 1994; Spradley, 1979).

The interview with each minister was audiotaped, transcribed, and subjected to a full phenomenological data analysis. A follow-up contact was conducted by means of a member check to evaluate the emerging results with the research participants (Fry & Oishi, 1995; Hines, 1994). An additional interview was conducted spontaneously on site with a former seminary professor of two of the participants. He is considered an expert in the field of premarital counseling. This interview was audiotaped, transcribed, and subjected to data analysis. It underwent the process of peer review and member check, respectively (Appendix. D).

Researcher's Profile

The researcher for this project is a 45-year-old male, married, and father of two children, both girls. He is a doctoral student at Iowa State University in the Human Development and Family Studies Department with a specialization in Marital and Family Therapy. Besides being a full-time graduate student, he is a part-time certified/licensed marriage and family therapist in the states of Wisconsin and Iowa. He has been a therapist in private practice for 14 years. He is also a Clinical Member and Approved Supervisor of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapists. Lastly, he is a senior pastor in a church in La Crosse, Wisconsin, where he has been serving for the last thirteen years.

The researcher is a graduate of a theological school, Wheaton Graduate School, 1991, and of two seminaries, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1983, and Covenant Theological Seminary, 1999. His interest in premarital counseling dates back to his formal education in during graduate school and seminary. In his internship and two pastorates, he has had an active role in designing and providing premarital counseling ministries. With a desire to offer more effective marriage ministries in the church, he took an advanced degree in Marriage and Family Therapy at the University of Wisconsin--Stout, graduating in 1989. His continued interest in preparing couples for marriage propelled his first dissertation in this direction (Buikema, 1999); and the questions it subsequently raised, inspired this current research project.

The researcher has conducted previous research on clergy and premarital counseling using a quantitative paradigm (Buikema, 1999). It confirmed his concern that the majority of clergy sense a lack of confidence in providing premarital counseling due in part to their inadequate seminary training. In an effort to determine more specifically the perceived needs of pastors and the type of training they desire to enhance their premarital counseling skills and the effectiveness of their pre-marriage ministries, this researcher utilized a qualitative paradigm for his second research project.

The researcher, embarking on this new research, believed that seminaries/theological schools should promote educational opportunities in premarital counseling for clergy during and after their formal pastoral training (Worthington, 1990; Wright, 1992). The researcher believed that clergy have a responsibility to pursue continuing educational opportunities. The researcher also believed that marriage and family therapy programs should train therapists to provide premarital counseling (Stahmann, 2000). The lack of emphasis in graduate programs on marriage preparation may account for the fact that premarital counseling has not been identified as a regular part of the clinical practice of today's marriage and family therapists (Doherty & Simmons, 1996). The researcher believed that

both clergy and family therapists have a significant role to play, and perhaps, a cooperative role, in meeting the needs of couples seeking to marry in the new millennium.

The researcher previously alerted the reader as to how his biases and preconceptions might influence his data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation. More specifically, he has described how specific summary statements, domains, categories, and sub-categories were developed during data analysis and how the researcher's biases influenced the interpretation of the data in the discussion section.

Role of Researcher

The researcher in a qualitative paradigm, as stated previously, is the primary instrument of data collection (Creswell, 1994, 1998; Erlandson et al., 1993; Guba, 1981; McCracken, 1988; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1990). Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research does not attempt to place a layer of instrumentation between the investigator and the informants. The investigator in this study, using a phenomenological approach, tried to minimize the "distance" or "objective separateness" between the observed and the observer (Bradley, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Newfield et al., 1996). He sought to interact with the respondents and adjust his line of questioning and data collection as the study progressed and the particular interview warranted it. This happened in a number of interviews. One of the strengths of this methodology was the flexibility it afforded both the researcher and the respondents.

The qualitative researcher may also adapt the project design in the process of data collection, whereas in quantitative research, the methodology remains fixed to the end of the project. In this case, the design remained relatively static with the exception of the spontaneous interview [interview #10] with an expert in the field of premarital counseling training and clergy.

Since qualitative research is reflexive, the researcher brackets and discloses biases and prejudgments to the research participants before starting to gather data (Cox-Dzurec,

1993; Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). The investigator in this study revealed at the onset his background and bias in premarital counseling before each interview.

Dependability Auditor

The researcher's Major Professor, Dr. Harvey Joanning, functioned as the dependability auditor monitoring all dimensions of the study. The auditor teaches qualitative research methodology at Iowa State University. He is a Professor in the Human Development and Family Studies Department and the Director of the Family Therapy Doctrinal Program. He is considered an expert in the field of qualitative research. He has conducted and supervised numerous qualitative research projects. The auditor guaranteed that the investigator complied with the standard practices required of researchers in the field of qualitative research.

Peer Reviewer

Mr. Darren Wozny is a Ph.D. Candidate at Iowa State University in the Human Development and Family Studies Department with a specialization in Marital and Family Therapy. He provided peer review and consultation at several stages of this research project, including the determination of research design, the data analysis, and the reporting of the findings. The researcher selected him because of his interest in premarital counseling and his experience in doing qualitative research.

Participant Recruitment

Purposive sampling is most often used in a qualitative paradigm to select individuals based on their ability to contribute to the researcher's current focus of investigation and, in this case, pastoral training in premarital counseling, (Bogdan & Biklin, 1982; Brotherson & Goldstein, 1992; Creswell, 1998; Krathwohl, 1998; Krueger, 1988; Morgan, 1998; Patton, 1990; Spradley 1979).

The informants for this study were selected on the basis of: (a) their seminary training at an accredited member of the Association of Theological Schools; (b) their own

experience in providing marriage preparation in a church context; (c) their ability to articulate their views on the preparation of pastors and premarital counseling; and (d) their willingness to voluntarily participate in this research project.

The participants were selected from the alumni pool of graduates of Covenant Theological Seminary during the years 1975-1995, who participated in an earlier research project (Buikema, 1999) and volunteered to be part of ongoing research. They all had a minimum of five years of full-time pastoral experience and had provided premarital counseling with a minimum of three couples each year over a five-year period of time. Their churches are located across the country and range in size from congregations of at least 100 members to more than 1,000 members.

Eleven members of the clergy were recruited and interviewed in person until a saturation point was reached (Creswell, 1998; Joanning & Keoughan, 1998; Patton, 1990). Nine pastors were interviewed on June 21, 22, 2000, at the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America in Tampa, Florida. Two ministers were interviewed on July 11, 12, 2001, in an attempt to reach saturation.

The researcher also opted to interview an individual, who was both a pastor and seminary professor, on short notice at the same pastors' conference. He is a seasoned pastor and an expert in the field of pastoral counseling. In fact, he trained two of the respondents in premarital counseling during their seminary education at Covenant Theological Seminary. The decision to interview him for this project came at the urging of these two students and the ready access to him at the conference. He was interviewed on June 22, 2000. His contribution to this study was highly significant.

Description of the Interviewing Process

Before beginning the interview process, the researcher obtained approval to conduct this research from the Human Subjects Committee at Iowa State University. Informed consent forms were signed before the start of each scheduled interview. No interview started

without a signed informed consent form (Appendix B). As stated above, twelve face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted. An interview protocol was developed (Brotherson, 1994). The researcher traveled to the site of the informants on both occasions to conduct a sixty-minute plus interview. Each phenomenological interview was double recorded, transcribed, organized, and analyzed. All initial interviews were (a) subject to peer review, (b) followed-up with member checks, and (c) sought suggestions and comments that might be helpful should there be a need for additional interviews. During the member check process, the participants with very few corrections, statements, or suggestions, returned the transcripts (Appendix H).

Description of the Interview Questions

Because the researcher had previously conducted research in the area of clergy training in premarital counseling (Buikema, 1999), some questions of this study were known prior to the start of the interviews. Nevertheless, a phenomenological interview is an informal, interactive process and utilizes discovery-oriented questions (Joanning, Newfield, & Quinn, 1987; McCracken, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1990; Spradley, 1979). The “grand tour question” was an open-ended question, and its intent was to encourage rich thick descriptions of the participants’ lived experience with premarital counseling training. Nearly every domain emerged out of the responses to the grand tour question.

The grand tour question, the mini-tour questions, and the sub-questions for this project were developed well in advance of the first interview; but, not all of them were used with each informant (Moustakas, 1994). The interview process initially used broad, open-ended, discovery oriented questions so as not to lead the research participants to specific responses. The protocol of the questioning was adapted as needed during the interview process.

As the process of collecting verbal data progressed, the investigator used sub-questions: structural questions, descriptive questions and contrast questions in keeping with

a modified phenomenological design (Joanning & Keoughan, 1997; Joanning, Newfield, & Quinn, 1987; McCracken, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1990; Spradley, 1979). The important principle at play in the use of these questions was a sense of being tentative or suggestive in asking the question. The intent of the sub-questions was not to seek confirmation, but to encourage further reflection about the lived experience of the informant and to assist the inquirer in the collection of more detailed data about the training needs of pastors in premarital counseling.

“Structural questions” were utilized to ask the respondents “to further define possible ‘domains,’ that is, broad categories of meaning,” (Joanning & Keoughan, 1997, p. 6; Spradley, 1979). These provided rich and substantive descriptions of the respondents’ lived experience with marriage preparation training.

“Descriptive questions” also were used to encourage respondents to describe their lived experience with premarital counseling in a fuller, more complete way (Joanning & Keoughan, 1997; Spradley, 1979).

“Contrasts questions,” like the other two types of questions, were used to attempt to provide additional information to the interviewer, but this type of question was used to define more precisely “the meaning implicit in symbolic language used by informants by finding out how one symbol is different from other symbols,” (Joanning & Keoughan, 1997, p. 6; Spradley, 1979).

Interestingly, by the time the researcher asked some of the sub-questions, the respondents already had provided an answer to them. This was the case with the seventh interview. The PMC provider previously had provided a response about the content component of premarital counseling training. Thus, he sought to provide different data.

PMC Interview Protocol

Grand Tour Question

1. Based on your past experience and training, what kind of preparation is necessary for pastors to provide effective premarital counseling?

Mini-Tour Questions

2. What role, if any, do you see the seminaries and theological schools have in equipping pastors to provide premarital counseling? Whose responsibility is it to equip pastors in this area?

3. How would you design a training course or unit of study in premarital counseling for clergy? What major components would you include in it?

4. Describe for me the training that you have received over the years in premarital counseling? Seminary training? Other? And, how effective has it been?

Sub-Questions

5. What specific content areas do you think should be covered in a training program for pastors in premarital counseling? What about remarital counseling?

6. In addition, what specific relational skills should be part of a pastor's training in premarital counseling?

7. What specific assessment instruments or inventories should pastors be trained to use?

8. What role, if any, do you see professionals, such as physicians, marriage and family therapists, financial planners, or other professionals, play in equipping clergy in premarital counseling?

9. What could seminaries do to provide continuing education for pastors in premarital and remarital counseling?

10. How would you describe your current premarital practice or church program?

Rigor of Design

There are several key issues involved in discussing rigor of design (Brotherson, 1994; Creswell, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Guba, 1981; Krathwohl, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tesch, 1990). They include credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. These parallel traditional criteria of rigor in quantitative research. Each contributes to the trustworthiness of the research. Qualitative researchers employ a variety of research techniques and data sources to achieve trustworthiness (Creswell, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1994). Many of these techniques are listed under the four headings below.

Trustworthiness

The researcher sought to establish trustworthiness in this study through recursive methods of phenomenological data collection, data analysis, and triangulation (Brotherson & Goldstein, 1992; Creswell, 1994; 1998; Guba, 1981; Krathwohl, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990; Smith, Sells, & Clevenger, 1994; Sprenkle & Moon, 1996). Guba has identified four criteria by which to judge trustworthiness (1981). The investigator attempted to provide “truth value through credibility, applicability through transferability, consistency through dependability, and neutrality through confirmability (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 132).

Credibility

Credibility in a qualitative paradigm is similar to internal validity in a quantitative paradigm (Guba, 1981; Krathwohl, 1998). It is established when the researchers have accurately interpreted the respondent’s reality (Brotherson, 1994; Brotherson & Goldstein, 1992a). One research team explained it as the “compatibility of the constructed realities that exist in the minds of the inquiry’s respondents with those that are attributed to them” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 30). To increase credibility, a number of techniques are pursued by researchers including triangulation, multiple methods, progressive subjectivity, peer review, member checks, negative case analysis, and multiple researchers to establish truth

value in qualitative research (Guba, 1981; Joanning & Keoughan, 1998; Krathwohl, 1998). In this study, four of these techniques were used.

The first technique was member checks. They were the investigator's analysis and summary of each interview submitted to and confirmed by the informant for their verification. Guba claims, "the process of member checks is the single most important action inquirers can take" (1981, p. 85). Member checks were used to ensure that there was a high degree of agreement between what the researcher interpreted from the informant's comments, descriptions, or perceptions, and what the informant actually meant. As stated above, member checks were done after each interview was conducted for this study. The researcher sought clarification about the data and the accuracy of the summary statements. The respondents were cooperative and all twelve returned the transcripts.

For added incentive to return the transcripts, the researcher sent one of two recent books on premarital counseling to them: Stahmann and Hiebert's book, Premarital & Remarital Counseling or Stanley et al., book, A Lasting Promise. All twelve transcripts were promptly returned and usable. The respondents made few changes in the column summaries. The only changes were corrections of fact, like the spelling of a name (Appendix H).

A second technique was peer review. It was used for the same purpose as member checks in this study. The researcher submitted the transcripts and the summary statements to one of his colleagues for verification. He worked through all twelve interviews. His written comments assisted the researcher in checking his perceptions and analysis of the data. Modifications were then made (Appendix G).

Progressive subjectivity was also an element in establishing and monitoring credibility (Joanning & Keoughan, 1997). This required that the inquirer purposefully and regularly evaluate how his own previous lived experience and attitudes were influencing the way he interpreted the data. A journal was kept, recording the research activity, and

assessing how the researcher's values and assumptions impacted and changed during the progress of the study.

Attempts were made to establish credibility through triangulation using the three techniques that were listed above. The researcher used another form of triangulation. He compared the verbal data of this research project with the written data of his previous study (Buikema, 1999) as well as other relevant research in the field (Babb, 1992; Brotherson, 1994; Cox-Dzurec & Abraham, 1993; Creswell, 1994; 1998; Fielding & Fielding, 1986; Ipes, 1982; Jones & Stahmann, 1994; Loskot, 1993; Trott, 1990).

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research is similar to reliability in quantitative research. It ensures consistency while allowing for an emerging design (Brotherson, 1994; Guba, 1981a; Guba & Lincoln, 1981b; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990; Sells, Smith, & Sprenkle, 1995). The researcher in qualitative studies is the instrument of inquiry (Creswell, 1994, 1998; Erlandson et al., 1993; Guba, 1981; McCracken, 1988; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1990). He/she will evolve as the project evolves in response to emerging insights and observations. Dependability requires that the researcher account for the movement (Guba, 1981).

Several methods or techniques were used in this research project to ensure dependability of the data. The method by which this criterion was addressed was through establishing an audit trail or an ongoing record that described the various dimensions of the research and tracked its progress (Brotherson & Goldstein, 1992; Guba, 1981; Erlandson et al., 1993). A second one was the maintaining of a record in the form of a journal, of data collection, analysis, and interpretations as the study evolved (Patton, 1990). The researcher's major professor, who is experienced in qualitative research, conducted a dependability audit (Brotherson & Goldstein, 1992; Guba, 1981).

Transferability

In quantitative research, external validity indicates that the researcher's results or findings apply or generalize across contexts. In qualitative studies, a similar phenomenon is known as transferability (Brotherson, 1994; Guba, 1981, 1990; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Sells, Smith, & Sprenkle, 1995). There are many methods used to achieve transferability including purposeful sampling, complete contextual descriptions, and multiple interviews (Brotherson & Goldstein, 1992). Purposeful sampling involves selecting respondents based on a set criterion. As stated previously, the participants in this project were chosen using purposeful sampling.

A second method was also used to ensure transferability. Contextual descriptions or thick rich descriptions were noted during the evolving study. The researcher documented a full description of the respondent, his characteristics, and life situation. In addition, the researcher carefully recorded the contextual factors of the interview itself.

Confirmability

In qualitative research confirmability is similar to the maintenance of neutrality or objectivity in quantitative research. It ensures that all data collected through the interviews can be traced back to the informant and not to the biases or perception of the researchers (Guba, 1981a). Triangulation, as discussed earlier, is the use of multiple methods and is a way to ensure confirmability (Brotherson & Goldstein, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checks, peer review, and the dependability audit, mentioned previously, were used as techniques allowing for triangulation of interpretations made by the researcher. In other words, by continually sharing the process and interpretations with both informants and other educated but uninvolved researchers, the findings were more likely to reflect the informant's reality, rather than that of a single inquirer. Thus, the trustworthiness of this study was addressed in a number of ways, using methods that had been previously tested and that are generally accepted in the field of qualitative research (Babbie, 1998; Brotherson, 1994;

Guba, 1981, Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990).

Data Analysis

There are generally three stages in phenomenology data analysis (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1990; Oiler, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1989). This research project conformed to them. The first stage was that of “epoch” or “bracketing.” Patton describes this stage as a time that: “the researcher looks inside to become aware of personal biases and to eliminate personal involvement with the subject material” (1990, p. 407).

Epoch requires that the researcher suspend judgment until all evidence from the transcribed interviews is analyzed according to the methods and procedures of phenomenal analysis (Boss et al., 1996; Gubrium & Holstein, 1997; Moustakas, 1994). As stated above under the axiological or value assumption, the researcher did not believe that “bracketing,” as defined by Moustakas, was ever fully possible, given the nature of human directed research (1994). The researcher did disclose his biases and assumptions at the outset of the interview.

The second stage is phenomenological reduction (Boss et al., 1996; Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1990). There are multiple parts to this stage. With the data bracketed, the data were broken down into summary statements. Every statement was given equal value and was considered relevant to the research question (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1990). After the data were summarized, they were arranged in domains of meaning or meaning units (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1990). Next, the researcher identified the categories and subcategories, and used them to establish the textual portrayal or rich thick description of the participants’ experience. Creswell divides the descriptions into two types: textual descriptions of what was experienced and the structural descriptions of how it was experienced (1998). Although they are informative, they still do not provide the essential, invariant structure or “essence” of the experience (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 1990). The

researcher sought to listen to the voice of the informants and record rich thick descriptions of their lived experience with premarital counseling and their respective training needs.

The third and final stage in phenomenological analysis was an integration of structure and textures or a “structural synthesis” (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1990). The integration or synthesis contain the “essence” of the informant’s experience, “recognizing that “a single unifying meaning of the experience exists” (Creswell, 1998, p. 55). Patton concludes, “The assumption of essence, like the ethnographer’s assumption that culture exists and is important, becomes the defining characteristic of a purely phenomenological study” (1990, p. 70). This phenomenological study attempted to establish the common lived experience of clergy and their training needs in premarital counseling.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Qualitative Results

Long interviews were conducted with twelve experienced providers of marriage preparation (PMC Providers). Interviews with the first 10 ministers were held at the same pastors' conference in June 2000. One of them was also a seminary professor, who was interviewed spontaneously at the urging of two of the interviewees, both of whom had been instructed by him during their seminary training. He was also interviewed because of his expertise in the field of premarital counseling. After the 10th interview was transcribed, reviewed, and the data analyzed, the researcher determined that the saturation point of the data had been reached. Nevertheless, two more pastors were interviewed in July, 2001, for three reasons. Firstly, since the proposal has stipulated 10 to 12 interviews, and the 10th one was actually conducted with a seminary instructor using a different set of questions, resulting in only nine informants responding to the interview protocol, the researcher choose to interview two more pastors. Secondly, since the seminary instructor taught at Covenant Theological Seminary, but was not actually a graduate of it, as was stipulated for the pastors' participation in this study, the researcher interviewed two more graduates of the seminary. Thirdly, neither one of these two ministers could attend the conference the previous year, but they eagerly wanted to participate in this follow-up study because of their strong interest in premarital counseling and continuing education. Both interviews proved highly significant for this study.

The first section of this chapter describes the respondents. The second section details domains and categories that emerged after the analysis of all twelve transcripts by the researcher, peer review, and their respective member checks.

Introduction to Respondents

A description of each premarital counseling provider (PMC Provider) introduced the respondents. The names of the participating pastors were not included to uphold the ethical standards of confidentiality.

PMC Provider #1 was a 50-year-old male and was married at the time of the interview. He graduated from Covenant Theological Seminary in 1990. He entered the ministry in 1984 and served on the staff of Navigators for nine years and in church pastoral ministry for 16 years. He had 25 years of ministerial experience. At the time of the interview and member checks, he was serving a Presbyterian Church in America in the Southeast in a predominantly white, college community. The church was a medium-sized congregation of approximately 250 members. He conducted premarital counseling with at least five couples per year. In his previous church, he did group counseling with 10-20 couples a year. He has had a lot of experience providing premarital counseling.

PMC Provider #2 was a 43-year-old male and was married at the time of the interview. He graduated from Covenant Theological Seminary in 1983. He had been pastoring congregations of the Presbyterian Church in America for 16 years. His church was a medium to large-sized congregation of 500 members plus and was located in the Midwest. In the year he was interviewed for this study, 2000, he conducted premarital counseling with 10 couples. On average, he provided marriage preparation with three to five couples a year.

PMC Provider #3 was a 37-year-old male and was married at the time of the interview. He graduated from Covenant Theological Seminary in 1992. He had been serving a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America for seven years. The church was a small church of 70-100 members located along the Southeastern Coastline. The community was a medium-sized metropolitan area of 500,000, predominantly made up of blue collar, military, and retirees. In recent years, he had seen a decline in weddings due to an aging congregation.

PMC Provider #4 was a 47-year-old male and was married at the time of the interview. He graduated from Covenant Theological Seminary twice, in 1978, with a Masters of Divinity, and in 2000, with a Doctorate of Ministry. He had been pastoring in the Presbyterian Church in America for 23 years. His church was a medium-sized congregation with a membership of 350 plus, and it was located in a densely populated metro-suburban Midwest town of 55,000. The community was upwardly mobile, middle management, and highly transient. In his previous church, he provided extensive premarital counseling in conjunction with the senior pastor. At the time of the interview, the church had seen a decline in weddings because fewer young people were coming into the church. Nearly everyone was married. Prior to this time, he had been conducting premarital counseling with at least five couples per year according to the earlier study (Buikema, 1999).

PMC Provider #5 was a 56-year-old-male and was married at the time of the interview. He graduated from Covenant Theological Seminary in 1977. He had 26 years of pastoral experience. He was serving a medium-sized suburban church of 150-200 members in the Central Plains. It was a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America. He conducted premarital counseling with approximately four to five couples per year.

PMC Provider #6 was a 41-year-old-male and was married at the time of the interview. He finished his Doctorate of Ministry at Covenant Theological Seminary in 1993. He did his Masters of Divinity at Westminster Theological Seminary and three additional years of training at the Florida Theological Center. He had been pastoring for 20 years. He was serving a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America along the Southeastern Coastline. It was a medium-sized church of 400 members. The community was rapidly growing, predominantly white, upper middle class, and professional. He conducted premarital counseling with 10 couples per year.

PMC Provider #7 was a 34-year-old-male and was married at the time of the interview. He graduated twice from Covenant Theological Seminary, first in 1991 with a

Masters of Divinity and in 1995 with a Masters in Theology. He had been pastoring the same Presbyterian Church in America congregation for 10 years. The church was located in an upper middle class, suburban community in the Midwest. He had a large congregation of approximately 600 members. He conducted premarital counseling with as many as 12 couples per year.

PMC Provider #8 was a 52-year-old-male and was married at the time of the interview. He graduated from Covenant Theological Seminary in 1994. He began pastoring in 1984 and had 16 years experience in the ministry. He had been serving a Presbyterian Church in America for approximately six years. The church was located in a small town in the Midwest. He conducted premarital counseling on average with two couples in this church and five in his previous church.

PMC Provider #9 was a 36-year-old-male and was married at the time of the interview. He graduated from Covenant Theological Seminary in 1995. He had five years experience in pastoral ministry. He had served the same suburban congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America in the South since graduation. The church was a medium-sized congregation with approximately 210 members. He conducted premarital counseling with three to five couples per year.

PMC Provider #10 was 62-year-old-male and was married at the time of the interview. He did not graduate from Covenant Theological Seminary, but instead, he taught at the seminary from 1985 to 1993. He had over 30 years of pastoral and teaching ministry. He was a graduate of Faith Seminary and Dallas Theological Seminary. He worked on two doctorates, one at Western Conservative Baptist Seminary in Portland, Oregon, and another one at the University of Georgia. He had served multiple pastorates across the country. He had run two counseling centers located in the Southeast. He wrote a textbook on premarital counseling manual, titled, Three to Get Ready. At the time of the interview, he was serving as an associate minister and director of a seminary in a mega-church in the South. The

church was located in a large cosmopolitan area and has a membership of approximately 4,000. It was a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America. The researcher was encouraged by two of the participants in this study to interview him, spontaneously, at the pastors' conference in June, 2000. He was an expert in the field of premarital counseling, having conducted research on premarital counseling, provided marriage preparation services in several settings, and trained pastors to perform their prewedding ministries. The researcher received permission in writing to use the respondent's name, Dr. Howard Eyrich, and the title of his book, Three to Get Ready in the body of the text. He was not only a participant in the study; he was also a subject to the study.

PMC Provider #11 was a 49-year-old-male and was married at the time of the interview. He graduated from Covenant Theological Seminary in 1977. He also did a Masters of Theological and Doctrinal Studies in Theology at Concordia Seminary. He has been pastoring in Presbyterian Churches in America for 26 years. He was serving a large church with a membership of approximately 1,500-2,000. The church was located in a rapidly growing, upper class, and middle management suburban community. He provided premarital counseling with 10 couples or so each year. He had an extensive premarital counseling program in his church and trained another participant in this study to do premarital counseling during the participant's internship while in seminary.

PMC Provider #12 was a 51-year-old-male and was married at the time of the interview. He had been pastoring congregations in the Presbyterian Church in America for 24 years. He graduated from Covenant Theological Seminary in 1977 with a Masters of Divinity. He graduated with a Doctorate of Ministry in 1985 from Westminster Theological Seminary. He also did his Ph.D. in continuing education at the University of Georgia and graduated in 2000. His church was a mega-church of 3,000 members. It was located in a large metropolitan upper middle to upper class community in the Southeast. He had published a workbook on premarital counseling called, 'Right Start,' and had expertise in

continuing education. He conducted premarital counseling in conjunction with other staff members with approximately 60 couples per year.

Grand Tour Responses

The interview process for eleven of the twelve providers of premarital counseling started the same way. Each of them were asked the grand tour question at the outset of the interview: "Based on your past experience and training, what kind of preparation do you think is necessary for pastors to provide effective premarital counseling?" While the respondents had unique responses, there were also similarities as well as differences. Their responses to the grand tour question alone provided interesting and diverse descriptions of nearly every emergent domain in this study pertaining to the premarital counseling training needs of pastors. These descriptions became thicker and richer through the progressive unfolding process of asking the mini-tour questions and then the sub-questions. At each new level of the interview, the questions became more narrowly defined and the answers more specific.

