

PARENTS' MARITAL SATISFACTION AND PRE-MARRITAL EDUCATION
PROGRAMS FOR THEIR ADULT CHILDREN

Emiko Nakanaga-Sparks

Healthy Marriages, Relationships, and Families: Interventions, Research and Policy
College of Human Services and Health Professions
Syracuse University

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INTRODUCTION

What is a healthy marriage? Moore et al. (2004) defined that a healthy marriage/relationship meets the following elements: 1) commitment of the couple, 2) satisfaction, 3) communication, 4) conflict resolution, 5) lack of domestic violence, 6) fidelity, 7) interaction/time together, 8) intimacy/emotional support, 9) commitment to the children, and 10) duration/legal marital status. All elements are closely related to individual and marital satisfaction, and are very important elements in marriages and relationships today. Recent statistics and research revealed that the marriage rate has declined because of an increased age of first marriage, an increase in the never-married population (Brotherson & Duncan, 2004); the number of cohabitating couples has increased, and the divorce rate has remained as high as about fifty percent (Brotherson & Duncan, 2004). These trends occurred because people seek more individual satisfaction and happiness in their marriage and/or relationships. This individualistic perspective plays a great role in recent couple relationships; for example, those who divorce and remarry want to become happier and more satisfied in their marriages and, relationships as well as their lives as individuals. Marriage is an ideal for many people, and they are looking for a healthy and better marriage/relationship in their lives. The government makes efforts to strengthen, preserve and promote marriage, and one example of the efforts is the premarital education programs. Because a majority of divorces occur in the early years of marriage, and suggesting the need for better marital preparation (Brotherson & Duncan, 2004).

In order to improve the satisfaction of marriage and couple's relationships, many marital education programs are available today. Many studies showed that marital

enrichment programs are effective in improving relationship skills and satisfaction (Jakubowski, 2004; Schilling et al, 2003). There are a number of marriage education programs for couples such as ACME Building Better Marriages, Caring Couples Network, Couple Communication I and II, Family Wellness, Practical Application of Intimate Relationship Skills (PAIRS), Preparation and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP), Prepare/Enrich, Relationship Enhancement, and Worldwide Marriage Encounter. Recent research found that the PREP, Relationship Enhancement, Couple Communication, and the Strategic Hope-Focused Enrichment programs were effectively working for couples in such subjects as an increase in communication skills (Jakubowski, 2004; Schilling et al, 2003). The PAIRS, Worldwide Marriage Encounter and other such marriage enrichment programs have not tested empirically (Jakubowski, 2004). Further, Larson, Holman, Klein, Busby, Stahmann and Peterson (1995) reviewed in their article comprehensive questionnaires used in premarital education and counseling past years, finding that the PREmarital Personal and Relationship Evaluation (PREPARE), the Premarital Inventory Profile (PMIP) and Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study (FOCCUS) were the best instruments for pre-marital counseling.

Pre-marital education programs and counseling are available especially for younger people, adolescents and college age adults. Some of the major pre-marital education programs and counseling include PREP, PAIRS and PREPARE /ENRICH program. Recent study showed that premarital distress prevention programs helped increase knowledge of relationship concepts, reduced future marital conflicts, such as violence in dating relationships, risk factors for adolescent pregnancy, thereby positively

impacting attitudes related to future successful marriage (Gardner, et al, 2004). Current research suggests that pre-marital counseling with the solution-focused approach helped clients build solution, stable and satisfying marriages that simultaneously produce a more positive quality of life (Murray & Murray, 2004). Silliman & Schumm (2004) found that youth valued parents and personal experience as sources of information on marriage. Moreover, many studies showed that adolescents have little interests in pre-marital education program or counseling, and expressed much lower need for marriage education than college students (Silliman & Schumm, 2004). However, college students are interested in formal marriage preparation only if it meets their preferences (Silliman & Schumm, 2004). These findings address the issue that not many younger adults or adolescents actually participate in pre-marital education program or counseling.

