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The Alexander House Apostolate Marital Relationship Education results: a quantitative study

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THE ALEXANDER HOUSE APOSTALATE MARITAL RELATIONSHIP

EDUCATION RESULTS: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY

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THE ALEXANDER HOUSE APOSTALATE MARITAL RELATIONSHIP

EDUCATION RESULTS: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY

A

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

St. Mary's University in Partial Fulfillment

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in

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by

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Abstract

THE ALEXANDER HOUSE APOSTALATE MARITAL RELATIONSHIP

EDUCATION RESULTS: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY

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St. Mary's University, 2021

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According to existing literature, 27 components contribute to the concept of couple's relationship satisfaction. Some of these components are included in non-religious and religious marital relationship education (MRE) programs. Research on nonreligious MREs spans decades; however, research on Catholic MRE programs is limited and not widely published. The purpose of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of one Catholic, faith-based, couples' MRE on impacting relationship satisfaction, and determine if specific religious and behavioral practices contributed to relationship satisfaction. The study was conducted with archival data collected from a population of mostly Catholic Latino and White couples in south central Texas.

This research used a quantitative paradigm and a correlational research design to answer the study's purpose. The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS) and Marital Adjustment Test were used to evaluate relationship satisfaction. A series of nonparametric analyses were conducted to address the research questions. Results indicated the number of KMSS total scores for a subset of participants in the nondistressed range increased from preworkshop to postworkshop. Two religious practices—praying daily together and asking

for forgiveness—as well as eight behavioral practices were significantly related to nondistressed KMSS scores.

Keywords: MRE, couples, couple workshop, marital satisfaction, marital happiness, Catholic, KMSS, Marital Adjustment Test, Locke Wallace, The Alexander House Apostolate

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Statement of the Problem

Research on relationship satisfaction began in the late 1950s, and researchers have

used the terms *marital quality*, *marital adjustment*, *marital satisfaction*, and *marital*

happiness to describe a spouse's perception of satisfaction with their committed romantic

relationship (Amato et al., 2009). These terms are unidimensional when only one

dimension or component is considered a measure of satisfaction in a relationship, and they

are multidimensional when they include multiple components as part of a relationship

(Amato et al., 2009; Corra et al., 2009; Dush et al., 2008; Hicks & Platt, 1960). According

to existing literature, more than 20 components contribute to relationship satisfaction (Dew

& Wilcox, 2013; Fitzgibbons, 2010; Gottman & Silver, 2015). Some of these components

are physical, such as physical touch, sex, and physical caregiving. Other components are

economical, such as how money is earned and spent in the relationship; lastly, others are

psychosocial (Chapman, 2015; Gleason et al., 2003; Gottman & Silver, 2015; Stack &

Eshleman, 1998). I have divided the psychosocial components into three categories:

cultural, behavioral, and relational. Examples of psychosocial components include

communication, conflict resolution, emotional intimacy, norms, values, expectations,

forgiveness, and religion (Berman, 2013; Chapman, 2015; Dew & Wilcox, 2013;

Fitzgibbons, 2010; Gottman & Silver, 2015; Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010; Peterson &

Seligman, 2004). Some of these components are considered in Marital Relationship

Education (MRE) programs.

MRE programs are designed to teach couples helpful attitudes, behaviors, and skills

in a relaxed and fun atmosphere, with the ultimate goal of improving couples' relationships

(Halford et al., 2008; Ooms, 2010). MRE programs seek to improve couples' satisfaction

through development of knowledge and skills; consequently, the divorce rate of those who participate in MRE programs has decreased by 30% (Carroll & Doherty, 2003; Hawkins et al., 2008). Still, 40% to 50% of couples get divorced in the first 5 years of their first marriage. Christian believers have a 33% probability of divorce, and Catholics have a 28% probability (Baucom et al., 2006; U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Reasons for divorce include lack of commitment (73%), too much arguing (56%), infidelity (55%), and unrealistic expectations (45%) (ChurchTechToday, 2017).

Topics included in MRE programs that correlate with relationship satisfaction are communication skills, conflict resolution skills, finances, friendship, sex, expectations, religion, and commitment (Blanchard et al., 2009; Braithwaite & Fincham, 2009; Halford et al., 2008; Hawkins et al., 2008). MRE programs may have a religious or nonreligious curriculum. Communication and conflict resolution skills constitute essential components of religious and nonreligious MRE programs, which evolved simultaneously during the growth of family life interventions in the 1960s (Hawkins et al., 2008; Jakubowski et al., 2004; Sprenkle, 2002). Although their emphases differ from those of nonreligious MRE programs, religious MRE programs address marital and committed relationships using deeply valued, cultural sources to provide meaning to problems and life stressors (McGoldrick & Hardy, 2008). Given their importance, I found it interesting that only a few religious MRE programs have been researched and disseminated (McManus, 1995).

Although Catholics in the United States are the second-largest faith community, totaling 68.5 million people (22%) in the U.S. population, limited research has been conducted on Catholic MRE programs (Lindner, 2011; McManus, 1995; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). To date, there are three Catholic MRE programs: Worldwide Marriage Encounter (Calvo, 1988; Worldwide Marriage Encounter, n.d.-a), Retrouvaille

(Retrouvaille, n.d.), and The Alexander House Apostolate (TAHA; Alexander, 2010). Unfortunately, existing empirical research on Catholic MRE programs is outdated and out of press (McManus, 1995). Beyond limited research on the effectiveness of Catholic MRE programs, there are no research studies focused on how Catholic practices may increase marital satisfaction.

Background

Individuals learn how to build and maintain committed relationships from the culture in which they were raised. Children and adults consciously and unconsciously look to relationships in their lives to enact rules, roles, and behaviors of relationships they seek to create, regardless of whether their relationship models are healthy and functional (Rebello et al., 2014; Tili & Barker, 2015). People get married because they want to be happy and have a companion in their lives (Frech & Williams, 2007; Hawkins & Booth, 2005). Because people come from different backgrounds, each member of the relationship likely has different values, traditions, and cultural views; therefore, differences and conflicts exist (Tili & Barker, 2015). To solve their problems and minimize hurting each other, couples need skills and knowledge to enhance relationship satisfaction (Fincham & Beach, 2010; Gottman, 2009; Previti & Amato, 2003; Tili & Barker, 2015).

Marital relationships comprise positive and negative interactions (Covey, 2014; Life Training Online, n.d.). Gottman (2009) explained an average of 69% of problems in a relationship are unsolvable. Negative interactions are considered communications that damage the relationship and lead to negative emotions, such as hurt, sadness, loneliness, and anger; these interactions are associated as costs (Gottman, 2009; Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009). Positive interactions are communications that enhance marital satisfaction and lead to positive emotions, such as feeling appreciated, loved, accepted, and valued; these

interactions are considered rewards (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008; Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009). Individuals in romantic relationships feel satisfaction with their partners when they have a minimum ratio of 5 positive interactions for every 1 negative interaction (Fincham & Beach, 2010; Life Training Online, n.d.).

To maintain marital satisfaction, distressed couples typically need to increase positive interactions to a 20:1 ratio, either because one or both partners have been deprived of emotional satisfaction (Gottman & Gottman, 2012). During discussions, communication skills—such as speaking, listening, asking questions, and problem solving—are essential to feeling safe and open to share feelings (Scheeren et al., 2014). Therefore, for improved relationship satisfaction, negative interactions should decrease, and positive interactions should increase.

Identifying and teaching the principles of sound marital relationships began in the 1930s in academic settings and then migrated to religious settings in the late 1940s (Calvo, 1988). MREs serve as the contemporary iteration of courses or workshops teaching couples how to "do" marriage. In mental health literature, more than 30 nonreligious MRE programs have been studied, and there are over 100 published studies about couple and relationship education (Blanchard et al., 2009; Hawkins et al., 2008).

MRE programs have been found to be beneficial for both healthy couples and moderately distressed couples, and have produced significant, positive effects on relationship satisfaction based on communication skills, conflict reduction, and increased relationship quality (Hawkins et al., 2008). These benefits were observed immediately after going through MRE programs and subsequent 6-month and 1-year follow ups (Babcock et al., 2013; Bradley & Gottman, 2012; Harris et al., 2009a; Hawkins et al., 2008; Olson et al., 2012). Attending an MRE program decreased probability of divorce by 30% because

participants learned how marital relationships should work and developed relationship skills (Carroll & Doherty, 2003). Other potential effects of MRE programs include a reduction in marital conflict, improvement in marital satisfaction, and bettering of the mother's parenting skills immediately after the program and long-term follow up (Cummings et al., 2008). Ultimately, positive effects on the couple's relationship may extend to children and immediate family.

The goal of MRE programs has been to teach couples how to develop and maintain healthy relationships and to be better prepared when a crisis occurs in the relationship (Halford, 2004). Federal and several state governments have subsequently funded MRE programs based on the effectiveness of their results (Halford et al., 2012). Faith communities have also seen the value of teaching individuals how to become healthy couples; therefore, pastors and priests, therapists, and friends may encourage enrollment in MRE programs to obtain help in solving problems and creating better relationships (Sprenkle, 2002).

MRE programs developed by Catholic laypersons have aimed to teach fellow Catholics how to prepare for and maintain a healthy marriage, but every parish may emphasize different aspects of marriage. Premarital preparation programs may vary in length and their curricula may focus on different principles important to the Catholic faith (Powell & Cassidy, 2006). These teachings may also include communication and problem-solving skills, but may not be grounded in best practices of couples' research (Davidson et al., 1983; Gottman, 2009; Johnson, 2007).

Theoretical Framework

Social exchange theory (SET) is an appropriate framework for understanding potential incentives for engaging couples and for learning strategies to improve marital

satisfaction in MRE settings. This theory uses economic principles, such as benefits, profits, and opportunity costs, to understand human relationships (White & Klein, 2008). SET has been used to research couples' relationships on such topics as formation, maintenance, and dissolution of relationships, along with courtship, attraction, reciprocity, fairness, commitment, trust, dependence, expectations, decision making, dominance, and satisfaction (Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009).

Satisfied couples may also perceive enough reward (i.e., profit) through their interactions with each other to warrant staying in the relationship, despite everyday problems that may arise. Homans (1958), when considering the principle of operant conditioning, noted a fundamental concept in behavioral psychology is to understand personal interactions involving mutual rewards and costs to satisfy human needs. Based on SET, Thibaut and Kelley (1959) suggested people act to maximize rewards and minimize costs in relationships. In a marital relationship, positive interactions (i.e., rewards, profits), are more valuable to partners than negative interactions (i.e., costs).

MRE programs, and specifically, TAHA, help couples increase relationship satisfaction (i.e., reward, profit) via improved communication and problem-solving skills, new knowledge, and enhanced awareness of rewards and lower costs (Halford, 2004; White & Klein, 2008). I used an SET framework to understand the goals of TAHA and collect data from couples who have attended TAHA's Catholic MRE program.

Purpose of the Research

The first purpose of this research was to evaluate the impact of a TAHA's couples' workshop on satisfaction in their relationships. TAHA may be able to improve its couples' workshop by developing new materials and tools to enhance couples' relationship satisfaction after an empirical assessment of its impact. The second purpose of this study

was to provide communities comprised of large Catholic populations with an additional MRE program whose impact has been examined. Third, I sought to help the Catholic faith community benefit from having an MRE program that is not only Catholic, but also research based. The final purpose of this study was to provide family therapists, mental health practitioners, and researchers with a culturally sensitive MRE tool whose impact has been examined.

Justification for the Study

Historically, the purpose of MRE programs has been to increase relationship satisfaction through the development of positive conflict resolution and communication skills, with proven effectiveness (Halford, et al., 2004). Unfortunately, due to the current lack of research on religious MRE programs, no data exists to support the effectiveness of MRE programs with a religious focus. Thus, evaluating the effectiveness of a Catholic, faith-based MRE program that serves to enhance relationship satisfaction will benefit the mental health field in several ways. First, this research benefits the mental health profession by empirically analyzing the effectiveness of a religious MRE program on enhancing couple satisfaction. Second, this research provides therapists, counselors, and psychologists with an initial point of comparison between a religious MRE program and nonreligious MRE programs. Third, this research also serves as an additional, research-based tool for marriage and family therapists to help couples find relational and religious solutions from a systemic perspective.

Limited research exists on the only three Catholic MRE programs in the United States (Calvo, 1988; Marriage Savers, n.d.; McManus, 1995; Retrouvaille, n.d.; Worldwide Marriage Encounter, n.d.-b). Catholic organizations and institutions will benefit from a research based Catholic MRE program that reinforces Catholic teachings and improves

relationship satisfaction. Moreover, Catholic priests are able to refer couples to an MRE program that helps parishioners with greater marital satisfaction, but also strengthens their respective faith.

Research Questions

In this study, I used a quantitative paradigm and correlational, repeated measures design to analyze archival data provided by couples who attended the 1-day TAHA Catholic MRE workshop. I then analyzed relationship satisfaction scores of couples who completed the TAHA MRE program to answer the following research questions.

1. Does TAHA's couples workshop enhance relationship satisfaction?

2. Which Catholic religious and behavioral practices are most strongly associated with TAHA workshop participants' relationship satisfaction scores prior to the completing the workshop?

3. Which demographic factors best predicted increased relationship satisfaction scores for individuals who participated in TAHA's workshop?

I performed a series of inferential statistical analyses, including the Wilcoxon signed-ranked test, crosstabs, Kruscal-Wallis H test, Mann-Whitney U test, and a generalized linear model to answer the research questions.

Limitations

I used archival data for this correlational research. Couples who participated in the study were from four cities in south central Texas; therefore, results are limited to south central populations and those practicing Hispanic-influenced Catholicism. Additionally, participants used self-reported measures, which may have rendered results biased due to the faultiness of retrospection and a response desirability effect (Carr et al., 2014). Finally, the postsurvey follow-up results were limited because I only administered the questionnaires at

a 4-year postworkshop follow up, rather than the standard research protocol of 6- and 12-month follow ups (Sprenkle, 2002).

Definitions of Terms

Catholic: A Catholic is an individual who believes Jesus instituted the Catholic Church, made Peter His successor as head of the Church, and the apostles constituted the apostolic college; this hierarchy continues until this day by succession of the pope as the head and bishops and priests as the apostles (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994, p. 880). Catholics also believe God protects human nature; therefore, they believe God is present in the sacraments, particularly in a marriage (Armstrong, 2016; Sarmiento, 2012).

Catholic committed relationship: A couple's relationship based on Catholic beliefs.

Committed relationship: Making the spouse a priority in the form of a contract (Gottman, 2009; Newton, 2008).

Marital relationship education: MREs are programs designed to provide information and teach skills, attitudes, and behaviors in a fun and relaxed atmosphere. Sessions are held in a group format where couples share interests in improving their relationships, with or without preexisting marital problems (Halford et al., 2008; Ooms, 2010).