Several pastors began their interview with statements about being inadequately prepared to provide the premarital counseling ministries in their churches coming out of seminary. This was the first preliminary domain to emerge from this study. It arose early out of responses to the grand tour question and was fleshed out further in response to question #4 of the Mini-Tour Questions. The sense that clergy in this study felt incompetent to provide their prewedding services was anticipated by the researcher given the review of related literature in which so many studies came to the same conclusion (Babb, 1992; Buikema, 1999; Givens, 1976; Harvey, 1977; Hill, 1968; Ipes, 1982; Jones & Stahmann, 1994; Loskot, 1993; Schumm & Denton, 1979; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Stewart, 1977; Summers & Cunningham, 1989; Trott, 1990; Wiser, 1959). The statements below were provided in response to the grand tour question of this study. They set the stage for what would later emerge as a formal "domain."

Potential Domain #1. The Inadequacy of Seminary Training in Premarital Counseling

PMC Provider #2 *"I really had nothing to start with when I got out of seminary."*

PMC Provider #6 *"But, honestly for premarital counseling and the actual number of hours that we spend in training...for that it was minimal...I really went out there with little training in the way of premarital counseling."*

Other pastors believed that they had received adequate training in the theological and biblical components of premarital counseling but not in the relational dimension of it. For example:

PMC Provider #1: *"I think most guys, at least from our Presbyterian Reformed tradition, are probably well-equipped theologically. I think, at least the guys that I talk to, do a good job in the cognitive, theological training of couples, the biblical basis for marriage, and so forth. I do not think they are nearly as well-prepared to deal with the more relational issues, like we were talking about before the interview began on communication issues, financial issues, and so forth and so on."*

Potential Domain #2. The Components of Premarital Counseling Training: Content, Assessment Instruments, Relational Skills, the Role of Professionals and the Process of Premarital Counseling

The second preliminary domain that emerged out of responses to the grand tour question revolved around the multi-faceted components of premarital counseling training. This later developed into the third domain. The data were quite varied from one pastor to another, and yet there was considerable correspondence. They yielded valuable and anticipatory information for each category of the emergent domain. The general or grand tour question was followed-up by a mini-tour question specifically on the projected components of premarital counseling training. All of the components and categories of domains were anticipated and followed-up in the interview by sub-questions. The only

exception to this was the category on the process of premarital counseling training. No sub-question was asked on this subject. This was the researcher's oversight.

The Content Component of Premarital Counseling Training

The first category dealt with the content component of premarital counseling training. What marriage preparation content should pastors be exposed to in seminary or other contexts? The respondents readily offered their opinions based on years of experience in providing premarital counseling services in their churches. Their responses included:

PMC Provider #3: *"They need an adequate academic exposure to ideas involved in counseling. They are looking for areas of things like conflict resolution, finances, anger management, and child rearing, and I would add to those things..."*

PMC Provider #5: *"I believe that fundamental to adequate premarital counseling is training in the Scriptures, in theology, and some training in [the] area of psychology and counseling."*

PMC Provider #7: *"Well, it is very important that the man first be trained biblically because they are anticipating the issues that will come up in their marriage, and then, obviously counseling training. They need that kind of professional psychological orientation training."*

Provider & Professor of Premarital Counseling #10: *"And then, in that marriage and family course at Covenant, I have about a three-week component on premarital counseling. Oh, I basically covered everything in the book--communication, roles, finances, children, sex, family worship, etc."*

PMC Provider #9: *"I think that pastors need primarily topics to cover in premarital counseling. Maybe hot items, especially, take how to handle a divorce, ... handle remarriages or, in my situation, I deal with an older congregation; what about a remarriage after years and adult children, and those types of things? You need to teach them about finances. Here is a biblical view of finance. How to handle to debt? Those types of things and then probably the*

biggest thing is maybe even a bibliography on, 'we cannot teach you everything but here is where you can go'. Those types of things--I think the seminary could be very helpful in that way."

The Assessment Instrument Component of Premarital Counseling Training

Another category arose toward the end of the interviewing process in response to the grand tour question. The review of related literature and this researcher's exposure to the field of premarital and remarital counseling anticipated the responses about assessment inventories. Sub-question #7 was designed to harvest rich thick descriptions on the use of assessment instruments in premarital counseling training. The responses below came in answer to the grand tour question.

Provider & Professor of Premarital Counseling #10: *"I just had them read the book and then talked my way through the various instruments and what their value was...the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis Test, The Trait Factor Inventory, The Sex Awareness Inventory, and the Premarital Counseling Inventory."*

PMC Provider #12: *"An introduction to instruments. I do not now know what Covenant Seminary, for example, how many courses are required for the M. Div., but it seems to me that at least an introduction to types of instruments would be helpful."*

The Process Component of Premarital Counseling Training

Another category that emerged from the respondents' answers to the grand tour question pertained to the actual training process of premarital counseling. Once again, the data were varied and yet similar. The researcher did not anticipate that vast breadth of the responses. As a result, no sub-question was asked on the process component of premarital counseling. Nevertheless, the participating pastors in this study provided valuable data about the training process of premarital counseling. Again, the researcher asked no specific follow-up question on the process components.

PMC Provider #2: *"And then, I think you need to just watch. Sort of, not necessarily a participant, but just to be able to watch it being done so that you can see how various kinds of content can be covered, at least that is the kind of learner I am. To sort of see it done rather than have to, you know, get out of seminary and it is like 'oh, gosh somebody wants premarital counseling', and it is like, okay, now I am supposed to sort of objectify this whole process."*

PMC Provider #4: *"I could answer that question in a lot of different ways...we can read the typical books that might be out there, take a seminary class where the professor makes him aware of all sorts of resources and techniques that tend to be used. One of those things that I think is most potentially valuable, though, is if let's say in seminary or, if you did not have the opportunity in seminary, as soon as you get into your pastorate, is that you just interview lots of different pastors and ask what it is that they do. What do they tend to do and what resources and what their experiences have been and what have [been] the bumps in the road? What are the big trouble spots?"*

PMC Provider #12: *"I am not sure that pastors in seminary can receive effective training for premarital counseling. I think they need in seminary training or pre-professional training... they need to have an introduction to premarital counseling at least to know what resources are available. Resources in books, tapes, organizations, maybe an outline of what a premarital counseling group of sessions would look like, suggested outline, or a number of suggested methodologies in that and an introduction to instruments."*

The Relational Skills Component of Premarital Counseling

In addition to previous component, relational skills also surfaced early in response to the grand tour question. Knowing that it was a major emphasis in premarital counseling programs, and the review of related literature, it was not surprising that the respondents touched on it. There was a specific sub-question on the relational skills component of premarital counseling that yielded rich thick descriptions of this category.

PMC Provider #1: *"I think that there is a great need for broadening their scope of what is necessary in preparing couples for marriage beyond the cognitive and theological, and I think there needs to be a lot more done on relational training in preparing couples for marriage. So I think there is a lot room for training of pastors in premarital counseling...communication issues and so forth and so on."*

The Role of Professionals Component of Premarital Counseling

On top of the components already mentioned above, the role of professionals in providing marriage preparation training for pastors was also brought to the attention of the researcher by one of the respondents in response to the grand tour question. Subsequently, the participating pastors answered a specific sub-question on this topic. The responses to it filled out this category with rich thick descriptions.

PMC Provider #8: *"I think they [pastors] should receive training from a Christian counselor who does marriage counseling, including premarital counseling."*

Several domains did not emerge out of the responses to the grand tour question. They came to the surface in relation to answers to mini-tour and sub-questions. What was interesting and fascinating to this researcher was the vastness of the information that the grand tour question alone produced. The descriptions of the data only became thicker and richer as the subsequent questions were asked of the participating pastors in the study. And, that was where the researcher turned his focus next after asking the grand tour question.

It was clear to this researcher early on in the interviewing process that one theme or domain that rapidly rose to the surface was the sense that the respondents in this study left seminary feeling inadequate to provide effective marriage preparation ministries in their churches. The writer's previous experience in providing premarital counseling and his research on pastors and premarital counseling alerted him to the potential of this persistent concern amongst clergy (Buikema, 1999). In fact, 86% of the sample population in this previous study claimed that their seminary preparation in premarital counseling was woefully

inadequate. Knowing that all the participants, who were interviewed in the second study, participated in the first one, the findings were not surprising. What was surprising was to listen to them voice in detail how they felt about their seminary training in premarital counseling or the lack thereof. Mini-tour question number four was directed specifically at this concern.

The introduction to this research project and the review of related literature traced this sense of inadequacy coming out of seminary back to the earliest literature on pastoral premarital counseling right up to the present (Buikema, 1999; Givens, 1976; Hill, 1968; Jones & Stahmann, 1994; Schumm & Denton, 1979; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Stewart, 1977; Summers & Cunningham, 1989; Wiser, 1959).

Emergent Domains

Domain #1. The Inadequacy of Seminary Training in Premarital Counseling

As stated above in the Problem Section of the Introduction and the Related Literature Review, clergy attributed the lack of training in seminary as a major reason for feeling incompetent to provide effective premarital counseling ministries (Babb, 1992; Buikema, 1999; Givens, 1976; Hill, 1968; Ipes, 1982; Jones & Stahmann, 1994; Loskot, 1993; Schumm & Denton, 1979; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Stewart, 1977; Summers & Cunningham, 1989; vom Eigen, 1983; Wiser, 1959). Six of the 12 respondents in this project claimed that they did not have any training in premarital counseling during their seminary days. Fifty percent left seminary with no marriage preparation training. Of the remaining six, how many would have said, if asked specifically that the training they did receive was sufficient to deliver effective premarital counseling services? Their thin description of it left the researcher with a lingering doubt.

In the earlier study, 86% of the respondents, which included all but one of the respondents in this later study, reported that their pastoral training in premarital counseling was inadequate (Buikema, 1999).

Listed first were the responses of those who received no premarital counseling in seminary followed by the five pastors who stated that they did receive some preparation in wedding counseling.

No Seminary Training in Premarital Counseling

PMC Provider #1: *"I had no help at seminary. I went to Covenant Theological Seminary and graduated in 1990, and there was nothing that I took there that prepared me for that. The training that I have gotten has not been training. It is just what I have learned to do to survive."*

PMC Provider #2: *"We had some general counseling in seminary but not specifically related to the premarital realm. That is it.... I really had nothing to start with when I got out of seminary."*

PMC Provider #5: *"Pretty sad. I have a minor in counseling. Most of my useful training has come through some 30 years of ministry, continuing to read, learning not what to read, but I have trained myself in a sense."*

Researcher: *"Did it touch on premarital counseling?"*

PMC Provider #5: *"No, I never had any direct training in premarital counseling."*

PMC Provider #9: *"I did not receive any, that I remember, I did not receive any, 'okay, now we are going to study premarital counseling'. I think, in my training, a lot was just talking to pastors."*

Provider and Professor of Premarital Counseling #10: *"That was my experience, too. I left Dallas and went to the Baptist church in Atlanta. It was one of the premier churches in the city of Atlanta, Georgia. The second year there, the senior pastor has a serious angina, so I was given all the weddings. So, gee, I needed to do some premarital counseling, and I looked back at my notes; and I found one page, that told me how important it was, but it said nothing about how to do it. So, I went over to Union Seminary, and I found one book, which*

was not very good at all, and at that point, I said, "Lord, if you will allow me to work on a doctorate, this will be my emphasis. So I had the same burden, then, that you have now."

PMC Provider #12: *"Well, I had one course in counseling...no, I did not get any premarital [counseling] training in seminary."*

These six responses clearly showed that half of the pastors in this study failed to acquire any training in premarital counseling in seminary. The knowledge and skills required to provide this ministry had to be developed subsequent to their formal education at Covenant Theological Seminary.

Several other pastors did report having received some premarital counseling training however, limited in seminary. Yet, the thin descriptions they gave of their training indicated that it might not have been very extensive. One recalled reading a book; another learned how to use an assessment instrument; and yet another claimed to learn for the first time about premarital counseling and its importance.

Some Seminary Training in Premarital Counseling

Provider and Professor of Premarital Counseling #3: *"I did [have some training in premarital counseling]. That is it. Since the class was marriage and family counseling, it was merely a subset of that class. The only premarital counseling training that I received since seminary would be reading Howard Eyrich's book, and I went through part of that in his marriage and family counseling class. The rest of it has simply been on-the-job training."*

PMC Provider #4: *"Not a lot of formal training. There was an aspect of pastoral counseling that was talked about in seminary."*

Researcher: *"So, you did have some training?"*

PMC Provider #4: *"Yes, we did, and I thought that that was pretty helpful, actually just being exposed to the whole idea. Since I really became a Christian just before going to seminary, really, I did not have much of an idea that premarital counseling existed or was*

ever even done. So, the main thing that that class in seminary exposed me to is just what it was and how important it was."

PMC Provider #6: *"There was some academic bookwork that was done. So, we had some academic and some observation time. It was only one course, and it was not a big, multi-hour course either it was like three hours, and that is all."*

PMC Provider #7: *"I did have a course with, as a section of our worship course with, Dr. Rayburn, that...I got my premarital, whatever premarital counseling training I got, and I still draw on that, and it is very practical and even on how to conduct a wedding rehearsal and so forth."*

PMC Provider #11: *"When I was at seminary, there was...I guess, as part of a pastoral counseling course...there was a module on premarital counseling, and, as part of it, we were trained in the Taylor-Johnson. We were shown how to do it. That is the only thing in seminary days."*

In the member check process, PMC Provider #8, was asked a specific follow-up question to determine if he had any premarital counseling in seminary. His written response, inscribed on the transcript was a simple "YES." He gave no details.

These responses of the participating pastors concerning their seminary training underscored their sense of inadequacy in being the providers of premarital counseling. Over half of them had no training in seminary. Even the five that did receive some marriage preparation training in seminary could not describe it in any detail. For two respondents, #4 and #7, it took the form of either a tangent discussed in a general counseling class, or, in one case, in a homiletics class. The other three respondents had a subset, a unit, or module respectively. PMC Provider #6 stated that it was relatively short, lasting not days, but all of three hours.

The conclusion of this researcher was in concert with previous studies (Buikema, 1999; Givens, 1976; Hill, 1968; Jones & Stahmann, 1994; Schumm & Denton, 1979; Stahmann &

Hiebert, 1997; Stewart, 1977; Summers & Cunningham, 1989; Wiser, 1959). Seminary should be providing more extensive education in premarital counseling for students preparing for the ministry. Without this kind of specialized training, clergy will continue to report having a sense of inadequacy in providing their marriage preparation service.

Domain #2. The Responsibility of Premarital Counseling Training

This raised a second and related question, which was asked in Mini-Tour Question #2. What role should seminaries have in training pastors to provide premarital counseling? Whose responsibility is it? The respondents' answers to these questions included more than this researcher anticipated. Although they felt that seminaries and theological schools had a definite role to play in equipping candidates for the ministry in marriage preparation, their responses indicated it was a shared responsibility. The seminaries, the churches, the denomination agencies, and the pastor all had a combined role to fill in the training process.

The Role of the Seminary in Providing Premarital Counseling Training

Clergy and researchers alike have called on seminaries to assume, at least in part, the role of equipping candidates for the ministry (Orthner, 1986a, 1986b; Schumm & Denton, 1979; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Stewart, 1977). vom Eigen's study of Presbyterian ministers called for seminaries and theological graduate schools to address the lack of premarital counseling (1983). A year later, Jones and Stahmann echoed the clarion call for more formal education in marriage preparation by the seminaries:

“The findings of this study suggest there is a need for additional preparation and training in order to equip clergy to provide PMC. Directors of pastoral training programs may want to evaluate whether their curriculum is providing adequate PMC counseling and coursework and experience. The fact that the general public seeks clergy to meet their needs in preparation for marriage should be motivation to encourage improved PMC curricula and experiences in every theological graduate

program. An emphasis on PMC training in pastoral counseling would be in the best interest of both public and clerical concerns" (1994, p. 186).

Over 90% or 11 of 12 respondents in this research project voiced the same expectation of the seminary.

PMC Provider #1: *"Yeah, definitely seminaries and theological schools should view that as part of their necessary equipping of those men going into the pastorate. So, it ought to be at least a portion of some course that for pastoral ministry equips them to know how to prepare couples for premarital counseling. So, I think it is in the role in the seminaries to be doing that effectively as they send them out into their churches. So, I think it lies on their shoulders."*

Researcher: So, you think it would be the primary place for that to take place?

PMC Provider #1: *"I do not know where else they would get it, unless they just sort of did it by trying to survive. They would have to initiate to find a person who knows how to do it. If they are not initiating, I do not know how else they would get the training; so I would say, 'yes' it does lie in the role of the seminaries."*

PMC Provider #11: *"I think seminaries and theological schools do have a role to play in that like with many things, you need to talk about the issues appropriately while they are in seminary, whether it is things like leadership training or whether it is like finances or premarital counseling or doing weddings or deciding worship services. There are just certain things that you can teach effectively at a beginning level- foundational level- in seminaries and we have to provide those kinds of tools. But, you realize that usually the people who are receiving that training are not in a position to, either with their own involvement in ministry or their personal growth to, really be able to maximize the benefit from that yet. I look at the things I received in seminary, even though they were good things to receive, and that did not do the job. It was helpful. It was sort of a one-on-one kind of thing. We have to be realistic about what*

seminaries can and cannot do for people who are seminarians. So, I think they need to provide some basics. ”

PMC Provider #2: “...the situation now is everybody sort of expects somebody else is going to be doing it. ‘You are going to have an internship, oh, that will cover premarital counseling.’ But I have done internships, and it is hard sometimes in that kind of context to involve an intern in that whole process just because of how much time it takes to complete it. That could be a portion of it. But I think the seminaries...the seminaries should provide basic, what they think is the substantial content...the dynamics. I think the seminary needs to address it because it is crucial and provides some kind of experience. ”

PMC Provider #8: “I think, for equipping the pastors, it should be the seminary. ”

PMC Provider #7: “George: Well, I think, certainly, it is the seminaries’ responsibility. It is one of the tools that needs to be put into their kit. ”

Researcher: “Some that I asked that question of --some say, ‘Well yes, it is the seminaries,’ and others have said, ‘well, what about the presbyteries? What about churches?’ And they talked about different places where that responsibility could fall. In fact, like in the internship, and so forth. ”

PMC Provider #7: “Well you certainly need all of those to participate, but you are never going to get the kind of concentrated orientation and teaching that you need except in the seminary, but you know on the other hand, I sure learned a lot too from the more senior ministers in the presbytery that I have called to, and said, “help.” I do not know what in the world I am doing. ”

The Role of the Church in Providing Premarital Counseling Training

While the respondents in this study almost unanimously agreed that the seminary should play an integral role in providing at least the basics of premarital counseling training, they also indicated that the churches perform a vital role, too. It comes in the context of the required internship for all seminarians. Half of the participating pastors made some reference

or statement to the role of the local church. They viewed the church's role not as exclusive but as complementary to that of the seminary. The seminary should provide the academic side or "broad strokes" of premarital counseling training; the church can offer the setting for the experiential side of the training, the hands on approach. This was a significant finding in this study. This researcher has not come across this concept in the literature on premarital counseling to date. Perhaps, the reason for this was that so much of the research--the books, and articles on clergy and premarital counseling--center on the practice of pastors and the programs for parishioners and not on the training or equipping of the providers (Bagarozzi & Rauen, 1981; Eyrich, 1987; Hamilton, 1991; Hawley & Olson, 1995; Ipes, 1982; Kemp, 1991; Mack, 1977; 1986; Schumm & Denton, 1980; Shadle, 1991; Trathen, 1995; Trott, 1990; Van Dussen, 1996; Wright, 1985; Stanley et al., 1998). They are notable exceptions (Buikema, 1999; Jones & Stahmann, 1994; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Wright, 1992).

The respondents stressed the vital place of the internship in the training of seminarians in premarital counseling. This category arose in the second interview. The pastor viewed the seminary and the church in a cooperative ministry of training seminarians in premarital counseling.

PMC Provider #9: *"I think the seminary just needs to provide broad strokes, because of course they cannot deal with every issue, so maybe broad stuff...but then, like in the PCA with our internship program, one part of the internship program should be working with a mentor saying, 'here are some other specifics,' and that would be a great place for anecdotal...you know 'the worst case I have ever had was this,' which that can help, and then also maybe show a candidate for ministry 'alright this is how I have done premarital counseling,' and if possible sit in on a meeting or something like that. So, I would think it would be for a pastor, especially in the PCA, broad strokes at seminary--topics, resources. But then in internship, 'okay here are some specific things you...here is how I have done it' type of thing."*

PMC Provider #2: *"I think that if you are doing an internship, and you are connected to a local church, hopefully, you have an opportunity to get some of this and have a firsthand experience."*

Researcher: *"So it is not just the seminary itself, but the churches doing the internship?"*

PMC Provider #2: *"Yes, because seminaries are not a place that have premarital sessions flowing through the seminaries. I think their responsibility would be more content. The experience would have to be a cooperative effort between the seminary and the church."*

The pastor above felt that the practical side of premarital counseling could naturally come in the context of the church, and the seminary could provide the content. Both needed to work together.

Researcher: *"In a number of interviews, the pastors indicated that in the context of an internship might be a better place to teach premarital counseling. The seminary could give the academic side and the board categories, and the churches, during the internship, could hone it and make it applicable to their setting."*

Provider and Professor of Premarital Counseling #10: *"What I would propose to do in this program, since we do a lot of premarital counseling, being a rather large church (4,000+), and we do a lot of it for other churches, too. Everyone who goes through the internship program will be assigned to do premarital counseling with a couple. I will teach them the material and prep them for it, but they will have to work with the couples. So, by the time they walk away from the internship, they will have a rich experience to process."*

Researcher: *"Which would be invaluable, and from that experience, they can go out and shape their own marriage preparation ministries."*

PMC Provider #10 thought that an internship could be structured to provide hands on experience in doing premarital counseling. Each intern would receive the necessary instruction before providing counseling with an engaged couple.

PMC Provider #4: *“Now, that could occur in some sort of internship and fellowship situation where a guy is getting underneath a pastor, the kind of oversight where he can sit in with the pastor, maybe, and watch him do some premarital counseling. I think that is probably optimal.”*

Researcher: One other interviewee brought that up. That in the context of internship, and that training might be one very good avenue to teach premarital counseling.

The next provider thought his internship experience in seminary was beneficial, but he did not have any exposure to premarital counseling.

PMC Provider #8: *“At Trinity, I did an internship for a year in a Free Church and that was helpful; but that was not one of the topics we covered, and I think pastors get in a lot of tough situations [in which] they do not know what to do.”*

PMC Provider #4: *“Exactly. So I think that in a formal internship or just the right first pastorate as part of the seminary training, but I do think that the seminary is one of the better positions to at least expose people to the resources that are available, the various philosophies or techniques that tend to be used. Who tends to do what? And then in some sort of an internship, do hands-on, opportunity to observe and practice.”*

Later in the interview, this same provider suggested that an expert in the field of premarital counseling or some related field could become involved in the training of a pastor.

PMC Provider #4: *“Oh, before they go out? Okay. Yes, sure. I think all sorts of things in a seminary class, particularly or even during internship, various professionals could be of tremendous value in developing to train and prepare somebody for premarital counseling. Now that could occur in some sort of internship and fellowship situation where a guy is getting underneath a pastor, the kind of oversight where he can sit in with the pastor, maybe, and watch him do some premarital counseling. I think that is probably optimal.”*

The Role of Seasoned Pastors in Providing Premarital Counseling Training

This writer felt that a corollary category that emerged out of the present research was

the role of the experienced pastor in the training of seminarians. A number of respondents spoke of the value of conversing with a seasoned member of the clergy about premarital counseling. Although this connection could come in the context of the internship, it could also be made on site or off site during seminary training. It might also happen post-seminary training in conjunction with one's first pastorate. In addition, it could take place in a continuing education or seminar setting. The researcher's own experience in both his internship and in his first pastorate bore out the significant contribution that a veteran minister can make to the understanding of premarital counseling.

PMC Provider #4 thought that seminarians and those fresh out of seminary should seek advice from an experienced pastor. This could also happen during an internship. He was fortunate to work under a pastor who believed in premarital counseling and mentored him in the area. He was exposed to various marriage preparation materials. But, he did not stop there; he sought the counseling of other ministers as well, and found it helpful.

PMC Provider #4: *"One of those things that I think is most potentially valuable, though, is if, let's say in seminary, or if you did not have the opportunity in seminary, as soon as you get into your pastorate, is that you just interview lots of different pastors and ask what it is that they do. What is their basic philosophy about premarital counseling? What do they tend to do and what resources and what their experiences have been and what have the bumps in the road? What are the big trouble spots? I would think just interviewing guys...I was an associate pastor for five or six years, and that was extremely valuable because then I got to see what the senior pastor did, and he took it very seriously; and therefore, he had all sorts of books and he had lots of exercises that he would do from various sources, and that was really helpful. And then, I did it on my own—interviewed other pastors at times. Just asked them, 'what do you do'. But, every now and then I found somebody who took it really seriously, and it was helpful."*

PMC Provider #9: *"I think in my training a lot was just talking to pastors. The training I remember, which must be the one that was most effective, was talking with my pastor in St.*

Louis, talking with Dan Zink and covering things like, 'Dan, if I were in this situation or if you were in this situation what would you do?' and he would give me feedback from that."

PMC Provider #2: *"The only training I received outside of seminary was just going through premarital counseling myself with my pastor, and we had three or four sessions; but it was not the kind of thing where...And there was so much stuff I did not know."*

PMC Provider #7: *"I sure learned a lot, too, from the more senior ministers in the presbytery that I have called to, and said, 'help! I do not know what in the world I am doing.'"*

PMC Provider #12: *"I remember clearly, now, asking a pastor when I was planning a church...I asked him what do you use [for premarital counseling] and he recommended Norm Wright's book, and that is kind of the introductory text I used to get things going."*

PMC Provider #3 brought an interesting perspective to the influence a pastor has on the development of a future candidate for the ministry. He stated that his pastor while growing up influenced his thinking about premarital counseling.

PMC Provider #3: *"I would also say that the pastor that you have or pastors that you have as you grow up will affect the way that you approach premarital counseling through the way that they portray the family as a whole, through the way they show what a single person is supposed to be like, as they attribute dignity and worth to everybody regardless of their marital state."*

The Role of the Denomination in Providing Premarital Counseling Training

Eleven of the 12 participating pastors in this study were all graduates from the same seminary, Covenant Theological Seminary; all twelve were serving churches in the same denomination, the Presbyterian Church in America. At the time of the interviews, the government of the denomination was delineated under three heads or "courts": the General Assembly, the Presbyteries, and all the local Sessions. Covenant Seminary itself was under the direction of the General Assembly. Throughout the interview process, several pastors

alluded to the responsibility of the various “courts” to give oversight to the training of ministerial candidates. As was stated previously in the Introduction, in 1993, the General Assembly, the highest church court of the Presbyterian Church in America, commissioned the Report of the Ad-Interim Committee on Divorce and Remarriage. The Report included a charge to commissioners (pastors in attendance at General Assembly), churches, and denominational agencies to enhance their marriage preparation ministries (Gilchrist, 1993).