Theoretical perspectives and frameworks have been used in pre-marital prevention/education/therapeutic programs to guide intervention for couples that were at risk of marital distress and divorce in their future. Carroll and Doherty (2003) reviewed past literatures on premarital conflict prevention programs; and found that the family development theory was most commonly used, and the behavioral/social learning theory, the social exchange theory, the communication theory and the psycho-educational perspectives were also used in other studies. Most of the pre-marital and marital programs and counseling focused on dyad relationships, however, marital education programs for families focused on not only the husband and wife relationships, but also the parents and child relationships. One of the past studies used systems theory for parent education program to guide counseling intervention within families (Winans & Cooker, 1984). In their study, the program was focused on the parent and child relationships to

improve parenting skills and parent and child relationships instead of couple relationships in general; and the researchers found that not only parenting skills were significantly increased, but also marital satisfaction was significantly increased even though it was not the focal relationship. Another study on a program for educating parents about the effects of divorce and conflict on children emphasized that children from high conflict divorces are at much greater risk for the development of a wide variety of emotional/behavioral problems than children from intact families (Carroll & Doherty, 2003; and Shifflett & Cummings, 1999). The approach is particularly important because it shows that the husband and wife relationships affect other relationships within the family such as the parent and child relationships. In this paper, the main focus is the parent and child relationships, especially parental guidance in pre-marital education program or counseling for their adult children.

Many researchers have tested the effectiveness of marital and pre-marital education programs, and found some benefits of these programs, some weaknesses and opportunity for improvements (Bodenmann & Shantinath, 2004 for CCET; Carroll & Doherty, 2003 for RE, PETS, PREP, PREPARE and other programs; Sullivan & Bradbury, 1997; Stanley, 2001 for PREP; Stanley, Markman, Prado, Olmos-Ballo, Tonelli, Peters, Leber, Bobulinski, Cordova & Whitton, 2001 for RO PREP and DU PREP). However, there are little studies about how parents' marital life including marital satisfaction, their experience of marriage, and pre-marital education programs influence their adult children's perspectives of marriage and outlook on marital and pre-marital education program. Specifically, this present study will examine if parents who have participated in a pre-marital education program recommend their adult children and their

partners to participate in programs before they marry. This issue is particularly important for the future quality of marriage. If pre-marital education programs are beneficial for couples, it is possible to increase marital satisfaction and decrease the number of divorces in future generations. Since the divorce rate is high in the United States, encouraging pre-marital education program for couples may decrease marital conflicts and divorces, and also this positive trend produces better circumstances for children.

The research questions are 1) what are characteristics of people who are satisfied with their marriage?; 2) what are characteristics of people who attend pre-marital education programs and/or counseling?; and 3) which parents, who participated or who did not participate in pre-marital education program or counseling, encourage their adult children to participate in such counseling or program?. The hypothesis is that parents who participated in pre-marital counseling or a pre-marital education program recommend their adult children to participate in pre-marital education program or counseling.

METHOD

Participants

One hundred ten married couples were asked to participate the Marriage Questionnaire survey, and eighty-five couples returned the survey. Two criteria were requested to be met prior to participating the questionnaire: 1) currently married, and 2) have been married between five to fifteen years. The average age of female was 39.11 with a range of 23 to 55 years olds where the average age of male was 41.54 with a range of 25 to 77 years olds. There were not lesbian-gay-bisexual couples founded in this study. Seventy females were currently in their first marriage (83.33%), and sixty-nine males were currently in their first marriage (83.13%). Thirteen females and thirteen

males were currently in the second marriage. One female and one male were currently in the third marriage.

They currently lived in NY (52%), NJ (15%), MA (13%), OH (6%), TX (2%), CA (2%), MD (1%), RI (1%), FL (1%), PA (1%), MO (1%), KA (1%), DC (1%) and Korea (1%). The race was asked and 62.35 percent of females and 58.33 percent of males were Caucasian (53 females and 49 males). African Americans were 14.12 percent of females and 20.24 percent of males (12 females and 17 males). Latinos/Hispanics were 14.12 percent for female and 10.71 percent for male (12 females and 9 males). Asians were 4.71 percent for female and 4.76 percent for male (4 for both). One male was American Indian, and another male did not specify his race. There were an Arabian couple and a Sam Rican couple in the participants. Moreover, nine interracial couples participated in this study: two Caucasian female and African American male couples, two Caucasian female and Latino/Hispanic male couples, two Latino/Hispanic female and Caucasian male couples, one Latino/Hispanic female and African American male couple, one Latino/Hispanic female and American Indian male couple, and one Caucasian female and non-specified male couple.