Marital satisfaction: Marital satisfaction is a subjective measure of different dimensions in a relationship, including satisfaction, gratification, or happiness (Shriner, 2009).

Marriage: According to Judeo-Christian theology, marriage is a lifetime bond (Mahoney et al., 2008).

Relationship: A relationship is an intimate union between one woman and one man; therefore, the words *marriage*, *couple*, and *relationship* are synonymous in this study.

Relationship enhancement: Relationship enhancement is synonymous with increasing relationship satisfaction (Halford et al., 2015).

Relationship satisfaction: Relationship satisfaction is a subjective measure of different dimensions in a relationship, including satisfaction, gratification, or happiness; *marital quality* is synonymous with *marital satisfaction* (Shriner, 2009).

Subjective well-being: Well-being is a subjective perception of a person's life in two dimensions of time, such as present and past, or cognitive and affective (Diener et al., 2009). Well-being is a combination of different aspects of the person, such as psychological well-being, positive and negative feelings and the balance between them, and positive thinking (Diener et al., 2009).

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

This chapter consists of a review of existing literature on how to enhance relationship satisfaction in a committed relationship through marital relationship education (MRE) programs. There are five sections in this chapter: Current state of marriage in the United States, relationship satisfaction, theoretical perspective, MRE programs, and summary of literature and literature gaps. The first section focuses on the current state of U.S. marriage and presents statistical information along with a brief history of marriage as a construct. The second section includes various conceptualizations of relationship satisfaction, which consequently defined the language used in this study; in this section, I describe which components have been found to contribute to increased relationship satisfaction. To improve comprehension, I divided these components into physical, economic, and psychosocial components. The third section describes social exchange theory (SET) as the theoretical framework supporting this research. The fourth section reviews existing research on the most prevalent nonreligious and religious MRE programs and how they promote their respective relationship satisfaction curricula. This section also specifically describes The Alexander House Apostolate (TAHA), a Catholic MRE program. The final section summarizes Sections 1 through 4, reviews gaps in the literature, and further describes how this study addressed this gap.

Marriage in the United States

Currently, there are approximately 121.6 million married individuals and 110.6 million unmarried individuals who are 18 years are older and live in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). The median age at first marriage is 29.5 years for men, and 27.4 years for women (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). The average length of a first marriage that ends in divorce is 9.2 years, and 6.6 years for the second marriage (U.S. Department of

Labor, 2013). Individuals are most likely to get divorced before the age of 30, with a probability of 80% for women and 72% for men (McKinley, 2018). In 2016, 27% of individuals who were married had been married before; in that group, 3.9% were men and 2.1% were women (Payne, 2016). Both marriage and divorce rates have continued to decrease; in 2016, in 44 states and Washington, D.C., the marriage rate reached 0.69%, which totaled 2,245,404 marriages (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017). The divorce rate reached 0.32%, which was 827,000 divorces (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017).

In the United States, about 62% of the adult population is in a committed relationship (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Sixty million couples are in committed relationships in the form of marriage, whereas 18 million are in a committed, cohabiting relationship (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Marriage is defined by 37 states as a committed relationship between individuals of the same or different sex (Governing, n.d.). The term *marriage* has evolved to the word *couple* because of sociocultural changes over the last 40 years, including increased cohabitation and couples of any gender forming committed relationships (Governing, n.d.; Thornton, 1988).

Brief History of Marriage in United States

A brief history of marriage in United States includes a description of events and how these events influenced marriage and family since the 18th century until now. This history begins with the Industrial Revolution describing what effects brought on families and marriages (Mintz & Kellogg, 1988). History continues with more mobility and changes in family roles during 19th century, finishing with the 20th century, where sociodemographic changes evolved the idea of marriage (Burgess et al., 1946, Cherlin, 2010; Lee & Payne, 2010; Robles et al., 2014).

1800s

In the late 18th century, due to effects of the Industrial Revolution, individuals began to move from rural areas to major cities, leaving farms to find industrial jobs (Amato et al., 2009). Consequently, the institution of marriage started to weaken (Amato et al., 2009). Before industrialization, the family was the unit of survival in rural areas because family members relied on each other for such needs as economic production, job training, and child and elder care (Burgess et al., 1946). Individuals in a marriage required parental approval and once in a relationship, they were expected to conform to traditional behaviors, sacrificing personal goals for their marriage and family (Mintz & Kellogg, 1988).

1900s

By the 1900s, families in cities more commonly had both parents working, replacing farm families with more individual autonomy; therefore, education, care, and healthcare were soon assumed by specialists (Burgess et al., 1946). Moreover, increased geographic mobility of youth, a decline in religious control, and a rise of democratic institutions gradually increased women's power (Amato et al., 2009). These changes led to increased marriage expectations, such as romance and sexual fulfillment, based on an egalitarian, friendly relationship with self-expression and personal satisfaction; such a shift facilitated the evolution of relationship terminology from *marriage* to *couple* (Mintz & Kellogg, 1988).

2000s

Major sociodemographic changes in marriage during the late 1900s and 2000s included the following: decreased marriage rates, increased cohabitation rates, an average age increase of those in their first marriage, increased divorce rates, and increased same sex marriages (Cherlin, 2010; Lee & Payne, 2010; Robles et al., 2014). The meaning of

marriage shifted from a historical emphasis on companionship, cooperation for social and economic obligations, and gendered roles, to an importance of self-fulfillment and personal choice (Cherlin, 2004).

Impact of Marriage

For most people, the single-most important relationship in their life is the one they have with their spouse or long-time partner. Studies have indicated those who are married enjoy a better quality of life as opposed to their single counterparts, particularly when examining factors such as longevity, mental health, physical health, and health habits (Brown et al. 2003; Hughes & Waite, 2009; Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001; Robles et al., 2014). In most states, marriage is a legally binding, committed relationship between two adult individuals, and typically involves a license from the state of the ceremony (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

In *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled, "the Fourteenth Amendment requires a state to license a marriage between two people of the same sex and to recognize a marriage between two people of the same sex when their marriage was lawfully licensed" (p. 1). Eleven states allow long-term couples—specifically, those who present themselves as husband and wife without a legal contract or have a common-law marriage—to engage in certain legal protections and responsibilities of those married by the state (National Conference of States Legislatures, 2014). Cohabitation is considered another form of committed relationship; the only difference from married couples is there is no written, legal contract, and one individual is considered the householder (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). The 2015 census reported 18 million couples live together without a marriage license or contract; yet, they share the same living space, expenses, and

sometimes, children, among other responsibilities. The same census reported there are 60 million married couples (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

Relationship Satisfaction

It is important to consider different researchers have equated the terms *marital satisfaction*, *marital quality*, *marital adjustment*, and *marital happiness* (Amato et al., 2009). The terms *marital quality*, *marital happiness*, and *marital satisfaction* have sometimes been used interchangeably, but still have differences depending on whether they are treated as unidimensional or multidimensional constructs in each investigation (Amato et al., 2009; Corra et al., 2009; Dush et al., 2008). A unidimensional measure is one that only takes into consideration one aspect of how content an individual is in a coupled relationship, and multidimensional measurements consider different aspects of a relationship (Amato et al., 2009). For example, when some authors consider certain concepts (e.g., happiness, conflict, commitment) as part of marital satisfaction, they are inherently measuring multiple dimensions of the overarching construct (Amato et al., 2009; Corra et al., 2009; Dush et al., 2008).

Constructs Measured as Part of Relationship Satisfaction

There are many components that measure individual satisfaction in a committed relationship, such as trust, commitment, support, communication, and emotional connection (Chapman, 2015; Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The constructs of marital quality, marital adjustment, marital satisfaction, and marital happiness are not equal, and it is important to understand their differences, especially when reviewing goals and effectiveness of MRE programs. The following terms have been used by researchers and specialized authors for more than 50 years of research on assessing the quality of couple relationships (Corra et al., 2009).

Marital Quality

Marital quality can be regarded as a general evaluation of a relationship with many correlating facets; this term is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct because the evaluation includes different dimensions, such as behavior and social comparison (Amato et al., 2009; Bookwala, 2005; Corra et al., 2009; Dush et al., 2008). Marital quality refers to individual evaluation of the negative and positive aspects of the relationship, such as behaviors and attitudes exhibited by a spouse during each interaction. These interactions are measured in areas of trust, respect, shared interests, disagreements, conflict, and marital intimacy (Amato et al., 2009; Bookwala, 2005; Robles et al., 2014; Scheeren et al., 2014).

When global assessment of these interaction-based aspects reveals high marital quality, it also means there is high satisfaction in the relationship because the relationship met personal expectations (Robles et al., 2014). When the assessment shows poor marital quality, marital satisfaction is also found to be low due to increasingly negative attitudes (Carr et al., 2014; Dush et al., 2008; Horn et al., 2013). High marital quality is directly proportional to low levels of negative behaviors, so helping a spouse increase positive behaviors and reduce negative ones leads to higher satisfaction in the relationship (Robles et al., 2014). Rebello et al. (2014) used marital quality as an equivalent of marital satisfaction, but Bookwala (2005) considered marital satisfaction just one element of overall marital quality.

Marital Adjustment

Marital adjustment is a concept reflective of a relationship's health and positivity and the capacity of an individual to have a committed relationship (Mert, 2018). The term has been considered an individual measurement of how the relationship is functioning for either partner (Locke & Wallace, 1959). Marital adjustment levels are related to: (a)

environmental factors, such as job stress, family background influence, and family processes; (b) couple competences, such as communication skills, problem-solving skills, intimacy, and reconciliation; and (c) personal characteristics, such as flexibility, neuroticism, and pathologies (Larson, 2002). Marital adjustment includes the measurement of relationship satisfaction, or happiness, in the level of agreement between spouses in aspects of finances, recreation, friends, sex, family life, household tasks, philosophy of life, affective issues, feelings about the relationship and their partner, ways of dealing with disagreements, handling of leisure time, commitments, future perspectives of the relationship, and even trust between spouses (Funk & Rogge, 2007; Locke & Wallace, 1959; Sabatelli, 1988).

Marital Happiness

Marital happiness can be defined as an individual's personal feelings about their marriage and the extent to which partners feel happy about their union (Corra et al., 2009). Amato et al. (2009) considered marital happiness a multidimensional concept that includes understanding, love, affection, agreements, sexual relationships, doing activities with their spouse, faithfulness, and taking care of each other. Some authors have used marital happiness as a synonym for marital quality because marital happiness is a measure of marital quality (Amato et al., 2009). Others consider marital happiness as a unidimensional concept (Amato et al., 2007; Dush et al., 2008).

Marital Satisfaction

Marital satisfaction results when personal dreams or ideas about marriage (e.g., those influenced by culture, religion, and education) correspond to the reality of the relationship; thus, marital satisfaction depends on the extent to which marriage meets the individual's expectations (Rebello et al., 2014). Specific elements that contribute to

increased marital satisfaction are love, jealousy, attachment, religiosity, and compassionate love, which can be defined as providing first for the spouse's personal needs (Rebello et al., 2014; Sabey et al., 2014). Regarding marital satisfaction, spouses may also evaluate costs and benefits of marriage throughout their relationship, and this evaluation has been linked to their degrees of satisfaction in the relationship (Rebello et al., 2014). Both Robles (2014) and Sabey et al. (2014) used marital satisfaction as an equivalent to marital quality; Amato et al. (2009) and Dush et al. (2008) used it synonymously with marital happiness.

In summary, the terms *marital quality*, *marital adjustment*, *marital satisfaction*, and *marital happiness* represent different ways of conceptualizing how content a person feels about being in a romantic relationship; therefore, sometimes, these terms have used as equivalents, although each may capture various aspects of a relationship. I used the term *relationship satisfaction* to discuss how content or fulfilled a person feels about being in a committed relationship; however, a person should be happy before entering a committed relationship in order to be happy in said relationship (DePaulo, 2014; DePaulo & Morris, 2005). Relationship satisfaction has been found to correlate with physical health and psychological well-being, though women have shown no difference in mental or physical health (Bookwala, 2005; DePaulo, 2014; Dush et al., 2008).

Origins of Relationship Satisfaction Research

It was necessary to consider background information and importance of stable relationships on individuals to give an adequate framework of reference. Origins of relationship satisfaction began when individuals in the 1900s started to focus on emotions, and social scientists made it a topic of formal research (Amato et al., 2009). Research on relationship satisfaction continued because the nature of relationships has changed over

time, with new generations evolving in sociohistorical contexts that emphasize different relational aspects (Bradbury et al., 2000).

In the early 1900s, marriage changed from being a source of economic security and emotional stability for raising children to becoming a source of emotional and individual satisfaction (Amato et al., 2009). Consequently, family life and marriage became a common topic among social scientists (Amato et al., 2009). In the 1940s and 1950s, using psychological and sociological concepts, researchers focused on demographics, social variables, relationship stability, and happiness (Amato et al., 2009). Research in the field of couple relationships was not formally developed into a conceptual framework to study couples' happiness until the late 1950s (Hicks & Platt, 1960). During the 1960s, relationship stability and happiness were the focus of proliferating studies of different populations, and several concepts were used to refer to the subjective state of marriage; these concepts included happiness, success, adjustment, and satisfaction, though none of these concepts were ever precisely defined (Nichols & Schwartz, 2006; Spanier & Lewis, 1980).

During the 1970s, researchers in search of additional variables to explain theoretical concepts studied other relevant terms, including marital quality, marital happiness, marital adjustment, and marital satisfaction; one major development involved recognition of marital quality as a multidimensional phenomenon (Norton, 1983). During this time, certain changes occurred in the field of relationship satisfaction research, such as including husbands in samples studied. Researchers started looking at the couple as a unit of analysis, including those in cohabitation (Amato et al., 2009; Thornton, 1988). After leading to more than 150 published articles and 182 doctoral dissertations in the United States, these changes resulted in the following outcomes: increased sample sizes, expanded growth of

awareness of biases in gender roles from the 1960s–onward, and marital quality considered an independent variable within the mental health and self-esteem scope (Spanier & Lewis, 1980).

In the 1980s, the concept of marital quality was conceived as a general measurement for global satisfaction in couple relationships (Fincham & Bradbury, 1987). Marital satisfaction began to focus on recognizing behavioral patterns of negative behavior related to body physiology. These negative patterns included those exhibited during conflict resolution, where one partner demands and the other withdraws as part of the conflict structure (Johnson, 2004). Physical violence among couples and families was also further studied and continued into the 1990s (Johnson & Ferraro, 2004).

During the 1990s, researchers continued to examine behavior exchange displayed during conflict and problem-solving discussions, resulting in finding patterns to differentiate distressed and nondistressed couples (Amato et al., 2009). An example is how one person in a relationship can make maladaptive attributions that covary with the presence of negative behaviors when couples try to solve problems (Hahlweg et al., 1998). During this time, affectivity was an important part of relationship satisfaction and affective expression, which moderates adverse outcomes (Bradbury et al., 2000). Further researchers studied other topics, such as how children influence marital satisfaction, the impact of life stressors and transitions, work and economic stressors, neighborhood involvement, religious involvement, and relationships with religious institutions (Bradbury et al., 2000).