PMC Provider #4: *“Well, in our system, of course, it is ultimately the presbytery’s responsibility to make sure that that training occurs one way or another.”*

PMC Provider #5: *“The seminary has some responsibility there. The church has a lot of responsibility there. And I think that the presbyteries, the way that the PCA is structured, the presbyteries ought to require training, basic training, in the various areas of counseling.”*

PMC Provider #6: *“You know wouldn’t it be great if the church was doing that? If the denomination was[providing training opportunities]. What if there was a way, just like physicians to attend conferences every year or so. When they are there, there are seminars offered. In this context, ongoing education and training occurs. Why shouldn’t we have that at a GA [General Assembly], rather than spend all of our time arguing about the length of a day in creation? What if there was an opportunity there for an ongoing training opportunity in premarital counseling? ...but you know the idea of having it connected with the General Assembly or in presbyteries.”*

A brief exchange between the Researcher and PMC Provider #12 placed some responsibility on the shoulders of the Christian Education & Publication (CE & P) Committee.

Researcher: *“Do you see any role for, like say, the presbytery or the General Assembly in this in continuing education opportunities for pastors?”*

PMC Provider #12: *“That would be nice.”*

Researcher: *“I know we do not do it, but I am wondering what you feel about that.”*

PMC Provider #12: *"How do I feel about that? I do not feel like there is anybody on the presbytery level that is thinking presbytery. This would be a nice thing for CE & P to take up and to do on a presbytery level or to encourage to be done. I personally think that is the kind of stuff that CE & P ought to be doing. I think they need to get more into continuing education issues."*

A few of the pastors in the current study stated that ministers, likewise, have a responsibility to seek out educational opportunities in premarital counseling during and after seminary. The responsibility does not rest solely on the seminaries or the churches.

The Role of Every Pastors in Providing Premarital Counseling Training

PMC Provider #5: *"The individual, too, has some responsibility. The problem with it is that a young man has so little experience, his knowledge is pretty anemic, so knowing what he needs is probably more than he ought to have the responsibility for--at least he certainly should not have all of it."*

PMC Provider #12: *"Yes, well I will not get into right now how I got into premarital counseling, but then a follow-up question, whose responsibility it is to equip pastors in this area? Well, again, my adult ed., I think the first responsibility to equip the pastors in this vital area is the pastor's responsibility. I think the pastor individually is ultimately the one responsible to make sure they get the equipping, and any pastor who goes into the ministry and does not recognize this need immediately either does not have enough people in his church to worry about or is not having any weddings to do or just is not aware or assumes too much upon themselves of what they think they can do and what they cannot. So, I think that they need to be sensitized to that in their pre-professional training. I think the seminaries should--as one vehicle--provide follow-up, continuing education, and I think it is ultimately the pastor's responsibility, and I think pastors need to be probed. This is something, for example, just an illustration, at Covenant--Jim Hatch, the Dean of Alumni Contacts, the one thing Jim could do is have some kind of a probing question: Are you*

continuing to equip yourself? Or, seminary magazines could have articles on what pastors feel like they need to continue to work with or equip themselves in. Just different things like that. An alumni newsletter could get into something like that. Those kinds of things just to...I think there also needs to be a general attitude in the pastoral education classes in the M.Div. level, but this is pre-professional training. You need to be continuing to learn. So those are just some things off the top of my head."

PMC Provider #2: *"It would be nice if you could sort of look back to your seminary and sort of count on them for keeping you up-to-date--sort of like a doctor does through his journals or whatever. I mean, we have to assume responsibility in that, and we are not spoon-fed. Try to keep ourselves up-to-date. It is easy to fall behind."*

PMC Provider #7: *"I think it is the minister's responsibility to seek out instruction in the areas where he has become weak. So you can go to hospital in-service training to find out about different pathologies. I just kind of sought things [out] on my own."*

Researcher: *"An awful lot of the pastors that I have talked with have not taken the initiative to do different things."*

PMC Provider #7: *"Yeah, I think you have got to."*

Domain #3. The Components of Premarital Counseling Training

Historically, researchers have surveyed engaged couples and the providers of premarital counseling to determine what components should be included in a marriage preparation program (Buikema, 1999; Jones & Stahmann, 1994; Schumm & Denton, 1979; Silliman & Schumm, 1989; Silliman, Schumm & Jurich, 1989; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Stuckey et al., 1986; Williams, 1992). Jones & Stahmann (1994) attempted to discover from pastors what should be covered in premarital counseling. In a private conversation, this researcher asked Dr. Stahmann why the results of this part of their survey were not included in their article. He commented that the pastors did not take the time to read carefully the

instructions to this section and failed to fill out the survey correctly. The researcher for this study expanded Jones and Stahmann's survey and did receive adequate responses. The current study was the first study to seek directly from the voices of pastors what components they thought should be part of their own preparation as providers of premarital counseling. The responses were unusually long for this study, but they yielded rich thick descriptions of at least four major components including content, instruments, relational skills, and the use of professionals in the training of clergy.

Before looking at each category, the researcher has provided a few examples of the thick rich responses given to the third mini-tour question. It reads, "How would you design a course of study or a unit in premarital counseling for clergy? What major components would you include in it?" Sub-questions followed up the mini-tour question. Each one sought additional information on the four categories: content, instruments, relational skills, and the use of professional in the training of clergy.

PMC Provider #1 included at least eight different concerns in his answer: biblical and theological dimension and responsibilities of marriage, factors of marriage dissolution, worldview and values, communication, finances, personality issues, assessment instruments, and premarital counseling resources.

PMC Provider #1: *"Well, of course, I think you need to be in agreement as to what biblically and theologically is critical to that couple and their understanding of marriage as God calls them to it and the covenant that is involved and agreeing with their mate before the Lord, before God's people when they are married, but probably most would know a lot of that anyway based on their training at seminary. I think there also needs to be a lot of training done on some of the other factors that contribute to the breakup of marriages. The whole communication process and what needs to be in a marriage. I think there needs to be training done as to the whole aspect of life philosophy and their whole viewpoint of what to each person in their marriage is necessary for them to enjoy life together, what values do*

they hold, and how to flesh that out. I think there needs to be training done along those lines of the financial ramifications in marriage and the bickering that goes on often with couples with finances. I think that there needs to be training done in preparing the couples to identify personality quirks and propensities. There are a lot of tools out there to use to do that, and I think they ought to be equipping the pastors with those tools. For instance, like the PREPARE tool, but I think they can equip them with a number of tools that are good and useful. I think that there needs to be training done in making them aware of the various materials already done, that they do [need to] not reinvent the wheel necessarily. What materials either workbooks or books, that have been published that would be good guidelines or outlines for premarital counseling. I think that there needs to be a variety of resources they give them along those lines while they are there.”

PMC Provider #4 offered a similar lengthy response. He mentioned at least 10 items including current worldviews, the biblical basis for marriage, communication, conflict resolution, in-laws, finances, cultural and biblical roles, marital expectations, family of origin issues, and basic assessment tools. He stressed the importance of talking about the “big issues,” roles, and family of origin issues.

PMC Provider #4: *“If I were designing a training program for pastors, I think one would be making sure that they really did understand what the common current worldviews are. How biblically illiterate they tend to be now, and where people are coming from, therefore, do not make a lot of assumptions about people. And then, if I designed it, I guess it would involve, as you think about doing premarital counseling, these are really the big issues in the sense that in marriage counseling these tend to be the situations that arise all the time. It is so important to give people at least the basic tools and perspectives that they are going to need to go into their marriage. These are some of the things, therefore, you need to make sure they understand going into marriage: the biblical basis of marriage, principles of effective communication, conflict resolution, basic issues of in-laws, and handling finances.*

Just the biblical basics of marriage with them. Understanding of the headship of the husband and what does it mean for a wife in Genesis, for example, to be called the husband's helpmate. What are the implications of the role of the wife within the marriage? I think roles are critical and just expectations. I think one of the things that probably undermine marriages as much as anything else is people approach marriage with a different sense of expectations. It used to be that you were raised in the same hometown, by families that all raised their kids the same way, they all looked at marriages the same way, and everybody knew what their expectations, roles, and responsibilities of marriage were. Now you meet on a college campus, or you meet people in a career or job or whatever later on down the line. You have got people coming together in marriage from all sorts of different backgrounds, perspectives, and views. They do not share anything in common except for physical attractions and general camaraderie. They do not understand anything about the intricacies of relationships and especially, this kind of biblical model, but they are going to approach marriage with spoken and unspoken expectations. 'My daddy always did this with my mommy. My dad washed dishes; my dad would not walk into a kitchen.' I mean, who knows all the different sorts of things? I think one of the things that is particularly helpful is not only to say these are all the different issues you have to be aware of, not to have training in every single one of them, but just in that nuance of helping people to identify what their expectations are as they go into it. 'Are we going to have sex once a month, or we are going to have sex until we have kids and then it is all over and done with.' Who knows what sorts of expectations? People have lots of different expectations, and a lot of conflict arises even early on in marriage when there are expectations and conflict with each other over them. So I would say those are all sorts of things. That perspective pastors need to be exposed to very explicitly."

Researcher: "You have highlighted one that some have not highlighted so much. It is just all the expectations that two people bring into a marriage. Coming out of their own

families in a worldview like you mentioned with different backgrounds, and all of a sudden they have to blend those things together, and obviously there will be conflict."

PMC Provider #4: *"Somebody once said it is like Pittsburgh. You have got the Monongahela River and the Allegheny River, and they come together; but where they come together there is a lot of white water and a lot of undercurrents and it is very dangerous water. That is a great description."*

Looking at the shaping of issues that surfaced out of the two interviews above, it was little wonder that PMC Provider #2 started his response by discussing a major caveat, the realistic expectations and time frame of premarital counseling itself. Then, he added his own list that covered nearly every item mentioned previously and included a few others, too.

PMC Provider #2: *"I would discuss with them (seminarians) the realistic limitations of what premarital counseling is. Just a reality-based view of what is premarital counseling, what should and could it accomplish--that would be one area. And then I would probably want to show them the various areas, given the limited amount of time that you have that you would like to see couples cover--biblical basis of marriage, probably a lot of exercises in communication. Realistic expectations of conflict and how to steer those in productive ways. How to fight a good fight, I think is very important. The fact that there is conflict blows a lot of people away. That is not wrong. What do you do with conflict roles and expectations? We all come in with our past expectations of what things should be, and some of those are conscious and some are unconscious. Roles not just biblically, just roles in terms of male and female thinking. Your roles in terms of what works for your marriage in terms of strengths and weaknesses and having an understanding of that. Administering some kind of personality test as an objective way of being able to step outside of yourself and look at yourself with seriousness and humor and say, 'yes that is true, that is the way I am.' The Taylor-Johnson test, the Myers-Briggs--along those lines. I think, looking at the basis saboteurs of marriage and looking at it from the negative side, what is going to ruin a marriage. You know the Four*

Horseman of Apocalypse? What are they, and why are they so destructive, and then, looking at their counterparts. All of those things asking couples in reflective ways to see what, not just what do I think I am going to get from this marriage? What does this person bring to me and their strengths and weaknesses, but what are the strengths that I bring to this marriage and what are the weaknesses that I know right now in my life I am bringing to this marriage? Actually that is kind of how I start off with sets of those questions, and I use that as sort of a foundation for some of those other areas we get into. Anything that can help a couple reflect on who they are as a person and understand better and respect and honor who the other person is. You are not marrying a fantasy. You are promising to love and uphold this person how they are today. They may never change, and really getting that through to the couple—that they are not marrying them on the hopes that they will be, but I am marrying them for who they are right now— is important. Finances are important. I think that in this there has to be a commitment from the couple that they are going to do the work outside the sessions. I find that the couples that do the reading and the work outside the sessions, they cover a lot of things already that they tell me about. We do not need to cover [them] because they already did that. I tell couples in the beginning that if they learn two or three, if there is just one thing they learn, two things they learn that they did not know coming in, that that is a good place to start. You do not have to know it all. Just two or three things.”

These three respondents provided answers similar to the other nine participants. In response to this mini-question on components of premarital counseling training for clergy, the researcher culled a minimum of 21 different sub-categories or items, and noted their frequency. Ranking them in order, 10 of 12 pastors expectantly stressed the biblical and theological basis for marriage. Communication and conflict resolution was the same with eight of 12 informants listing them. Six of 12 highlighted the need to include instruction related financial matters, role-play, and the use of premarital counseling assessment instruments. Three were mentioned by name: PREPARE (4), Myers-Briggs (2), and TJTA

(1). Five of 12 identified several other issues: relationship breakdown factors, realistic expectations, relationship roles, personality issues, parenting skills, and respect or honor. Three of 12 listed worldview, family of origin, and time frame issues. Two of 12 underscored the need to discuss commitment, domestic violence, in-laws, and divorce/remarriage. Several other concerns were listed by one person: the couple's responsibility for the outcome of premarital counseling and the professional counselor's role,

Looking at the list of topics, relational skills, and instruments, the vast majority of them have been typically included in the premarital counseling programs offered to couples according to the literature and premarital counseling manuals reviewed in this study (Boehi, Nelson, Schulte, & Shadrach, 1997; Buikema, 1999; Eyrich, 1987; Prokopchak & Prokopchak, 1994; Rutledge, 1966, 1968a, 1968b; Sloan & Harden, 1992; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Stahmann & Salts, 1993; Stanley et al., 1998; Worthington, 1990; Wright, 1992). This indicated to the researcher that the respondents have a fair knowledge of the components of premarital counseling; what was lacking was the preparation to deal with them in their church settings.

The researcher's previous project measured the seminary training on many of the same premarital counseling subjects (Buikema, 1999). Utilizing a Likert scale of five, with five indicating "very good," and one indicating "not very good," the highest mean for any topic was three. It was not surprising that it was for "religious faith." Frankly, the researcher was somewhat amazed at how low this score was in the context of a seminary or a mean of 3.0. But, all the means were relatively low. The means for marital expectations, communication, conflict resolution, personality issues, and parenting had means of less than three.

There was a specific sub-question designed to fill out the descriptions under the four major components that emerged out of the mini-tour question. The first question pertained to the content of premarital counseling training. Its purpose was to encourage more clarity, richness, and thickness of description. However, it did not turn out that way. Since the

question of content actually was asked in a general way in the grand tour question and in a more specific way in a mini-tour question, it seemed to the researcher that many of the respondents tried to add something different in response to the sub-question that they did not include in their earlier responses. For example, 7 out of 12 talked about the second half of sub-question #5 dealing with divorce and remarriage. Thus, the writer decided to collate all the responses to the three layers of questions to give an accurate and full description of the participating pastors' responses.

The Content Component of Premarital Counseling Training

Biblical and Theological Material

As pointed out earlier in response to a mini-question on the components of premarital counseling, 10 of 12 pastors stressed the importance of including the biblical and theological basis for marriage in a training program for clergy in premarital counseling. In the sub-question, specifically on the content component, some expanded on their earlier comments, while others skipped over discussing this topic. Several respondents mentioned the need to cover the biblical basis for marriage, but did not elaborate on what that meant. The data were varied from one respondent to the next, but there was considerable overlap in their responses. PMC Provider #1 twice pointed out in response to interview questions #1 and #3 that seminarians were familiar with the biblical and theological aspects of marriage, but he also spelled out some of the specific biblical material that needed to be covered in premarital counseling training for clergy. He stressed two matters: the biblical view of marriage based on the creation mandate of marriage and the biblical roles for husbands and wives based on the redemptive love of Christ.

PMC Provider #1: *"The creation ordinance of marriage...how God has designed marriage to be. I think that needs [to be] framed in the pre-fall understanding of relationships, being man and woman, and God's call of them to become one. There needs to be an understanding, I think, of the whole role of God's view of family in biblical accounts and how*

God used families- is the main institution of creating a godly culture and the role they play in the propagation of that culture biblically. I think that is critical in...the current day, of God calling for the parents to raise a godly generation, how God used that and what happens when they do not fulfill that role."

PMC Provider #7: *"But I think the man needs to, the man needs a refresher course of what is, oh, we are thinking of seminary students, so a basic biblical overview of the pertinent passages that come to bear on marriage, deal with issues of divorce and remarriage, not that you are going to talk about that in premarital counseling, but it helps to, I mean if that is the goal that you are trying to avoid with this couple, you do not want to be counseling them in a divorced marriage of the future. It is helpful to have those principles ahead of you to steer them away from it."*

PMC Provider #3: *"I think, as a pastor, that they need primarily a thorough grounding in Scripture and what the Bible says about man, his nature, what the Bible says about God, and how the two of them interact. With that as a foundation..."*

PMC Provider #12: *"It would include the whole dynamic of the biblical concept of what is marriage and marriage as a covenant relationship, as well as the biblical concepts of role relationships in the marriage. So those would be minimal things."*

PMC Provider #5: *"I think, fundamental to adequate premarital counseling is training in the Scriptures, in theology..."*

Besides the general statements about the need for a biblical foundation as an integral part of premarital counseling training, several providers also spoke of the biblical roles of husbands and wives.

PMC Provider #1: *"I think the roles that God sees in man and woman in marriage and what those roles are, particularly in our day and age where those roles are in a tremendous state of flux. About men understanding their role of headship and women in their role as support, submissive, but...And I think the other issue which is critical in the*

whole thing is understanding the whole relationship redemptively that it has in their own lives and how that impacts the relationship with one another. That is to say, that if a man does not understand God's call to them to love their wife as Christ loves the church, then their ability to love their wife that way is going to be significantly less. A lot of it is related to, they do not understand very well the whole redemptive picture of God's unconditional love for them. You cannot give unconditional love if you have not tasted it and understand it, so it is both the cognitive and the emotive experience of redemption, and to the degree that they have experienced that, that is the degree of which they will be able to give that to the other person. I think that is critical. So, there [is] a real gospel undercurrent to the whole understanding of marriage, and if that is not there, there are going to be problems."

Several others emphasized the need to deal with the issue of biblical roles in marriage. Four out of twelve mentioned it in response to the mini-tour question and another four in response to the sub-question.

PMC Provider #7: *"Well, it is very important that the man first be trained biblically, because you are anticipating the issues that will come up in their marriage—not only in a positive sense. You have to anticipate, to alert the couple to their respective responsibilities to each other. The husband's responsibility to serve his wife as Christ served the church, the wife's responsibility to respect her husband and submit to him. So, in the biblical paradigm of what their relationship is to be a reflection of, how Christ relates to the church. So, that is of the utmost importance, that they just have that kind of biblical intelligence of where those pertinent passages are, what they mean. Those passages are not easy to understand, so they need exegetical training to understand the controversial passages of submission and so forth."*

Later, in the interview that same pastor added:

PMC Provider #7: *"Well, now this is an opportunity to try to remember some of the things I left out on the other questions. Roles, maybe this is covered partly in the biblical*

material, but [it is] one thing to discuss what the roles are at an academic level, as we do in seminary, as we have been doing at the General Assembly."

PMC Provider #3: *"I would look at it as being a way of somehow establishing the biblical order of the family where...The Southern Baptists get a lot of grief from the secular press. I think that their comments are taken out of context and twisted. When I say I believe a woman should submit to her husband, I am not in any way implying her inferiority. It is more a functional role. The husband is not told to lord it over his wife, but rather to give himself to her, and sacrificially, so as he provides for needs and basically gives, [he] ideally is giving his life for his wife and family."*

PMC Provider #4: *"Just the biblical basics of marriage with them--understanding of the headship of the husband and what does it mean for a wife in Genesis, for example, to be called the husband's helpmate? What are the implications of the role of the wife within the marriage?"*

PMC Provider #2: *"We all come in with our past expectations of what things should be, and some of those are conscious and some are unconscious. Roles, not just biblically, just roles in terms of male and female thinking. Your roles in terms of what works for your marriage in terms of strengths and weaknesses and having an understanding of that."*

One pastor spoke at length about the spiritual dynamics of the gospel and the practical application of it, such as forgiveness as the foundation for pastoral counseling, and particularly, the premarital counseling. An excerpt of the exchange is provided below:

PMC Provider #11: *"It begs the question, 'what is effective premarital questioning?' But ...I think they need to understand the spiritual dynamics of the gospel. I think one thing that is unique about pastoral counseling is being able to help people really understand how the gospel every single day gets translated into the hard relationships of marriage, and so, that is real important to me. My whole approach to premarital counseling and counseling in pastoral ministry is not so much that there are five things you do or seven techniques or three*

things to say, as much as it is relational, and you know, helping them have tools for effective relationship with each other and tools for effective relationship with Jesus. So, part of it, as much as anything, it is the authenticity of the person and the person's ability to relate the gospel to everyday life. I really think it is important for the person to be married. Now, of course, there are certain traditions where that would not be possible. But I think it is very important, because even though you know you could make a case that you are just talking about relationships in general, I think there is just something very unique about marriage relationship and the issues that are faced. They need to have real experience in marriage. I think they ought to have had some kind of training in premarital counseling and the kind of issues and tools that are available."

Researcher: *"Well, that is sort of what came up out of my first research that I did so many of the pastors said that they did not have that kind of preparation. They had only the biblical side of it."*

PMC Provider #11: *"That's right. But you see I would even go beyond that and say, I think, people who would say they had the biblical side, they have the theological answers; and, you know, that is not the same thing as having people really able, having a pastor really, able to relate the gospel and grace to the issues of relationship. Do you know what I mean?"*

Researcher: *"Yes, I do. Very definitely."*

PMC Provider #11: *"I think that is so critical, otherwise, you [are] just sort of proof testing marriage and there are all sorts of biblical texts you can go to and read this; but what do you do when you are in a relationship with someone who is both sinful and stubborn, and you realize that you are just as sinful and stubborn and how do you deal with that? How does forgiveness really get translated into a relationship? I think the gospel means everything, and so you need to help people think in terms of what they really need. They do not need...What they need is a relationship with Jesus in which the gospel is at the heart of who they are."*

Three of the ministers mentioned the biblical concept of forgiveness. Two did not address it in any detail, Provider #1 and #2; but one stressed its importance.

PMC Provider #11: *“The content that I make sure to cover is, I try to get them reading something to get them thinking about the gospel, and, you know, by that I do not mean just Jesus died for your sins, but, you know, Sonship kinds of things and to really have them think about that as far as content [is concerned]. Forgiveness is just critical. Understanding the differences between them.”*

For the participating pastors in this study, the biblical and theological basis was an important content component in the training of clergy in premarital counseling. The emphasis on biblical roles between husbands and wives may reflect the tension in the contemporary culture and its influence on the church.

All the books and programs on premarital counseling written from a Christian perspective begin by stressing the biblical and theological dimensions of marriage (Baughen & Baughen, 1994; Boehi et al., 1997; Burkart, 1950; Clinebell, 1977; Coleman, 1991; Dicks, 1963; Dobson, 1993; Esau, 1990; Eyrich, 1987; Floyd, 1993; Giblin, 1994; Hamilton, 1991; Hardin & Sloan, 1992; Haug, 1998; Mace, 1951, 1952, 1984, 1985; Mace & Mace 1976; 1986; Mack, 1986; Mitman, 1980; Morris, 1960; Oates, 1958; Parrot III & Parrot, 1995, 1997, 1998; Prokopchak & Prokopchak, 1994; Rutledge, 1966, 1968a, 1968b; Shadle, 1991; Sproul, 1986; Stanley, 1997; Stanley et al., 1998b; Taylor, 1999; vom Eigen, 1983; Warren, 1992; Worthington, 1990; Wright, 1976, 1977, 1981; 1985a, 1985b, 1992, 1998; Wright & Roberts, 1997). That the pastors in this study elevated the spiritual dimension of above the other topics was to be expected. They did the same in the earlier study (Buikema, 1999). Given the pastoral profession and the nature of it, the biblical component should be an integral part of the content component of premarital counseling training for clergy. The clergy in this study readily and repeatedly wove this reality throughout their responses during the interview.

Communication and Conflict Resolution Material

Communication and conflict resolution was the second major sub-category to emerge in this domain. Eight out of 12 respondents stressed the need to include both of them in the content component of premarital counseling training for clergy. Pastors in Van Dussen's study (1996) reported that the top two marital issues were communication skills and problem solving skills. The main item they wanted addressed in a seminar was, again, communication. This supported the finding from the researcher's earlier study (Buikema, 1999) that communication and conflict resolution skills were very important and needed more attention in seminary training. Seventy-two percent of the clergy in this earlier study identified communication as the top concern for both first marriages and remarriages. When the pastors were asked to select the "most damaging" areas of marriage in a follow-up question, communication ranked first with 47.6% for both first marriages and 34% for remarriages. The review of related literature lent credence to the importance of communication and conflict resolution in premarital counseling (Avery et al., 1980; Babb, 1991; Bienvenu, 1975; Boehi et al., 1997; Buikema, 1999; Rutledge, 1996; Schumm & Denton, 1979, 1980; Silliman & Schumm, 1989; Stanley et al., 1998; Trathen, 1995; Van Dussen, 1996; Williams, 1992; Worthington, 1990; Wright, 1992).

In addition, substantial research had been conducted since the mid 1970's on reducing marital discord and divorce through better communication and conflict resolution skills. This has been a prolific area of interest and research (Boike, 1977; Blumberg, 1991; Farrell & Markman, 1985; Floyd, 1993; Floyd & Markman, 1984; Gottman, Notarius, Gonso, & Markman, 1976; Gottman, 1994; Guerney, 1977; Guerney, 1988; Guerney, Brock & Coufal, 1986; Hahlweg & Markman, 1988; Horton, 1982; Larson, 1992; Larson & Olson, 1989; Lenthall, 1977; Mace & Mace, 1976; Markman & Hahlweg, 1993; Markman et al., 1993; Miller, Nunnally, & Wackman, 1960, 1976; Miller, Wackman, Nunnally, & Miller, 1992;

Ridley et al., 1981; Rolfe, 1975, 1977; Schumm & Denton, 1979, 1980; Silliman & Schumm, 1989; Stanley, Markman, St. Peters, & Leber, 1995).

The participants' responses in this study expressed the need for training in communication and conflict resolution skills during and after seminary. The thorny issue, as Trathen's research (1995) showed, was which enhancement program can be demonstrated to be the most effective, and warrant use in training clergy? The respondents' statements in this study underscored the great need to do additional research and work toward developing effective programs to address this training need of pastors.

Provider #1 stressed that more attention needed to be focused on communication in seminary training. He believed that good conflict resolution skills fostered healthy couple communication. Other respondents agreed with him.

PMC Provider #1: *"I think there also needs to be a lot of training done on some of the other factors that contribute to the breakup of marriages--the whole communication process and what that needs to be in a marriage. I think there needs a lot of work done on communication. A lot of the whole course should be designed around communication. Either understanding the principles of it, which would involve not only good daily communication...that is a good prescription to avoid problems down the road, but also when there are problems- how to resolve conflicts. Conflict resolution in marriage, I think, is key to really good communication."*

PMC Provider #9: *"I think, for them, the key thing would be a course in communication, and especially, how to handle conflict."*

PMC Provider #3: *"I think that conflict resolution--as people see just how hot things can get...they need to be exposed to that. They need to be personally exposed to it, and again that is a difficult experience to get."*

PMC Provide #7: *"Then I would focus heavily on communication and preferring the other person, ministering to the other person rather than trying to manipulate them to your*

position. In our subculture, we deal with the passive aggression as an unhealthy way of conflict resolution. And then I think the communication issues are the key ones for a couple that is being remarried because that is probably what broke down in the original divorce."