The total gross income household was asked with the following seven categories: 1= less than \$15,000; 2= \$15,000-\$25,000; 3= \$26,000-\$50,000; 4=\$51,000-\$75,000; 5= \$76,000-\$100,000; 6=\$101,000-\$150,000; 7= over \$150,000. The average was 5, \$76,000-\$100,000, and 28.40 percent of participants responded for this income category. Another 28.40 percent of them responded the 7. 14.81 percent of them responded the 3, and another 14.81 percent of them marked the 4. 8.64 percent of them marked the 6. The 1 and 2 categories were followed (2.47% for each).

The highest level of education was also collected, and 27.06 percent of females obtained high school diploma where 18.82 percent for males as the highest rates. The second highest rate for females was post-graduate degree (24.71%), however, the second highest rate for males was associates degree (15.29%). Only 8.24 percent of females marked associate degree. 7.06 percent of males obtained trade school degree where 4.71 percent of females obtained. 4.71 percent of males marked some high school education where only 1.18 percent of females did. 3.41 percent of females and males obtained bachelor's degree. Only 2 percent of males obtained post-graduate degree.

Religious affiliation was also collected, and 40 percent of females and 44.71 percent of males were Catholic. 16.47 percent of females and 12.94 percent of males were Jewish. 10.59 percent of females and males were Baptist. 11.76 percent of females and 5.88 percent of males were Protestant. 3.53 percent of females and males were Muslim. 2.35 percent of females and males were Buddhist. 1.18 percent of female and 2.35 percent of males were Evangelistic. 7.06 percent of females and 9.41 percent of males marked no religious affiliation, and 7.06 percent of females and 8.24 percent of males marked other religious affiliation.

Procedure

Participants were selected by students who attended a course, CFS201 Family Development, in Syracuse University for having the opportunity to receive extra credit by distributing the questionnaire to two separate married couples who met two criteria 1) currently married, and 2) have been married between five to fifteen years. The identical questionnaires were distributed to couples, and asked to answer questions individually.

After they finished answering, these questionnaires were returned to the students or mailed to the department of Child and Family Studies at Syracuse University.

Material

The questionnaire was developed by a professor in the department of Child and Family Studies, Dr. Alan Taylor. It was used to understand marital relationships and premarital relationships, marital education program and premarital education program. There were twenty-eight questions on two pages, and it took approximately twenty minutes to complete.

Demographic questions were age, gender, current marital status, yearly total gross income for household, highest education, race, religion, level of religiousness, frequency of attending religious services, and county and state that they currently live and when they were married. Questions for premarital relationships were the period of dating time, the period of engaged time, if participated in pre-marital counseling, preparation for marriage class or a pre-marital education program prior to their current marriage, in case of yes, type of pre-marital educational activities, and levels of helpfulness. Questions for marital relationships were if participated in marital enrichment/enhancement/strengthening programs or marital counseling, in case of yes, types of marital counseling or enrichment programs and frequency of involvement for each, type of counseling or enrichment activities that they participated in most recently, and levels of helpfulness of the activities, marital satisfaction, marital satisfaction of spouse, if consider to participate a free marriage enrichment program with reason, and if recommend their son or daughter who plan to get married to participate in premarital counseling or a marriage preparation course.

Questions for communication within premarital couples were if they communicated openly and effectively, if they rarely had arguments, if they made financial decisions together, if they openly negotiated marital roles and responsibilities, if they openly discussed having children, and if they discussed what parenting roles and responsibilities they would hold. Questions for communication between husband and wife within the past six months were if they have been very satisfied with how we communicate, if they rarely have arguments, if they have made financial decisions together, if they have openly negotiated marital roles and responsibilities, if they have openly discussed their expectations for their children, if they have openly discussed how to fulfill our parenting roles and responsibilities. These questions were asking participants to choose one of the closest scales of five; strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neutral-neither disagree or agree, somewhat agree, and strongly agree. Finally, two more questions were asked to answer yes or no: if one partner openly expressed a desire to participate in pre-marriage education activities or pre-marriage counseling and the other partner resisted, and if one spouse openly expressed a desire to participate in marriage enhancement activities or marriage counseling and the other spouse resisted.

RESULTS

SPSS was used to answer the research questions and to test the hypotheses.

Question One: What kinds of people are satisfied with their marriage?