In the 2000s, researchers focused more on relationship satisfaction as a specialized topic and examined its correlation with different areas, such as health, well-being, remarriage, parenthood, couples with children, couples with children with disabilities, effects of MRE programs, and mortality (Blanchard et al., 2009; Hawkins et al., 2008;

Manzoli et al., 2007; Mitnick et al., 2009; Proulx et al., 2007a, 2007b; Risdal & Singer, 2004; Twenge et al., 2003). The reliability of relationship satisfaction was also studied, primarily in the area of prevention, to ascertain effects of premarital MRE programs on couples, the effects of MRE programs on stepfamilies, and the effects of having workshop moderators in MRE programs (Fawcett et al., 2010; Hawkins et al., 2013; Lucier-Greer & Adler-Baeder, 2012).

Research has since continued on relationship satisfaction and other such topics as health, empathy, emotional intelligence, mindfulness, and gender differences (Jackson et al., Malouff et al., 2014; McGill et al., 2016; Miller et al., 2014; Sened et al., 2017; Sim et al., 2016). Other topics include how relationship satisfaction is affected by premarital cohabitation or when couples have a sick partner or a disabled child (Brandão et al., 2017; Jose et al., 2010).

Components Contributing to Relationship Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction is related to the components that interact in a couple's relationship to increase or decrease satisfaction. I classified these components into three categories: physical, economic, and psychosocial. These components are not exclusive from each other; many of them are closely related and impact one or more aspects of the relationship. Different benefits that correlate with relationship satisfaction have been included in these components; for example, longer lives and better physical health, which are included and described in each component section (Hughes & Waite, 2009; Robles et al., 2014). I present additional information in the Context for Relationship Satisfaction section later in this chapter.

Physical Components

Human beings have basic physical needs that can be satisfied by a partner, such as physical support, physical caregiving, and sexual intercourse (see Table 1). Some individuals like to receive love with physical touch, such as hugs, kisses, and holding hands; these types of behaviors increase relationship satisfaction (Chapman, 2015). Physical caregiving is shown in the following ways: completing repairs or chores; giving physical support to help a partner, which particularly occurs among elder people; making the other feel loved; and providing the partner with help, protection, and well-being (Chapman, 2015; Gleason et al., 2003; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). In older adults, physical caregiving has been associated with increased life expectancy of 5 or more years (Brown et al., 2003).

Sexual intimacy, including fulfilling sexual intercourse, has been considered an important physical component of relationship satisfaction (Buehler, 2017). The more emotionally intimate a couple, the better and more rewarding sex they will have, generating more relationship satisfaction (Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010). Couples with satisfying sexual relationships generate endorphins and oxytocin hormones, which lead couples to feel a stronger emotional bond and more satisfaction in their relationship (Berman, 2013; Doherty, 2001).

Physical health benefits related to relationship satisfaction include having a healthier lifestyle, prolonged life, a lower risk of illness, and a lower risk of drug and alcohol abuse (Hughes & Waite, 2009; Robles et al., 2014). Relationship satisfaction is also associated with having fewer health problems, fewer medical visits, and lower cardiovascular reactivity (Bookwala, 2005; Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001; Robles et al., 2014). When relationship satisfaction is low, physical health of spouses deteriorates. Stress

generated by conflict can also lead to poor bodily functioning of the immune system and increases likelihood of developing diseases, including symptoms of neurological disorders (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001; Robles et al., 2014). Relatedly, low relationship satisfaction is related to higher inflammation, which has been connected to functions of the immune system and cancer (Robles et al., 2014). Mortality rates for nonmarried women increase by 50% compared to married women and 250% for single men (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2005). I present additional information in the context of relationship satisfaction later in this chapter. Table 1 breaks down physical components that contribute to relationship satisfaction.

Table 1

Physical Components That Contribute to Relationship Satisfaction

Category	Subcategory	Component	Relationship satisfaction
Physical	None	Support: Shown through acts of service (Chapman, 2015).	Fosters positive feelings and diminish negative emotions (Chapman, 2015; Gleason et al., 2003).
		Caregiving: Providing help, protection, and security to the partner (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	Generates relationship satisfaction (Chapman, 2015).
		Sexual intercourse: Enjoyable mutual touching with fulfilling sexual intercourse for both individuals (Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010).	Satisfying sexual relationships release endorphins and oxytocin hormones that create emotional intimacy, generating relationship satisfaction (Berman, 2013; Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010).

Economic Components

Financial resources are necessary to provide sustainment for individuals in a

relationship (see Table 2). Marriage can improve quality of living because when two people

work, they bring two salaries home, and by working as a team, they can afford better

housing, food, or other commodities (Stack & Eshleman, 1998). Support between husband

and wife in finances is reflected in the way money is earned, used, and handled; namely,

support considers the meaning of money for each person, such as freedom, security, trust,

and power (Gottman & Silver, 2015). Table 2 shows economic components that contribute

to relationship satisfaction including subcategory, components and how components

contribute to relationship satisfaction.

Table 2

Economic Components That Contribute to Relationship Satisfaction

Category	Subcategory	Component	Relationship satisfaction
Economic	Finances	Quality of living: When two individuals work as a team, they can afford better housing, food, or other commodities (Stack & Eshleman, 1998).	Generates feelings of freedom, security, trust, power, and control, which lead to relationship satisfaction (Gottman & Silver, 2015).
		Financial support: The way money is earned, used, and handled (Gottman & Silver, 2015).	

Psychosocial Components

The psychosocial components considered relevant in relationship satisfaction, are

categorized as the following: (1) *cultural*, components influenced by culture in the form of

norms, values, virtues, and expectations; (2) *behavioral*, components shown by an

individual's behavior, such as communication, problem solving, conflict resolution,

caregiving, generosity, and knowledge; and (3) *relational*, components that impact the

relationship's connection, such as commitment, trust, flexibility, support, admiration, friendship, love, emotional intimacy, forgiveness, sexual relationships, cohesion, and religion (Dew & Wilcox, 2013; Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Cultural Components

Culture is learned via social interaction, beginning with where the individual grew up with family (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). This concept refers to an individual's beliefs about a committed relationship. Actions are influenced by an individual's norms, values, and virtues. Norms have been defined by culture as standards of proper or acceptable behaviors (Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009). Values are defined as desirable qualities strived for by an individual; therefore, values guide an individual's actions in a specific way (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The convergence between acceptable norms and desirable qualities leads to the concept of virtues, which Aristotle (1931) considered as excellence in behavior, or the most appropriate behavior for the nature of the human being. Notably, not all desirable values are intrinsically good and convenient (Aristotle, 1931). There are other positive behaviors or virtues that have functioned as strategies to keep a healthy connection in the relationship, such as admiration, friendship, commitment, generosity, patience, forgiveness, trust, gratitude, hope, positivity, and love (Fitzgibbons, 2010). When partners interchange high levels of these kinds of actions, they can expect to have upper levels of relationship satisfaction (Dew & Wilcox, 2013; Fitzgibbons, 2010).

In a committed relationship, there exists an expectation that a partner will act according to their values; yet, because individuals may have different norms and values from their past experiences, expectations need to be discussed. The individual's knowledge and understanding of their partner's background and their willingness to adapt to their partner can increase marital satisfaction (Tili & Barker, 2015). Expectations are feelings or

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beliefs about if someone or something will be successful, good, and beneficent (Newton, 2008). These expectations may be realistic or unrealistic and should be exposed, clear, and practical because they have an important role in relationship satisfaction (Newton, 2008). Individuals with higher expectations of marriage tend to work harder to fulfill those expectations, and generally, they have greater marriage satisfaction because of their higher levels of effort (Gottman & Silver, 2015). Cultural components also influence individual behavior, as I describe in the next section.

Behavioral Components

Behavioral components have been developed based on knowledge and are illustrated by behaviors in every relationship (Newton, 2008). The ability to communicate adequately and manage conflict has a significant impact on relationship satisfaction, because good communication and problem-solving skills facilitate agreement and increase relationship satisfaction (Previti & Amato, 2003). Communication is the way people exchange information through symbols, signs, or behaviors, and can be expressed verbally or nonverbally (Mehrabian, 1981). Using nonverbal communication in an emotional discussion, such as facial and body movements, increases communication by 55% and 65% to 70%, according to Nascimento (2005).

Conflict is inevitable in committed relationships, but on average, 69% of couples' problems can be solved when they have good communication and problem-solving skills to reach an agreement (Gottman, 2009; Johnson, 2004). Relationship satisfaction increases when spouses use positive conflict resolution strategies and decreases when conflicts are resolved through destructive or competitive strategies (Babcock et al., 2013; Scheeren et al., 2014).

Another important aspect of forming a strong relationship comes from caregiving, which can be defined as an orientation of being self-giving and providing generosity to help and protect the partner—when an individual gives good things freely and abundantly enhances relationship satisfaction (Dew & Wilcox, 2013; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Several studies indicated how generosity benefits both partners in increasing relationship satisfaction by giving to others the way they like to receive, even if it is not part of an exchange relationship (Dew & Wilcox, 2013; Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

These previous strategies are only possible when one individual possesses knowledge of the facts and knowledge of the other individual. When a person gets to know their partner's inner psychological world in a deep way, and uses that knowledge to care with generosity, it builds trust fostered by intimacy between partners, generates a better connection, and increases relationship satisfaction (Gottman & Silver, 2012, 2015). Several components that improve behaviors also benefit from connections of a committed relationship, and subsequently enhance relationship satisfaction. I describe these components next as relational components.

Relational Components

Individuals seek committed relationships because of the value they find in sharing their lives with someone with shared values. Many people in relationships look for connection and personal intimacy with their partner to find a deeper reason of why to stay together; shared activities and having intimate conversations help strengthen these relationships by creating a spiritual meaning of the union (Gottman & Silver, 2015). Johnson (2007) defined connection as a secure, emotional bond where a person trusts that their spouse will be there to give the emotional response needed, because such support is

also important for their partner. Consequently, a close emotional bond is fundamental to relationship satisfaction (Johnson & Greenman, 2013; Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010).

Connections that exist between spouses are based on friendship, which is built on trust and admiration. Trust is the belief the partner will not exploit or take unfair advantage in any way. Admiration is being aware that the partner is doing right or good, which generates feelings of respect, approval, and being valued (Gottman & Silver, 2015; Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009). Mutual support, which is reflected by helping or assisting the partner and by promoting the partner's interests, also benefits relationships (Chapman, 2015). When spouses support each other, negative feelings are diminished, and positive feelings are fostered (Gleason et al., 2003).

Human beings have a primary need for an emotional connection with significant others even before being born (Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010). If this emotional connection is positive during childhood, it provides security and fosters healthy emotional development and relationships; in adulthood, people use relationships to fulfill emotional needs through emotional intimacy (Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010; Moser et al., 2016). Chapman (1995, 2015) developed the five love languages for people to understand how an individual may want to receive love and feel more loved to build their emotional connections (Bland & McQueen, 2018; Egbert & Polk, 2006). These languages are: words of affirmation, quality time, acts of service, physical touch, and receiving gifts; they do not include sex (Chapman, 1995). The five love languages have been researched and proven to create and maintain relationship satisfaction (Chan & Mogilner, 2017; Egbert & Polk, 2006; Glorieus et al., 2011). The five love languages are related to the "love tank," where actions creating love are received (Chapman, 1995, 2015).

The importance of feeling valued, nurtured, and appreciated (i.e., love) that each partner should extend to the other partner has often been described as using a debit-to-assets metaphor. Mental health professionals have compared the "love tank" (Chapman, 1995) or "emotional bank account" (Newton, 2008) to a relational checking account—owned by one's partner (i.e., the owner)—which registers deposits or withdrawals based on the owner's stated preferences for nurturing and appreciative behaviors, and the owner's interpretation of the partner's behavior as conveying (Bland & McQueen, 2018; Chapman, 1995; Egbert & Polk, 2006). A minimum ratio of 5 deposits to 1 withdrawal is needed during a couple's discussion to maintain a satisfying relationship (Life Training Online, n.d.). Some ways to make deposits are to understand the other person by showing empathy, keeping promises, clearly explaining their expectations in the partnership, being kind and courteous, being trustful, and apologizing every time it is needed (Chapman, 2015; Life Training Online, n.d.).

Harm to a partner in a committed relationship happens, because conflict is inevitable; therefore, forgiveness is necessary. Forgiveness is the action of releasing feelings of resentment, sadness, or anger generated from suffering unjust treatment caused by a partner (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). Forgiveness fosters positive feelings related to relationship satisfaction (Fitzgibbons, 2010). Sexual intercourse helps overcome negative feelings and is connected to marital satisfaction, because a satisfactory sexual experience is fundamental for individuals to have a close relationship and the right level of emotional attachment based on acceptance of each other (Gottman & Gottman, 2012).

Religion also plays an important role in a person's social life, as an organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, and faith community to worship a god or group of gods (McGoldrick & Hardy, 2008). Religious involvement is an important tool that strengthens

relationship bonds (Fincham & Beach, 2010; Nelson et al., 2011). When a couple shares religious values, religion becomes a predictor of success and relationship satisfaction, because it has been found to increase positive interactions between spouses and decrease negative behaviors (Fincham & Beach, 2010; Nelson et al., 2011; Sabey et al., 2014). Table 3 breaks down psychosocial components that contribute to relationship satisfaction.