PMC Provider #5: *"As I mentioned before, conflict resolution...how to...we need to devise courses that will help a person see their part in the equation because almost all conflict points to the other person. You can change them; you can only change yourself. So people need to be taught how to think through that and get past their emotions and their initial responses. In my counseling, that's always been the objective and it's been people's biggest problem to get them to focus on their part of the equation."*

PMC Provider #12: *"...then the course would cover communication and conflict or communication skills, conflict resolution skills."*

As indicated above, the participating pastors in this study advocated including communication and conflict resolution skills as a central part of the educational curriculum of clergy. To summarize the statement of one respondent, there needs to be a biblical component and a communication component as part of the core curriculum of premarital counseling training in seminary (PMC Provider #7).

Financial Material

Near the top of the lists of engaged couples and providers was the issue of handling finances and the conflicts that often revolve around them (Babb, 1992; Eyrich, 1987; Hardin & Sloan, 1992; Olson, 1998; Prokopchak & Prokopchak, 1994; Rutledge, 1996; Schumm & Denton, 1979, 1980; Silliman & Schumm, 1989; Silliman, Schumm & Jurich, 1992; Stanley et al., 1998; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Stuckey et al., 1986; Trathen, 1995; Van Dussen, 1996; Williams, 1992; Worthington, 1990; Wright, 1992). The respondents in the researcher's earlier project reported feeling inadequate to prepare engaged couples in financial management. They also indicated that their seminary training did not equip them in this area. The pastors in the present study expressed the same. They placed financial

material right behind communication and conflict resolution skills in order of priorities for inclusion in the curriculum for a unit in premarital counseling. Interestingly, the descriptions about finances were thinner in nature. Often, finances would be listed with a number of other topics pertaining to premarital counseling or merely mentioned in passing (Provider #2, #4, #6, #8, #9, #12). Others provided fuller responses (#1, #3).

PMC Provider #4: *"These are some of the things, therefore, you need to make sure they understand going into marriage: the biblical basis of marriage, principles of effective communication and conflict resolution, basic issues of in-laws and handling finances. I think the first one I kind of covered already--finances and whole thing."*

PMC Provider #2: *"Finances are important!"*

PMC Provider #8: *"Basic things of finances..."*

PMC Provider #6: *"Course material, whatever you want to say, in the premarital counseling, something on finances, something on sex, something on kids, something on going to church, something on family devotional life. You know there is such a variety of subjects that would fit there. Work might go under finances. Right now that is the way I am organized in those categories."*

PMC Provider #12: *"and then the course would cover communication and conflict or communication skills, conflict resolution skills, sexuality, and sex dynamics, finances. So those areas, communication, conflict resolution skills, finances, sex and sexuality, and then tying into that goals and understanding personal goals and direction together as individuals as well as the couple and how those tie into family goals and God's calling, so those are the primary things."*

PMC Provider #9: *"Well let me talk about broad topics. One is marriage. Communication. Finances. Broader family issues.... Maybe just topics like that and then, although it might be too much, if possible, to get into details like 'okay you need to teach them about finances. Here is a biblical view of finance.' How to handle debt."*

PMC Provider #1: *"I think there needs to be training done along those lines of the financial ramifications in marriage and the bickering that goes on often with couples with finances. I think the whole financial aspect is critical of that family; and even before that, the whole standard of living issues and values in standard of living issues is that couples can bring in much different views of standard of living and values that are money-driven--ultimately money-driven."*

PMC Provider #3 argued that seminarians should complete the same premarital counseling routine as the engaged couples whom they would later serve. Included in this regiment would be the preparation of a financial budget. A short exchange between the respondent and the researcher was recorded below. It emphasized the need for the providers to be competent in the subject matter, which they would seek to teach to engaged couples.

PMC Provider #3: *"I think [the state of] Florida has a good starting point where they think about finances, conflict resolution, parenting skills, communication. They [seminarians] should have to undergo a premarital counseling routine. In other words, they do the homework that their counselees would undergo. They would prepare budgets, they would go through...."*

Researcher: *"The finances would be part of it."*

PMC Provider #3: *"That is correct. For me that is a particular thing of interest. My wife is an engineer or was an engineer, and she has always balanced our checkbook, but without that background, I would not have any idea about what she was talking about when she says, 'Honey this is where our finances are.'"*

The participating pastors in this study considered financial matters an important content area in premarital counseling, but they did not discuss it at length like the previously two content areas. There was no unsolicited mention, however, of who might provide this content area in the seminary or in the church. It did arise later under the use of professionals.

Marital Expectations Material

Another content area to arise quickly to the status of a sub-category was marital expectations. In answer to mini-tour question #3 about the components of premarital counseling training program, five out of twelve respondents mentioned expectations in marriage. This was not a surprise to the researcher since communication, finances, and expectations were often linked closely together in the literature (Babb, 1992; Eyrich, 1987; Hardin & Sloan, 1992; Olson, 1998; Prokopchak & Prokopchak, 1994; Rutledge, 1996; Schumm & Denton, 1979, 1980; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Stuckey et al., 1986; Williams, 1992; Worthington, 1990; Wright, 1992). In the researcher's previous study marital expectations were sandwiched between couple communication skills and couple conflict skills (Buikema, 1999). The pastors in the earlier study listed marital expectations as the second most frequently occurring problem area for couples and the second most damaging problem area for couples.

PMC Provider #2 talked about alerting couples to the conscious and unconscious expectations that naturally arise out of our past experiences. He stressed the need to accept the person in the present and not focus on what that person might become in the future. He also felt it was critical for a couple to recognize what strengths they bring to the marriage.

PMC Provider #2: *"Those things would include a biblical basis of marriage, probably a lot of exercises in communication and realistic expectations... They may never change, and really getting that through to the couple that they are not marrying them on the hopes that they will be, but I am marrying them for who they are right now, is important. We all come in with our past expectations of what things should be and some of those are conscious and some are unconscious. All of those things asking couples in reflective ways to see what, not just what do I think I am going to get from this marriage. What does this person bring to me and their strengths and weaknesses, but what are the strengths that I bring to this marriage and what are the weaknesses that I know right now in my life I am*

bringing to this marriage? Actually, that is kind of how I start off with sets of those questions and I use that as sort of a foundation for some of those other areas we get into."

PMC Provider #4 spoke of the need of alerting couples, who come into marriage with very different expectations, both spoken and unspoken. Without being sensitive to them, they could easily undermine a marital relationship.

PMC Provider #4: *"I think roles are critical and just expectations. I think one of the things that probably undermine marriages as much as anything else is [that] people approach marriage with a different sense of expectations. It used to be that you were raised in the same hometown, by families that all raised their kids the same way, they all looked at marriages the same way, and everybody knew what their expectations, roles, and responsibilities of marriage were. Now you meet on a college campus or you meet people in a career or job or whatever, later on down the line. You have got people coming together in marriage from all sorts of different backgrounds, perspectives, and views. They do not share anything in common except for physical attractions and general camaraderie. They do not understand anything about the intricacies of relationships and, especially, this kind of biblical model, but they are going to approach marriage with spoken and unspoken expectations. 'My daddy always did this with my mommy.' Yes. 'My dad washed dishes, my dad would not walk into a kitchen.' I mean, who knows all the different sorts of things? I think one of the things that is particularly helpful is not only to say these are all the different issues you have to be aware of, not to have training in every single one of them, but just in that nuance of helping people to identify what their expectations are as they go into it. 'Are we going to have sex once a month or we are going to have sex until we have kids, and then it is all over and done with...' Who knows what sorts of expectations? People have lots of different expectations, and a lot of conflict arises even early on in marriage when there are expectations and conflict with each other over them. So, I would say those are all sorts of things. That perspective, pastors need to be exposed to very explicitly."*

PMC Provider #5: *“And, then, I would certainly have it include all of the areas, or as many as possible relating to marriage, such as finances, childrearing, how backgrounds play into that, their social settings and how social settings out of which they came, their expectations...I would have to cover all those things.”*

PMC Provider #4 stressed the importance of understanding and appreciating the differences.

PMC Provider #4 *“Understanding the differences between them. To use Gottman's phrase, to really develop and understand their love maps. So they see who each is, they understand it, and they value the differences and celebrate those.”*

Relationship Roles Material

A closely related if not overlapping content area with marital expectations and theological and biblical material was relationship roles and gender roles. A number of informants expressed the need to add this to the content areas that candidates for the ministry should be exposed to during their seminary training. Some of the respondents spoke of the roles in terms of culture, others in terms of the Bible, and still others in terms of an interaction between both spheres.

PMC Provider #1 related the issue of roles to the broader context of the Bible. He also stressed the redemptive dimension and the need to experience and express unconditional love in relating to a spouse. Without applying the gospel in the context of a marriage, a couple will experience troubles. For many of the pastors, to talk about roles was almost inseparable with talking about the biblical material related to them.

PMC Provider #1: *“I think the roles that God sees in man and woman in marriage and what those roles are, particularly in our day and age where those roles are in a tremendous state of flux. About men understanding their role of headship and women in their role as support, submissive, but...And I think the other issue which is critical in the whole thing is understanding the whole relationship redemptively, that it has in their own*

lives and how that impacts the relationship with one another. That is to say that if a man does not understand God's call to them to love their wife as Christ loves the church, then their ability to love their wife that way is going to be significantly less. A lot of it is related to [the fact that] they do not understand very well the whole redemptive picture of God's unconditional love for them. You cannot give unconditional love if you have not tasted it and understand it, so it is both the cognitive and the emotive experience of redemption and, to the degree that they have experienced that, which is the degree to which they will be able to give that to the other person. I think that is critical. So, there's a real gospel undercurrent to the whole understanding of marriage, and if that is not there, there are going to be problems."

PMC Provider #4: *"I think roles are critical. Understanding of the headship of the husband and what does it mean for a wife in Genesis, for example, to be called the husband's helpmate. What are the implications of that for the role of the wife within the marriage."*

PMC Provider #7: *"Roles, maybe this is covered partly in the biblical material, but one thing to discuss, what the roles are at an academic level as we do in seminary, as we have been doing at the General Assembly. You have to anticipate, to alert the couple to their respective responsibilities to each other. The husband's responsibility to serve his wife as Christ served the church, the wife's responsibility to respect her husband and submit to him. So, in the biblical paradigm of what their relationship is to be a reflection of how Christ relates to the church. So, that is of the utmost importance that they just have that kind of biblical intelligence of where those pertinent passages are, what they mean. Those passages are not easy to understand, so they need exegetical training to understand the controversial passages of submission and so forth."*

PMC Provider #12: *"It would include the whole dynamic of the biblical concept of what is marriage and marriage as a covenant relationship, as well as the biblical concepts of role relationships in the marriage. So those would be minimal things."*

PMC Provider #3: *“When I say I believe a woman should submit to her husband, I am not in any way implying her inferiority. It is more a functional role. The husband is not told to lord it over his wife, but rather to give himself to her, and sacrificially, so as he provides for needs and basically gives, [he] ideally is giving his life for his wife and family. “...And that goes a lot further than who has the remote for the TV and who cooks the dinner. Disciplining children is something that is highly a volatile topic right now.”*

Besides the biblical roles, Provider #2 emphasized the need to include roles in terms of gender differences and function in the content of premarital counseling training.

PMC Provider #2: *“Roles, not just biblically, just roles in terms of male and female thinking. Your roles in terms of what works for your marriage in terms of strengths and weaknesses and having an understanding of that.”*

PMC Provider #9: *“Well, let me talk about broad topics. One is marriage. You know what is marriage, roles in marriage. Communication. Finances. Broader family issues. What do you do with the in-laws? How many kids you want?”*

Most of the providers spoke of the roles of men and women primarily in the context of the biblical material. Gender differences were only alluded to by a couple of the participants in this study. This content area warrants more attention in seminary training beyond the biblical dimension to the cultural and psychosocial dimensions. Clergy need to be alerted to the complexity of the role issue in present day society and its implications for marriage. A unit in premarital counseling should include this sensitive and often controversial material.

Sexuality & Intimacy Material

Since the 1960's the subject of human sexuality has been part of a regular part of premarital counseling programs, both in the church and in the secular arena (Baughen & Baughen, 1994; Clinebell, 1977; Coleman, 1991; Dicks, 1963; Dobson, 1993; Esau, 1990; Eyrych, 1987, 1996; Giblin, 1994; Hamilton, 1991; Hardin & Sloan, 1992; Haug, 1998;

LaHaye & LaHaye, 1976; Mace, 1951, 1953, 1972, 1974, 1980, 1986; Mack, 1986; Mitman, 1980; Morris, 1960; Oates, 1958; Parrot, 1995; Prokopchak & Prokopchak, 1994; Rutledge, 1966; Silliman & Schumm, 1989; Shadle, 1991; Sproul, 1986; Stanley, 1998; Stanley et al., 1998; Stahmann & Barclay-Cope, 1977; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1987, 1997; Taylor, 1999; vom Eigen, 1983; Warren, 1992; Worthington, 1990; Wright, 1985b, 1992, 1998

The topic of sex and intimacy came up in one way or another in 10 of 12 interviews in the present study. Six of 12 respondents mentioned the need to include it in the content component of premarital counseling. Four of 12 spoke of the need to refer sexual dysfunction to a physician. In this researcher's previous study the participating pastors tagged "sexual relationship" and "family planning" to be the topics in which they were least trained to deal with coming out of seminary. They also reported feeling more incompetent to broach this subject with engaged couples than nearly any other topic in premarital counseling.

PMC Provider #12: *"...and then the course would cover communication and conflict or communication skills, conflict resolution skills, sexuality, and sex dynamics, finances. This is the premarital."*

The pastor above went on to detail a premarital counseling course that he helped devise called 'Right Start'. He touched on the way it handles this matter.

PMC Provider #12: *"Well, let me start with what we have done in 'Right Start' and go backwards. We do 'Right Start'--it is not taught by one person. For example, with sexuality, we deal with it in two weeks. One deals just with kind of a biblical view of sex and sexuality. More sexuality than sex. Then the next week we either bring in an obgyn or we bring in a nurse practitioner that has been trained, who also is a midwife. So, I think it is extremely important and necessary to bring in physicians. I mean, I think in a seminary course the interplay that physicians might have on sexual dysfunctional issues are very*

important, and I have had couples that have that early on, right after they are married and how they cope with that. Is it a legitimate dysfunction? I think that would be a great help."

PMC Provider #2 also spoke of the need to cover sexuality in marriage. Like the previous pastor, he also made reference to seeking help early if there is some kind of sexual dysfunction.

PMC Provider #2: *"Reality based in terms of what you can hope to accomplish...communication, roles, finances, how to fight a good fight, conflict management, forgiveness, those kind of issues. Understanding gender differences, sexuality, and the role that has in marriage, and letting couples know if there are difficulties in that area where they can go rather than just being hush-hush for 20 years and ruining the marriage. Those would be some of the basic content areas. We know that is going to be a problem both in terms of sexuality...those things can be helped by having professionals help the clergy in spotting them."*

PMC Provider #8: *"Basic things of finances, communication, sex, personality differences between men and women, child raising. Those sorts of things."*

PMC Provider #9: *"Well, let me talk about broad topics. One is marriage. You know, what is marriage, roles in marriage. Communication. Finances. Broader family issues. What do you do with the in-laws? How many kids you want? Those types of things, and then sexuality, or intimacy in marriage is what I call it."*

PMC Provider #6: *"Course material, whatever you want to say, in the premarital counseling, something on finances, something on sex...Right now that is the way I am organized in those categories."*

PMC Provider #3: *"Human sexuality is something that I think is often times glossed over because we tend to spiritualize ourselves too much and forget that are not merely a soul but a body as well. I think that roles are something that in this day and age are very controversial. We need to be sure on why we believe what we believe so that as we counsel*

people from widely varying backgrounds, we can have some way to bring them together.”

In our society, we basically reduce it to an animalistic type of biological function, where as, biblically speaking, it has a much higher role than that, and I guess the best way of expressing that would be the difference between making love and having sex. It is not something that I see as being restricted to appropriation. This is a wonderful gift of God, and yet we look at it as being merely recreational and meaningless. It is between two consenting adults. That knowledge was very helpful.”

PMC Provider #5 asserted that a major source of marital conflict comes from sexual problems. To alert them, he required all engaged couples to read LaHaye’s text on the physiology of sexuality.

PMC Provider #5: *“...where most marital problems are based on financial problems and then sexual problems. And I require that they read a book by Tim LaHaye so they can understand the physiology of sex because there is a lot of confusion and mystery, still, even with the sexual revolution. They still need to know the physiology.”*

PMC Provider #1 attributes many of the sexual problems to the narcissistic nature of the current culture.

PMC Provider #1: *“Egocentricity, primarily in our culture. Our culture is a highly emotive culture. Not very cognitive. Very high on experiences and low on resolve and commitment at the expense of pain and hurt, and so I think in our current day that is probably the primary thing. They do not know how to live for another. They live for themselves, and the effectiveness of life is evaluated by how this makes me feel. I think that is the primary problem...People living like they are single rather than they are married, continuing the same habits, their schedule, sexual promiscuity or sexual addictions that are all very self-serving and not sensitive to the other person at all. They do not know how to give those things up. I think that is the primary problem.”*

PMC Provider #11 spoke of the pressures on young, mobile, working couples and sexual temptation.

PMC Provider #11: *"But I do think that two careers, particularly for newlyweds, can put a huge burden upon a relationship. Both are pursuing their careers and no one is really taking responsibility to make it work. Both have all sorts of sexual pressures. So I think that is a unique issue facing newlyweds—probably the fragmentation of society in which relationships that used to be in place. You talk about the nuclear family, more and more people are living very mobile lives and are both mobile, moving regularly and disconnected from friends and from family. We find that it is all too often the case that people who were struggling in their marriage, but hanging in there."*

PMC Provider #7 talked about the need to cover sexuality in a unit on premarital counseling. He also described the way sexuality was covered in homiletics class, the only class in which he received any premarital counseling. He did not realize at the time the importance of sexuality in marriage and the problems associated with it.

PMC #7: *"So, a biblical unit, a psychological clinical unit, a communication unit, and maybe, there does need to be a separate unit on sexuality...I had a homiletics class with Dr. Rayburn, and that is where I got my premarital, whatever premarital counseling training I got...But I remember his talking very frankly with us about the things we need to talk to couples about, and he mentioned communication, and he mentioned the need to be at one on issues before children and so forth, and then, he said, ' talk to your men about sex. You have got to tell them about that.' And, you know, it was sort of embarrassing as a young Turk to hear that kind of thing from Dr. Rayburn, but I mean so many of the problems... I mean just as a practical sideline, if he had not singled that out to say there are differences in the way men and women approach this one area, and likewise, other areas, I would not have known to focus on that, and now I understand 10 years on the other, 13 years on the other side of*

that, that while sex is not a huge part of marriage, if there are problems in that area it affects every other area. So, I was very grateful for the man to talk turkey to us."

The majority of the pastors in this study spoke of the necessity of including content on sexuality and intimacy in a unit on premarital counseling training. They talked about the potential problems connected with sexuality and the impact they can have on a relationship. Several informants mentioned involving professionals to present this component both in the seminary and in the church. They also said they would making referrals if problems emerged. Some of the material was discussed in the category on the role of professionals.

Personality Issues Material

Personality issues have been another common content area of premarital counseling programs. (Baughen & Baughen, 1994; Clinebell, 1975; Dicks, 1963; Dobson, 1993; Esau, 1990; Eyrich, 1987; Hardin & Sloan, 1992; Mack, 1986; Olson, 1976, 1983, 1998; Prokopchak & Prokopchak, 1994; Rutledge, 1996; Silliman & Schumm, 1989; Sproul, 1986; Stanley, 1997; Stanley et al., 1998; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1987, 1997; Stahmann & Salts, 1993; Taylor, 1999; vom Eigen, 1983; Worthington, 1990; Wright, 1985b, 1992, 1998). This researcher's previous work found that the graduates of Covenant Theological Seminary felt that they were ill equipped to confront personality issues in premarital counseling. Four of twelve of the participants in this study mentioned this as a content area in their interview. The thrust of their statements called for seminarians to be trained in using some form of personality tests. Provider #1 provided an example.

PMC Provider #1: *"I think that there needs to be training done in preparing the couples to identify personality quirks and propensities. There are a lot of tools out there to use to do that, and I think they ought be equipping the pastors with those tools. For instance, like the Prepare tool, but I think they can equip them with a number of tools that are good and useful. I think there needs to be training done in making them aware of the various materials already done, that they do not to reinvent the wheel necessarily."*

PMC Provider #2: *“Administering some kind of personality test as an objective way of being able to step outside of yourself and look at yourself with seriousness and humor and say, ‘yes that is true, that is the way I am’. The Taylor-Johnson test, the Myers-Briggs. Something along those lines. I think looking at the basis saboteurs of marriage and looking at it from the negative side, what is going to ruin a marriage?”*

These two statements were similar to those made by other participants. They were later covered under the category of assessment instruments.

Parenting Issues & Skills Material

The next sub-category pertained to the topic of parenting. This, too, has been included in many of the premarital counseling programs over the years (Baughen & Baughen, 1994; Clinebell, 1975; Dicks, 1963; Dobson, 1993; Eyrich, 1987; Hardin & Sloan, 1992; Jordan, Stanley, & Markman, 1999; Mace, 1972, 1986; Mack, 1986; Sproul, 1986; Stanley, 1997; Stahmann & Salts, 1993; Taylor, 1999; vom Eigen, 1983; Worthington, 1990; Wright, 199, 1998). This topic was mentioned by a half of the pastors in this study. They agreed that this, too, should be part of the premarital counseling content for clergy.

PMC Provider #1: *“For instance, when children enter the relationship, at least I know from my experience, and I have met many couples that felt ready to be a parent, but you’re not ready for the intrusion of that new person into your marriage, and it changes the dynamics of relating drastically, and I do not find many couples that are ready for that and are knowing how to cope with that when that happens.”*

PMC Provider #12 listed the dynamics of childbearing and child rearing issues as matters that should be covered in the premarital counseling unit for clergy. He then went on to discuss the importance of a loving supportive church and home environment in which to rear children.

PMC Provider #12: *"and then the course would cover communication and conflict or communication skills, conflict resolution skills, finances, sexuality, and sex dynamics. It would include the initial dynamics of childbearing and child rearing issues."*

"Let me just mark off a couple of things. One, obviously the marriage is supposed to reflect Christ and His Church. You want to have as healthy marriages as possible in the church because you want to have a healthy church environment. You want to have a healthy environment for children to grow up in. The list just goes on and on. The stronger the marriages in your church, the stronger the church is going to become, the stronger the community is going to become in caring for one another, the better environment for children to grow up in, so there are just multiple reasons."

PMC Provider #7: *"And then I view it as I am disciplining them for the covenant children that they are going to have. So I think I have a responsibility to their children to make sure that mom and dad are getting off on the right foot. Negatively, I just want to prevent the kinds of problems that I deal with most of the week when marriages end in divorce."*

PMC Provider #5 *"And, then I would certainly have it include all of the areas, or as many as possible of all the areas relating to marriage such as finances, childrearing...I would have to cover all those things."*

The participating pastors did not elaborate at length on exactly what content on parenting and childrearing would be helpful in a training unit on premarital counseling. They talked about childrearing and particularly the importance of the environment in which children are born and raised. If a unit in marriage preparation was taught in conjunction with a broader course in marriage and family, this topic would receive fuller treatment.

Remarriage Material

Back in 1975 more than a million couples parted ways in the United States. Clinebell (1984) estimated that two-thirds of the women and three-fourths of men eventually would

remarry. He claimed that there was a critical need for effective preparation for remarriage. In 1977, 60% of all remarriages were conducted in a religious setting (Albrecht et al., 1983). Today, approximately 30% to 40% of couples seeking to marry have been previously married (Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997). Telling was the change of titles for the last two additions of Stahmann and Hiebert's book on premarital counseling. The second edition of the handbook, published in 1987, was titled Premarital Counseling: The Professionals Handbook. When they issued the third edition of the handbook in 1997, a dramatic shift in title had taken place. It was now titled Premarital & Remarital Counseling. Given the fact that clergy continue to be the primary providers of premarital and remarital counseling, the content offerings in seminary training should be changed to reflect both emphases. Seminaries need to be in tune with the special needs of couples that are remarrying. The researcher's previous project on premarital counseling found clergy identifying communication problems related to the previous marriage, unrealistic expectations, and concerns about children as the four major issues to focus on in remarital counseling (Buikema, 1999).

PMC Provider #12 identified three of the big issues in remarital counseling: the blended family, sexuality, and communications. He talked about the extensive program offered in his home church, 'Fresh Start,' which is used to minister to individuals who have been divorced. Engaged couples were required to work through past issues before they can move ahead and take 'Right Start,' which was the premarital component of their marriage ministries. Each couple, looking to marry, was assigned a mentoring couple. The rationale for extended out the process was the high frequency of divorce for couples that marry within two years of being divorced.

PMC Provider #12: *"Sex and communications are the two hot points in remarital preparation. The biggest hot button is blending the family, your kids and our kids, my kids and our kids together, and all the issues that we face with that. So forcing them to look at those issues, challenging them to consider those things and challenging them to consider delaying*

their marriage long enough to really think and kind of work through those issues...That is the short form. As far as remarital counseling, you also know the statistics, I am sure, that remarriages in the first two years after divorce ends statistically is anywhere between 80% to 85 % of second marriages end in divorce if you get remarried within the first two years, so there is no magic about that. But if a couple is getting married and they have not been divorced for more than two years, we immediately flag that. The second thing we flag is even if they are getting remarried...have they gone through therapy? Have they gone through 'Right Start'? In our church, they are required to have gone through 'Fresh Start' before they can go through 'Right Start.' That includes if one of the two individuals getting married into a blended situation, in a remarriage situation has not been married before, they still go through 'Fresh Start'. We will always give couples like that a mentor couple that is a blended family or a remarital family so that they have individuals that they are dialoguing with those who understand the issues that they are facing. Those things are just initial things. We have a whole elective we do in 'Fresh Start' on remarriage.

PMC Provider #4 talked about the challenge of doing remarriage ministry. He has seen a different dynamic over the past two decades. There were many more couples seeking to remarry. Some couples coming in for counseling were very cautious and others still had not looked at the root causes of the breakdown of their first marriage. He felt that pastors should do premarital counseling tailored to fit the need of a particular couple. Many may not have ever had premarital counseling before. Some have not dealt with past issues. He also thought that a major emphasis in the counseling should be placed on the biblical dimension of marriage. Again, he contended that many may not have heard it before either, and when they do, they find it helpful.