Marital satisfaction was rated for four categories: very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied and very dissatisfied. 81 percent of wives and 87 percent of husbands rated very satisfied in their marriages. 15 percent of wives and 9 percent of husbands (including a husband rated both of very satisfied and somewhat satisfied) rated

somewhat satisfied in their marriages. No females rated somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. One husband rated somewhat dissatisfied, and another husband rated very dissatisfied. Three missing data for wives and one for husbands were found. The majority of participants were satisfied in their marriages. The wife of the husband who rated somewhat dissatisfied did not answer the question of marital satisfaction. The wife of the husband who rated very dissatisfied rated her marriage as very satisfied.

Since there were not any female and only two husbands who were dissatisfied in their marriages, the data description of participants explained what kind of people are satisfied with their marriage. Specifically, the average age was 39.11 for female and 41.58 for male. The 82 percent of couples are in the first marriage at that time they participated in the questionnaire. Two largest portions of total gross income for household were \$76,000 to \$100,000 (26%) and over \$150,000 (26%). The largest portion of the highest education level for female was high school diploma (27.06%) and interestingly post graduate degree was also higher percentage (24.71%). The largest portion of the highest education level for male was also high school diploma (19.28%). Caucasian was the largest portion of total participants (62.35% of females and 57.83% of males). Catholic was the largest portion of religious affiliation (40% of females and 44.58% of males).

The largest portion of the length of dating with current spouse was two to four years (37.45%). 29.76 percent of females responded that they were engaged with their spouse for seven to eleven months where 26.51 percent of males responded that they were engaged for twelve to eighteen months. Table 1 shows a summary of responses by

people who are satisfied with their marriages that indicated characteristics of people who are satisfied with their marriages.

Table 1. Summary of responses by people who are satisfied with their marriages

Question 1: What kinds of people are satisfied with their marriage?					
		Female		Male	
N= people who are satisfied with their marriages		85	100%	83	98%
age	average	39.11		41.58	
marital status	1st marriage	70	82.35	68	81.93
	2nd marriage	13	15.29	12	14.46
	3rd marriage	1	1.18	1	1.20
	other	0	0.00	0	0.00
income	Less than \$15,000	2	2.35	2	2.41
	\$15,000-\$25,000	2	2.35	2	2.41
	\$26,000-\$50,000	13	15.29	12	14.46
	\$51,000-\$75,000	11	12.94	12	14.46
	\$76,000-\$100,000	22	25.88	22	26.51
	\$101,000-\$150,000	7	8.24	7	8.43
	Over \$150,000	22	25.88	22	26.51
education	some high school	1	1.18	4	4.82
	high school diploma	23	27.06	16	19.28
	trade school degree	4	4.71	6	7.23
	associate degree	7	8.24	13	15.66
	bachelor's degree	29	34.12	28	33.73
	post graduate degree	21	24.71	16	19.28
race	Asian	4	4.71	4	4.82
	Black	12	14.12	16	19.28
	Caucasian	53	62.35	48	57.83
	American Indian	0	0.00	1	1.20
	Pacific Islander	0	0.00	0	0.00
	Latino/Hispanic	12	14.12	9	10.84
	Other	4	4.71	4	4.82
religion	Baptist	9	10.59	8	9.64
	Buddhist	2	2.35	2	2.41
	Catholic	34	40.00	37	44.58
	Evangelistic	1	1.18	2	2.41
	Hindu	0	0.00	0	0.00
	Jewish	14	16.47	11	13.25
	Muslim	3	3.53	3	3.61
	Protestant	10	11.76	5	6.02
	No religious affiliation	6	7.06	8	9.64
	other	6	7.06	7	8.43
dating period	less than 1 month	0	0.00	0	0.00
	1 to 3 months	4	4.71	3	3.61
	4 to 11 months	7	8.24	7	8.43
	1 to 1 1/2 years	24	28.24	24	28.92
	2 to 4 years	32	37.45	31	37.35
	5 or more years	18	21.18	18	21.69

engaged period	less than 1 month	5	5.95	4	4.82
	1 to 3 months	6	7.14	8	9.64
	4 to 6 months	19	22.62	20	24.10
	7 to 11 months	25	29.76	19	22.89
	12 to 18 months	16	19.05	22	26.51
	more than 18 months	13	15.48	10	12.05
satisfaction with marriage	very satisfied	69	81.18	74	89.16
	somewhat satisfied	13	15.29	7	8.43
	somewhat dissatisfied	0	0.00	0	0.00
	very dissatisfied	0	0.00	0	0.00
recommend children to participate in pre-marital education program	yes	51	60.00	44	53.01
	no	24	28.24	35	42.17

Question Two: What are characteristics of people who attended pre-marital education program or counseling?