Table 3

Psychosocial Components That Contribute to Relationship Satisfaction

Category	Subcategory	Component	Relationship satisfaction
Psychosocial	Cultural	Norms: Standards of proper and or acceptable behaviors defined culturally (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009).	Norms influence behavior and expectations. When a partner behaves according to one's expectations, it generates satisfaction (Chapman, 2015; Peterson & Seligman, 2004).
		Values: Desirable qualities possessed by an individual that guide behavior in a specific way (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009).	Values influence behavior and expectations, which generate relationship satisfaction (Chapman, 2015; Peterson & Seligman, 2004).
Psychosocial	Cultural	Virtues: The convergence between acceptable norms and desirable qualities gives rise to the concept of virtues, which Aristotle (1931) considered as excellence in behavior, or the most appropriate behavior for the nature of the human being.	Virtues that enhance relationship satisfaction are admiration, trust, commitment, friendship, generosity, gratitude, forgiveness, patience, positivity, hope, and love (Dew & Wilcox, 2013; Fitzgibbons, 2010; Gottman 2009; Johnson, 2004).
		Expectations: Feelings or beliefs about how successful, good, and beneficent a couple relationship will be (Newton, 2008).	Expectations should be realistic to enhance relationship satisfaction (Newton, 2008). Individuals who have higher expectations tend to work harder to fulfill it, generating relationship satisfaction (Gottman & Silver, 2015).
	Behavioral	Communication: The ability to adequately exchange ideas and	Relationship satisfaction increases when individuals express

Category	Subcategory	Component	Relationship satisfaction
		feelings; the percentage of nonverbal communication goes from 55% to 70% and verbal communication goes from 30% to 45% (Gottman, 2009; Mehrabian, 1981; Nascimento, 2005; Previti & Amato, 2003).	themselves adequately and decreases when they use criticism, contempt, defensiveness, or stonewalling (Gottman, 2009; Previti & Amato, 2003).
		Problem solving: The form and tools individuals use to solve a problem (Babcock et al., 2013; Scheeren et al., 2014).	Relationship satisfaction increases when positive strategies are used and decreases when destructive or competitive strategies are used (Babcock et al., 2013; Scheeren et al., 2014).
		Conflict resolution: An average of 69% of couples' problems can be solved couples have good communication and problem-solving skills to reach an agreement (Gottman, 2009).	When conflict is addressed the right way, it generates trust, openness, and intimacy, enhancing relationship satisfaction (Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010).
		Caregiving: The orientation of self-giving to help and protect the partner (Dew & Wilcox, 2013; Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	Giving good things freely and abundantly enhances relationship satisfaction (Dew & Wilcox, 2013; Peterson & Seligman, 2004).
Psychosocial	Behavioral	Generosity: Giving to others (Dew & Wilcox, 2013).	When one person is generous, it benefits both partners in a relationship, enhancing satisfaction (Dew & Wilcox, 2013).
		Knowledge: Gained when an individual knows his or her partner's inner psychological world (Gottman & Silver, 2015).	When an individual fulfills the partner's emotional needs based on knowledge, it generates trust that fosters intimacy, enhancing relationship satisfaction (Chapman, 2015; Gottman & Silver, 2015).
	Relational	Commitment: Involves feelings of willingness to participate and permanency in a relationship; commitment is founded on attractions and constraints (Nelson et al., 2011; Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009).	Commitment is required to generate feelings of trust and support, generating relationship satisfaction (Johnson, 2004).

Category	Subcategory	Component	Relationship satisfaction
		Trust: The belief that the partner will not exploit or take unfair advantage of him or her in any way (Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009).	Trust is needed to have intimacy; trust and intimacy generate relationship satisfaction (Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010; Newton, 2008).
		Flexibility: The ability to make changes when needed (Olson, 2011).	The right level of flexibility is related to relationship satisfaction (Olson, 2011).
		Support: Helping or assisting the spouse and by promoting the partner's interests (Chapman, 2015; Gleason et al., 2003).	Providing support makes people feel loved, fostering relationship satisfaction (Gleason et al., 2003).
		Admiration: Being aware that the partner is doing right or good, generating feelings of respect, approval, and being valued (Gottman & Silver, 2015).	Admiration fosters positive feelings, generating relationship satisfaction (Gottman & Silver, 2015).
		Friendship: The relationship between two individuals wanting the best for the partner based on love (agape), creating a lasting bond (Aristotle, 1931).	Friendship in a couple relationship generates satisfaction (Previti & Amato, 2003).
Psychosocial	Relational	Love: A feeling of affection that can be shown in five ways, according to Chapman (2015): words of affirmation, quality time, acts of service, physical touch, and gifts.	Individuals have a preference for how they want to feel loved. Love generates relationship satisfaction (Chapman, 2015).
		Emotional intimacy: A secure emotional bond based on an individual trusting that their partner will be there to give the emotional response needed, fostering openness to share oneself with another person (Johnson, 2010; Newton, 2008).	Emotional intimacy generates relationship satisfaction (Johnson & Greenman, 2013; Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010).
		Forgiveness: The action of releasing feelings of	

Category	Subcategory	Component	Relationship satisfaction
		resentment, sadness, or anger, generated from suffering an unjust treatment from another individual (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000).	Forgiveness fosters positive feelings related to relationship satisfaction (Fitzgibbons, 2010).
		Sexual relationships: Relationships based on emotions and sexual arousal requiring a certain degree of relaxation; orgasm requires a balance between tension and confidence in the partner, especially in females (McCluskey, 2006; Johnson et al., 2010?).	A satisfactory sexual experience requires the acceptance of each other and the right levels of attachment to generate relationship satisfaction (Johnson et al., 2010).
		Cohesion: The level of emotional bonding (Olson, 2011).	The right level of cohesion is related to relationship satisfaction (Olson, 2011).
		Religion: An organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, and faith community to worship a god or a group of gods (McGoldrick & Hardy, 2008).	Shared religious values, individual religious involvement, and couple engagement in religious activities generate relationship satisfaction (Fincham et al., 2010; Larson & Olson, 2005; Nelson et al., 2011; Sabey et al., 2014).

Context for Relationship Satisfaction

The existing research I have presented has largely suggests that relationship satisfaction promotes physical and emotional health when comparing happy couples to unhappy couples (Bookwala, 2005; Dush et al., 2008; Horn et al., 2013; Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2005; Robles, 2014). Medical conditions or mental disorders (e.g., depression, trauma, bipolar disorder, borderline personality), may impair the motivations and capacities of individuals to facilitate relationship satisfaction with a partner (Frech & Williams, 2007; Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2005). The severity of the mental disorder, whether it be mild,

moderate, or severe, may deter a person's ability to generate satisfaction for themselves and it may transfer negative feelings or apathy into a relationship (Robles et al., 2014).

The correlation between relationship satisfaction and physical health and well-being was found when comparing individuals who reported being happy or unhappy in a committed relationship during long-term studies (Bookwala, 2005; DePaulo, 2014; Dush et al., 2008). Results showed divorced women have better health than unhappily married women (DePaulo, 2014). No significant change in happiness was found when comparing single individuals transitioning to a committed relationship, nor comparing how long people lived if they had always been married or single (DePaulo & Morris, 2005). According to DePaulo (2014) and DePaulo and Morris (2005), neither single nor married women showed any notable differences in physical and mental health.

Some researchers have found satisfaction in a relationship contributes more to one's general happiness than other factors in life, such as having a good job or having good friends (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001; Rebello et al., 2014). Other researchers have found being single or in a couple relationship generates the same levels of satisfaction (DePaulo, 2014; DePaulo & Morris, 2005). Böger and Huxhold (2018) confirmed people around 50 years old were more satisfied being single than younger single people; therefore, with advancing age, the satisfaction of being single increased.

Summary of Literature Review

For an individual to be happy in a relationship, different components are required. First, the individual needs to be happy before entering a committed relationship. Second, the individual needs to find another physically and psychologically healthy individual to start a relationship (Frech & Williams, 2007; Hawkins & Booth, 2005; Monin & Clark, 2011). Third, the individual needs to apply the components previously described as

physical, economic, and psychosocial; the more components both individuals in a committed relationship have, the better likelihood they have a high level of relationship satisfaction (Brown et al., 2003; DePaulo, 2014; Frech & Williams, 2007; Gleason et al., 2003; Hawkins & Booth, 2005).

Benefits of being in a satisfactory, committed relationship contribute more to general happiness than any other factor in life, because a partner could be a source of emotional support, offer security and companionship, and even increase one's social network; thereby, leading to improved relationship satisfaction in life and extended life expectancy (Brown et al., 2003; DePaulo, 2014; Frech & Williams, 2007; Gleason et al., 2003; Hawkins & Booth, 2005; Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001; Mastekaasa, 1992). When relationship satisfaction improves, the psychological well-being and mental health of an individual improves in regard to life satisfaction and happiness, and typically leads to less depression, stress, and suicide (Dush et al., 2008; Hawkins & Booth, 2005; Horn et al., 2013). People unhappy in their couple relationships tend to be less happy in life and have poorer psychological and physical health (Hawkins & Booth, 2005).

Theoretical Perspective

Social scientists have used many lenses, such as economic and social principles, behavioral psychology, and systemic perspectives, to examine the constructs of relationship satisfaction (Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009). From a systemic point of view, social exchange theory (SET) and its focus on the transactional nature of relationships has helpful for understanding motivations of teaching and understanding goals for identifying how relationship satisfaction is enhanced (Takahashi, 2000). The SET framework draws from psychological, sociological, and economic concepts, and SET practitioners have considered human behavior an economic exchange, called *transactions*, where people seek maximized

profits and minimized costs (White & Klein, 2008). Human relationships are negotiated

exchanges (i.e., transactions), and rely on economic principles to explain social behaviors

by considering rewards, costs, expectations, and alternatives as part of social life

(Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Takahashi, 2000; White & Klein, 2008).

History of SET

The roots of SET began in 1901, when sociologist, Albert Chavannes, applied

business ideas to personal relations and commented that social exchange was fundamental

in human relationships (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008). Chavannes (as cited by Knox, 1963)

noted human behavior obeys the profitable exchange law, where every individual will

choose the most rewarding option for happiness. Later, Houmans (1958) published *Social

Behavior as Exchange*; in that article, Homans proposed individuals exchange not just

goods or monetary valuables, but also symbolic goods or personal value, such as approval

and prestige.

SET scholars received an important legacy from anthropologists Mauss and de

Levi-Strauss, who considered human relationships as a reflection of a social organization's

patterns and society's defined rules, laws, and customs—all are reciprocity indicators that

differentiate human behavior from animal behavior (White & Klein, 2008). Other

researchers, such as Homans and Schneider, disagreed with Levi-Strauss about social

norms regulating interpersonal exchanges (Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009). Homans and

Schneider believed institutions only limit choices because individuals behave to satisfy

needs; this belief was associated with principles of behaviorism, as developed by Skinner

(as cited by Zaman, 2014), who stated people learn and repeat rewarded behaviors. Homans

(1958) proposed that the principle of operant conditioning, one of the fundamental concepts

in behavioral psychology, should be considered when trying to understand personal interactions involving mutual rewards and costs to satisfy human needs.

Other anthropologists and sociologists have also made contributions to SET; for example, Malinowski was the first theorist who observed the rule of reciprocity, and Mauss introduced the idea of exchange as part of a system of reciprocity, where individuals interchange profits in couple relationships via reciprocity (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; White & Klein, 2008). In addition, Gouldner (1960) identified norms of reciprocity as obligations, rights, and duties in relationships. Similarly, Sahlins (as cited by Zaman, 2014) found that in social exchange, the norm of reciprocity had economic reasons, because he considered the economic exchange as part of the human instinct; therefore, humans will behave accordingly as an economic transaction by maximizing rewards and minimizing costs. The secret to good relationships, according to Homans (1958), involves deriving value for one's self by giving to others (e.g., spouse, partner, child, friend, business associate) what they value. If both individuals hold this value and engage in this quid pro quo (but not necessarily equitable) behavior, their relationship will be satisfactory (Nichols, 2006).

Family theorists have set forth ideas based on SET throughout history. Sabatelli and Shehan (2009) asserted that SET principles informed Waller's principle of least interest, Blood and Wolfe's resource theory, and Scanzoni's work on sexual bargaining. Lewis and Spanier used SET to discuss the role of marital quality in marital stability (White & Klein, 2008). None of the most influential exchange theorists in the 1960s examined family issues; their only focus was on the behavior of people and power dynamics in social relationships. However, by the end of the 1970s, SET was widely used as a theory to understand family dynamics (Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009; White & Klein, 2008). By early

1980, SET was applied to marital stability, parent–child relations, fertility decisions, divorce, women's work roles, and status of the elderly (White & Klein, 2008).

Principles of SET

SET considers three concepts emphasized in relationship satisfaction curricula: rules and norms, resources, and relationships. However, the foundational principle of rational actors underlies the usefulness of these key concepts (Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009). In concert, all four of these principles provide the motivation (i.e., rational actor), broader social context (i.e., rules and norms for transactions), capital (i.e., resources), and personal context (i.e., relationships).

Rational Actors

In SET, an individual is considered a rational actor, capable of considering different options and weighing rewards and costs of each option. Because individuals are self-interested, they make decisions to maximize utilities in a transaction (White & Klein, 2008). When individuals are faced with alternatives that will generate no rewards, an individual will choose the least costly alternative. The standards to evaluate rewards and costs differs from one individual to another and can change with time (Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009).

Rules and Norms

Rules and norms are reciprocal and negotiated agreements, better understood as economic transactions, where individuals give because they inherently expect rewards in return (White & Klein, 2008). There are three different types of reciprocity. The first type is a transactional pattern of interdependent exchanges, where an individual's action leads to a response from the other; reciprocity is viewed as a natural component that emerges in a committed relationship (Gonnet, 2010). The second type of reciprocity is a personal belief

of people getting what they deserve. The third type of reciprocity is a moral or cultural norm, which is something people ought to do (Lioukas & Reuer, 2015).

Resources

Resources exchanged in relationship interactions may include time, money, and prestige, and the relationship make take form of an agreement with norms about an economic exchange or an association between two partners interacting as institutions or individuals (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Lioukas & Reuer, 2015; White & Klein, 2008). Expected outcomes from these interactions in a relationship mainly include rewarding behaviors, such as trust and support between partners (Lioukas & Reuer, 2015). The norm of reciprocity in couple relationships often presents itself as a pattern when two people exchange rewards—with time, reciprocal obligations usually emerge from these interactions. When the exchange of rewards is stable in a relationship, a model where trust is built develops, facilitating future interactions. The norm of fairness is present when rewards and costs in a relationship are equivalent (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008; Zaman, 2014).

Rewards, according to Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005), include money, love, status, information, goods, and services. Each reward has two key characteristics: particularism and concreteness. Particularism depends on the individual who gives the reward. For example, regardless of who provides money, particularism is low because the value of money is constant. Conversely, love has high particularism because it is more valuable, depending on the person who provides it (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The second characteristic of an element exchanged is concreteness, which refers to how particular the resource is (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Some resources are valued because the individual who provides them is valued. Differences in resources an individual

has, in contrast with a partner, creates important differences in power and control,

generating the possibility of conflict in the relationship (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008;

Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009).

Relationships

Core constructs of SET pertinent to relationships include the following: individuals

avoid costs and punishments and seek rewards, they calculate to minimize costs and

maximize profits, and they evaluate relationship alternatives as a foundation for making

decisions before behaving in a certain way (Blau, 1964; Donnelly & Burgess, 2008). People

evaluate rewards and costs differently according to their experiences, making social

relationships very complicated (Blau, 1964; Donnelly & Burgess, 2008). Rewards are

defined as pleasure, satisfaction, and gratification, and serve as positive reinforcements;

costs are defined as punishments or foregone rewards (White & Klein, 2008).

In couple relationships, it is important to recognize different types of rewards and

costs. Blau (1964) considered there to be four types of rewards, but as I previously

discussed, Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) considered there to be six types. Blau (1964)

considered an individual's rewards to be money, social approval, esteem (also considered

respect), and compliance. An individual's costs are an investment of time and effort, the

cost of resources given in exchange, and the cost of opportunity if an individual had other

options available. In every relationship, if the value of rewards received exceeds an

individual's expectations, profit became less valuable in the future (Blau, 1964; Sabatelli &

Shehan, 2009).