PMC Provider #4: *"The remarriage issue of course has become a major issue. Much more so than when I started the ministry 25 years ago. So that creates a whole other dynamic. Oh, yes. Now a lot of times it can work, I suppose you would say unfortunately it*

can work to the people's advantages in the sense that they made some mistakes and do not want to repeat them again. Therefore, they tend to be extremely cautious, even say I am going to sleep with people, have all sorts of relationships but I am not going to marry again. And then if they get to the point of marriage, hopefully, that they will...I have run across a lot of people who have a feeling about what they are looking for at this time. On the other hand, I have also found an awful lot of people who have never explored why their relationships went sour. Therefore, I think one of the most important things in remarriage is, first of all, probably just the basic premarital counseling all over again because an awful lot of these people never even had it in the first place. On top of all that you have really got to explore in some thoroughness why your relationship went bad before. What happened and what are you going to do this time around. It is not going to happen again, and what does the Bible have to say about that particular area? Did it explode over finances, did it explode over sexual expectations, did it explode under unfaithfulness? Did you guys both work so much you grew apart? What happened? I think in remarriage situations it is not that now you do not have to do premarital counseling you, just have to do that in a different way and particularly what I do is just a profile of what is a biblical marriage and why a Christian wedding ceremony and what those vows entail. I would say that 90% of the time it is an eye opener to people who had no clue, and they are very impressed when they get it. 'I just never knew this. This is terrific. Well, how come I never heard this stuff before. This makes all the difference in the world' kind of thing and to me it is just Christian marriage 101.' And a lot of people become pretty jaded about marriage too, very cynical about it. Sometimes that is something to get over. Again, because they do not see that the Bible has any relevance. When they see that the Bible has some sort of guidelines and blueprint for what a real marriage is, a lot of stereotypes can go by the wayside. 'Wow, I never looked at it that way before.' The whole idea of women submitting to their husband. Just say those words and people's hair will bristle in the back of their neck. They are really ticked. But get a

chance to work through that biblically. It is like 'wow, it makes a lot of sense. I can really see that.' They are ready for the rest of the counseling because all of a sudden you feel like this guy has something to offer besides Scripture."

PMC Provider #7 also spoke of the need of applying biblical concepts to a person who has been devalued in a previous relationship. He stressed that pastors needed to be sensitive to these issues. He felt that communication would be a key issue and the breakdown thereof in the previous relationship.

PMC Provider #7: *"What I do with couples that are remarrying is, especially in regard to the women that typically come out of broken marriages, who have just been beaten up, and somehow, tying their worth in Christ, or lack thereof, to the lack of worth that they have felt from their previous spouse and so dealing with Christian issues--basic theological truths applied to their heart and say that person treated you like you were not worthy, but that does not touch who you are ontologically in Christ, alerting pastors that they need to be sensitive. And then I think the communication issues are the key ones them for a couple that is being remarried because that is probably what broke down in the original divorce."*

Needless to say, formal education of pastors in pastoral counseling ought to include an emphasis on the specialized needs of couples in which at least one person has been previously divorced or lost a spouse. The literature on premarital over the past 40 years has not paid enough attention to these concerns (Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997).

The Relational Skills of Premarital Counseling Training

The answers to sub-question #6: "In addition, what specific relational skills, if any, should be part of a pastor's training in premarital counseling?" were quite interesting. They underscored the need to include this subject matter as part of the content for training clergy in premarital counseling. The majority of the pastor in this study expressed that pastors need to be taught basic communication and conflict resolution skills. They also stressed a need to

learn to practice them in their own relationship before they can become effective in counseling others.

PMC Provider #12: *"Well, first of all we have got a major problem that most pastors are not strong in their relational skills. Pastors are not skilled in counseling skills and usually talk at couples instead of with them. That is part of pastoral training right? I think that it is better today than it was in the old days. Anyway so what relational skills? I think pastors need to work on their own relational skills and I think that would probably help them a great deal to understand how to deal with relational skills with couple. I think pastors need to work on their own skills, and if they worked on their own skills that would probably be carried through better in the counseling office than trying to give them anything superficial."*

PMC Provider #1 emphasized the pastor's own need to assess his own marriage and work through the issues they have, even seek help if necessary. This would enable them to be more effective in assisting others with their issues.

PMC Provider #1: *"Well, it would great if they themselves would go through an assessment of their own marriage, so that they are ministering out of the strength of being weak. I mean if there are issues in their marriage, it will make them much more effective counselors for getting help being better communicators in their relational skills. But there is going to be conflict and I think the relational skills need to grow."*

PMC Provider #8: *"I am going to be a pastor. How can I possibly have problems in my marriage? Well, everybody has conflict and it is helpful. The pastoral couple needs conflict resolution."*

Several informants stressed the need for pastors to develop basic listening skills, including how to ask the right questions and to be empathetic (Giblin, 1994).

PMC Provider #4: *"I would say the first one would be listening, and that is a skill to develop. He has got to be able to ask some questions and listen, and that means asking some good questions that allow people to start thinking diagnostically a little bit, helping people to*

understand what the issues of marriage are. What their old issues might be that they are bringing to the table as they explore. So whether it is a big part of the training that a person needs to receive is being an active listener who asks questions that will lead people down an intentional path and exploration and yet to stop and listen extremely well and then to give help in the way they need it."

PMC Provider #3: *"Listening. One of the things that I find myself doing even in this interview is framing my answer while you are trying to talk, and the ability to stop and consider what another person is saying is a valuable one, but even more than that the concept that they not only hear it but they get beyond or they take into account body language tone. They actually understand what the person is communicating. Sometimes our words do not necessarily say what I mean."*

PMC Provider #5: *"I think they need to learn how to listen, learn how to listen, learn how to synthesize, analyze and then synthesize. And he needs to learn, having listened...he needs to learn the right questions. He needs to learn how to sympathize, empathize. He has to gain confidence before he can really penetrate the situation. Oftentimes, he needs to understand the equation and retain objectivity. He needs to learn how to communicate clearly. Young men, especially theological students need to learn how to listen and that overwhelming their wives with their insight and their doctrine, even if they are right...They are not caring and they are not loving. They need to learn how to care and how to express and communicate it. Listening is a good part of that."*

PMC Provider #6 stressed the importance of listening but also being able to apply biblical truth in a particular situation. He did not feel too competent in this area.

PMC Provider #6: *"Well, we are going to hope that pastors are people who can listen and who have some biblical training and an ability to open the word to a specific problem, but help and guidance and how do you proceed in teaching and in counseling about*

these different subjects. On that I am pretty inept. I do not have a whole lot of expertise to offer on that. They leave pretty much where they came in.

PMC Provider #7 highlighted the necessity of being sensitive to gender difference in communication and conflict resolution.

PMC Provider #7: *"Well, I think he (the pastor) has got to alert the couple to the differences between how a male and female typically handle problems. Now, I am always careful to say the couple. I am not slotting you, and I do not want to create false paradigms, but on the whole this is the way we tend to relate and so to help the man understand that at times his wife will simply need to vent and share her feelings, and in her mind that is talking. Talking is the man listening. She needs her husband to listen and not to just give her a quick fix to her problem. And he needs to learn to communicate securely to his wife, and to secure this relationship she has to secure contexts in which she can share these problems."*

The Assessment Instruments Component of Premarital Counseling Training

Throughout the interviewing process, several pastors in this study continually made reference to various premarital counseling inventories and personality assessment tools. Their responses to the sub-question #7 on the place of assessment instruments indicated the need to include this material in the training of clergy in premarital counseling. The very first interview spoke of this need. In fact, 11 of 12 referred to at least one assessment tool.

According to the researcher's findings in the early study (Buikema, 1999) over half of the informants, or 59.2%, were using some kind of assessment instrument in premarital counseling despite the fact that only about one-third of them were introduced to an assessment tool in seminary. Furthermore, nearly all of the newer books on premarital counseling for clergy and several journal articles encourage the use of inventories and personality tests (Eyrich, 1987; Giblin, 1994; Hardin & Sloan, 1992; Hawley & Olson, 1995; Larsen & Olson, 1989; Mace, 1986; Mack, 1986; Markey, Micheletto, & Becker, 1997; Olson, 1983, 1998; Parrott III & Parrott, 1997; Rutledge, 1966; Summers & Cunningham,

1989; Stahmann & Salts, 1993; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1987, 1997; Taylor, 1999; Velandar, 1993; vom Eigen, 1983; Williams & Jurich, 1995; Worthington, 1990; Wright, 1985, 1992).

The assessment instruments used by pastors in this study included the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis (7), PREPARE/PREPARE ENRICH (4), Myers-Briggs (2), DISC (1) and a number of informal tools such as the role inventory.

PMC Provider #2 spoke of the use of several assessment instruments: FOCCUS, Myers-Briggs, Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis, a love language inventory, and role and expectations inventory.

PMC Provider #2: *"I think they should be trained in the Myers-Briggs or the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis because of all the ones out there; I think the catholic church has one that I have heard, I do not know the name of it, (FOCCUS) but I have heard it is great. We did the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis. We just have a great hour. It is an hour and a half session usually and we have couples come in who are very nervous. They are vulnerable, but by the end of it they are really talking. I think doing role inventory. I do not have a professional tool I use about that, but some inventory about roles and expectations tells me gobs of stuff about what are going to be some of the sparks in this marriage when there are big discrepancies about that. That is an important one. A Love Language Inventory—we try to use it as maybe a model, and it all points back to what could be a communication issue, it could be other issues, it could be things from their past."*

Respondent #7: *"The TJTA is the only one I have ever used. I do not really have a lot of others. Well no, I can tell you a few others actually. DISC has one for couples that our church used recently, and I like DISC and it is another grid, and I think it was a very helpful tool. Is it better than PREPARE? Well, probably not, because PREPARE is like you said... for pre-married couples; DISC is more for couples. It may be something better to go through once you have been married for a little while or for people that are getting remarried, it is probably a better tool. I think it is decent tool, but probably not as effective with pre-*

married couples because DISC is more for people who have been living together and have issues that they need to resolve."

PMC Provider #3: *"As I mentioned the Taylor-Johnson Temperamental Analysis, I use that. I like it because it is easy to administer, I can grade it myself, and as I get the results, it highlights areas that may need more discussion in the future. I like it. Eyrich's book has a whole battery of instruments to use...everything from what are you bringing into this marriage and what do you want to leave behind in terms of personal traits, family situations, or whatever, to what...you think your roles are going to be for both of them and then together, which is always interesting because they rarely talk with each other. But, again, as far as how to implement that in a course, I do not have the faintest idea of how to effectively do that. PREPARE, I have heard of, but only vaguely."*

PMC Provider #12 has used several assessment instruments over the years. He preferred PREPARE to the others. He listed two others that no one else in this study mentioned: Right Path and 16 PF.

PMC Provider #12: *"For example, they need to train in the use of PREPARE-- train in the use of other instruments that would be helpful along those lines. I would include in that the use of the PREPARE inventory or the PREPARE MC. I do not use the Taylor-Johnson anymore. I think it is too easy to manipulate it. I think the DISC is too easily manipulated. Personally, if I had to choose one, I would say I would chose PREPARE. I think that the Myers-Briggs simply brings an enhancement of understanding temperaments. A number of new instruments are coming on the market. One is called Right Path, which is a very helpful thing. I think probably more helpful than the Myers-Briggs because it is easier to understand and it just as well statistically analyzed as far as credibility in that area. The 16 PF is helpful, but it is too sophisticated for most pastors. I think what Olson (PREPARE) has done has been a great service to pastors because it is an instrument that they can use that is highly valuable but it is not difficult to understand."*

PMC Provider #1: *"I think that there needs to be training done in preparing the couples to identify personality quirks and propensities. There are a lot of tools out there to use to do that, and I think they ought be equipping the pastors with those tools. For instance, like the PREPARE tool, but I think they can equip them with a number of tools that are good and useful. I think there needs to be training done in making them aware of the various materials already done, that they do not need to reinvent the wheel necessarily."*

PMC Provider #6 claimed to be using a couple instruments, but with no formal training how to use them. He spoke of being willing to get trained.

PMC Provider #6: *"Yeah, I would like to be trained and even certified in using some of the standard ones that are accepted in lots of places, and that I take stabs at using things like that. And yet I am still using them in ways that is probably not fair to the material because I am just not trained enough to really use them. Well, let's see, we have got Eyrich's Premarital Counseling Series, which I use. We have the Taylor-Johnson and an inventory on roles is in there. But still I almost feel like a witch doctor when I am trying to explain these things and use them, because I really have no formal training, and I know the people who do them do not want people like me doing a whole lot with them anyway because they would rather have somebody who is trained in it."*

PMC Provider #8: *"There is a conflict tool that I have seen which I got from that one course, and there is the Taylor-Johnson Temperamental Analysis. I think is helpful. I have used those."*

PMC Provider #9: *"Yes. I would not say it is a high priority item with me, but that might just be out of my ignorance. If I better understood programs and how to use them, I might say 'you have to use this'. I want to keep it simple."*

PMC Provider #11: *"Well, you know, I just know what I did when I was a kid. I was trained in the Taylor-Johnson and I found that it to be a helpful tool, but certainly the PREPARE and ENRICH inventories are very valuable tools as well. Pastors need to be looking*

for good tools that are out there. For instance, both IMAGO Relationship Therapy and Gottman's work provides great tools and assessment surveys they you can use. Those things are everywhere whether you do that or Campus Crusade stuff. There is just a ton of material out there. It does not matter what the material is. You just have to use something that is effective in helping people communicate and understand each other. The question is who should be trained to do so. I would probably say PREPARE ENRICH."

Not every pastor in the study had used an assessment instrument in premarital counseling. PMC Provider #4 said he would use one if he were trained; but he also added that they might not be needed with all the other resources available for premarital counseling. Only one provider preferred not to use them (PMC Provider #5).

PMC Provider #4: *"I have never really used any of them, to be honest with you. I have never really used Myers-Briggs or anything like that. I think it would be helpful, actually, if I had the training. I would probably do it but I do not have it and never have used it. But most of the premarital counseling works really well without it, without a lot of formal diagnostic tools. The assigned books, which we read, they have some exercises to do. You try it out a few times, adjust it to make it your own, and you end up with a pretty decent tool that often helps you get through some things. So I think it is time to get some of the training, perhaps, Myers-Briggs and some others. It would be valuable, but I do not personally... from my own experience."*

PMC Provider #5: *"You have to have some assessment tools, of course. Most of them are between your ears rather than a test that you can give. There are good personality profiles and so forth. I guess I would say that a pastor should deal with premarital counseling. But for this, they don't need the personality profiles and tools that you would use with more serious kinds of issues like conflict or personality disintegration. I think I know some pastors who have used some of these tools somewhat effectively, and it has changed the direction of their ministry. They become counselors instead of shepherds."*

The participating pastors in this study expressed an interest in the various assessments tools, but needed training in them. Many were already using them in their premarital counseling programs. Others knew of them, but were not using them. Two preferred not to use them. The rightful place of assessment tools in the training of clergy in premarital counseling may be debatable, but at the very least, this researcher believes that seminarians should be exposed to their existence, if not, trained in them.

Domain #4. The Potential Role of Professionals in Premarital Counseling Training

For years, those doing research and writing books on premarital counseling have encouraged clergy to take advantage of the expertise that professionals can offer to engaged couples in marriage preparation (Babb, 1991; Bernstein, 1977; Clinebell, 1975; Elia, 1959; Giblin, 1994; Hardin & Sloan, 1992; Harvey, 1977; Ipes, 1982; Mace, 1972, 1986; Mace & Mace, 1974, 1986; Mack, 1986; McManus, 1993; Morris, 1960; Most & Guernsey, 1983; Olson, 1998; Orthner, 1986b; Rutledge, 1966, 1968b; Schumm & Denton, 1979; Stanley, 1997; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1987, 1997; Stewart, 1977; Taylor, 1999; Trott, 1990; vom Eigen, 1983; Worthington, 1990; Wright, 1992). This researcher served two large churches in which this was the common practice. In his first pastorate, the psychiatrist conducted the group discussion on sexuality and birth control. The church treasurer did the section on finance and budgeting. Both professionals were a great resource to the engaged couples and the pastors.

This researcher's previous study reported that clergy were more than willing to involve various professionals in the delivery of their premarital counseling ministries (Buikema, 1999). Ninety-eight percent of the participants claimed that they would tap the expertise of financial planners, accountants, and physicians. Interestingly, they were not so inclined to send an engaged couple to a secular therapist. Only 14.6% claimed that they would call upon the services of a psychologist or professional counselor. This researcher was puzzled at this peculiar finding and has wondered ever since what the pastors' reasons

were for their response. Was it simply because of the longstanding mistrust between the clergy and secular counselors or something else?

The researcher wanted to know what pastors thought about including professionals in the actually training of seminarians. Over a decade ago, Summers & Cunningham (1989) called for that very thing. They urged professions to work with seminaries and other institutions to help equip pastors in premarital counseling.

The respondents in the current research unanimously agreed. All twelve felt this was a good idea. Earlier in the study several participants thought it would be a good idea for seasoned pastors and practitioners to be part of the training process for clergy. Now, they enthusiastically embraced that idea of utilizing other professionals, including physicians, financial planners, professional counselors, and lawyers.

PMC Provider #1: *"Yeah, I think so. I mean, I think in a seminary course the interplay that physicians might have on sexual dysfunctional issues are very important, and I have had couples that have that early on, right after they are married and how they cope with that. Is it a legitimate dysfunction? I think that would be a great help. Therapists would be tremendous resources, I think, in dealing with what comes into their offices and why are they there. Why do couples come a year after they have been married or two years after they are married? Financial planners I think would be great. I think, to give a broad scope on financial planning with biblical parameters would be tremendous. I think all of those would be great resources to a seminary course. Great resources."*

PMC Provider #4: *"Oh, before they go out? Okay. Yes, sure. I think all sorts of things in a seminary class particularly or even during internship; various professionals could be of tremendous value in developing to train and prepare somebody for premarital counseling."*

PMC Provider #9: *"Oh yeah, I think it would be great to bring them in."*

PMC Provider #6: *"Well, the training would be great. I would jump on that. What if professionals in those areas could not only advise and instruct us, but give us some stuff, too. You know I think that would be great—even have them actually come and do training in segments."*

PMC provider #11: *"I think that would be a very, very valuable thing. You could bring in a number of professionals like that and on one day you could even do a one-day seminar to get people the material and the content they need. You could have a physician come in and talk about sexuality. A marriage and family therapist come and talk about what they have learned and what they think makes for good premarital counseling. You could have a financial planner come in and talk about specific tools that might be valuable resources. An attorney to come in and talk about how expensive divorce is, so run from it. Yes, I think it is a great idea."*

PMC Provider #2: *"Equipping the clergy. I think it would be very helpful. I am very open to that. I know probably there might be a lot of pastors who would say, 'well, that is the world.' Well, I think the world has documented quite a bit of what we believe anyway in their own language at least from different studies that I have read. I think it is very helpful. I think you want to make sure you know what kind of content you can get. Are they going to need integration? Biblical principles? Do they have a background to some of those things? Having sound financial advice, not necessarily Christian, sound financial advice and saying 'yes' to following it; or if there is sexual dysfunction or if there is chronic depression, we know that is going to be a problem both in terms of sexuality and in terms of just an ongoing thing in the relationship, bipolar...those things can...having professionals help the clergy in spotting... When I first went into the ministry I did not even know what bipolar was."*

PMC Provider #8: *"Yes, they can help. Professional counselors. Yes, Christian counselors. Both could be, I believe in common grace so what?"*

PMC Provider #5 was more than willing to use professionals. He reasoned that it would be good to have professionals as part of the formal education of seminarians if for no

other reason than to show them their limitations and when it is appropriate to refer a parishioner.

PMC Provider #5: *"I think that all of those would be useful. I think that seminaries should have their people in for special classes and the like. However, they do it, marriage and family therapists and counselors could give an overview of certain processes and problems that engaged couples and newlyweds might experience, if for no other reason that to show the seminarian/young pastor that he is not adequate to solve them...and to give them some clues how to approach them and when to refer them. The young fellas have the notion that you can give them a Bible and they can deal with anything because they tend to think in black and white. They need to realize that it is not always the case. They need to be shown the remarkable breakdown in marriage because of financial problems and communication problems. They need to be challenged by the known realms of possibilities of psychological areas and the complexity of marriage and family therapy and the like. Then they will have some idea of what their limits ought to be and are and what is available and when they should refer. They need to know that those areas are large, especially financial because that relates to everything. Intense, profound, psychological problems, of course, they will have to deal with from time to time. They need to know and recognize when to refer. I believe in using resource people. We also have a psychologist in our church, and he does things on child rearing and marriage. Well, that is not counseling per se, but it has the effect of informing people about things they have not thought about before."*

PMC Provider #3: *"Yes, one of Dr. Eyrich's approaches to training was helping us to figure out when we had exceeded our expertise and when to cry for help. In my case, that is usually pretty early in the program, but at least if you know that you do not have enough about it as much and by talking to people who are qualified in those areas and being exposed to that in your study. I have told people that I do not know everything and I do not pretend to know everything, but I at least like to know who to ask, and that would help."*

PMC provider #7: *"That is a good idea...I have not thought of that frankly, but I mean whom of us has Dr. Wheat not helped? Even those of us who have been married for a while are helped by the physiological lecture of Dr. Wheat. I would see that to be very helpful, and I think it would also be helpful for a physician to tell the man the kinds of physiological, the kinds of sexual problems that he sees with couples, just so pastors can alert the couples to something that may not fit right; and you may be uncomfortable, but those kinds of things can be taken care of. You just refer the couple to a professional. Encourage them not to be embarrassed about it and so forth but refer them on. I have had a number of couples come back and say, 'you told us that we were supposed to come back here if we have a problem. This is our problem.' I cannot fix that but I know who can and there is no need to put up with those kinds of annoyances. Family therapists, I think, I have already said, are good to alert them to those pathological scenes and I think that is the most essential thing is that a professional referral be made. Lawyers. Wise champions of the faith, older ministers, and people who have been married longer than we have."*

PMC Provider #12: *"Well, let me start with what we have done in 'Right Start' and go backwards. We do 'Right Start'--one person does not teach it. For example, with sexuality we deal with it in two weeks. One deals just with kind of a biblical view of sex and sexuality--more sexuality than sex. Then the next week we either bring in an obgyn or we bring in a nurse practitioner that has been trained who also is a midwife. So I think it is extremely important and necessary to bring in physicians. When we use the Myers-Briggs and things, we have brought in therapists, who are Christians, from outside. When we do our financial analysis, we bring in a CFO (Certified Financial Planner) and an individual who is both a certified financial planner and a certified public accountant."*

Researcher: *"I know in church programs we have used them; but I have often wondered if the seminary, just by way of introducing pastors to these outside resource people, should bring them in just so they know that they are out there."*

PMC Provider #12: *"Definitely."*

Researcher: *"That way they would begin to think in those terms instead of trying to be all things for everyone, I mean trying to accomplish everything themselves."*

PMC Provider #12: *"I think we have to and need to."*

Domain #5. The Prospects of Continuing Education in Premarital Counseling Training

Many professions require continuing education of their constituents. Besides being a member of the clergy, the researcher has been a practicing marriage and family therapist for over a decade. This year, he has received in the mail literally dozens of brochures advertising various seminars on the newest theories, techniques, and approaches in the field of therapy and other related fields. The number of brochures that he has received this year promoting training seminars for pastors he can count on one hand. The participants in this study indicated a strong interest in post-seminary education and named a number of potential sources for it. The first source and the obvious one was the seminary. The respondents listed a number of ways that the seminary could be involved in continuing education: D.Min programs, mini-term courses, multiple programs, correspondence courses, special conferences, seminars, workshops, a monthly alumni newsletter, seminary magazine, annotated bibliography, and mailing lists. Loskot (1993) found that 83% of the priests in her study claimed that they would attend seminars on premarital counseling.

The Place of the Seminary

PMC Provider #12 did his doctorate in continuing education. In response to the grand tour question, he made a number of suggestions about the necessity of pastors to be involved in ongoing learning experiences.

PMC Provider #12: *"I think there is a woeful amount of continuing education possibilities available, unless a person does a D.Min. But, I think that Covenant and other schools ought to be offering continuing education opportunities where pastors then, who are in the work and who then equally sense the need for it, have vehicles available. I know I*

have availed myself of numbers of training mechanisms that were available, but it was a hodge podge that I had to put together for myself. I think that one, two, or three continuing education types of programs that are available within a comfortable proximity would be very helpful, especially for younger pastors who have not been through it. So, what is necessary for them? In continuing education, I think there is a need for vehicles to be made available."

Researcher: "It is interesting that you would bring up this whole idea of continuing ed. When I talked to Mike Marcy yesterday, he really stressed that too, and like you said, there is a woeful lack of it out there for pastors today."

PMC Provider #12: "Adult education is where I did my Ph.D. so...My work is in continuing education."

PMC Provider #12 also placed the responsibility for continuing education squarely on the shoulders of pastors. He felt that there should be accountability. Then he added a few suggestions as to what the seminaries could do to help meet this need.

PMC Provider #12: "The individual (pastor) is ultimately the one responsible to make sure they get the equipping, and any pastor, who goes into the ministry and does not recognize this need immediately, either does not have enough people in his church to worry about, or is not having any weddings to do, or just is not aware or assumes too much upon themselves of what they think they can do and what they cannot. So I think that they need to be sensitized to that in their pre-professional training. I think the seminaries should as one vehicle provide follow-up, continuing education, and I think it is ultimately the pastor's responsibility, and I think pastors need to be probed. This is something, for example, just an illustration, at Covenant, Jim Hatch, the Dean of Alumni Contacts, the one thing Jim could do is have some kind of a probing question: are you continuing to equip yourself, or the seminary magazines could have articles on what pastors feel like they need to continue to work with or equip themselves in. Just different things like that. An alumni newsletter could get into something like that. Those kinds of things just to... I think there also needs to be a

general attitude in the pastoral education classes in the M.Div. level, that this is only pre-professional training. You need to be continuing to learn. So those are just some things off the top of my head."

PMC Provider #11: *"They (the seminaries) could just create some wonderful programs in which they could invite, even if it is not mandatory, voluntarily, invite pastors to come back, stay on the campus, have all sorts of times of worship and some rich fellowship with other pastors and then have both some plenary sessions with the faculty who do some teaching and some challenging stuff, and then workshops that they could chose from, and I think that would be a wonderful PR thing for the seminary to do and it would be incredibly helpful."*

PMC Provider #6: *"The seminaries could use their mailing lists to facilitate this. We get advertisements from the seminary for ongoing training from time to time. That could be a good way to do it. So, seminaries could be a big part of it, and then if seminaries could maybe help to get some guys out on the road to promote it and demonstrate it."*

PMC Provider #2: *"Well, obviously when you graduate, your relationship is finished other than being an alumnus. I do not expect a monthly newsletter update. But they could...I suppose seminaries could offer... mini-term or correspondence courses in these areas. Maybe some of them do. I am not sure really what is out there."*

PMC Provider #7: *"Well, seminaries could certainly offer that. I am not prepared to say that they should offer that, but they could, and then we host things at Covenant like Allender Conferences and so forth."*

PMC Provider #4: *"The D.Min. programs are kind of helpful. Some of the continuing education programs... I think, once you are out of seminary and in the ministry for a while, you become really sensitive to what your shortcomings are and your faulty ideas. A D.Min. program could be very, very helpful, but I think just offering additional classes that are just available to be audited or not necessarily taking for credit, but the seminary says these are*

resources that are available to the Christian community. Sign up and take that kind of thing. You take a class that you never got in seminary. There is a definite benefit in continuing education, let alone a full D.Min. program. I think that would be a really, really valuable contribution to the broader community."