Thirty females and twenty-eight males participated in pre-marital education programs or counseling prior to their marriages. The average female age was 38.33, and 40.07 years old for males. The 86.67 percent of females and 82.14 percent of males are in the first marriage at that time they participated in the survey. 26.67 percent of females responded that their total gross income for household was \$76,000 to \$100,000, where 46.43 percent of males answered for \$76,000 to \$100,000. 43.33 percent of females have obtained post graduate degree. 25 percent of males have obtained bachelor's degree, and another 25 percent of them have obtained associated degree. Caucasian was the largest portion of the total participants (80% of females and 71.43% of males). Catholic was the largest portion of religious affiliation (50% of females and 57.14% of males).

40 percent of females rated that they had dated with current spouse for 2 to 4 years prior to marriage, where 39.29 percent of males rated that they had dated more than 5 years. 36.67 percent of females responded that they were engaged with their spouse for

twelve to eighteen months, where 42.86 percent of males did. 90 percent of females and 92.86 percent of males were very satisfied with their current marital relationships.

Table 2 shows a summary of responses by people who attended pre-marital education program or counseling that indicated characteristics of people who attended pre-marital education program or counseling.

Table 2. Summary of responses by people who attended pre-marital education program or counseling

Question 2: What are characteristics of people who attended pre-marital education program or counseling?

		Female		Male	
N= people who attended pre-marital education program participated in pre-marital education activities	yes	30	35%	28	33%
	no	55	64.71	57	67.06
age	average	38.33		40.07	
marital status	1st marriage	26	86.67	23	82.14
	2nd marriage	4	13.33	4	14.29
	3rd marriage	0	0.00	0	0.00
	other	0	0.00	0	0.00
income	Less than \$15,000	0	0.00	0	0.00
	\$15,000-\$25,000	1	3.33	0	0.00
	\$26,000-\$50,000	4	13.33	3	10.71
	\$51,000-\$75,000	5	16.67	4	14.29
	\$76,000-\$100,000	8	26.67	13	46.43
	\$101,000-\$150,000	2	6.67	1	3.57
	Over \$150,000	6	20.00	4	14.29
education	some high school	0	0.00	1	3.57
	high school diploma	6	20.00	6	21.43
	trade school degree	3	10.00	2	7.14
	associate degree	3	10.00	7	25.00
	bachelor's degree	5	16.67	7	25.00
	post graduate degree	13	43.44	5	17.86
race	Asian	0	0.00	0	0.00
	Black	2	6.67	3	10.71
	Caucasian	24	80.00	20	71.43
	American Indian	0	0.00	1	3.57
	Pacific Islander	0	0.00	0	0.00
	Latino/Hispanic	4	13.33	4	14.29
	Other	0	0.00	0	0.00
religion	Baptist	4	13.33	1	3.57
	Buddhist	0	0.00	0	0.00
	Catholic	15	50.00	16	57.14
	Evangelistic	1	3.33	2	7.14
	Hindu	0	0.00	0	0.00
	Jewish	3	10.00	1	3.57
	Muslim	0	0.00	0	0.00
	Protestant	4	13.33	2	7.14
	No religious affiliation	2	6.67	2	7.14
other	1	3.33	4	14.29	

dating period	less than 1 month	0	0.00	0	0.00
	1 to 3 months	0	0.00	0	0.00
	4 to 11 months	1	3.33	1	3.57
	1 to 1 1/2years	7	23.33	6	21.43
	2 to 4 years	12	40.00	10	35.71
	5 or more years	10	33.33	11	39.29
engaged period	less than 1 month	0	0.00	0	0.00
	1 to 3 months	1	3.33	3	10.71
	4 to 6 months	4	13.33	4	14.29
	7 to 11 months	6	20.00	4	14.29
	12 to 18 months	11	36.67	12	42.86
	more than 18 months	8	26.67	5	17.86
satisfaction with marriage	very satisfied	27	90.00	26	92.86
	somewhat satisfied	3	10.00	1	3.57
	somewhat dissatisfied	0	0.00	0	0.00
	very dissatisfied	0	0.00	0	0.00
recommend children to participate in pre-marital education program	yes	24	80.00	22	78.57
	no	3	10.00	4	14.29

Question Three: Which parents, who participated or who did not participate in pre-marital education program or counseling, encourage their adult children to participate in such counseling or program?