SET and Relationship Satisfaction

SET is a framework widely used to understand potential incentives for couples to

engage and learn strategies to improve their relationship satisfaction, because people enter a

relationship to satisfy their basic needs (Johnson, 2004; White & Klein, 2008). The theory has been used to research couples' relationships on a variety of topics, including the formation, maintenance, and dissolution of a relationship, along with courtship, attraction, reciprocity, fairness, commitment, trust, dependence, expectations, decision making, dominance, and relationship satisfaction (Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009).

Scholars who use SET often explain levels of relationship satisfaction by subtracting negative interactions (i.e., costs) from positive interactions (i.e., rewards) in the relationship and compare the results to existing cultural norms (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008; White & Klein, 2008). Therefore, the result of the equation should be positive, which results from a more positive value attributed to rewards after subtracting the value of costs in the relationship and then comparing the resulting positive value with cultural norms. Interactions with no inherent value are not considered in the equation because they do not generate rewards or costs. If the total value of the previous comparison is positive, then the individual will stay in the relationship.

An individual considers and compares alternatives depending on the availability of rewards in other relationships. In other words, a person accepts few rewards from a relationship if no other options are possible, but if another connection with a higher reward level is available, the person might decide to abandon their present relationship to get into a more rewarding one (Donnelly & Burgess, 2008; White & Klein, 2008). In a relationship, rewards must be proportional to costs; the more resources are invested, the higher the expectations of rewards (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959; White & Klein, 2008).

The formation, maintenance, and dissolution of relationships are regulated by the interaction of different factors, such as attraction, satisfaction, reciprocity, fairness, commitment, trust, and dependence (White & Klein, 2008). These factors work as

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mediators of involvement in the process of courtship during formation of the bond; fairness, reciprocity, decision making, dominance, control, and power are mediators of relationship stability over time, because they interact with satisfaction to impact relationship stability (Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009). During the formation stage of a relationship, the most desirable dating partners are those with rewarding characteristics, such as physical beauty or promising social status (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008). Choices in this regard are highly influenced by an individual's past experiences, measured against expected costs and rewards, and by the probability of achieving desired outcomes; attraction and dependability are closely related (Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009).

In a committed relationship, the partner who contributes more resources has more power and impact on decision making. The result is the less-powerful individual looks for alternative sources of rewards to reduce inequality in a relationship (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008). Thus, when there is inequality in a relationship, jealousy is an emotion that lessens that feeling of inequality. The more an individual relies on receiving rewards, the less power the individual has (Bagarozzi, 2009). Norms emerge and evolve to balance and stabilize benefits in a relationship, and the partner who receives fewer rewards is more likely to become angry, whereas the other partner might feel more guilty (Homans, 1958; Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009).

Attraction (i.e., rewards) between individuals in a relationship are more valued when an individual's expectations are exceeded, and dependence in a relationship is calculated by the availability of other relationships that can generate more rewards. Therefore, attraction and dependence are closely related; when attraction is high, dependency is high (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008; Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009). Actions of individuals are oriented to get the greatest rewards; an individual must take into

consideration the benefits of the spouse, because relationships are interdependent. Consequently, their behaviors are shaped by the dependence on satisfying needs of both participants (Dagleish et al., 2015; Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009; White & Klein, 2008).

SET researchers have described how relationships work using economic principles supported by behavioral principles (Homans, 1958; White & Klein, 2008). Tables 4, 5, and 6 show physical, economic, and psychosolica components, respectively, that contribute to relationship satisfaction—including subcategory, components, and how components contribute to relationship satisfaction.The components that enhance relationship satisfaction have been considered in SET via several models:

(a) The five love languages and the emotional bank account (Bland & McQueen, 2018; Chapman, 2015, 1995; Covey, 2014; Egbert, & Polk, 2006; Life Training Online, n.d.);

(b) Gottman's (2009) sound relationship house model, which includes trust, commitment, knowledge, turning toward instead of away, admiration, communication, problem solving, fulfilled dreams, and shared meaning; and

(c) the circumplex model (Olson, 2000), with flexibility, cohesion, and communication as components that correlate with relationship satisfaction (Van Groningen Anthony, 2007; Shen, 2001). The principal category that maintains satisfactory relationships includes behaviors that focus on benefiting the partner and, at the same time, maximizes rewards for both partners, because relationships are interdependent (Dagleish et al., 2015; Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009; White & Klein, 2008).

Table 4

Physical Components That Contribute to Relationship Satisfaction

Category	Subcategory	Component	Relationship satisfaction
Physical	None	Support: Shown through acts of service (Chapman, 2015).	Fosters positive feelings and diminish negative emotions (Chapman, 2015; Gleason et al., 2003).
		Caregiving: Providing help, protection, and security to the partner (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	Generates relationship satisfaction (Chapman, 2015).
		Sexual intercourse: Enjoyable mutual touching with fulfilling sexual intercourse for both individuals (Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010).	Satisfying sexual relationships release endorphins and oxytocin hormones that create emotional intimacy, generating relationship satisfaction (Berman, 2013; Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010).

Table 5

Economic Components That Contribute to Relationship Satisfaction

Category	Subcategory	Component	Relationship satisfaction
Economic	Finances	Quality of living: When two individuals work as a team, they can afford better housing, food, or other commodities (Stack & Eshleman, 1998).	Generates feelings of freedom, security, trust, power, and control, which lead to relationship satisfaction (Gottman & Silver, 2015).
		Financial support: The way money is earned, used, and handled (Gottman & Silver, 2015).	

Table 6

Psychosocial Components That Contribute to Relationship Satisfaction

Category	Subcategory	Component	Relationship satisfaction
Psychosocial	Cultural	Norms: Standards of proper and or acceptable behaviors defined culturally (Peterson &	Norms influence behavior and expectations. When a partner behaves according to one's expectations, it generates

Category	Subcategory	Component	Relationship satisfaction
		Seligman, 2004; Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009).	satisfaction (Chapman, 2015; Peterson & Seligman, 2004).
		Values: Desirable qualities possessed by an individual that guide behavior in a specific way (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009).	Values influence behavior and expectations, which generate relationship satisfaction (Chapman, 2015; Peterson & Seligman, 2004).
Psychosocial	Cultural	Virtues: The convergence between acceptable norms and desirable qualities gives rise to the concept of virtues, which Aristotle (1931) considered as excellence in behavior, or the most appropriate behavior for the nature of the human being.	Virtues that enhance relationship satisfaction are admiration, trust, commitment, friendship, generosity, gratitude, forgiveness, patience, positivity, hope, and love (Dew & Wilcox, 2013; Fitzgibbons, 2010; Gottman 2009; Johnson, 2004).
		Expectations: Feelings or beliefs about how successful, good, and beneficent a couple relationship will be (Newton, 2008).	Expectations should be realistic to enhance relationship satisfaction (Newton, 2008). Individuals who have higher expectations tend to work harder to fulfill it, generating relationship satisfaction (Gottman & Silver, 2015).
	Behavioral	Communication: The ability to adequately exchange ideas and feelings; the percentage of nonverbal communication goes from 55% to 70% and verbal communication goes from 30% to 45% (Gottman, 2009; Mehrabian, 1981; Nascimento, 2005; Previti & Amato, 2003).	Relationship satisfaction increases when individuals express themselves adequately and decreases when they use criticism, contempt, defensiveness, or stonewalling (Gottman, 2009; Previti & Amato, 2003).
		Problem solving: The form and tools individuals use to solve a problem (Babcock et al., 2013; Scheeren et al., 2014).	Relationship satisfaction increases when positive strategies are used and decreases when destructive or competitive strategies are used (Babcock et al., 2013; Scheeren et al., 2014).

		Conflict resolution: An average of 69% of couples' problems can be solved couples have good communication and problem-solving skills to reach an agreement (Gottman, 2009).	When conflict is addressed the right way, it generates trust, openness, and intimacy, enhancing relationship satisfaction (Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010).
		Caregiving: The orientation of self-giving to help and protect the partner (Dew & Wilcox, 2013; Peterson & Seligman, 2004).	Giving good things freely and abundantly enhances relationship satisfaction (Dew & Wilcox, 2013; Peterson & Seligman, 2004).
Psychosocial	Behavioral	Generosity: Giving to others (Dew & Wilcox, 2013).	When one person is generous, it benefits both partners in a relationship, enhancing satisfaction (Dew & Wilcox, 2013).
		Knowledge: Gained when an individual knows his or her partner's inner psychological world (Gottman & Silver, 2015).	When an individual fulfills the partner's emotional needs based on knowledge, it generates trust that fosters intimacy, enhancing relationship satisfaction (Chapman, 2015; Gottman & Silver, 2015).
	Relational	Commitment: Involves feelings of willingness to participate and permanency in a relationship; commitment is founded on attractions and constraints (Nelson et al., 2011; Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009).	Commitment is required to generate feelings of trust and support, generating relationship satisfaction (Johnson, 2004).
		Trust: The belief that the partner will not exploit or take unfair advantage of him or her in any way (Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009).	Trust is needed to have intimacy; trust and intimacy generate relationship satisfaction (Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010; Newton, 2008).
		Flexibility: The ability to make changes when needed (Olson, 2011).	The right level of flexibility is related to relationship satisfaction (Olson, 2011).
		Support: Helping or assisting the spouse and by promoting the partner's interests (Chapman, 2015; Gleason et al., 2003).	Providing support makes people feel loved, fostering relationship satisfaction (Gleason et al., 2003).
		Admiration: Being aware that the partner is doing right or	Admiration fosters positive feelings, generating relationship satisfaction (Gottman & Silver, 2015).

		good, generating feelings of respect, approval, and being valued (Gottman & Silver, 2015).	
			Friendship in a couple relationship generates satisfaction (Previti & Amato, 2003).
		Friendship: The relationship between two individuals wanting the best for the partner based on love (agape), creating a lasting bond (Aristotle, 1931).	
Psychosocial	Relational	Love: A feeling of affection that can be shown in five ways, according to Chapman (2015): words of affirmation, quality time, acts of service, physical touch, and gifts.	Individuals have a preference for how they want to feel loved. Love generates relationship satisfaction (Chapman, 2015).
		Emotional intimacy: A secure emotional bond based on an individual trusting that their partner will be there to give the emotional response needed, fostering openness to share oneself with another person (Johnson, 2010; Newton, 2008).	Emotional intimacy generates relationship satisfaction (Johnson & Greenman, 2013; Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010).
		Forgiveness: The action of releasing feelings of resentment, sadness, or anger, generated from suffering an unjust treatment from another individual (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000).	Forgiveness fosters positive feelings related to relationship satisfaction (Fitzgibbons, 2010).
		Sexual relationships: Relationships based on emotions and sexual arousal requiring a certain degree of relaxation; orgasm requires a balance between tension and confidence in the partner, especially in females (McCluskey, 2006; Johnson et al., 2010?).	A satisfactory sexual experience requires the acceptance of each other and the right levels of attachment to generate relationship satisfaction (Johnson et al., 2010).
			The right level of cohesion is related to relationship satisfaction (Olson, 2011).

Cohesion: The level of emotional bonding (Olson, 2011).	Shared religious values, individual religious involvement, and couple engagement in religious activities generate relationship satisfaction (Fincham et al., 2010; Larson & Olson, 2005; Nelson et al., 2011; Sabey et al., 2014).
Religion: An organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, and faith community to worship a god or a group of gods (McGoldrick & Hardy, 2008).	

Critique of SET

SET is a common research framework for relationships, but it has presented some difficulties, such as not explaining how people calculate rewards and costs before acting (Bagarozzi, 2009; White & Klein, 2008). Studies on how people calculate rewards and costs remain lacking, and little research exists about exchange processes. Furthermore, some SET constructs have not yet been fully identified, and some formulations are ambiguous, which can lead to multiple interpretations—making this model a difficult one to test (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Nakonezny & Denton, 2008; White & Klein, 2008). An example of this difficulty is a formula that defines how exchange is decided or does not exist; therefore, two individuals, under the same circumstances, can make different decisions (Knox, 1963). Most importantly, SET scholars have considered individuals as rational actors who are always thinking of and calculating profits, but they have not considered them as people who make decisions based on feelings not always calculated rationally (Bagarozzi, 2009).

MRE Programs

MRE programs have been designed to give information and teach skills, attitudes, and behaviors in a relaxed atmosphere, where group sessions are fun and couples share the interest of improving their own relationships, regardless of preexisting marital problems (Halford et al., 2008; Ooms, 2010). These participation-optional programs attract couples

because the group format makes participants of all backgrounds feel supported and comfortable (Ooms, 2010). In the following sections, I explain the history of MRE programs, their connections with relationship satisfaction, the context in which these programs have been considered effective, and how couples consider attending a program.

History

In the United States in 1930, professional counselors began working with women who sought advice on to improve their marriages. For this reason, professionals based their therapeutic approach on personal experiences (Halford et al., 2008; Ooms, 2010). The field of marriage counseling started growing when several professionals with expertise in different disciplines joined the movement. Groves, a sociologist and pioneer, gave the first course on marriage education at University of North Carolina in 1934 (National Healthy Marriage Resource Center, n.d.). Then in 1938, National Council of Family Relations was established and in 1942, so too was American Association of Marriage Counselors (Kuehl, 2009; National Healthy Marriage Resource Center, n.d.).

MRE programs, as opposed to marriage counseling, started mainly as an educational resource provided by religious organizations to couples intending to marry (Calvo, 1988). In 1946, the Archdiocese of Chicago began to offer talks as preparation for marriage developed by the Catholic Church (National Healthy Marriage Resource Center, n.d.). The foundations of MRE as a scholarly field began in the 1950s and 1960s with the establishment of the Marital Research Institute (MRI), along with the work of Calvo and David and Vera M. to help couples improve their relationships (Halford et al., 2003; National Healthy Marriage Resource Center, n.d.).

In 1952, Calvo, a Catholic priest, started to give presentations at marriage conferences in Spain, with the intent of helping couples develop an honest and open

relationship (National Healthy Marriage Resource Center, n.d.). His initiative was successful, and by 1971, he founded Worldwide Marriage Encounter, open to Catholic and non-Catholic people who desired to improve their relationships (National Healthy Marriage Resource Center, n.d.). In 1959, Bateson et al. started MRE work with people suffering from schizophrenia and their families; later, they focused on family therapy, studying communication in family units (Mental Research Institute, n.d.).

The Maces began facilitating workshops for couples in the early 1960s, designed to help them develop skills and avoid marital distress even if they had no apparent interpersonal problems (National Healthy Marriage Resource Center, n.d.). In 1966, Coalition for Marriage, Family, and Couples Education was founded as an organization designed to promote MRE programs in the United States (Ooms, 2010). By 1973, the Mace couple had already begun the Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment (ACME), just 1 year after Guerney started offering courses on relationship enhancement at the Institute for Development of Emotional and Life Skills (National Healthy Marriage Resource Center, n.d.).