PMC Provider #9: *"Well, I would think if somebody like Larry Burkett, you know Christian Financial Council, say we are going to have a pastors one-day training or conference or whatever or to work it in, maybe CE & P was having a pastors' conference."*

PMC Provider #5 expressed concern about the current focus of the Doctorate of Ministry. He would like to shift the emphasis to course work that relates more to the church setting.

PMC Provider #5: *"I think the focus today is erroneous. Pastors are encouraged to pursue their Doctor of Ministry when in fact it is nothing more than a glorified graduate degree or master's degree in an attempt to compete with the world for significance. I guess that sounds a little bitter. The seminaries could provide advanced courses in areas of concern, including premarital counseling rather than courses for a degree that really does not relate to what they do in their churches. We need a more and better understating of how to relate to people from multicultural situations. I lost a Korean couple because I did not understand how they fit and what needs we were not meeting. I still don't understand what happened. However, the seminaries in our denomination are designed to guide men or all of them toward the ministry and should be more inclined to provide the training in those areas of need and the full spectrum of ministry. I think that it is the type of ongoing ministry that should be provided."*

The participants in the study also thought that another context for continuing education was the annual general assembly meeting and the regional presbyteries. Babb (1992) spoke of the same thing in reference to the Wesleyan Methodists. They could use their regional and annual meetings for continuing education seminars.

The Place of the General Assembly & the Presbytery

PMC Provider #11: *"I think you could have, in our circles, you could have presbytery meetings on an occasional basis to have a course as a refresher course or a case study course or something like that in both premarital and remarital counseling. Certainly at General Assembly you could do that. You could have the pastoral oversight committee encourage pastors to avail themselves of certain kinds of courses or seminars that are available. They could certainly put a requirement in for a certain number of units for continuing education. That would be pretty exciting to me to see the presbytery do that."*

PMC Provider #11: *"Well, you know the denomination. I have gotten a little bit of training in church planting from the denomination such as Mission to North America. I would like more. How come we cannot do that for premarital counseling? Admittedly, we have an MNA office. We have people who are on staff to do this. We do not have people on staff to do this in what we are talking about, so that is a disadvantage. These things are costly to run. They take a lot of time and energy for us to do them, but the denomination would be a nice choice for that, too."*

PMC Provider #1: *"First of all, I think there is a great need within our own tradition. I would like to have materials specifically geared with a covenantal redemptive view of marriage and what was written for our own community; and to my knowledge there is nothing out there that is written with that theological framework in mind, so a covenantal framework would be a tremendous tool—because the whole heart of marriage is covenantal. I think we need to have some, even like the pre-assembly seminars to have an opportunity for guys to come that ties this whole thing together as to what pastors can do to counsel and then do any follow-up counseling they might need to do post-marriage. I think that would be a great help."*

PMC Provider #2: *"Or the presbytery. You know, maybe have the presbytery run a seminar for elders, lay people, and pastors. The materials we are using now... Are you going to ask me a question about what I am using now?"*

PMC Provider #4: *"Presbyteries could do it. As a matter of fact, they could do that sort of thing. I think that would be really valuable. I have had some classes since seminary on just how I needed to protect myself from falling into temptation or from compromising situations. I never got any of that in seminary, and those kinds of things would be outstanding for the presbytery to continue to offer. The seminaries could provide that through the presbyteries. That would be great."*

PMC Provider #5: *"The denominations and our denomination could host seminars across the country. Sometimes it is difficult for a person from a small church to attend General Assembly because it costs a couple thousand dollars sometimes. But, our seminaries could do that, locally. There is also a lot out there in the secular area. You don't have to have it all from a Christian perspective. There is a lot of good information out there. You don't have to have it from a Christian perspective. You have to sort things out."*

The Place of the Church

PMC Provider #2: *"I have just ended up trying to find help in areas through other means. Like, I got a hold of Redeemer Church in New York wondering how they do premarital counseling, and I looked through the whole thing and I sort of took out what I liked and some of their... It is interesting to find that a lot of stuff I do they do already, but it was good to know, 'okay here is a church that is huge and they have got a lot of people running through this process and trying to deal with it.' This is what they saw as good content. Just some of the exercises. I am always looking for good stuff to give couples in terms of what they can do outside of the sessions to sort of open things up."*

PMC Provider #12: *"For example, the church could host a seminar to train in the use of PREPARE. To train in the use of other instruments that would be helpful along those lines. In a larger church situation you can set up a seminar-type of a program and provide options for methodologies available for pastors."*

PMC Provider #7: *"I think it is the minister's responsibility to seek out instruction in the areas where he has become weak. So you can go to hospital in-service training to find out about different pathologies. I just kind of sought things on my own."*

PMC Provider #5: *"Even in the community, the health services provide all kinds of training possibilities. If a person wants the training he can find it. If he insists that it be from his doctrinal perspective, then he is in a little more trouble; but I do think the training possibilities are out there."*

The Place of the Internet

PMC Provider #11: *"And the implications of the Internet, continuing education on the Internet is huge and I can certainly see no matter where a person is anymore or how small their little area is, they have access to the Internet, and I could see making things available either on the internet or from professionals. You would require people going through premarital counseling to utilize it or look at or even make videos available. I mean, there are all sorts of resources now that never were available in the past."*

PMC Provider #3: *"That would be an immensely helpful tool, and at the same time, it would be an immensely controversial tool. I think for a seminary to link its name in the ways that I would want for it to, it is something that probably would not happen because everybody is...you cannot make everybody happy, and the end result is you are not making anybody happy."*

PMC Provider #2: *"Yes, well we got exposed to that today. CE&P has all sorts of stuff. Just click on and take advantage of youth, children, marriage, and family. Well, they got a...it looked like the start of a good web site on all that kind of thing. Advertising a book a week that they recommended, one for each of these different areas, that kind of stuff. There is almost no excuse anymore."*

PMC Provider #10: *"Another idea came to mind as we were talking earlier today and that is, I can put together a multidimensional program, and perhaps, make it available on the*

Internet. I could take what I normally do in a seminar format and package it with videotapes, audiotapes, and a copy of my workbook and simply call it, A Pastor's Guide to Premarital Counseling. Something like that."

PMC Provider #12: *"Yes, but you could have it on the Internet. Covenant, of course. They are an information clearing house, and it is kind of like the link section on a website."*

Domain #6. The Current Practices of Premarital Counseling Ministries

The final discovery question pertained to the participants' actual practice. Although the purpose of this project was to investigate the educational needs of seminarians in premarital counseling, the researcher thought that reviewing participating pastors' actual marriage preparation services might also shed some light on this subject. The providers' responses to sub-question number #10 were quite diverse. There was some overlap, but no set pattern in their premarital counseling ministries. Several of them were in a state of flux. Everyone seemed to have a unique approach to marriage preparation.

Six were using, in some form or fashion, one of the four popular Christian marriage preparation books or workbooks (Eyrich, 1987; Mack, 1986; Parrot III & Parrott, 1995, 1997, 1998; Wright, 1977, 1997). The researcher's earlier study showed that only 19% were exposed to any program during seminary (Buikema, 1999).

Only four pastors were using assessment instruments: PREPARE (2), Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis (1), and Wright's Family of Origin Inventory (1). Two discussed the desire to use mentoring couples.

PMC Provider #1 has been using Wright's workbook, Before You Say I Do, in conjunction with having a couple progressively write a marriage covenant.

PMC Provider #1: *"Well, currently we use Before You Say I Do and we also couple that with a writing of a marriage covenant. They weekly add to the covenant and it coincides with the chapters in the book by Wright. The final result is a written covenant that they write out, which involves having to think through values of their family and their marriage, the*

standards and expectations they have of one another. It is not meant to be hyper-detailed, but detailed enough so that their expectations of their relationship, their marriage, and their family have been discussed and thought through and agreed on. Those are the two things that we do currently. So, I will meet with them and discuss those chapters in the book and oversee them making a covenant with one another. I used to use the PREPARE, but I am not trained to interpret it. That is what we do currently."

PMC Provider #2 discussed the evolution his premarital program has gone through recently. He has switched from using Wright's information based program (1997) to Parrott, III & Parrott's enrichment program (1995). The rationale for the change was that the latter program generated more couple ownership and interaction. This pastor also found a family of origin inventory helpful. He hoped to incorporate mentoring couples in the program in the future.

PMC Provider #2: *"Well, it has a little bit of history to it. When I first started out, I just kind of developed my own thing because I did not have anything, and I did not really know what was out there. About eight years into my ministry, I started using--Norman Wright. Probably everybody has used Norman Wright, and it is a pretty decent outline. It has some good content. It is weak on exercises. There is one inventory there that I think is okay about the past--family of origin, I think that is a good chapter. We have just switched to Saving to Your Marriage Before It Starts. The reason I like it is...the exercises are good. There are workbooks for the couple. What we like about it for the size of our church, it has a lay counseling option with it so that you can begin to give out some of the sessions and the ones you are going to cover to the couples' mentors. We have not done it yet, but the reason we went for this series is because it is structured to build that in over time and that is the direction we want to go--is to have them not just meet with the pastor, but they meet marriage mentors who are going to sort of look after them for a set amount of time, and they are going to cover some of the material so that we will not have to cover it. The book is*

good, and people like videos. There are videos with it. You really need to read the book, and you have to do the exercises. We could not possibly cover them all in our sessions. The point is that they are doing the work. Something is happening outside the session and that gives sort of a synergy approach... It provides the combustion for the time that you have with them."

PMC Provider #3 claimed to be adapting Eyrich's book, Three to Get Ready, to fit each couple. The Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis was given in the early stages of the counseling, and the main topics in premarital counseling were covered. The number and length of the sessions varied.

PMC Provider #3: *"I generally follow the outline that is given in the Three to Get Ready book, and I will expand it or contract it according to the needs I see in the couple. I usually administer the TJTA early on to highlight possible trouble spots or areas of concern and I try to meet...My church has set a wedding policy that requires premarital counseling, and I could meet as few as four times for two-hour sessions, or expand that however much I would like. My ideal would be six months of counseling once a month for an hour each time with homework done by the couple and time for evaluation done by me. I use that to cover those basic areas again on sexuality, child rearing, communication, finances, family worship, and the role of God and the church in the marriage; and I know there are things that I am leaving out."*

PMC Provider #4 covered the basic content of premarital counseling. He stressed the use of post-marital counseling sessions, contending that a couple was better equipped to engage in counseling after the distractions of the engagement and the wedding.

PMC Provider #4: *"Well, now, one of the adjustments that I have made over the years is that when I enter into a premarital situation with somebody, there are about four basic times that I want to have with them which involves planning the wedding itself but also the basics of biblical marriage, identifying and working through expectations, principles for*

communication and conflict resolution. Primarily, though, just making them aware of other general trouble spots that tend to crop up fairly frequently. Then I make them commit to post-marital over the course of their first year. One of my experiences is that before marriage they are really busy and distracted with preparing for the wedding, and they are really not paying as much attention. And also they have not really entered into the dynamics of living together as husband and wife, and therefore, a lot of what I want to communicate to them will make a lot more sense afterwards so I cover some of the basics, give them the essential tools; but then say you only need to commit to two or three more times afterwards, and we would redo some of the exercises with them to show them how within a matter of six months to a year they had actually changed already and to say you cannot really put each other in a box. One of the things that it exposes is that your response to that exercise now were very different and your perceptions of the other person are now very different than they were six months to a year ago. So the post-marital counseling allows me to make that point more effectively and to launch a marriage."

PMC Provider #5 required couples to read several popular books by Christian writers: Sell, Crabb, and Lahaye. He spent up to 12 weeks with a couple.

PMC Provider #5: *"It's more than it use to be. I really can't measure it very objectively because I only have myself to go by. I require in premarital counseling quite a bit of reading. I require them to read and discuss it together. There was a book by Dr. Sell from Trinity that I used for years that is now out of print, so I started using a book by Crabb. And I require that they read a book by Tim LaHaye so they can understand the physiology of sex, because there is a lot of confusion and mystery still, even with the sexual revolution. They still need to know the physiology, so I approach the whole thing from a theological and biblical perspective. I start out by establishing where marriage came from. Then we talk about conflict resolutions. And, we talk about the importance of trust, and so forth. So from my perspective, it is more thorough than it use to be. So that is how I approach it. With the*

reading and reporting on the book, it usually takes 12 weeks, sometimes longer, depending on the couple. ”

PMC Provider #6 followed Eyrich’s program, outlined in his book, Three to Get Ready. He covers the basic content material of premarital counseling.

PMC Provider #6: *“I am using Howard Eyrich. He has a book called Two to Get Ready or is it Three to Get Ready? At my age, your mind is the first thing to go. It is a series that I use. There are 10 lessons in there. I use it for six weeks, six times, and shoot for an hour, but it usually takes longer than that. That is current practice. There is a week on finances, a week on kids, a week on sexual stuff. We begin with two weeks on the biblical foundation of a Christian marriage, what that is and what you are reflective of, why do it, and then ending up with the last’s week work on the wedding service itself, what that is like, what we do there and why. But that is currently what I am doing. ”*

PMC Provider #7 served a growing congregation, and his involvement in premarital counseling has changed. His staff followed a set curriculum, but he used an outline that he worked out in the early years of his ministry. He gave no specifics, and the researcher did not pursue them because of time restraints on the informant.

PMC Provider #7: *“My sessions then are just what I have done so many times, I just sort of have the outline in my mind. The other guys have a curriculum that they use, and I had to learn things so quickly on the fly. I did not have time to write it down, whatever, so I said when we started multiplying staff, I said we have to have a curriculum for you to follow because I want to make sure that couples are adequately prepared, and I do not have that written down. They each have a curriculum to ensure some kind of quality control.”*

PMC Provider #8 has used material from several popular premarital counseling programs. He would conduct 10 sessions.

PMC Provider #8: *“I use other people’s material. Go through a workbook like Wayne Mack’s. What I have been using--Preparing for Marriage. I have Norm Wright’s and*

I have those charts and things that he uses. Taylor-Johnson. I would like to meet 10 times. The mentoring couple after their married...Now, this couple is married and gone to Detroit."

PMC Provider #9 was still working out his premarital program, having been in the ministry for five years. He was using six sessions and looking for other materials. He has thought about using a personality inventory.

PMC Provider #9: *"Infant stage. Of course, I have only been a pastor for five years. I am comfortable in what I am doing in that I have six sessions, and I am comfortable with the topics I am covering. What I am not comfortable in is the resources I give to them to read, having a book, so to speak. That is why I talked to you about Eyrych's book or using something like the personality assessment or something like that right there. You know I just need to be better educated on those resources to determine if and when I will use them. I do not think...I am very happy with the length, six sessions spread over usually six to twelve weeks. I prefer at least having a week between them. My philosophy...I am comfortable, but I think it needs to grow."*

PMC Provider #10 at the time of the interview was overseeing the seminary at a mega-church in the South. He used the modules in His book, Three to Get Ready, to acclimate the interns to premarital counseling. He assigned each of them to do actual counseling with one couple. He has considered putting together a multidimensional program utilizing various mediums: the Internet, videotapes, audiotapes, and a copy of a workbook.

PMC Provider #10: *"I think another way that the seminary could approach it is similar to what we are going to do by offering an internship program at our church. We are going to have 10 interns, and I have a significant part in that. And, one of the parts I would like to do is 'The Man, His Marriage, and Ministry.' I will create a workbook that will have each of these components and exercises that can be done with their spouses, using some of the stuff in premarital counseling. I will require them to read my book on premarital counseling just so I know they will have been exposed to what is available. What I would*

propose to do in this program, since we do a lot of premarital counseling, being a rather large church, and we do a lot of it for other churches, too. Everyone who goes through the internship program will be assigned to do premarital counseling with a couple. I will teach them the material and prep them for it, but they will have to work with the couples. So by the time they walk away from the internship, they will have a rich experience to process. Another idea came to mind as we were talking earlier today, and that is I can put together a multidimensional program, and perhaps, make it available on the Internet. I could take what I normally do in a seminar format and package it with videotapes, audiotapes, and a copy of my workbook and simply call it, A Pastor's Guide to Premarital Counseling."

PMC Provider #11 was from a mega-church and had a more structured program. He used PREPARE. A therapist might interpret the results. They covered the traditional content. He required homework and reading books. There were also two post-wedding follow up sessions.

PMC Provider #11: *"The way it works is if someone wants to be married by a pastor on staff, then they need to set up a meeting with the pastor. It could be me, could be someone else who is on staff. They set up the first meeting. At the first meeting, they fill out forms. We get information on them. That is when we talk about their spiritual life if we do not know them real well. It is sort of an introduction, get to know each other, get them thinking about certain things in a session--how did you meet, how did you fall in love, talk a little bit about your family of origin, what did you learn positive, what did you learn negative from your families' marriages that you saw. Usually there are three or four questions that I will use just to begin to get a feel for where they are, where the relationship is, and those kinds of things. If I feel comfortable about that, I mean about them after that first interview, then I will say your next step is to call either--I give them a choice--someone on staff who is a therapist or a couple in the church, I will give them their name, and they are going to give you the PREPARE. They will then meet with you two or three times afterwards to go over*

the results of it and the one option is sort of a one-person, a therapist will meet with you for two to three sessions afterwards and that is going to be a little bit more counseling kind of stuff, or you have the option of meeting with another older couple who will talk with you couple to couple about the same things but the feel and the attitude and the culture will be a little different. What they will do then is not just go over the ENRICH but they will also talk about the biblical dimensions of marriage and what they need to be aware of, what they have learned. Before I send them on to that meeting, I neglected to say something, I will give them one or two books to read that, depending upon my talk with them, I think would be of value. It just depends upon what I think their needs are and what would be most helpful. Then I say after that meeting with...after the person that you are meeting with or the couple you are meeting with gives you the green light and you are done, then you call me and then we will set up two to three additional meetings. One of those meetings will be to actually plan the wedding itself, the ceremony, but the other two will be to follow-up on things that happened there, to find out what their needs are, to talk about the materials that I have had them read, and just to sort of go from there. Then there are going to be two post-marriage follow-ups. We try to do one at three months and one at either six or nine months."

PMC Provider #12 has been involved in a large church. He helped design an extensive premarital counseling program called 'Right Start'. It was an intense program requiring the training of lay mentors who meet four times during a ten-week period (Elia, 1959; Most, 1981; Most & Guernsey, 1983, Harvey, 1977). Couples are required to read a couple of books, complete homework assignments, cover the basic premarital content, and complete both the Myers-Briggs and PREPARE.

PMC Provider #12: *"Well, this is going to get into some of your sub-questions because maybe a little personal history would be helpful here. When I was a singles pastor in Philadelphia from 1980 to 1985, I was about through the ministry as well as my D.Min. work at Westminster to develop a divorce recovery program and we call that 'Fresh Start.'*

A follow-up to that appeared fairly quickly after getting that started, a logical follow-up to that was to start a premarital program. Church of the Savior was a fairly decent size at that time. There were about 1200 people, and we started with what we called the ‘Right Start’ because ‘Fresh Start’ and I so I had to do the research and planning to put together that program and that continued to develop and has created a number of different variations on that theme. They still do a ‘Right Start’ at Church of the Savior, and about five other churches I think now are doing types of seminars built off of that kind of a model, but I would develop a model around a very similar frame of reference in the way that we train. What that program does is it trains lay mentors to meet with couples four times during a 10-week period, and then the couples are also taking 10 two-hour classes and read two to three books in that 10-week period of time so that they have classroom assignments, personal assignments individually, assignments together as a couple and then assignments in meeting with an experienced mentor couple. I would include in that the use of the PREPARE inventory or the PREPARE MC. I would include in that the use of most likely the Myers-Briggs, and then the course would cover communication and conflict or communication skills, conflict resolution skills, finances, sexuality, and sex dynamics,. It would include initial dynamics of childbearing and child rearing issues. This is the premarital. It would include the whole dynamic of the biblical concept of what is marriage and marriage as a covenant relationship as well as the biblical concepts of role relationships in the marriage. So those would be minimal things.”

The participants’ approaches to premarital counseling ranged widely from the simple to the complex. From their descriptions, it seemed that the majority of them covered the basic content matter of marriage preparation. Few used assessment tools and inventories. Those that talked about the number of hours and sessions suggested that were conducting a minimum of four sessions and as many as 10. Six were using popular premarital counseling programs on some level or another. Four talked about either using mentoring couples, but

only one was doing so at the time of the interview. The researcher wondered how diverse their premarital counseling ministries might be if they had had similar exposure to materials and training experiences during seminary and their internship. Furthermore, he also was curious to know how effective their marriage preparation ministries actually were.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS

Historically, clergy have been the primary providers of premarital counseling services. Yet, over the past five decades, while limited research has been conducted on premarital counseling programs, even less research has been targeted toward the understanding of the preparation needs of the providers. The findings of this qualitative research project may have positive implications toward this end. They may offer valuable insights to the seminaries and the churches that seek to equip candidates for the ministry in prewedding counseling. They may also have an impact on continuing education in marriage preparation. This study listened to the lived experience of 12 seasoned providers of premarital counseling. Their responses supplied verbal data that amplified and expanded on previous quantitative research on the preparation needs of pastors in premarital counseling (Buikema, 1999; Jones & Stahmann, 1994).

What are the educational and experiential training needs of clergy in premarital counseling? The researcher's earlier study raised this question in a limited way in conjunction with a broader project on premarital counseling, and this research project sought to continue the journey of trying to answer it (Buikema, 1999).

In the process of collecting and evaluating the participants' responses in this study, several domains emerged, leading to multiple conclusions. The first domain to surface was the pastors' inadequate seminary training in premarital counseling. Six of 12 respondents in this project claimed that they did not receive any training in marriage preparation during seminary. The thin descriptions of the remaining six respondents raised serious questions about the depth of the premarital education in seminary. The researcher concluded that the seminaries needed to re-evaluate their curricula and develop quality programs to prepare clergy in premarital counseling. This finding corresponded with the conclusion of the earlier study, in which 86% of the ministers reported that their seminary training proved inadequate

to deliver effective premarital counseling services (Buikema, 1999). Pastors need more formal, in depth training in marriage preparation (Jones & Stahmann, 1994; Summers & Cunningham, 1989).

More research is required to determine specifically what are the deficiencies in seminary education in premarital counseling. And, what is the relationship or connection between the confidence of clergy and their formal pre-marriage preparation training? Why did pastors claim, in study after study reviewed for this project, that they felt incompetent in providing their prewedding ministries (Babb, 1992; Buikema, 1999; Givens, 1976; Hill, 1968; Ipes, 1982; Morris, 1965; Jones & Stahmann, 1994; Loskot, 1993; Schumm & Denton, 1979; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Stewart, 1977; Summers & Cunningham, 1989; Trott, 1990; vom Eigen, 1983; Wiser, 1959)? Would more education and experience in premarital counseling change this feeling? Would equipping them to use a research proven marriage preparation program make a difference in their level of confidence (Trathen, 1995)?

The second domain in this study was about whose responsibility is it to equip ministers in premarital counseling? The finding in this study was that the participants felt that the seminaries were principally responsible for preparing candidates for the ministry in premarital counseling (Buikema, 1999; Jones & Stahmann, 1994; Orthner, 1986a, 1986b; Schumm & Denton, 1979; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Stewart, 1977; vom Eigen, 1983). Eleven of 12 participants asserted this. But, the burden does not rest on the shoulders of the seminaries alone; the respondents also expressed that such training was a shared responsibility. The seminaries, the churches, the denominational agencies, and yes, even the pastors all have a role to fill in the training process (Buikema, 1999; Jones & Stahmann, 1994; Summers & Cunningham, 1989). What is the nature of their respective roles? To summarize one of the respondents, 'the seminary should provide the academic side of premarital counseling training and the church internship the experiential side?' (PMC Provider #2) The respondents intimated that the development of an effective premarital counseling training program would require a

collaborative effort. Additional research is necessary to discern the integral and interrelated nature of the roles of each of the responsible parties.

A third domain to emerge out of this study pertained to the components of a seminary unit in premarital counseling. The respondents claimed that it should be comprised of at least three important components: basic premarital content, relational skill training, and exposure to assessment instruments.

The content component included classic premarital topics: the biblical basis for marriage, communication and conflict resolution, marital expectations, relationship roles, personality issues, sexuality, and parenting skills (Babb, 1992; Buikema, 1999; Eyrich, 1987; Ipes, 1982; Olson, 1983; Prokopchak & Prokopchak, 1994; Rutledge, 1968; Sloan & Harden, 1992; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Stahmann & Salts, 1993; Stanley et al., 1998; Worthington, 1990; Wright, 1992). This led the researcher to conclude that the providers of marriage preparation demonstrated a general knowledge of the basic premarital content, but what was missing was the necessary seminary exposure to them. This corresponds to the results of the researcher's earlier study, in which the respondents claimed that they were not well taught in any of the content areas of premarital counseling (Buikema, 1999). More research needs to be conducted on what should be the content areas of premarital counseling? Are we certain that traditional topics cover the full range of the premarital subjects? Should more consideration be given to the expressed concerns of engaged couples and remarital couples (Schumm & Denton, 1979; Silliman & Schumm, 1989; Silliman, Schumm, & Jurich, 1989; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Stuckey et al., 1986; Williams, 1992)?

A corollary finding was that the respondents expressed the need for more than education in the content aspect of communication and conflict resolution. They felt that it was also important to teach the fundamentals of relational skills: empathy, good listening techniques, and the art of asking the right questions. In addition, they thought that the seminarians should practice these skills with a friend or spouse as part of their training unit in

premarital counseling. Six out of 12 pastors indicated that role-play could be useful in this regard. None of the clergy in the study mentioned any of the major communication skills programs by name like PREP, MCCP, or RE. What is the role of the seminary in exposing them to such programs or similar ones? What relational skills need to be taught to pastors as part of premarital counseling training? Additional research needs to be initiated to determine what relational skills can be efficiently and effectively taught to seminarians and later by the clergy to engaged couples.

Another interesting finding of this study was that many participants repeatedly made reference to assessment instruments, personality inventories, and other investigative tools. In fact, 11 of 12 respondents referred to at least one assessment instrument. The one most often mentioned was the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis (7), followed by PREPARE, (4) and then, Myers-Briggs (2). But, significantly, only two were introduced to any assessment tool during seminary, and that one was the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis. Yet, half of the participants claimed that exposure to assessment tools should be an integral component of premarital counseling. They expressed a willingness and need to be trained in the use of them. In describing their current premarital counseling practices, only four pastors were using any kind of assessment tool. Two were using PREPARE; one was the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis, and one was using Wright's Family History Analysis.