The hypothesis was that parents who participated in pre-marital counseling or a pre-marital education program recommend their adult children to participate in pre-marital counseling or a marriage preparation course. The number of females who participated in pre-marital education program or counseling was thirty, and for males was twenty-eight. Twenty-four females (80%) and twenty-two males (78.57%) answered that they would recommend their son or daughter to participate in pre-marital counseling or a marriage preparation course.

Since there are two groups as the independent variables, parents who participated in pre-marital counseling or preparation for marriage class or a pre-marital education program and parents who did not, and the dependent variable is categorical variable with two levels: recommend children to participate in pre-marital counseling or a marriage

preparation course, or do not, chi-square statistic was used to analyze the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. Chi-square was conducted twice for female and male. Table 3 shows relationships between the two variables in females. 88.90 percent of females who participated in pre-marital counseling or program would recommend their children to participate in pre-marital counseling or a marriage preparation course, whereas 11.10 percent of females who participated in such counseling or program would not recommend their children to participate in such counseling or program. 55.30 percent of females who did not participated in pre-marital counseling or program would recommend their children to participate in pre-marital counseling or a marriage preparation course, whereas 44.70 percent of females who did not participated in such counseling or program would not recommend their children to participate in such counseling or program. The chi-square showed that these relationships were significantly associated at 0.007, which was smaller than the alpha level of 0.05 two-sided tails.

Table 3. Chi-square: relationships between pre-marital counseling and let child go to counseling.

FPre-marital counseling * FLet child go to counseling Crosstabulation

			FLet child go to counseling		Total
			No	Yes	
FPre-marital counseling	No	Count	21	26	47
		Expected Count	15.2	31.8	47.0
		% within FPre-marital counseling	44.7%	55.3%	100.0%
		% within FLet child go to counseling	87.5%	52.0%	63.5%
		% of Total	28.4%	35.1%	63.5%
	Yes	Count	3	24	27
		Expected Count	8.8	18.2	27.0
		% within FPre-marital counseling	11.1%	88.9%	100.0%
		% within FLet child go to counseling	12.5%	48.0%	36.5%
		% of Total	4.1%	32.4%	36.5%
Total	Count	24	50	74	
	Expected Count	24.0	50.0	74.0	
	% within FPre-marital counseling	32.4%	67.6%	100.0%	
	% within FLet child go to counseling	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	32.4%	67.6%	100.0%	

Table 4 shows relationships between the two variables in males. 84.60 percent of males who participated in pre-marital counseling or program would recommend their children to participate in pre-marital counseling or a marriage preparation course, whereas 15.40 percent of males who participated in such counseling or program would not recommend their children to participate in such counseling or program. 41.80 percent of males who did not participated in pre-marital counseling or program would recommend their children to participate in pre-marital counseling or a marriage preparation course, whereas 58.20 percent of males who did not participated in such

counseling or program would not recommend their children to participate in such counseling or program. The chi-square showed that these relationships were significantly associated at 0.001, which was smaller than the alpha level of 0.05 two-sided tails. Since both of the chi-square tests were 2 X 2 tables, the Continuity Corrections were reported instead of the Pearson chi-square.

Table 4. Chi-square: relationships between pre-marital counseling and let child go to counseling.

MPre-marital counseling * MLet child go to counseling Crosstabulation

			MLet child go to counseling		Total
			No	Yes	
MPre-marital counseling	No	Count	32	23	55
		Expected Count	24.4	30.6	55.0
		% within MPre-marital counseling	58.2%	41.8%	100.0%
		% within MLet child go to counseling	88.9%	51.1%	67.9%
		% of Total	39.5%	28.4%	67.9%
	Yes	Count	4	22	26
		Expected Count	11.6	14.4	26.0
		% within MPre-marital counseling	15.4%	84.6%	100.0%
		% within MLet child go to counseling	11.1%	48.9%	32.1%
		% of Total	4.9%	27.2%	32.1%
Total	Count	36	45	81	
	Expected Count	36.0	45.0	81.0	
	% within MPre-marital counseling	44.4%	55.6%	100.0%	
	% within MLet child go to counseling	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	44.4%	55.6%	100.0%	

The results suggested that slightly more females would recommend their children to participate in such counseling or program than males no matter parents participated in pre-marital counseling or program or not. Moreover, the number of males who did not

participated in pre-marital counseling or program would not recommend their children to participate in such counseling or program was higher than males would do so. Therefore, the results supported the hypothesis, parents who participated in pre-marital counseling or a pre-marital education program more likely recommend their adult children to participate in pre-marital counseling or a marriage preparation course.