In the 1970s, American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, Commission on Accreditation for Marriage, and Family Therapy Education were founded (Kuehl, 2009). The field of marriage and family therapy witnessed the beginnings of marriage and relationship education and couples and marriage therapy (CMT), each one with different characteristics (Ooms, 2010). I describe CMT later in this chapter. As previously indicated, MRE programs were created to provide couples with information, teach them certain skills, and bring awareness in a group format (Halford et al., 2008; Ooms, 2010).

By the 1980s, emotion-focused couples' therapy was developed in Canada, spearheaded by Johnson and Greenberg (Johnson, 2004). Furthermore, multiculturalism

was considered crucial to therapy by experts like McGoldrick (as cited by Kuehl, 2009). Other marriage and family therapy professionals, such as Gottman, Sollee, and Doherty, noticed many couples who divorced did not seek professional help at the right time or at all (Halford et al., 2003; Ooms, 2010). By the 1990s, approximately 30% of all couples in the United States had attended some type of relationship education program (Halford et al., 2003).

MRE program evolution resulted in a typical MRE program format consisting of one or two facilitators who present research-based topics that enhance relationship satisfaction (for descriptions of these topics, see Tables 1, 2, and 3) to a group consisting of several couples. Each workshop begins with an icebreaker exercise to help participants feel more comfortable, engage in the workshop, and be ready to participate. Presenters deliver materials, introduce the topic, present information, and incorporate skill-building exercises. Time is given for each couple to work separately from the group. Then, facilitators approach couples to find out how they are doing and if more help is needed. This procedure is followed until topics are finished (Halford et al., 2003).

Couple and family education programs increasingly have been specialized to reach different life stages of any given couple, whether they have blended families, come from different cultures, or have diverse religious backgrounds (Newton, 2008). These methods are spread throughout many countries around the world (Halford et al., 2008). Relationship problems and divorce are present in every country, which is why relationship education programs are an important tool to improve marriages (Halford & Snyder, 2012). The myriad purposes of MRE have included sustaining marital satisfaction, reducing distress, decreasing divorce rates, providing knowledge, skills, and attitudes about couple

relationships, and reducing personal and social costs (Halford et al., 2003; Halford et al., 2004; Halford et al., 2008).

MRE research started during the 1970s and largely found effectiveness of couples' workshops depended mostly on awareness, cognitive change, feedback, and skills training (Halford, 2004). These relationship education programs have often used assessments before beginning a program to tailor curricula to meet audience needs (Halford et al., 2003). Examples of assessments that have been used include Prepare/Enrich, Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study (FOCCUS), and Relate (Halford et al., 2012). The Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) has been evaluated in controlled trials, and both PREP and Relate have been proven effective in enhancing communication between a couple (Halford et al., 2004). Because MRE is manualized, people who are not licensed therapists or counselors can facilitate the program with training (Markman & Rhoades, 2012; Newton, 2008).

MRE and Relationship Satisfaction

MRE research on effectiveness of enhancing relationship satisfaction began in the 1970s, and researchers have demonstrated some MRE programs improved relationship satisfaction and decreased divorce rates (Halford, 2004; Halford et al., 2003). Essential elements for MRE programs to generate results are: awareness, cognitive changes, skills training, and feedback (Halford et al., 2003). These factors help improve communication and conflict resolution skills, help participants understand commitment, and develop adaptive behaviors, attitudes, and other skills (Carlson et al., 2014; Halford et al., 2003).

MRE may be skill-based or delivered with inventories (Halford, 2004). Skill-based MRE sessions focus on teaching and developing a couple's ability to generate good relationship outcomes, such as positive communication, conflict management, and positive

expressions of affection. These outcomes enhance relationship satisfaction, both short and long term. (Commerford & Hunter, 2016; Halford, 2004; Halford et al., 2003). Certain skill-based MRE programs, proven by researchers to enhance relationship satisfaction, include: Great Start, The Art of Science of Love (TASL), Prepare/Enrich, and PREP, (Gottman, 2009; Halford et al., 2004; Newton, 2008; Olson et al., 2012). Facilitators use individual questionnaires during relationship education programs with inventories. Later facilitators compare the results of each one with the individual's partner to obtain information and personal and relationship feedback about risks, which generates higher marital satisfaction (Commerford & Hunter, 2016; Halford, 2004). The most widely used MRE inventories are FOCCUS, Prepare/Enrich, and Relate (Halford, 2004).

Couples who participate in MRE programs maintain higher marital satisfaction levels and stability when compared with control groups (Carlson et al., 2014; Halford et al., 2004; Wood et al., 2012). Higher marital satisfaction is correlated with having effective communication and conflict resolution skills, giving support and love to a partner, clarifying expectations, and strengthening friendship in the marriage (Allen et al., 2015; Wood et al., 2012). Another essential element of couple relationship satisfaction is the couples' financial situation, because economic strain is related to decreased relationship adjustment, lower parental quality, and lower marital satisfaction (Carlson et al., 2014). Table 7 shows common components of relationship satisfaction in four MRE programs.

Table 7

Common Components of Relationship Satisfaction in Four MRE Programs

Component	MRE program				Frequency
	Component addressed in the workshop (Yes/No)				
	Great Start	TASL	Prepare/Enrich	TAHA	
1. Communication	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	4
2. Conflict resolution	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	4
3. Finances	Yes	No	Yes	No	2
4. Friendship	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	4
5. Sex	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	3
6. Expectations	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	3
7. Religion	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	3
8. Commitment	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	3
9. Forgiveness	No	No	Yes	Yes	2

Note. TASL = The Art of Science and Love; TAHA = The Alexander House Apostolate.

Context

Usually, when couples have problems, they try to solve them on their own or by talking to friends and family. If these resources are not enough, most people seek help from their religious community leaders, such as pastors and priests, rather than seek therapy (Sprenkle, 2002). Frequently, these leaders refer couples to religious MRE programs. These programs are research-based tools that enhance marital satisfaction for most couples, and they also have been considered a complementary approach to marriage and family therapy (Sprenkle, 2002). Some programs have proven to be effective with distressed couples, but are not designed to help couples with pathologies (Halford & Snyder, 2012). Couples with high levels of distress or dysfunctions require CMT with a licensed therapist (Ooms, 2010).

Modern MRE Programs

Each MRE has its own curriculum, which may include religious content. The distinction between nonreligious and religiously affiliated MRE programs is not the presence or absence of religious or faith-based content (e.g., Christian-based content); rather, these programs are often assigned to their respective categories based on (1) accessibility to both secular and faith-oriented individuals, and (2) institutional focus of the goals of satisfied relationships. Some MRE programs provide multiple versions of the same materials, customized to each couple who sought out that program (e.g., Prepare/Enrich), and others have been sufficiently focused and honed to meet the needs of a specific religious group (e.g., TAHA).

Nonreligiously Affiliated MRE Programs

Based on research, programs with no religious affiliation do not include any religious information (Olson et al., 2012). These programs are open to any couple wishing to enhance their relationship satisfaction, independent of their religious beliefs. The programs I consider in this section are Great Start, The Art of Science and Love (TASL), and Prepare/Enrich. Researchers have found these three programs enhance relationship satisfaction (Gottman, 2009; Newton, 2008; Olson et al., 2012). In the next section, I consider programs with religious affiliations that use religious beliefs as a motivation to change and enhance relationship satisfaction (McGoldrick & Hardy, 2008).

Great Start. Great Start is a skill-based program developed by Newton (2008); it is part of the initiative, Twogether in Texas, which aims to improve children's quality of life by educating parents about their relationship (Harris et al., 2009b). More than 90% of Great Start participants have reported learning communication and problem-solving skills and improving relationship satisfaction in the family, and more than 80% have reported they

feel very committed to a long-term relationship (Harris et al., 2011). Great Start includes different topics about friendship, commitment, sex, finances, communication, problem solving, intimacy, and how to protect the relationship (Newton, 2008).

Great Start participants from different ethnic groups, such as African American and Latinx, indicated the curriculum was highly focused in problem solving, communication, intimacy, and listening skills; after the program, couples were committed to their relationship in long-term periods (Harris et al., 2009b). Other researchers found, after the workshops, people were more inclined to believe love was important in a successful marriage, felt more confident about problem-solving skills, and were less critical about their partner, along with believing being in a relationship was more desirable than being single (Harris et al., 2009c; Harris et al., 2009d).

TASL. TASL is the title of a couples' workshop designed by John and Julie Gottman based on more than 30 years of marriage research (Gottman, 2009). Participants reported at 6-month and 1-year follow ups that the TASL workshop generated positive results in relationship satisfaction, specifically with regard to communication and problem-solving skills, $F(3,60) = 2.77$, $p = 0.48$ (Babcock et al., 2013). The most important aspects that improved with TASL participation were relationship satisfaction and friendship quality, while reducing destructive conflict. When MRE workshops like TASL focus on communication, friendship enhancement, and conflict management, they reduce marital distress and enhanced marital satisfaction (Babcock et al., 2013).

This MRE workshop includes presentations, learning activities, and postworkshop homework to continue developing skills to strengthen relationships (Gottman, 2009). Some TASL topics include: (1) identifying strengths to continue building the relationship; (2) using fondness and admiration to revive love and respect; (3) developing communication

skills with physiological self-soothing; (4) learning how to start up, repair, and deescalate a conversation; (5) listening to the partner's underlying dreams; (6) compromising and accepting influence; and (7) working together to achieve life goals (Gottman, 2009).

Prepare/Enrich. Prepare/Enrich is a couples' workshop that can be adjusted for premarital or married couples. Carlson and Dermer (2016) described how this program uses an individual assessment before training to identify strengths and growth areas of the relationship, which is based on the circumplex model of marital and family systems first developed by Olson et al. (2012). The program's curriculum is based on this assessment, which focuses on areas that need improvement and is facilitated by a trained individual.

Prepare/Enrich covers 12 topics: communication, conflict resolution, partner style and habits, financial management, leisure activities, sexual expectations, family and friends, relationship roles, spiritual beliefs, expectations regarding children, parenting expectations, and marriage expectations (Olson et al., 2012). Prepare/Enrich's individual assessment also helps researchers evaluate five personality scales. The first personality scale considers behavior in social situations, openness, flexibility, and an interest in changing and undertaking new experiences. The second personality scale considers organization and persistence in work. The third personality scale considers daily life and general goals. The next personality scale considers how pleasing, considerate, and cooperative a person is in relationships. The last personality scale considers the tendency to remain relaxed and calm in stressful and nonstressful situations (Olson et al., 2009). This evaluation also measures dynamic scales, such as: assertiveness, self-confidence, avoidance, and partner dominancy (Olson et al., 2009). In addition, the assessment categorizes couples into five types: vitalized, harmonious, conventional, conflicted, and devitalized (Olson et al., 2012).

This assessment has been used by more than 3 million couples (Olson et al., 2012). Additionally, more than 100,000 marriage and family therapists, counselors, marriage educators, pastors, and priests have used the inventory to help couples build healthy relationships (Olson et al., 2012). The Prepare/Enrich program improves the scale results of 30% of couples at the end of the workshop; vitalized couples, a positive category, increase by 52%, and 83% of conflicted partners change their status to harmonious or traditional (Knutson & Olson, 2003). After one analysis of the training, more than 90% of participants reported they had more realistic expectations of marriage, and 70% reported having better communication and problem-solving skills and were more sensitive to their partner's needs (Wages & Anderson-Darling, 2004).

Religiously Affiliated MRE Programs

Because religion, spiritual beliefs, and faith are important aspects of a person's life, it was necessary to consider these elements in the couple relationship (Larson & Olson, 2005). Religion is an institutionalized belief system with moral values and beliefs about God and practices centered on a faith community. Religion provides an explanation for the meaning of life and the present, past, and future of a person. In fact, around 85% of Americans reported religion as important in their lives (McGoldrick & Hardy, 2008).

Congruence between beliefs and practices generate well-being (Larson & Olson, 2005). Consequently, when people face uncertain futures, they look to their faith and try to be congruent. When people are suffering or otherwise in pain, prayer facilitates tranquility and clarity (Koenig et al., 2001). On the contrary, religion may make some people feel shame, guilt, or worthlessness, possibly contributed to destructive behaviors, addictions, or isolation (McGoldrick & Hardy, 2008). Religious beliefs have been related to many aspects of marriage, and the consensus by researchers on faith and faith's practices are they have

high correlation with relationship satisfaction and couples' closeness (Larson & Olson, 2005).

Religious MRE programs are Christian-based and organized around religious beliefs and biblical content; these programs have been initiated in different countries around the world (Huang, 2005). Here, I divide this section into two parts. In the first section, I describe two non-Catholic or Christian MRE programs: Marriage Ministry and Marriage Savers. In the second section, I discuss the Catholic Church's position on marriage, biblical emphasis, and sacraments, and describe three Catholic MRE programs: Worldwide Marriage Encounter, Retrouvaille, and TAHA. I also included a brief history of TAHA and a discussion on how it enhances relationship satisfaction.

Non-Catholic and Christian MRE Programs

Religious, non-Catholic MRE programs include the Christian denomination in the United States and in other Asian countries, such as China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Singapore (Huang, 2005). Researchers have concluded that even though other nations have different religions, MRE programs have largely been Christian-based with adaptations to each culture, because Christian organizations often try to help couples using MRE programs (Huang, 2005). In addition, some governments have provided federal funding for nonreligious MRE programs; therefore, Christian programs were adapted as nonreligious (Huang, 2005).

Marriage Ministry. In 1987, Father Dick McGuinnis, associate rector of St. David's Episcopal Church, decided to find out how to help couples in trouble in his church in Jacksonville, Florida (McManus, 1995). He decided to focus his efforts on working with solution programs, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (McManus, 1995). To learn how people in marriages overcame crisis, Father McGuinnis formed two groups of four and three

couples who had experienced serious marital problems, but now had good relationships.

The result was that six couples had taken the Marriage Encounter workshop, which led to

(a) improved communication skills; (b) changed roles where women became more

feminine, letting husbands lead; and (c) men became less self-centered (McManus, 1995).

Every person in both groups experienced the same spiritual steps to become a better person

and spouse (see Appendix A); this study resulted in 17 action statements for Marriage

Ministry (McManus, 1995).

This process calls for assigning one couple, belonging to Marriage Ministry, to a

marriage in need of help. The Marriage Ministry's couple listens, understands, and accepts

the new couple, shares their experience on relationship recovery, and teaches the 17

principles and the sacraments. This process may take four to 30 sessions, depending on

each case; both couples then get together once a month to share notes and support each

other (McManus, 1995). The Episcopal Church shares the seven sacraments with the

Catholic Church, and includes the idea of God and the conception of marriage as a

sacrament for the life of spouses (The Episcopal Church, n.d.). I describe these concepts

later under the Catholic MRE Programs section.