The researcher's earlier study found over half of the informants, or 59.2%, were using some kind of assessment instrument, despite the fact that only about one-third of them were introduced to an assessment tool in seminary (Buikema, 1999). Needless to say, considerable discussion and research needs to be engaged in order to discern the proper place of assessment instruments in premarital counseling training. Which ones should pastors be trained to use and when, in seminary or after seminary? How effective are they? Nearly all of the newer books on premarital counseling for clergy and many journal articles encourage

the use of assessment inventories and personality tests; the question is how to incorporate them as a component of premarital counseling? (Eyrich, 1987; Fournier & Olson, 1986; Giblin, 1994; Hardin & Sloan, 1992; Hawley & Olson, 1995; Larsen & Olson, 1989; Mace, 1986; Mack, 1986; Markey, Micheletto, & Becker, 1997; Olson, 1983, 1998; Parrott III & Parrott, 1997; Rutledge, 1966; Summers & Cunningham, 1989; Stahmann & Salts, 1993; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1987, 1997; Taylor, 1999; Velander, 1993; vom Eigen, 1983; Williams & Jurich, 1995; Worthington, 1990; Wright, 1985, 1992).

One firm conclusion of this study was that professionals should work not just with the churches, but also with the seminaries, to help equip pastors to provide effective premarital counseling ministries. The respondents were unanimous on this point. All 12 agreed. They enthusiastically embraced the idea of including other professionals, such as physicians, financial planners, professional counselors, and lawyers in the marriage preparation process. This finding was in keeping with researcher's previous study in which over 98% of the informants claimed they would tap the expertise of professionals. Furthermore, the literature in the field of premarital counseling widely supports the place of experts in the training and the delivery of premarital counseling (Babb, 1991; Clinebell, 1975, 1996; Giblin, 1994; Hardin & Sloan, 1992; Huff, 1983; Ipes, 1982; Mace, 1972, 1986; Mace & Mace, 1974, 1986; Mack, 1986; McManus, 1993; Morris, 1960; Olson, 1998; Orthner, 1986b; Rutledge, 1996; Schumm & Denton, 1979; Stanley, 1997; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1987, 1997; Stewart, 1977; Summers & Cunningham, 1989; Taylor, 1999; Trott, 1990; vom Eigen, 1983; Worthington, 1990; Wright, 1992).

Another important finding of this research project was the strong desire of the participants to be involved in post-seminary education. They named a number of potential sources for it: the seminaries, the denomination agencies, the local church, community, and the Internet. The pastors in this study enumerated a long list of ways in which the seminary, in particular, could be involved in continuing education, including everything from a formal

program like the D.Min. to a simple monthly alumni newsletter. The respondents often mentioned the seminar format as a possible vehicle for clergy to continue to learn and hone their pastoral knowledges, skills, and ministries. Loskot (1993) discovered that 835 of the priests in her research asserted that they would actively participate in seminars on premarital counseling. A challenge comes with the findings of both studies. What is the most economical way, in terms of time and money, to package continuing education opportunities in premarital counseling and in other ministry areas as well for clergy? Furthermore, there is a need not only to develop such programs, but also to measure their effectiveness over time.

A related finding has to do with the fact that several participants stressed that clergy have a responsibility to pursue continuing education opportunities. Seminary training alone is not sufficient to meet the every changing challenges of the pastoral ministry. For example, a decade ago, very little emphasis in the church was placed on remarital counseling; today, that is beginning to change. With it comes the need for further study, often post-seminary education, in marriage preparation. What was taught in seminary 10 years ago is inadequate to address the special needs of engaged couples in which at least one person has been previously married. That amounts to as many as 40% of those seeking marriage preparation (Kemp, 1982; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997). Interestingly, only one of the participating pastors in this study made any reference to remarital counseling in describing their current marriage preparation ministries. More research needs to be conducted on the place of continuing education and its place in premarital and remarital counseling.

The final finding in this study pertained to the participants' actual practice. The stated purpose of this investigated study was to determine the educational needs of seminarians in premarital counseling. A related question was asked about the current prewedding counseling practices. The purpose of the question was to ascertain what marriage preparation is necessary based on what is or is not taking place in the respondents' actual ministry setting. Each pastor seemed to have a unique approach to marriage

preparation. There was no set pattern or structure to their ministries, outside of them covering the classic premarital topics. Several seemed to be in transition. Half of them or six were utilizing one of the four popular Christian marriage preparation books or workbooks (Eyrich, 1987; Mack, 1986; Parrot & Parrott, 1995; Wright, 1977, 1997). Although 11 of 12 made some reference to an assessment instrument earlier in their interviews, only four pastors were actually using one: PREPARE (2), Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis (1), and Wright's Family of Origin Inventory (1). Two discussed the desire to have mentoring couples; but only one was using them. The researcher wondered how much conformity the participants' premarital counseling programs would have had there been a set marriage preparation curriculum during their seminary training. The participants did not offer any comments about how effective they felt their respective ministries to engaged couples were.

In summary, since pastors continue to provide a significant link between the church and the family, there is a critical need today to better educate and equip them to provide effective premarital counseling during their seminary training and afterwards. Covenant Theological Seminary, as well as other seminaries, needs to evaluate their past and present efforts. They must continue to listen to the voices of the clergy who are on the frontlines and in the trenches of marriage ministries. They must seek to determine what contribution formal seminary education should make to the required training of future candidates for the pastoral ministry and the optional training for existing pastors in premarital and remarital counseling. What influence should the seminaries and other educational institutions exercise over the marriage ministries of the church?

As mentioned previously, there needs to be a cooperative effort between the seminaries, the churches, the denominational agencies and the pastors. And, I would add to the list, the researchers. All of them have a responsibility and a cooperative role to play in providing premarital services to the churches and the community. Perhaps, these parties could collaborate on a comprehensive program, which stresses both practice and theory. The

latter is huge a deficiency in premarital counseling programming (Bagarozzi & Rauen, 1981; Buikema, 1999; Rutledge, 1966; Schumm & Denton, 1980; Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997; Summers & Cunningham, 1989; Trott, 1990).

Students and post-seminary students should be exposed to the current resources, including existing premarital models, content, assessment instruments, and relational skills. Perhaps, a possible class assignment in any course or unit on premarital counseling could require a student or pastor to devise or upgrade an existing premarrriage program.

Pastors, likewise, have a responsibility to work at improving the effectiveness of their own premarital counseling ministries within the church. The seminary may be the primary source for continuing education, but, certainly, it does not have the sole responsibility. Clergy need to take the initiative to avail themselves of the current literature, seminars, and even community/church resource people. Certainly it behooves local pastors to take advantage of seasoned pastors, pastoral counselors, and therapists in their area. Lastly, pastors have an important role to play in providing constructive feedback to the churches, the seminaries, and their respective denominations on how they might enhance the effectiveness of their marriage ministries.

The opportunities for research on clergy and premarital and remarital counseling seem endless. This study shows how little information is available to date on the training needs of clergy in premarital counseling. Research on the effectiveness of existing programs and resources is essential if measurable improvements in the premarital ministries and strategies of the church are going to take place.

In the end, any lasting results will require the cooperative efforts of all parties involved: the pastors, the professionals, the researchers, along with the denominations, the seminaries, and the churches. Collectively, an effective ministry to engaged couples can be provided through the local church and the community to the glory of God!

APPENDIX A. THE PARTICIPANT'S INFORMATION LETTER

May 25, 2000

Dear Friend of Covenant Theological Seminary:

Two summers ago, I sent you a survey on premarital counseling. It was for my dissertation project at the seminary. Dr. Zink and I were working together on trying to upgrade the premarital counseling component of the required M.Div. course on Marriage and Family (CO320) and the elective course in the D.Min. program, Marriage and Family Counseling (DM842).

Enclosed are the findings of the study. I thought you might be interested in a complete copy of the results and discussion section. Therefore, I went through the expense to make you a copy. The pastoral profiles themselves are fascinating, not to mention the data on premarital counseling. Hopefully, it will give you some insight as to what different pastors are doing to provide marriage preparation.

This summer, Lord permitting, I will be conducting additional research as I attempt to finish my Ph.D. in Marriage and Family Therapy at Iowa State University. The earlier research project raised a number of intriguing questions, particularly about the training of pastors in premarital counseling. For instance, 86.4% indicated that their seminary training was inadequate (see. p. 70). Thus, I want to focus this new study specifically on this topic: The Training Experiences of Pastors and Premarital Counseling.

The research approach to the study will be different from the first study. Instead of a survey, I will conduct interviews with pastors. I will call and set up a time to meet with you at your convenience. With your consent, I will tape record the session. The information you provide will be strictly confidential. All tapes will be assigned a number and kept in a locked filing cabinet.

Your involvement is strictly voluntary. I will be calling you at the beginning of June 2000. The project will end by December, 2001. All audiotapes will be erased by January 1, 2002. Upon completion of the project, I plan to publish the results of both studies and fulfill a dream of hosting a seminar on premarital counseling at General Assembly along with some experts in the field.

I will be at General Assembly this June in Tampa, Florida, and would be willing to meet with you there. This would save me an enormous amount of time and money. Please consider prayerfully participating in this study and returning the enclosed card. I trust that this project in some way will better prepare us all and, in particular, the future graduates of Covenant Theological Seminary to provide more effective premarital counseling ministries.

Sincerely yours,

APPENDIX B. THE INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

The Department of Human Development and Family Studies and the Iowa State University Family Therapy Clinic supports protecting human subjects participating in research studies. The following is provided so that you can decide whether you wish to participate in the present study to be used as a part of a student pilot research project. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time.

The purpose of this study is to explore the training experiences of clergy in premarital counseling. Participation in this study may provide you with a sense that you have contributed to increased understanding of how clergy are prepared to provide the premarital counseling ministries in their churches. You may also gain greater insight into others' experiences as a provider of pre-wedding counseling.

There are no anticipated physical, psychological, social, legal, professional, or economic risks or discomforts. However, the potential exists for discomfort that sometimes accompanies social interaction. This study will request your consent and ask you questions during your involvement in an interview.

Your participation in this study is solicited, but strictly voluntary. Please do not hesitate to ask any questions about the study. Confidentiality will be strictly followed, and your name will not be associated in any way with the research findings. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated. If you have further questions regarding your participation in this study, or you wish to have a copy of the results sent to you at the conclusion of the study, please call Dr. Jeffrey K. Buikema at (608) 784-0260 or Dr. Harvey Joanning at (515) 294-5215.

Name of the Participant_____

Signature of the Participant_____

Date_____

APPENDIX C. QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Grand Tour Question

1. Based on your past experience and training, what kind of preparation is necessary for pastors to provide effective premarital counseling?

Mini-Tour Questions

2. What role, if any, do you see the seminaries and theological schools have in equipping pastors to provide premarital counseling? Whose responsibility is it to equip pastors in this area?

3. How would you design a training course or unit of study in premarital counseling for clergy? What major components would you include in it?

4. Describe for me the training that you have received over the years in premarital counseling? Seminary training? Other? How effective has it been?

Sub-Questions

5. What specific content areas do you think should be covered in a training program for pastors in premarital counseling? What about remarital counseling?

6. What specific relational skills should be part of a pastor's training in premarital counseling?

7. What specific assessment instruments or inventories should pastors be trained to use?

8. What role, if any, do you see professionals, such as physicians, marriage and family therapists, financial planners, or other professionals, play in equipping clergy in premarital counseling?

9. What could seminaries do to provide continuing education for pastors in premarital and remarital counseling?

10. How would you describe your current premarital practice or church program?

APPENDIX D. THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE INTERVIEWS

<u>Interview #</u>	<u>Interview Date</u>	<u>Summary Date</u>	<u>Peer Debrief</u>	<u>Member C</u>
Interview 001	06/21/2000	08/05/2001	09/23/2001	10/13/2001
Interview 002	06/21/2000	07/18/2001	09/24/2001	10/17/2001
Interview 003	06/21/2000	06/29/2001	09/24/2001	10/17/2001
Interview 004	06/21/2000	04/18/2001	09/24/2001	10/06/2001
Interview 005	06/21/2000	07/13/2001	09/24/2001	10/08/2001
Interview 006	06/22/2000	06/04/2001	09/24/2001	10/21/2001
Interview 007	06/22/2000	05/11/2001	09/25/2001	10/13/2001
Interview 008	06/22/2000	06/17/2001	09/25/2001	10/09/2001
Interview 009	06/22/2000	07/24/2001	09/25/2001	10/16/2001
Interview 010	06/22/2000	06/12/2001	09/25/2001	10/10/2001
Interview 011	07/11/2001	08/19/2001	09/25/2001	10/19/2001
Interview 012	07/12/2001	08/10/2001	09/25/2001	10/17/2001

APPENDIX E. AN EXAMPLE OF A TRANSCRIPT

Respondent #1
 Interview 001
 6/21/2000
 Reviewed
 08/05/2001
 Summaries
 8/15/2001
 Peer Review
 09/23/01
 Member Check
 10/13/2001

Grand Tour Question

Researcher: Q-1. *“Based on your past experience and training, what kind of preparation do you believe is necessary for pastors to provide effective premarital counseling?”*

PMC Provider #1: *“I think most guys, at least our Presbyterian reformed tradition, are probably well-equipped theologically. I think, at least the guys that I talk to, do a good job in the cognitive, theological training of couples, the biblical basis for marriage, and so forth. I do not think they are nearly as well-prepared to deal with the more relational issues like we were talking about before the interview began on communication issues, financial issues, and so forth and so on. So in that regard, I think that there is a great need for broadening their scope of what is necessary in preparing couples for marriage beyond the cognitive and theological, and I think there needs to be a lot more done on relational training in preparing couples for marriage. So I think there is a lot room for training of pastors in premarital counseling.”*

Researcher: *“Yes, and I would agree with that, too and we will try to flush this out a little bit more.”*

Mini-Tour Questions

Researcher: Q-2. *"If you look at the second one, what role, if any, do you see the seminaries and theological schools have in training ministers to provide premarital counseling? Whose responsibility is it to equip pastors in this vital area?"*

PMC Provider #1: *"Yeah, definitely seminaries and theological schools should view that as part of their necessary equipping of those men going into the pastorate. So, it ought to be at least a portion of some course that for pastoral ministry equips them to know how to prepare couples for premarital counseling. So, I think it is in the role in the seminaries to be doing that effectively as they send them out into their churches. So, I think it lies on their shoulders."*

Researcher: *"So, you think it would be the primary place?"*

PMC Provider #1: *"I do not know where else they would get it, unless they just sort of did it by trying to survive. They would have to initiate to find a person who knows how to do it. If they are not initiating, I do not know how else they would get the training; so I would say yes it does lie in the role of the seminaries."*

Researcher: *"Okay. That's great."*

Researcher: Q-3. *"How would you design a training course of study or a unit in premarital counseling for clergy? What major components would you include in it?"*

PMC Provider #1: *"Well, of course, I think you need to be in agreement as to what biblically and theologically is critical to that couple and their understanding of marriage as God calls them to it and the covenant that is involved and agreeing with their mate before the Lord--before God's people--when they are married, but probably most would know a lot of that anyway based on their training at seminary. I think there also needs to be a lot of training done on some of the other factors that contribute to the breakup of marriages. The whole communication process and what that needs to be in a marriage. I think there needs to be training done as to the whole aspect of life philosophy and their whole viewpoint of what to*

each person in their marriage is necessary for them to enjoy life together, what values do they hold, and how to flesh that out. I think there needs to be training done along those lines of the financial ramifications in marriage and the bickering that goes on often with couples with finances. I think that there needs to be training done in preparing the couples to identify personality quirks and propensities. There are a lot of tools out there to use to do that, and I think they ought be equipping the pastors with those tools. For instance, like the PREPARE tool, but I think they can equip them with a number of tools that are good and useful. I think that there needs to be training done in making them aware of the various materials already done, that they do need to reinvent the wheel necessarily. What materials, either workbooks or books that have been published, would be good guidelines or outlines for premarital counseling? I think there needs to be a variety of resources they give them along those lines while they are there."

Researcher: "Well, you have mentioned a number of things that others have mentioned, too. If a unit was done along this line, it seems to me that it would take more than a day or two of what you are describing."

PMC Provider #1: "Definitely, yeah, much longer."

Researcher: Q-4. "Let's move onto the next question. Describe for me the training that you have received over the years in premarital counseling and how effective has it been? And then, eventually we will get to what your seminary training has been like if you want to include that in, that's fine."

PMC Provider #1: "I had no help at seminary. I went to Covenant Theological Seminary and graduated in 1990, and there was nothing that I took there that prepared me for that. The training that I have gotten has not been training. It is just what I have learned to do to survive. I think there has been a lot of what I have done in terms of the more broad counseling thing has been what I have gleaned from what used to be the Institute of Biblical Counseling in Charlottesville--a lot of their week-long seminars, actually hosted their seminar

in our church and have read a lot from them, so that is a broader framework. Not necessarily specific to premarital counseling, but that is the sort of framework that I have been helped by the most. The rest of what I have done is by my own, just looking at material and designing material and determining in our church what we would require of couples that the pastors would marry; and so a lot of that has been done by the pastors together agreeing on that, but mostly by my own looking at other materials and then designing it with any adjustments we want to make for what we wanted to do. So, we did not want just a two or three session time with couples. We wanted it to be longer than that, so that when we left that time with the couples we felt we could say we have done all we can do to prepare them for their wedding and their marriage, and so that is what I have done. It has not been training. It has been what I had to do to conscientiously provide the counseling I felt they needed.”

Researcher: “Did you have a chance to look at what I sent back to you?”

PMC Provider #1: “Some of that.”

Researcher: “Because it is really interesting. If you look at the vast majority of people who graduated between 1975 and 1995, they expressed the same thing you have. They were not equipped to go out and provide effective premarital counseling ministries in their churches. They have all found their own ways of designing their programs and collecting materials and finding what works. It is pretty fascinating when you think about it. Especially when you think that we are still the primary providers and that responsibility falls to us, and yet we are not equipped to go out and do it.”

PMC Provider #1: “Yeah, it is a survival...usually a survival curriculum. They have to go out and find their own curriculum.”

Researcher: “Yes, interesting. And the institute that you mentioned was what again?”

PMC Provider #1: “The Institute of Biblical Counseling.”

Researcher: “Okay, sure, I get their materials.”

PMC Provider #1: “Yes, it is the group connected with Dan Allender.”

Researcher: *"But I still get their letter from them, but I do not have the time to read it."*

PMC Provider #1: *"From Allender? He is now at Western in Oregon. I forget what it is called, but anyway."*

Sub-Questions

Researcher: Q-5. *"I am going to ask some more specific questions now. In terms of content areas, what do think needs to be covered in training? I know that you have touched on this to some degree, but what are the content areas that need to be covered in a training program for ministers in premarital counseling? And then also a follow-up question, what about remarital counseling, because we seem to be doing more of that? In fact, they say up to 40 percent of the weddings now being done in the country at least one partner has been previously married. But in terms of content, what areas do you try to cover?"*

PMC Provider #1: *"The creation ordinance of marriage--how God has designed marriage to be. I think that needs to be framed in the pre-fall understanding of relationships being man and woman and God's call of them to become one. There needs to be an understanding, I think, of the whole role of God's view of family in biblical accounts and how God used families is the main institution of creating a godly culture and the role they play in the propagation of that culture biblically. I think that is critical and the whole view of God's call upon Israel and also to the current day of God calling for the parents to raise a godly generation, how God used that, and what happens when they do not fulfill that role."*

"I think that there needs to be a lot of work done on communication. A lot of the whole course is designed around communication. Either understanding the principles of it, which would involve not only good daily communication that is a good prescription to avoid problems down the road, but also when there are problems, how to resolve conflicts. Conflict resolution in marriage I think is key to really good communication."

"I think the whole financial aspect is critical of that family and even before that the whole standard of living issues and values in standard of living issues is that couples can bring

in much different views of standard of living and values that are money-driven—ultimately money-driven.”

“I think the roles that God sees in man and woman in marriage and what those roles are, particularly in our day and age where those roles are in a tremendous state of flux. About men understanding their role of headship and women in their role as support, submissive, but...”

“And I think the other issue, which is critical in the whole thing, is understanding the whole relationship redemptively that it has in their own lives and how that impacts the relationship with one another. That is to say that if a man does not understand God's call to them to love their wife as Christ loves the church, then their ability to love their wife that way is going to be significantly less. A lot of it is related to that they do not understand very well the whole redemptive picture of God's unconditional love for them.”

“You cannot give unconditional love if you have not tasted it and understand it, so it is both the cognitive and the emotive experience of redemption, and to the degree that they have experienced that, that is the degree of which they will be able to give that to the other person. I think that is critical. So, there is a real gospel undercurrent to the whole understanding of marriage, and if that is not there, there are going to be problems. I think the whole aspect of personality distinction and appreciation needs to be brought out in the marriage, usually by some tool, like the PREPARE tool, you know where they can really see their heads up on each other's propensities, their strengths and weaknesses and there is not a ... you can head off collisions if they can be prepared to what is ahead based on what they have said about themselves. Those are, I guess, most of the things I would want to do.”

Researcher: “I noticed that you have mentioned PREPARE a couple of times. You found that to be a very effective tool?”

PMC Provider #1: “Yeah, I mean where I was before, I kind of worked as the tandem with John Kiebler, who was a marriage and family therapist as well as an M.Div. ordained

minister, and so we would work together, and so it was required that they do that and then sit down with him in the course, and he sees them through understanding the red flags and making sure that they are interpreting the results in a healthy and preparatory way for their marriage. And if he sees major red flags, to make sure that he is available to them to work that through, after he points out to them there are some real collisions here, and you need to be prepared for them if you are not already."

Researcher: "I found that to be effective as well. I use that quite often, in fact. It is a springboard for much of what I do, just because it gives them something concrete to see and to deal with. This seems to be very well-received by anyone I have ever used it with. Has that been your experience too?"

PMC Provider #1: "Yes, I never heard of it being rejected as a tool. Sobering, helpful."

Researcher: "What about remarital counseling? Any other things that you might add by way of dealing with them in terms of content?"

PMC Provider #1: "That certainly is different. The tool that I usually use with couples is Before You Say I Do by Wright, and it has its weaknesses, but the strength of it, I think, is it is highly communicative. And you really have to interact a lot on the material that is required in the exercises, which I think is a healthy part. You know, yeah, the thing that I usually d-- trying to get back to remarriage issues-- it depends on why they are remarrying. Whether if it is the spouse is deceased is one thing. If it is a divorce, then I have used a lot The Marriage Builder by Crabb. I just like it. It is a little different than most tools. It is not a how to, things are the 16 things you need to do to have an effective marriage, which Wright is a little bit weak on, I mean what Wright does a lot of. You know, you tend to think that if I do all these technique kind of things then, I will survive, but what I like about Crabb is his book is conceptual and is more philosophical, attitudinal, and I like that a lot. And that is what I often use to go back and think through what Crabb says about foundations of the relationship, particularly issues of goals and

desires and administrating manipulation, which I like a lot. I have found a lot of couples, if there are divorces, it is often due to score keeping and tensions and unresolved issues that have their roots in attitudinal, 'I am in this for what I can get out of it.' And then they start magnifying faults in one another, keeping score, and they end up with a fish line that you cannot untangle; they refuse to untangle in the biblical way and they divorce, so that is what I like to use."

Researcher: "That seems to be a large challenge right now because there is so much more of it than I remember, even years ago. And now I noticed it even in the research—in the books that are being written—there are huge components just on particular issues for couples where at least one person has been divorced. And how the church addresses that. Whereas, in the literature that has been put out by the church, it has not been addressed very much at all, so you can just image what seminarians receive by way of that."

PMC Provider #1: "Very little."

Researcher: Q-6. "In addition, what specific relational skills, if any, should be part of a pastor's training in premarital counseling? Now you have alluded to the need for that, but the specific relational skills or enhancement skills that you have found to be helpful. What could be done by way of helping students going through seminary in this regard?"

PMC Provider #1: "Well, it would great if they, themselves, would go through an assessment of their own marriage, so that they are ministering out of the strength of being weak. I mean, if there are issues in their marriage, it will make them much more effective counselors for getting help—being better communicators in their relational skills."

Researcher: "So, helping them with conflict resolution skills and communication skills."

PMC Provider #1: "Exactly. So, I mean if they have anything, that I think you need to see how they relate to their own exposed needs and if they refuse to or do not respond very well, the chance of them being good and excellent in doing it with couples that struggle is not very excellent. They will not do nearly as well if they have not walked down that road themselves."

So, that would be one thing I would say. I think again there just needs to be... I am going to underscore what I have already said... I think there really needs to be an underscoring of the need for them to understand the gospel and redemption themselves, and I think there is a lot going on now within conservative circles of rediscovering the gospel for the church, which I think is a very healthy thing. And just a basic underlying sense that can be in the church past and that the gospel is the place where you start from, and then you grow out from that and you learn more challenging things--things that are more important than the gospel. I think if they have the idea they are in a position where the real weakness can emerge. I think, instead, the truth of the matter is in Christian living, you do exactly the opposite. You start on the outer edges of the gospel, and you move more and more into the center of understanding, emotively, not just cognitively. What it means to be justified by grace. What does it mean to be a son or daughter of God, and if they do not have that in their matrix and in their grid, they are not going to love each other redemptively; so I think it is critical that they learn to love each other redemptively and providing, as I Peter 4 says, 'the covering of grace,' and so they have to live each day doing that to the other. It seems to me with a lot of marriages you begin to see a slow change from 'I'm in this for what I can give to it' to 'I'm in this for what I can get out of it' and then when that begins to happen and they cross that line over to the other side, they begin to keep score and keep track of hurts that the other has provided them, the pain that they feel, and unforgiveness, and disappointments, and then you get that fishing line configuration where they just have so many issues. But there is going to be conflict and I think the relational skills need to grow--is number #1. When do they make a decision that I have a conflict that I must have resolved? What is the conflict that deserves resolution? When do I tell the other person that this is worth fighting over, that it is worth resolving? I think they need to know when that is, and then, number 2, when the other person presents that; they need to understand how to resolve it. How do we resolve the conflict that we have without getting defensive and taking it personally and shutting down? How do we keep our emotional doors open and deal with the

conflict redemptively? That we hear each other and work through it and make resolutions. I think that is very critical. I think there needs to be a lot of help giving couples about where there are predictable trouble spots in a marriage that you can anticipate to arise. For instance, when children enter the relationship—at least I know from me and I have met many couples that felt ready to be a parent—but you were not ready for the intrusion of that new person into your marriage, and it changed the dynamics of relating drastically; and I do not find many couples are ready for that and knowing how to cope with that when that happens.”

Researcher: “It is interesting that you would bring that up because one of the books that just came out in the market...is what is called the Christian version of PREP. Now they have come out with another one for couples with their first child, and they have several chapters. I am going to send you the other book, but I will reference this other one, too, to you because there are several chapters on dealing with stress and parenting and so forth that they have added, and that whole book is just on resolving conflicts, but it also gets into these core concepts. What are the issues that are coming up at the different marital stages, like you just mentioned children? That is a major adjustment, and we know it is one of the three times in which couples are more likely to divorce.”

PMC Provider #1: “At the introduction of children?”

Researcher: “Yes, first child. That’s when affairs take place, etc. Because of the reapportioning of energies and how you meet the needs of the child, your husband, etc...and a lot of fascinating dynamics that are involved in that.”