DISCUSSION

The current study was conducted to test hypothesis; 1) parents who participated in pre-marital counseling or a pre-marital education program recommend their adult children to participate in pre-marital program or counseling, and to answer two questions; 1) what are characteristics of people who are satisfied with their marriages?; and 2) what are characteristics of people who attend pre-marital education programs and/or counseling?. These questions were important to be answered due to understand deep couple relationships. Sullivan and Bradbury (1997) suggested that it is important to investigate the characteristics of couples who do and do not participate in premarital programs commonly administered in the community. It is also important to understand more about characteristics of people are satisfied with marriage because it can utilize the knowledge to help other couples who are not satisfied with their marriages. It has commonly focused on fixing and improving couples' weaknesses, however, learning skills from successful couple relationships also help and strengthen marriages.

Characteristics of people who are satisfied with their marriages

The first research question was answered without any comparison group because only one male rated as dissatisfied with his marriage and no female responded as dissatisfied with marriage. Overall, the majority of the participants were educated the

middle and upper classes Catholic Caucasians who are around forty years old and in their first marriage. As the results showed, there were some noticeable gender differences and characteristics. Specifically, the total gross income for household was relatively higher than the average middle class income, especially there were one third of couples had over \$150,000 annual income. Wives had obtained the higher education than husbands, especially one fourth of wives received post graduate degree while only two percent of husbands did. Recent study showed that there was higher risk of divorce in the second marriage than in the first marriage (Brotherson & Duncan, 2004). Therefore, the demographic characteristics of people who are satisfied with their marriages were high education, the middle and upper classes, Catholics, Caucasians and in the first marriage.

The average length of dating with a spouse was two to four years, and the average length of engagement was seven to eighteen months. However, wives tended to respond shorter engagement than males did. The majority of couples did not participated in premarital counseling or educational program before they married, or marriage enrichment/enhancement/strengthening programs or marital counseling either within the past six months. However, when the issue was about their children, majority of parents responded that they would recommend their son and daughter to participate in premarital counseling or a marriage preparation course before they get married. This rate was higher in mothers than fathers.

As the results showed earlier, the characteristics of the majority of the couples who are satisfied with their marriages were relatively higher educated with a higher income in their late 30s to early 40s-year-old, Catholic, Caucasians, and in the first marriage. Sullivan and Bradbury (1997) addressed that the lower the age, the lower the

income, the lower the education, parental divorce, lower marital satisfaction, higher neuroticism and higher stress were linked to declines in marital functioning. Moreover, Ooms and Wilson (2004) reported that low-income persons are more likely to have low-quality, unsatisfying relationships. Therefore, the results were supported by the past studies.

Characteristics of participants of pre-marital education program or pre-marital counseling

Approximately a little over one third of the couples participated in pre-marital education program or counseling. The average ages, marital status, total gross income household, education, religious affiliation and race were about the same as characteristics of people who are satisfied with their marriages. Specifically some differences were found; the average ages were younger than in people who did not participated in pre-marital education program or counseling. Almost all people who attend pre-marital education program or counseling were Caucasians, which indicated that there was not variation in race. The ratios of catholic people were higher in both genders especially in husbands than the ratios of catholic people who did not participate. Also pre-marital counseling/education program participants were more religious and much more frequently attend religious services than people who did not, especially the differences were significantly large in husbands. People who participated in pre-marital education program or counseling also had obtained higher education, however, unlike husbands who did not participate, the male pre-marital education program or counseling participants had obtained a much higher education. The numbers of husbands who had obtained Bachelor's degree or post graduate degree were significantly much higher than

people who did not participate. The lengths of dating and engagement before couples were married showed a tendency of much longer among couples who participated in premarital education program or counseling than couples that did not, especially the length of engagement was significantly longer.