Marriage Savers. Marriage Savers was founded in 1992 by Michael J. and Harriet

McManus to decrease divorce and cohabitation rates and increase marriage rates

(McManus, 1995). Marriage Savers encourages churches to sign a contract called

Community Marriage Policy (CMP) to implement the program in churches. The program

began with evangelical churches and later expanded to Catholic and mainline churches

(McManus, 1995). Marriage Savers trains mentor couples, pastors, and priests to help other

couples undergo five stages: "dating for preparing to have a life-long marriage, improving

existing marriages, assisting troubled relationships, reconciling the divorced, and supporting stepfamilies" (Marriage Savers, n.d.).

The Marriage Savers' MRE program is guided by the same 17 principles used by the Marriage Ministry MRE program and includes biblical teachings (McManus, 1995, p. 204). In the Marriage Savers program, the mentor couple meets with a distressed couple on a weekly basis for a minimum of 2 hours. Couples are also encouraged to attend a Marriage Encounter program. The MRE program ends when facilitators decide the couple has learned to coexist in a healthy relationship (McManus, 1995). Mentor couples are trained by Marriage Savers staff and need to fulfill the requirement of more than 20 years of marriage; moreover, they needed to have endured enough problems to have almost divorced, but were able to recover their relationship and turn it into a joyful one (McManus, 1995). McManus (1995) commented, "an independent study by the Institute for Research and Evaluation of their first 114 CMP's reported that on average county divorce rates fell 17.5% over seven years" in the 1990s.

Table 8 breaks down nonreligious and the religiously affiliated MRE programs; it also includes the Catholic MRE programs described later in this chapter. The first column is the MRE type. The second column is the name of the MRE program. The third column describes the format of the program, and the last column includes the relationship skills emphasized, including the components that enhance relationship satisfaction (see Tables 4, 5, and 6).

Table 8

Nonreligious and Religious Affiliated MRE Programs

MRE type	MRE	Format	Relationship skills emphasized
Nonreligious	Great Start	Individual Couples; Workshop of six to eight couples	Communication Conflict resolution Commitment Intimacy Financial management Leisure/time together Sex Parenting Self-care
	The Art of Science and Love	Workshop of six or more couples	Communication Conflict resolution Commitment Friendship Intimacy Leisure/time together Relationship roles Self-care Planning the future
Nonreligious	Great Start	Individual couples; Workshop of six to eight couples	Communication Conflict resolution Commitment Intimacy Financial management Leisure/time together Sex Parenting Self-care
	The Art of Science and Love	Workshop of six or more couples	Communication Conflict resolution Commitment Friendship Intimacy Leisure/time together Relationship roles Self-care Planning the future
	Prepare/Enrich	Individual couples	Cohesion Communication Conflict resolution Intimacy

MRE type	MRE	Format	Relationship skills emphasized
			Family and Friends
			Financial management
			Flexibility
			Leisure/time together
			Religion/Spiritual beliefs
			Self-care,
			Sex
Religious (Non-Catholic)	Marriage Ministry	Individual couples	Communication
			Intimacy
			Commitment
			Self-care
			Relationship roles
			Religion
			Forgiveness
	Marriage Savers	Individual couples	Communication
			Intimacy
			Commitment
			Self-care
			Relationship roles
			Religion
			Frogiveness
Religious (Catholic)	Retrouvaille	Workshop of six to 25 couples and a follow-up post-program for individual couples	Communication
			Conflict resolution
			Intimacy
			Commitment
			Self-care
			Forgiveness
	Worldwide Marriage Encounter	Workshop of six to eight couples	Communication
			Conflict resolution
			Intimacy
			Parenting Self-care
			Religion
			Planning the future
			Forgiveness
	TAHA	Workshop of six to 30 couples	Communication
			Conflict resolution
			Commitment
			Friendship
			Intimacy
			Parenting
			Sex
			Religion, forgiveness

Catholic MRE Programs. The Catholic religion is practiced by 1,200 million

people in the world, mostly in Europe and North America (BBC News, 2013). In the

United States, there are approximately 65 million individuals who report practicing the

Catholic faith, representing 22% of the population (The Hierarchy of the Catholic Church,

n.d.). Presently, the United States has the fourth-largest population of Catholics after Brazil,

Mexico, and the Philippines (The Hierarchy of the Catholic Church, n.d.).

Those who practice the Catholic faith consider marriage to be a sacrament between

one woman and one man with God's intervention (Ephesians 5:21). This covenant will only

end when one person dies; therefore, divorce is unacceptable, but separation may be

granted under certain circumstances (Canon Law 1151, n.d.). The sacrament of marriage is

considered the intervention of God in the constitution of marriage and married life

(Ephesians 5:21). Every time spouses interact, God helps in a particular way for the

relationship to follow the purposes of marriage, which are the following: (1) to look for the

good of the spouse by self-giving; therefore, seeking to act according to God's will for their

salvation; (2) to procreate; and (3) to educate the children born of the marriage (Catechism

of the Catholic Church, 1524, 1652, 1660, 2366).

If a person follows God's precepts, such as the Ten Commandments, the Church

commandments, the seven cardinal virtues, and so forth, that person will have a strong

relationship with God (John 14:6–7). According to this logic, God's intervention will then

benefit married people, resulting in overall joy to the individuals in question (Ezekiel

18:21–22, 27–28; Family Ministries, n.d.; Fitzgibbons, 2010). These previous ideas result

in marriage's three characteristics. The first characteristic is indissolubility; once a person

is married, the sacrament remains unbroken until one spouse dies. The second characteristic

is fidelity; a person in marriage belongs to their spouse as God's faithful love for his church

and anyone in it (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1644–1648; Matthew 19:6). And the last characteristic is exclusivity, meaning each person in the marriage belongs only to the spouse and should not have sexual relationships with other people (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1644–1648; Matthew 19:6).

Because culture and religion are important factors in relationship satisfaction, MRE programs focused specifically on values shared by specific religions have also been considered valuable (McGoldrick & Hardy, 2008). Catholicism encompasses not just a series of precepts, but a way of life that affect people in totality. For Catholics, marriage is not just a relationship, but a covenant through which both spouses develop into the best version of themselves for the sake of the other (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994). In the following sections, I discuss the only three Catholic MRE programs in the United States: Retrouvaille (Retrouvaille, n.d.), Worldwide Marriage Encounter (Calvo, 1988), and TAHA (Alexander, 2010).

Retrouvaille. Retrouvaille was founded in 1977 by Guy and Jeannine Beland in Quebec, Canada (Retrouvaille, n.d.). The Belands were Worldwide Marriage Encounter facilitators who worried couples dealing with more severe marital problems were not getting the help they needed from attending the workshops. Therefore, the Belands decided to make small changes to the Marriage Encounter program and started offering Retrouvaille in French; in 1978, the English language program began in Toronto, Canada (Retrouvaille, n.d.). Retrouvaille became independent of Worldwide Marriage Encounter in 1980 and offered a new curricular format with weekend and postweekend activities beginning in 1982 (Retrouvaille, n.d.). Retrouvaille is a French word that means *rediscovery*. The program focused on communication and was designed for married couples who felt lost, alone, frustrated, hurt, angry, or shut down, and who were thinking of divorce or separation.

The program is also designed for couples already divorced but who want help with their relationship (Retrouvaille, n.d.). The program consists of a weekend and postweekend sessions.

The one weekend session takes place from Friday evening until Sunday afternoon, Three facilitator couples and a priest give several presentations about communication, review areas of the relationship, and provide practical tools for improving marriage. The presenters share their personal experiences and, after the presentations, each participant has time to reflect and discuss it later with their spouse in private (Retrouvaille, n.d.). The postweekend sessions, led by a facilitator couple, consist of six to 12 sessions every other week for a minimum of 2 hours over 3 months (McManus, 1995). These meetings focus on self-awareness behaviors and couples learn about self-change amid healing problems, affirm each other to build trust, love their partner even if they do not feel it, and learn other practical tools to explore various areas of the marriage (Retrouvaille, n.d.).

This program is also available in a Christian, multidenominational format and substitutes the priest for a Christian minister and spouse; people from all faiths, or those with no faith, are welcome in any program (Retrouvaille, n.d.). To attend the workshop, an interview is conducted to assess each spouse's willingness to commit for 3 months and work on their marriage. Couples are told any infidelity needs to cease before that initial weekend and they should seek professional help if substance abuse or physical violence exists (McManus, 1995).

Worldwide Marriage Encounter. Worldwide Marriage Encounter, also referred to in this study as Marriage Encounter, was started in Barcelona, Spain, in 1962 by Calvo, a Catholic priest (Calvo, 1988). Father Calvo (1988) started Marriage Encounter to help individuals, couples, and families have deeper and satisfying relationships. The same

reasoning inspired him to write *Face to Face: Becoming a Happier Married Couple* to
reach more people and support post-Marriage Encounter participants in everyday life
(Calvo, 1988). Calvo's book consists of the full Marriage Encounter program, complete
with instructions, readings, exercises, and recommendations to follow every day for 5
weeks, with one topic for each week. Table 9 shows the workshop's content and
components that enhance relationship satisfaction, as described in Tables 4, 5, and 6.

Table 9

Worldwide Marriage Encounter With Relationship Satisfaction Components

Topics	Content	Relationship satisfaction components
Where are we?	What an individual makes of marriage, a journey to happiness, and expectations (Calvo, 1988).	Commitment, trust, communication, friendship, emotional intimacy, forgiveness, religion, love, conflict resolution, values, virtues, expectations.
Who am I?	Knowing and accepting oneself, personal values, taking care of individual needs toward growth, maturing as an individual and spouse, and experiencing forgiveness (Calvo, 1988).	Values, emotional intimacy, forgiveness, virtues overcoming narcissism, selfishness, pride, and self-centeredness.
Is God alive in our marriage?	This part is used to develop a relationship with God. The meaning and ultimate sense of life, heart, and being. God's vision of marriage as Sacrament, reconciliation and praying together (Calvo, 1988).	Religion, norms, values, virtues.
Are we becoming one?	Become completely united to God and to spouse in the body, mind, heart, will, and soul as a process to happiness (Calvo, 1988).	Religion, norms, values, virtues, emotional intimate, commitment, caring, forgiveness.
Are we spiraling out?	Expand love to children extended family, friends, neighbors, and other poor and needy people (Calvo, 1988).	Religion, trust, affirmation, forgiveness, caring, communication, norms, values, virtues.

The first Marriage Encounter in the United States was facilitated by a Jesuit priest and two couples in Port Washington, New York in 1968 (McManus, 1995). The format of a typical Marriage Encounter weekend includes having facilitator couples share their personal experiences and testimonies with participants, and then each person writes a letter to share with their spouse later in a personal conversation. These steps are repeated several times in a place away from home (McManus, 1995). McManus (1995) reported results of several different research studies conducted with pre- and postworkshop questionnaires with a combined feedback rate of 83% positive remarks; participants reported a very positive impact on intimacy, closeness, and communication. Marriage Encounter has also expanded to 10 other religious denominations, including United Methodist, Baptist, Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Seventh Day Adventists (McManus, 1995).

TAHA. TAHA is an "international nonprofit 501c(3) organization working to preserve the marriage covenant, build stronger families and lower the divorce rate by proclaiming the beauty, goodness and truth of God's plan for marriage" (Alexander, 2010, p. 7). Based on their own marriage recovery, Gregory and Julie Alexander founded this organization in 1999 and have been teaching their own MRE program ever since (Alexander, 2010). The Alexanders decided to help enhance marriages after seriously considering divorce and then finding a Catholic priest who assisted them by assigning questions to answer as homework. This experience fueled their decision to work as a team and find answers in the Bible. Alexander and Alexander (2011) answered these questions:

1. "What is God's plan for marriage?"

2. "What does the Catholic Church teach about marriage?"

3. "What does St. Paul and the Holy Fathers say about marriage?" (p. 67).

The Alexanders are the facilitators of TAHA's couples' workshop. In the workshop, they describe their personal experiences working to save their marriage based on scriptures with Catholic teachings; they extend their knowledge of how to build a relationship and knowledge they've acquired from related literature. Table 10 shows the MRE topics, exercises, and key concepts in the next section (Alexander & Alexander, 2016).

TAHA and Relationship Satisfaction. Because TAHA's MRE program focuses on Catholic followers, Catholic principles help couples exemplify those same religious knowledge and values to strengthen their relationships and increase marital satisfaction (Larson & Olson, 2005). As previously discussed in this chapter, norms, values, and virtues are psychosocial components that contribute to relationship satisfaction (Dew & Wilcox, 2013; Fitzgibbons, 2010; Gottman, 2009; Johnson, 2004). There are six Catholic-based topics presented in TAHA's MRE program, and each one relates to different components of relationship satisfaction (see Table 10). They are described as:

1. God's plan for marriage. Commitment is an essential element in marriage to enhance relationship satisfaction; in TAHA's MRE program, the same concept is presented to make the spouse the priority in the form of a life contract (Gottman, 2009; Newton, 2008).

2. Chastity in God's plan. This topic includes the concept of sex as good and enjoyable to identify and destroy taboos. Sex life is important as a complement of emotional intimacy (Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010; Olson et al., 2009). Fidelity is also important as part of commitment, and this program helps couples avoid infidelity as part of taking care of the marriage (Newton, 2008). Self-denial is also important in sex relationships, because women and men are physically different; therefore, they should

know each other and accompany this knowledge with intercourse to reach climax, and generate emotional intimacy (Berman, 2013; Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010; Newton, 2008).

3. Forgiveness and healing. Forgiveness is an element that helps couples get rid of anger from hurt that divides marriages (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). Forgiveness is a requirement to have a better relationship and friendship and generates emotional intimacy and love (Fitzgibbons, 2010; Johnson & Greenman, 2013; Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010; Previti & Amato, 2003). This concept is only included in Christian-based MRE programs and as a sacrament in Catholic programs.

4. Can we talk? Communication and problem solving are necessary components to generate relationship satisfaction. Gottman's (2009) recommendations for communication are included in this topic (e.g., using I statements, honor and respect, avoiding criticisms).

5. How can I serve you? This topic is about emotional needs and how to fulfill these needs in the couple relationship as a necessary process to generate relationship satisfaction via emotional intimacy (Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010). When people are selfless, being caregivers lays the foundation to resolve problems with a better attitude as part of managing conflict techniques, which subsequently generates trust and love (Chapman, 2015; Gleason et al., 2003; Gottman, 2009).

6. The power of prayer. Prayer is a concept included only in religious MRE programs. Table 10 shows TAHA's MRE program with relationship satisfaction components.