PMC Provider #1: “That is great. I would like to see that. Anyway, does that help?”

Researcher: Q-7. “Sure, definitely. What specific assessment tools, instruments, and/or inventories should pastors be trained to use? What about assessment tools, instruments, and inventories? You mentioned PREPARE. Are there any other things that you have found helpful?

PMC Provider #1: *"That is the only one I have ever used, [Researcher]. I do not really have a lot of other...I mean, I have used other...Well no, I can tell you a few others actually. DISC has one for couples that our church used recently, and I like DISC and it is another grid, and I think it was a very helpful tool. Is it better than PREPARE? Well, probably not, because PREPARE is like you said it is for pre-married couples. DISC is more for couples. It may be something better to go through once you have been married for a little while, or for people that are getting remarried, it is probably a better tool."*

Researcher: *"Doesn't it look more at a person's style, the way he approaches things?"*

PMC Provider #1: *"Yes."*

Researcher: *"In fact, I think at the Assessment Center...everyone who went through the Assessment Center for church planning had to take DISC."*

PMC Provider #1: *"Did they do the marriage DISC?"*

Researcher: *"Yes."*

PMC Provider #1: *"I think it is decent tool, but probably not as a effective with pre-married couples because DISC is more for people who have been living together and have issues that they need to resolve."*

Researcher: Q-8. *"What role, if any, do you see other professionals such as physicians, marriage and family therapists, financial planners or other professionals playing in equipping clergy in premarital counseling? Not helping in a premarital program in the church, but in their training for seminarians. Do you see any role of these other professionals playing a role in this kind of training?"*

PMC Provider #1: *"Yeah, I think so. I mean, I think in a seminary course the interplay that physicians might have on sexual dysfunctional issues are very important, and I have had couples that have that early on-- right after they are married--and how they cope with that. Is it a legitimate dysfunction? I think that would be a great help. Therapists would be tremendous resources, I think, in dealing with what comes into their offices and why are they there. Why do*

couples come a year after they have been married or two years after they are married? I think that most pastors are probably real simplistic as to what does come into those offices and the extent to which they need not just a short-term dose, but a long-term therapy to deal with the issues that are involved in that. Financial planners, I think, would be great. I think, to give a broad scope on financial planning with biblical parameters would be tremendous. I think all of those would be great resources to a seminary course. Great resources."

Researcher: "Even having someone come in and equip them to use PREPARE?"

PMC Provider #1: "Yes, oh yeah, absolutely."

Researcher: "Because that seems like that is what a lot of them end up using. In fact, the number 1 instrument or assessment tool was PREPARE, but they learned it after seminary, not during seminary."

Researcher: Q-9. "What could seminaries do to provide continuing education for pastors in premarital counseling? I will give you a case in point. When I did my D.Min. in marriage and family, there was nothing mentioned relative to premarital counseling until I brought it up."

PMC Provider #1: "None that I know of, but I do not know of anything that is being done."

Researcher: "What could we possibly do? Do you think there is a need, an ongoing need, for education or how would you look at it?"

PMC Provider #1: "First of all, I think there is a great need within our own tradition. I would like to have materials specifically geared with a covenantal redemptive view of marriage and...written for our own community, and, to my knowledge, there is nothing out there that is written with that theological framework in mind, so, covenantal framework would be a tremendous tool--because the whole heart of marriage is covenantal. First of all, God's covenant with us, and that, as the basis of our covenant with one another. If any of them are done like that it would be specifically geared toward this particular covenantal reformed

position... I think we need to have some, even like the pre-assembly seminars to have an opportunity for guys to come that ties this whole thing together as to what pastors can do to counsel and then do any follow-up counseling they might need to do post-marriage. I think that would be a great help."

Researcher: "I have always thought that that is the kind of thing that would happen in these seminars at General Assembly from all different perspectives and different subjects and topics, and so often it seems like the focus is more on the church growth aspect of things, not so much on some of the practical things where we live day to day. Have you ever heard of Eyrich's book? Eyrich did a book. He was a graduate, I believe, of Covenant, and he does have a resource out that does have some of that frame in there of the covenant redemptive side of things. So, I thought I would mention that to you."

PMC Provider #1: "What is the material?"

Researcher: "His last name is Eyrich."

PMC Provider #1: "He was at Covenant. Now he is at Briarwood. Is that where he is?"

Researcher: "I am not sure where he is right now, but I think that you are correct....and there is also Wayne Mack, who has done some work, too, along that line."

PMC Provider #1: "Yeah, I guess I did know that."

Researcher: "Eventually I am going to put them all together-- a listing of resources when I send things out-- but I hope to hold a seminar here someday and bring in some of these people."

PMC Provider #1: "That would be great."

Researcher: "So, that is the long-term plan. I was hoping to do it this year, but everything has taken longer to get done."

PMC Provider #1: "How long do most guys spend? What you have found in your research...?"

Researcher: *"You mean in terms of sessions?"*

PMC Provider #1: *"How many sessions?"*

Researcher: *"Six to 10."*

PMC Provider #1: *"Six to 10, okay."*

Researcher: *"Which is pretty common. In the 60's it was one, possibly two. Wedding, and then they got into a few other things, and all that will be put in the final project. I already did it for Covenant Seminary, my dissertation, but I am going to put in a much larger resource and make it available. But six to 10, but it is not uncommon to see 10 to 12 sessions by people today. It just takes a lot of work. Oh, this is an interesting question. This goes back to your practice."*

Researcher: Q-10. *"Some of it you probably have already alluded to, but how would you describe your current premarital counseling practice or program in the church that you are in?"*

PMC Provider #1: *"Well, currently we use Before You Say I Do and we also couple that with a writing of a covenant, a marriage covenant, and they have to each week add to the covenant and it coincides with the chapters in the book by Wright; so the final result is I have to have a written covenant that they write out, which involves having to think through values of their family and their marriage, standards and expectations they have of one another. It is not meant to be hyper-detailed, but detailed enough so that their expectations of their relationship and their marriage and their family have been discussed and thought through and agreed on, so those are the two things that we do currently. I used to use a PREPARE test, but I have not been trained to interpret the results yet. I have not been through the training, but did use to do that as well. I did that on the front end; before they started, they took that. So, I will meet with them and discuss those chapters in the book and oversee them making a covenant with one another. That is what we do currently."*

Researcher: *"That's great. It is nice to hear that somebody is trying to use the whole concept of the covenant that is foundational in scripture in order to do premarital counseling, which is basically a first. I have heard somebody articulate that, but again it is foundational and fundamental."*

PMC Provider #1: *"Yes, I think so. I agree."*

Researcher: Q-11. *"Just a last question because this is an evolving process. Can you think of any questions I left out or that you would have asked or not have asked in terms of the training of pastors to provide premarital counseling?"*

PMC Provider #1: *"I do not think so. I cannot think of anything."*

Researcher: *"Okay. You think we have covered everything?"*

PMC Provider #1: *"I think so."*

Researcher: *"I really appreciate your willingness to do this."*

PMC Provider #1: *"You're welcome. I am glad to do it. Hope it helps."*

APPENDIX F. AN EXAMPLE OF A TRANSCRIPT SUMMARY

<p style="text-align: center;">Grand Tour Question</p> <p>Researcher: Q-1. <i>“Based on your past experience and training, what kind of preparation do you believe is necessary for pastors to provide effective premarital counseling?”</i></p>	
<p>PMC Provider #1: <i>“I think most guys, at least our Presbyterian reformed tradition, are probably well-equipped theologically. I think, at least the guys that I talk to, do a good job in the cognitive, theological training of couples, the biblical basis for marriage, and so forth. I do not think they are nearly as well-prepared to deal with the more relational issues like we were talking about before the interview began on communication issues, financial issues, and so forth and so on. So in that regard, I think that there is a great need for broadening their scope of what is necessary in preparing couples for marriage beyond the cognitive and theological, and I think there needs to be a lot more done on relational training in preparing couples for marriage. So I think there is a lot room for training of pastors in premarital counseling.”</i></p>	<p>PMC=Premarital Counseling</p> <p>Researcher: <i>“Pastors in the Presbyterian Reform tradition are well-trained in the theological, biblical and cognitive approaches to PMC, but not in the relational aspects. There is a need to expand PMC training for pastors.”</i></p>
<p>Researcher: <i>“Yes, and I would agree with that, too, and we will try to flesh this out a little bit more.”</i></p>	

Mini-Tour Questions	
<p>Researcher: Q-2. <i>"If you look at the second one, what role, if any, do you see the seminaries and theological schools have in training ministers to provide premarital counseling. Whose responsibility is it to equip pastors in this vital area?"</i></p>	
<p>PMC Provider #1: <i>"Yeah, definitely seminaries and theological schools should view that as part of their necessary equipping of those men going into the pastorate. So, it ought to be at least a portion of some course that for pastoral ministry equips them to know how to prepare couples for premarital counseling. So, I think it is in the role in the seminaries to be doing that effectively as they send them out into their churches. So, I think it lies on their shoulders."</i></p>	<p>Researcher: "Seminaries are responsible to train pastors in PMC. Without pastors being proactive in pursuing their own training after seminary, where else would they get it besides the seminary?"</p>
<p>Researcher: <i>"So, you think it would be the primary place?"</i></p>	
<p>PMC Provider #1: <i>"I do not know where else they would get it, unless they just sort of did it by trying to survive. They would have to initiate to find a person who knows how to do it. If they are not initiating, I do not know how else they would get the training; so I would say yes it does lie in the role of the seminaries."</i></p>	<p>Researcher: "Without pastors initiating post-seminary education in PMC, where would they get training if the seminaries did not train them? The responsibility lies with the seminary."</p>
<p>Researcher: <i>"Okay. That's great."</i></p>	
<p>Researcher: Q-3. <i>"How would you design a training</i></p>	

<p><i>course of study or a unit in premarital counseling for clergy? What major components would you include in it?"</i></p>	
<p><i>PMC Provider #1: "Well, of course, I think you need to be in agreement as to what biblically and theologically is critical to that couple and their understanding of marriage as God calls them to it and the covenant that is involved and agreeing with their mate before the Lord--before God's people--when they are married, but probably most would know a lot of that anyway based on their training at seminary. I think there also needs to be a lot of training done on some of the other factors that contribute to the breakup of marriages. The whole communication process and what that needs to be in a marriage. I think there needs to be training done as to the whole aspect of life philosophy and their whole viewpoint of what to each person in their marriage is necessary for them to enjoy life together, what values do they hold, and how to flesh that out. I think there needs to be training done along those lines of the financial ramifications in marriage and the bickering that goes on often with couples with finances. I think that there needs to be training done in preparing the couples to identify personality quirks and propensities. There are a lot of tools out there to use to do that, and I think they ought be equipping the pastors with those tools. For instance,</i></p>	<p>Researcher: "Pastors should be trained in the biblical and theological foundations of marriage."</p> <p>"Pastors need to be educated in the factors of marital breakdown."</p> <p>"They need training in communication, finances, and personality issues."</p> <p>They need training to identify personality issues.</p> <p>"They need training in various assessment tools."</p>

<p><i>like the <u>PREPARE</u> tool, but I think they can equip them with a number of tools that are good and useful. I think that there needs to be training done in making them aware of the various materials already done, that they do need to reinvent the wheel necessarily. What materials, either workbooks or books that have been published, would be good guidelines or outlines for premarital counseling? I think there needs to be a variety of resources they give them along those lines while they are there."</i></p>	<p>Researcher: "They need to be exposed to and provided with the various tools and PMC materials."</p>
<p>Researcher: "Well, you have mentioned a number of things that others have mentioned, too. If a unit was done along this line, it seems to me that it would take more than a day or two of what you are describing."</p>	<p>Researcher: "The PMC training described above will require more than two days."</p>
<p>PMC Provider #1: "Definitely, yeah, much longer."</p>	<p>Researcher: "Considerably longer!"</p>
<p>Researcher: Q-4. "Let's move onto the next one question. Describe for me the training that you have received over the years in premarital counseling, and how effective has it been? And then, eventually we will get to what your seminary training has been like that in, that's fine."</p>	
<p>PMC Provider #1: "I had no help at seminary. I went to Covenant Theological Seminary and graduated in 1990, and there was nothing that I took there that prepared me for that. The training that I have gotten</p>	<p>Researcher: "I received no training in PMC at Covenant Theological Seminary. I have not had any formal</p>

<p><i>has not been training. It is just what I have learned to do to survive. I think there has been a lot of what I have done in terms of the more broad counseling thing has been what I have gleaned from what used to be the Institute of Biblical Counseling in Charlottesville—a lot of their week-long seminars, actually hosted their seminar in our church and have read a lot from them, so that is a broader framework. Not necessarily specific to premarital counseling, but that is the sort of framework that I have been helped by the most. The rest of what I have done is by my own, just looking at material and designing material and determining in our church what we would require of couples that the pastors would marry; and so a lot of that has been done by the pastors together agreeing on that, but mostly by my own looking at other materials and then designing it with any adjustments we want to make for what we wanted to do. So, we did not want just a two or three session time with couples. We wanted it to be longer than that, so that when we left that time with the couples we felt we could say we have done all we can do to prepare them for their wedding and their marriage, and so that is what I have done. It has not been training. It has been what I had to do to conscientiously provide the counseling I felt they needed.”</i></p>	<p>training in PMC.</p> <p>“I acquired a broad framework from the Institute of Biblical Counseling seminars.”</p> <p>“I designed, with other pastors, the material for couples in our church. It was extensive. We wanted to provide effective PMC.”</p>
<p>Researcher: “Did you have a chance to look at what I</p>	

<i>sent back to you?"</i>	
PMC Provider #1: <i>"Some of that."</i>	
Researcher: <i>"Because it is really interesting. If you look at the vast majority of people who graduated between 1975 and 1995, they expressed the same thing you have. They were not equipped to go out and provide effective premarital counseling ministries in their churches. They have all found their own ways of designing their programs and collecting materials and finding what works. It is pretty fascinating when you think about it. Especially when you think that we are still the primary providers and that responsibility falls to us, and yet we are not equipped to go out and do it."</i>	
PMC Provider #1: <i>"Yeah, it is a survival...usually a survival curriculum. They have to go out and find their own curriculum."</i>	Researcher: "Pastors often use survival curriculum."
Researcher: <i>"Yes, interesting. And the institute that you mentioned was what again?"</i>	
PMC Provider #1: <i>"The Institute of Biblical Counseling."</i>	Researcher: "The Institute of Biblical Counseling"
Researcher: Researcher: <i>"Okay, sure, I get their materials."</i>	
PMC Provider #1: <i>"Yes, it is the group connected with Dan Allender."</i>	Researcher: "The group is connected with Dan Allender."
Researcher: <i>"But I still get their letter from them, but I</i>	

<i>do not have the time to read it."</i>	
PMC Provider #1: <i>"From Allender? He is now at Western in Oregon. I forget what it is called, but anyway."</i>	Researcher: "He is at Western in Oregon."

APPENDIX G. AN EXAMPLE OF THE PEER REVIEW

Grand Tour Question	
<p>Researcher: Q-1. <i>"Based on your past experience and training, what kind of preparation do you believe is necessary for pastors to provide effective premarital counseling?"</i></p>	
<p>PMC Provider #1: <i>"I think most guys, at least our Presbyterian reformed tradition, are probably well-equipped theologically. I think, at least the guys that I talk to, do a good job in the cognitive, theological training of couples, the biblical basis for marriage, and so forth. I do not think they are nearly as well-prepared to deal with the more relational issues like we were talking about before the interview began on communication issues, financial issues, and so forth and so on. So in that regard, I think that there is a great need for broadening their scope of what is necessary in preparing couples for marriage beyond the cognitive and theological, and I think there needs to be a lot more done on relational training in preparing couples for marriage. So I think there is a lot room for training of pastors in premarital counseling."</i></p>	<p>PMC=Premarital Counseling</p> <p>Researcher: "Pastors in the Presbyterian Reform tradition are well-trained in the theological, biblical and cognitive approaches to PMC, but not in the relational aspects. There is a need to expand PMC training for pastors."</p> <p>Peer Reviewer: <i>"Identified more training on communication and financial issues with premarital couples."</i></p>
<p>Researcher: <i>"Yes, and I would agree with that, too, and we will try to flesh this out a little bit more."</i></p>	
Mini Tour Questions	
<p>Researcher: Q-2. <i>"If you look at the second one, what</i></p>	

<p><i>role, if any, do you see the seminaries and theological schools have in training ministers to provide premarital counseling. Whose responsibility is it to equip pastors in this vital area?"</i></p>	
<p><i>PMC Provider #1: "Yeah, definitely seminaries and theological schools should view that as part of their necessary equipping of those men going into the pastorate. So, it ought to be at least a portion of some course that for pastoral ministry equips them to know how to prepare couples for premarital counseling. So, I think it is in the role in the seminaries to be doing that effectively as they send them out into their churches. So, I think it lies on their shoulders."</i></p>	<p><i>Researcher: "Seminaries are responsible to train pastors in PMC. Without pastors being proactive in pursuing their own training after seminary, where else would they get it besides the seminary?"</i></p>
<p><i>Researcher: "So, you think it would be the primary place?"</i></p>	
<p><i>PMC Provider #1: "I do not know where else they would get it, unless they just sort of did it by trying to survive. They would have to initiate to find a person who knows how to do it. If they are not initiating, I do not know how else they would get the training; so I would say yes it does lie in the role of the seminaries."</i></p>	<p><i>Researcher: "Without pastors initiating post-seminary education in PMC, where would they get training if the seminaries did not train them? The responsibility rests with the seminary."</i></p>
<p><i>Researcher: "Okay. That's great."</i></p>	
<p><i>Researcher: Q-3. "How would you design a training course of study or a unit in premarital counseling for clergy? What major components would you include in</i></p>	

it?"	
<p>PMC Provider #1: <i>"Well, of course, I think you need to be in agreement as to what biblically and theologically is critical to that couple and their understanding of marriage as God calls them to it and the covenant that is involved and agreeing with their mate before the Lord--before God's people--when they are married, but probably most would know a lot of that anyway based on their training at seminary. I think there also needs to be a lot of training done on some of the other factors that contribute to the breakup of marriages. The whole communication process and what that needs to be in a marriage. I think there needs to be training done as to the whole aspect of life philosophy and their whole viewpoint of what to each person in their marriage is necessary for them to enjoy life together, what values do they hold, and how to flesh that out. I think there needs to be training done along those lines of the financial ramifications in marriage and the bickering that goes on often with couples with finances. I think that there needs to be training done in preparing the couples to identify personality quirks and propensities. There are a lot of tools out there to use to do that, and I think they ought be equipping the pastors with those tools. For instance, like the <u>PREPARE</u> tool, but I think they can equip them with a number of tools that are good and useful. I think that there needs to be training done in</i></p>	<p>Researcher: "Pastors should be trained in the biblical and theological foundations of marriage."</p> <p>"Pastors need to be educated in the factors of marital breakdown."</p> <p>Peer Reviewer: "PMC needs to include training on assessing spouse's life philosophies and values."</p> <p>"They need training in communication, finances, and personality issues."</p> <p>They need training to identify personality issues.</p> <p>"They need training in various assessment tools."</p>

<p><i>making them aware of the various materials already done, that they do need to reinvent the wheel necessarily. What materials, either workbooks or books that have been published, would be good guidelines or outlines for premarital counseling? I think there needs to be a variety of resources they give them along those lines while they are there."</i></p>	<p>Researcher: "They need to be exposed to and provided with the various tools and PMC materials."</p>
<p>Researcher: <i>"Well, you have mentioned a number of things that others have mentioned, too. If a unit was done along this line, it seems to me that it would take more than a day or two of what you are describing."</i></p>	<p>Researcher: "The PMC training described above will require more than two days."</p>
<p>PMC Provider #1: <i>"Definitely, yeah, much longer."</i></p>	<p>Researcher: "Considerably longer!"</p>
<p>Researcher: Q-4. <i>"Let's move onto the next one question. Describe for me the training that you have received over the years in premarital counseling, and how effective has it been? And then, eventually we will get to what your seminary training has been like that in, that's fine."</i></p>	
<p>PMC Provider #1: <i>"I had no help at seminary. I went to Covenant Theological Seminary and graduated in 1990, and there was nothing that I took there that prepared me for that. The training that I have gotten has not been training. It is just what I have learned to do to survive. I think there has been a lot of what I have done in terms of the more broad counseling thing has been what I have</i></p>	<p>Researcher: "I received no training in PMC at Covenant Theological Seminary. I have not had any formal training in PMC."</p>

<p><i>gleaned from what used to be the Institute of Biblical Counseling in Charlottesville—a lot of their week-long seminars, actually hosted their seminar in our church and have read a lot from them, so that is a broader framework. Not necessarily specific to premarital counseling, but that is the sort of framework that I have been helped by the most. The rest of what I have done is by my own, just looking at material and designing material and determining in our church what we would require of couples that the pastors would marry; and so a lot of that has been done by the pastors together agreeing on that, but mostly by my own looking at other materials and then designing it with any adjustments we want to make for what we wanted to do. So, we did not want just a two or three session time with couples. We wanted it to be longer than that, so that when we left that time with the couples we felt we could say we have done all we can do to prepare them for their wedding and their marriage, and so that is what I have done. It has not been training. It has been what I had to do to conscientiously provide the counseling I felt they needed.”</i></p>	<p><i>“I acquired a broad framework from the Institute of Biblical Counseling seminars.”</i></p> <p><i>“I designed, with other pastors, the material for couples in our church. It was extensive. We wanted to provide effective PMC.”</i></p>
<p><i>Researcher: “Did you have a chance to look at what I sent back to you?”</i></p>	
<p><i>PMC Provider #1: “Some of that.”</i></p>	
<p><i>Researcher: “Because it is really interesting. If you look at the vast majority of people who graduated between 1975</i></p>	

<p><i>and 1995, they expressed the same thing you have. They were not equipped to go out and provide effective premarital counseling ministries in their churches. They have all found their own ways of designing their programs and collecting materials and finding what works. It is pretty fascinating when you think about it. Especially when you think that we are still the primary providers and that responsibility falls to us, and yet we are not equipped to go out and do it."</i></p>	
<p>PMC Provider #1: <i>"Yeah, it is a survival...usually a survival curriculum. They have to go out and find their own curriculum."</i></p>	<p>Researcher: "Pastors often use survival curriculum."</p>
<p>Researcher: <i>"Yes, interesting. And the institute that you mentioned was what again?"</i></p>	
<p>PMC Provider #1: <i>"The Institute of Biblical Counseling."</i></p>	
<p>Researcher: Researcher: <i>"Okay, sure, I get their materials."</i></p>	
<p>PMC Provider #1: <i>"Yes, it is the group connected with Dan Allender."</i></p>	
<p>Researcher: <i>"But I still get their letter from them, but I do not have the time to read it."</i></p>	
<p>PMC Provider #1: <i>"From Allender? He is now at Western in Oregon. I forget what it is called, but anyway."</i></p>	

APPENDIX H. AN EXAMPLE OF A MEMBER CHECK

<p>Jeff: Q-8. <i>You have talked about mentoring couples quite a bit and that sort of ties in with question #8: "What role do you see other professionals such as physicians, marriage and family therapists, financial planners and others and obviously mentoring couples, but in terms of training clergy, how might you see them used?"</i></p>	
<p>PMC Provider #12: <i>"Well let me start with what we have done in 'Right Start' and go backwards. We do 'Right Start'--it is not taught by one person. For example, with sexuality we deal with it in two weeks. One deals just with kind of a biblical view of sex and sexuality. More sexuality than sex. Then the next week we either bring in an obgyn or we bring in a nurse practitioner that has been trained who also is a midwife. So I think it is extremely important and necessary to bring in physicians. When we use the Myers-Briggs and things, we have brought in therapists who are Christians, from outside. When we do our financial analysis, we bring in CFO (Certified Financial Planner) and an individual who is both a certified financial planner and a certified public accountant."</i></p>	<p>Researcher: <i>"Right Start' involves numerous specialists I the program."</i></p> <p><i>"Physicians need to be brought into the process."</i></p> <p><i>"Therapists are used to interpret the Myers-Briggs."</i></p> <p><i>CFO help with the areas of finances."</i></p> <p>PMC Provider #12: <i>"CFP"</i></p> <p><i>"CFO is a Certified Financial Office."</i></p>

APPENDIX I. THE MEMBER CHECK LETTER

September 28, 2001

Dear Respondent #1:

I hope you are well in the Lord and are prospering in your ministry at Grace Presbyterian Church.

Thanks so much for being willing to be part of this research project on "The Preparation of Pastors in Premarital Counseling." As a token of my appreciation, I have enclosed is a copy of Dr. Scott Stanley's book, A Lasting Promise: A Christian Guide to Fighting for Your Marriage. It is probably one of the finest works on the subject of premarital counseling to date.

In addition, I have enclosed the ORIGINAL copy of the transcript of the interview (it is more readable than a copy) that I conducted with you on June 21, 2000. I need you to read the summary statements in the right-hand margin of the transcript, and if they are accurate, I need you simply to place a CHECK next to them. Please use BLUE ink. A different reader used black. If you should need to add or subtract from any of the summary statements, do not hesitate to do so. Please call me if you have any questions at the church office (608) 782-7833 or at my home (608) 784-0260.

I hope to defend my dissertation on November 30, 2001. Please return the ORIGINAL transcript to me just as soon as possible. I have enclosed a self-addressed envelope with the postage paid.

Thank you for participating in this study. I trust that it will better prepare us all, and in particular, the future graduates of Covenant Theological Seminary, to provide more effective premarital counseling ministries in Christ's Church.

Gratefully in Christ,

Jeffrey K. Buikema

APPENDIX J. THE ROLE OF THE DEPENDABILITY AUDITOR

The process of writing the current dissertation began for this researcher back in his first semester at Iowa State University. His Major Professor, Dr. Harvey Joanning, introduced him to another paradigm of social research--qualitative research. With the knowledge that there were many unanswered questions about the training needs of clergy in premarital counseling from his earlier dissertation, he sought to continue the journey of discovery by using, not a quantitative approach as before, but employing a qualitative approach this time around. The outline of the present work emerged out of the interaction of the student and his professor. A pilot study on "Clergy Training in Premarital Counseling" was done for the course project. The researcher conducted six long interviews with pastors with the approval of Human Subjects and the guidance of his major professor. The study yielded rich thick descriptions of the lived experience of pastors and their training needs in premarital counseling. His professor encouraged him to turn the pilot study into a dissertation. Papers and projects for several courses were all geared with this goal in mind.

Dr. Joanning also served as the dependability auditor, overseeing the new dissertation project from beginning to end. Many discussions between the two ensued over the proper approach to the study--ethnography or phenomenology? The latter approach won out. With this in mind, the researcher, in consultation with his major professor, wrote a proposal for his dissertation, conducted the interviews, analyzed the verbal and written data, summed up his findings, and conclusions in this dissertation. The dependability auditor read the transcripts, the summary statements, and the entire dissertation to ensure that the researcher followed sound qualitative research methodology. Offering timely and substantive comments, the professor guided the researcher through the uncharted waters of his first phenomenological

study. The researcher gained an appreciation for the role of qualitative research in social science. The role was not competitive, but complementary!

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