The majority of couples would recommend their adult children to participate in premarital counseling or a marriage preparation course. These rates were significantly much higher than couples who did not participate in pre-marital education program or counseling, especially the ratio of husbands was double. Also, marital satisfaction was much higher in couples who participated in pre-marital counseling or a marriage preparation course than couples who did not participated, especially husbands rated higher satisfaction with their marriages than wives. These results suggested that pre-marital education program or counseling more positively influences males than females.

Overall, the results suggested that pre-marital education program or counseling is effective and helpful for many couples, especially for males. Many studies suggested that participants of pre-marital education program or counseling significantly improved their marital communication skills, and marital relationships. Moreover, several studies suggested that pre-marital programs and counseling are helpful for young middle class Caucasian couples because these couple programs and counseling were developed for the middle class Caucasian couples who want to improve their marital relationships, not racially diverse low-income couples or couples who are at high risk of marital distress and divorce. This present study also showed the same results.

Relationships between parents and children about participating in pre-marital education program or pre-marital counseling

The hypothesis was tested if parents who participated in pre-marital counseling or a pre-marital education program recommend their adult children to participate in pre-marital program or counseling before they get marry, and supported by the results. Many couples would not consider attending a free marital enrichment program for their marriages, and it did not matter if they participated in pre-marital education program or counseling before they were married. However, they would encourage their adult children to participate pre-marital counseling or a marriage preparation program before their children will marry. The number of couples who participated in pre-marital education program or counseling showed significantly higher ratios of more couples who would recommend to their children to participate in pre-marital education program or counseling before they will marry. It indicates that the couples believe that pre-marital counseling or a marriage preparation course are helpful and impact their relationships positively, and the result showed that it did not matter if they participated in pre-marital education program or counseling.

Further, the result suggested that couples who did not participated in pre-marital education program or counseling did not think that such programs or counseling would be beneficial or positively impact marital relationships. More mothers in both groups showed that they would recommend their adult children to participate in such program or counseling than fathers, specifically more fathers who did not participated in pre-marital education program or counseling would not recommend their adult children to participate in such program or counseling. Moreover, the ratio of husbands who did not participated in pre-marital education program or counseling and who would not consider attending a free marital enrichment program was very high, and much higher than the ratio of wives.

It may be because they were already satisfied with their marriages without attending any pre-marital education program or counseling. Nevertheless, if the couples were asked the same questions during the first couple years of their marriages, they may respond more positively because they would remember the pre-marital programs or counseling were helpful and beneficial. The results showed that the majority of couples answered that pre-marital programs or counseling were helpful. Williams, Riley, Rishch and Van Dyke (1999) examined perceptions of the helpfulness of marriage preparation among one to eight-year-married couples, and reported that marriage preparation was perceived as highly valuable by respondents who were in the first few years of marriage and was perceived as less valuable the longer the respondent was married.

Overall, the results showed that males were more conservative and private, and may not think that parents recommend or encourage children to participate in pre-marital counseling or program before they will marry. However, parents who had an experience of participating pre-marital education program or counseling think that pre-marital education program and counseling would be helpful and positively impact on marital relationships, and encourage children to participate in such program or counseling.

Limitations

Unfortunately, there were some limitations in this study. First of all, the number of people who participated in pre-marital education program or counseling and the number of people who did not were greatly different (female=30 and 55, and male= 28 and 57), and the number of females and males who participated were small, which is very limited to generalize the data to population. Moreover, there was not any couple that was not satisfied with their marriage. Without the comparison group, it is difficult to

conclude characteristics of people who are satisfied with their marriages. Second, even though there were some variations, majority of couples were the middle class Caucasians. Since the data did not have much cultural diversity, the results of this study may not represent diverse population. Third, there were some missing values in the last question of marital communication skills within the last six months because the question was mistakenly asked about communication skills before they were married. Eight females and nine males did not answer the question.

For future research, a follow-up study can be conducted to investigate how much and how far the pre-marital education program or counseling will impact marital relationships, especially marital communication skills, and also how parents' experience of attending pre-marital education program or counseling influence their children, next generations. For example, how the parents' view of marriage and marital relationships influence their children after participating pre-marital education program or counseling. Also, it can be tested further which part of the pre-marital education programs or counseling are more effective and helpful for which population, and should include control groups with direct comparisons of the programs and counseling in the future study. Moreover, it can be examined how much pre-marital education program and counseling can contribute to reduce marital conflicts and prevent divorce in current marital relationships as well as in the future marital relationships for adult children.

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