the chaplain primarily involved. The program should reduce the time required for each individual chaplain to help a couple prepare for marriage.

A helpful analogy is the breakdown between “branch” and “common” subjects in all military schools. Branch subjects are those which apply directly to the primary role of the person being trained. Common subjects are those which apply to all persons in the military. In the marriage preparation process, topics which relate specifically to the intimate needs of any couple are best covered in individual counseling with the primary chaplain. The Marriage Preparation Course treats only those topics which are common to all marriage relationships. It is, therefore, a “common subjects” supplement to individual premarital counseling.

The Marriage Preparation Course is also conceived to be a forum where critical issues regarding the marriage relationship can be surfaced and explored in a safe and facilitative environment with the help of trained resource individuals. Topics relating to communication, religion, finances, and sex are broached and discussed since they are subjects which many couples do not discuss in the normal course of dating and courtship. Religious and ethical values are prioritized, communication skills practiced, and basic budgets formulated. Homework assignments are viewed primarily as discussion starters to assist couples to continue the dialogue on critical issues between class periods. Participation and sharing are encouraged. Care is taken, however, to avoid any pressure on participants to “open up” to the group. As has been mentioned, the course is an educational forum and not a vehicle for therapy. In the experience of the authors, however, many couples have shared openly and have confided later that group discussions made strong impacts on their own thinking and attitudes. Ideally, those who have completed the four sessions are better prepared for marriage because they have been equipped with some basic skills and have already worked through some critical issues in the marriage relationship.

The Marriage Preparation Course is also regarded as an arena for professional and collegial sharing, where social service professionals compare insights and techniques which are helpful for marriage. The program has utilized the resources of a number of different agencies at Ft. Lewis. Eleven chaplains are currently involved in the conduct of the program. Ten of them recently attended a two–day marriage enrichment seminar with their wives to extend or update their training in preparation for their contribution to the course. Similar training opportunities are planned for the future.

Survey of Reactions by Course Graduates

Having deliberately clarified the philosophy of the program, along with the preferred format, content, tone, and method, we attempted to measure our effectiveness by surveying the course participants who