Table 10

TAHA's MRE Program With Relationship Satisfaction Components

Topics	Exercises	Key concepts	Relationship satisfaction components
God's plan for marriage	Identify personal priorities when couples will discuss their answers and try to rearrange these in the right order, determining what is stopping people from making the proper arrangements and defining what they can do to overcome obstacles.	Explain the Catholic Church's teachings in general and regarding marriage. Marriage is a commitment for life. The Catholic Church teaches that "the wife should be submitted to her husband, and the husband should love his wife as Jesus loves his Church" (Alexander & Alexander, 2016)	Commitment, norms, values, virtues, and religion
Chastity in God's plan	Identify personal ideas about sex and analyze where those ideas are coming from: culture, movies, and church teachings, among others. At the end of the exercise, the facilitator explains how those ideas are right or wrong, explaining how God's plan for marriage is the unity of one male and one female, and how sex is the way to unite and procreate. Be aware of the type of sex life each spouse would like to have as a couple, focusing on positive things.	The purpose of sex in marriage is the unity between the spouses and procreation. Chastity in marriage means to practice sex only with the spouse in mind, body, and soul because both become one flesh united in sacrament. Learn about contraception, and why medical contraception is not God's will; view contraception through a Catholic lens.	Sex, emotional intimacy, fidelity, norms, values, virtues, knowledge, and religion.
Forgiveness and healing	Forgiveness and healing is based on the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It starts with an individual praying to find their own faults and failures, recognizing how the partner made you suffer, feel pain, treated you with disrespect, hurt you, was abusive, unfaithful, etc., and making a written list of faults; then trying to be apologetic, both	Forgiveness will open the door for releasing feelings of love, which is why people should follow God's plan for marriage. Negative emotions often come from not fulfilling the spouse's emotional needs, and this generates stress, anxiety, fear, and resentment. People make mistakes, and everybody should ask for	Forgiveness, love, emotional intimacy, friendship, norms, values, virtues, and religion.

Topics	Exercises	Key concepts	Relationship satisfaction components
	emotionally and rationally about the faults committed. The next step is to tell the spouse about the list and make a commitment not to make the partner feel the same way again. Before finishing the exercise, couples are urged to go to Reconciliation to receive absolution from a priest and reestablish the relationship with God the Father.	forgiveness, firstly to God and then to each other.	
Can we talk?	During a conversation, be sure to use "I" statements and express your feelings in words, not in actions. Avoid stockpiling because you will explode. Deal with only one issue at a time, remember you cannot change another person, avoid generalizations such as 'never and 'always' and, most importantly, eliminate sarcasm, criticism, and accusations. For homework, every day after work, take a few minutes to catch up with your spouse's inner world and ask questions such as, "How do you feel?" and, "How was your day?"	Marriages should have common ground rules to engage and communicate, such as always be honest and charitable, enhance the relationship, speak in a warm and appreciative way, avoid criticism and getting defensive, and be empathetic. Communication can aid or kill a relationship; therefore, speaking only to benefit the other and not seeking to destroy them is crucial. The relationship a person has with God is the reflection of that person's relationship in marriage. Conflict is inevitable, but how a person deals with it is very important: trying to edify, voicing issues of concern, and offering resolutions are other ways to continue proper communication.	Communication, conflict, agreement, love, norms, values, virtues, and religion.
The power of prayer.	Pray to God and ask Him what He wants each spouse to understand from this workshop? Jesus sent us the Holy Spirit to guide people, but people also need to study and read the church's teachings, such as the	The more a person prays, the more that person will listen, and if a person asks God for help in becoming the husband or wife He wants the spouses to be, better ideas and inspirations will be received, and each spouse will be a	Norms, values, virtues, and religion.

Topics	Exercises	Key concepts	Relationship satisfaction components
	Humane Vitae, the Church Catechism, and the Bible, which will help to know what God's plan for marriage is.	better person, resulting in a better marriage.	

Summary of Literature and Literature Gaps

Researchers started investigating relationship satisfaction in the 1940s and have used psychological and sociological concepts to study marriage; in the 1950s, a conceptual framework was developed to better understand and assess marriage (Hicks & Platt, 1960). In relationship satisfaction studies, researchers have used different terms to measure relationship satisfaction, such as *marital quality*, *marital happiness*, and *marital satisfaction*; these terms take form as unidimensional or multidimensional constructs, depending how each term was treated in the respective investigation (Amato et al., 2009; Corra et al., 2009; Dush et al., 2008). All these constructs are self-subjective, reported measurements that evaluate objective and subjective components of relationship satisfaction.

Literature Overview

In this literature review, I grouped 27 components contributing to relationship satisfaction into three categories: physical, economic, and psychosocial (Chapman, 2015; Gleason et al., 2003; Gottman & Silver, 2015; Stack & Eshleman, 1998). I shared certain components in two or more groups and considered them in myriad ways, such as sex, which involves having physical contact and an emotional connection with the spouse (Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010). Some components were part of therapy models and were described in a way that promoted learning for couples. Several components have been included in MRE programs since the 1950s, and these programs help couples develop

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knowledge and skills to generate relationship satisfaction (Halford et al., 2003; Halford et al., 2008; Ooms, 2010).

Research on MRE programs started in the 1970s and has continued to this day (Markman & Rhoades, 2012). MRE programs became popular because of improvement in relationship satisfaction and approximately 30% of couples in the United States had attended one by the 1990s (Halford et al., 2003). MRE programs have continued to specialize in reaching different cultures, religious backgrounds, and family norms throughout many countries. These programs focus on (a) sustaining relationship satisfaction; (b) providing knowledge, skills, and attitudes; (c) decreasing divorce rates; and (d) reducing distress and personal and social costs (Halford et al., 2003; Halford et al., 2004). Therefore, MRE programs are an important tool to help couple relationships and society (Halford et al., 2008; Halford & Snyder, 2012).

MRE programs may include a religious curriculum; the most common religious MRE programs are Christian-based. These Christian organizations can be found in Asian countries with adapted curriculums because federal governments have funded nonreligious MRE programs to help couples enhance their relationships (Huang, 2005). There are three Christian Catholic MRE programs in the United States: Retrouvaille, Worldwide Marriage Encounter, and TAHA. Research on religious MRE programs remains limited and has not been made widely available for review; thus, it is not clear whether an MRE grounded in religion helps couples increase relationship satisfaction, or whether religious practices impact relationship satisfaction.

Purpose of the Research and Research Questions

Given that research on religious MRE programs is very limited and largely unavailable for review, it was important to explore not only if religious MRE programs

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enhance relationship satisfaction, but also if a Catholic-specific MRE program enhances relationship satisfaction. As such, I conducted a quantitative study to evaluate relationship satisfaction in a Catholic MRE program; findings provided relevant information for addressing the lack of research while simultaneously evaluating the impact of a Catholic MRE on relationship satisfaction. This study, and its design, was guided by the following research questions:

1. Does a TAHA's couples workshop impact long term relationship satisfaction?

2. Which Catholic religious and behavioral practices are most strongly associated with TAHA's workshop participants' relationship satisfaction scores prior to the completing the workshop?

3. Which demographic factors best predict increased relationship satisfaction scores for individuals who participated in TAHA's workshop?

Chapter 3: Research Methods

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of The Alexander House Apostolate's (TAHA) couples' workshop in impacting relationship satisfaction. This research used a quantitative paradigm and a correlational research design to answer the study's research questions. The primary goal of this research was to determine if TAHA's faith-based couples' workshop enhanced satisfaction in couples. The secondary goal was to examine the relationships between the demographic data, religious practices and behavior practices, and relationship satisfaction. This research used archival data collected from participants to examine TAHA's marital relationship education (MRE), or couples,' workshops. This study analyzed data collected from a population of predominantly Latino and White Catholic couples in south central Texas. The study's guiding question was: Does TAHA's couples workshop impact long term relationship satisfaction? This research also explored the following secondary research questions:

2. Which Catholic religious and behavioral practices are most strongly associated with TAHA's workshop participants' relationship satisfaction scores prior to the completing the workshop?

3. Which demographic factors best predict increased relationship satisfaction scores for individuals who participated in TAHA's workshop?

Social exchange theory (SET) provided a helpful framework for understanding the transactional nature of relationship processes, such as formation, maintenance, and dissolution, including relationship satisfaction. Social exchange theory takes into consideration how an individual is motivated to gain rewards with the lowest cost possible (Zaman, 2014). Relationship satisfaction becomes a reward for developing communication and problem-solving skills, as well as other behaviors described in Chapter 2. The prospect

of fulfilled emotional needs and minimization of costs with a significant other underscores the implicit, transactional nature of relationships (Babcock et al., 2013; Scheeren et al., 2014; White & Klein, 2008).

Research Design

This research used a quantitative paradigm with a correlational research design to answer the study's research questions. A quantitative paradigm begins with a theory or research question, defines variables, and uses valid and reliable tests to collect information from a preselected population (Creswell, 2013). It also draws inferences from the manipulation of numbers collected through surveys and analysis with statistical methods to confirm or deny the research question (Creswell, 2013).

I acknowledge having a postpositivistic epistemological position in constructing the research question and creating the literature review, as well as the research design. A postpositivistic epistemological position assumes that I can objectively measure participants' experiences but can only access partial truths about a human phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Daly, 2007; Panhwar et al., 2017). The phenomenon of interest in this research is the association between demographic characteristics, religious and behavioral practices taught in the TAHA couples' workshop, and relationship satisfaction scores. The quantitative paradigm used tests to convert participants' subjective perceptions about their relationship satisfaction into numerical data and used statistical instruments to confirm or deny the research questions. The postpositivistic paradigm asserts that research cannot have access to the complete truth about the phenomenon because there are other factors that the tests do not encompass and, therefore, are beyond the scope of the research (Daly, 2007; Henderson, 2011).

A quantitative paradigm aligns with experimental, quasi-experimental, descriptive, and correlational research designs (Center for Innovation in Research and Teaching, n.d.). A correlational design is nonexperimental and measures independent and dependent variables to assess the statistical correlation among them (Krathwohl, 2009). This study's main research question, "Does TAHA's couples workshop impact long term relationship satisfaction?" implicitly reflects a correlation between two variables: the couples' workshop and couples' relationship satisfaction, as assessed by multiple data collection tools. By measuring a couple's relationship satisfaction before the workshop and at a later date, the nature of the relationship between these two variables can be examined (Krathwohl, 2009).

Researcher's Experience With TAHA

As a doctoral student in need of clinical hours, I worked as a marriage and family therapist for TAHA. Soon thereafter, in my role as therapy director at TAHA, I provided feedback on the data collection processes but did not directly collect data. Later in my studies, TAHA expressed an interest in analyzing data collected from previous MRE workshops. The organization's stated goal was to learn how effective their workshop was in enhancing relationship satisfaction for participating couples, and what behaviors and religious practices were associated with relationship satisfaction. Because TAHA's work aligned with my interest in marriage relationship education, I decided to request use of its data for my dissertation research. I requested permission to access the agency's deidentified data for analysis and TAHA granted access (see Appendix B). After the Institutional Review Board approved the research proposal, I was granted access to the database containing TAHA's data.

TAHA Program Evaluation Data

As noted in Chapter 2, The Alexander House Apostolate (TAHA) is a nonprofit agency that was established in 1999 in south central Texas (Alexander, 2010). Greg and Julie Alexander created this organization after they overcame their marital problems by focusing on tenets of their Catholic faith. Based on personal experience, they wanted to teach the knowledge gained in renewing their relationship; therefore, they created TAHA's couples' workshop (Alexander & Alexander, 2016). For almost 20 years, the Alexanders have traveled throughout the United States and around the world to offer a Catholic-based workshop to couples who want to improve their relationship. In order to evaluate the impact of their couples' workshop, the Alexanders, although nonscientists, identified measures and collected data from participants who attended their workshops.

Participants

TAHA collected data from all participants who completed their measures. Participants had (a) participated in a TAHA workshop, (b) attended the workshop with their partner, (c) answered the preworkshop measures, and (d) answered the postworkshop measures. The Alexanders worked with Catholic churches to promote and book TAHA MRE workshops, and then they facilitated the workshops. When each couple arrived at the parish the day of the workshop, they were welcomed and asked to register via a participant list.

Data Collection

Preworkshop data were collected from participants who had attended one of four workshops in south central Texas. The first workshop took place in November 2015 in Rio Grande; the second workshop in February 2016 in Houston; the third workshop in April 2016 in San Antonio; and the final workshop in August 2016 in West City. Parishes

recruited couples and individuals using a snowball strategy. Each parish decided how to best promote the workshop to attract the most couples. As a result, each workshop had between 24 and 93 individuals in attendance. Of the 224 total participants attending these workshops, 93 (41.0%) attended in West City, 80 (35.2%) attended in San Antonio, 30 (13.2%) attended in Rio Grande, and 24 (10.6%) attended in Houston.

At the workshop, a TAHA representative greeted each participating couple, explained the purpose of the study, and informed them that participation was voluntary. When participants agreed to fill out the questionnaire, TAHA's representative then provided participants with hard copies of the preworkshop measures, with instructions to fill them out before the workshop started (see Appendix C). Participants filled out questionnaires by hand and the TAHA representative collected completed questionnaires during the first break of the workshop. Participation in filling out the questionnaires was 100%, and all returned hard copies were included in the preworkshop data.

At the end of each workshop, facilitators told participants that a TAHA staff member would contact them later to request completion of a postworkshop questionnaire. An average of 89% of participants from each workshop agreed to allow TAHA to contact them (see Appendix C). A total of 227 preworkshop questionnaires were collected, and TAHA then scanned all the original hard copies, stored the data in the organization's data set, and transferred the data into a spreadsheet in 2019. As an arbitrary criterion, participants whose partners did not participate in the workshops were not considered in the sample; therefore, the total numbers of participants considered for the statistical analyses are 224 individuals. The three individuals not considered in statistical analyses were from West City. The preworkshop questionnaire included the participant's name and also the name of the participant's partner. Participation in the preworkshop questionnaire was

100%; therefore, if the questionnaire of the participant's partner was not found, I concluded the partner did not attend TAHA's workshop, and this participant's questionnaire was excluded from the database.

In March 2020, TAHA contacted participants to collect follow-up data. TAHA used one of the two preworkshop measures to collect postworkshop data (see Appendix C). Data were collected digitally using a web-based, cloud data collection tool (i.e., Qualtrics), which could be accessed using a link sent to participants' individual email addresses. Participants recorded an assigned number on their questionnaires when they accessed the link so that they could be matched with their partner's questionnaire and the preworkshop questionnaire. All data were collected as part of their ongoing program evaluation.

Measures

Measures describe the information provided by participants in TAHA's questionnaires (see Appendix C). The information was transferred into a deidentified spreadsheet. The archival dataset contained demographic questions, two standardized measures on relationship satisfaction, and 16 questions about religious and behavioral practices (see Appendices B and C). One standardized measure and 16 questions about religious and behavioral practices were also administered after TAHA's workshop.

Demographic Questions. The demographic information provided by participants included the following: zip codes, the number of children and their ages, and ethnicity. For the question about children's ages, a blank space was provided for participants to write ages of all their children. For the question about ethnicity, participants could select from the following options: White, Latino or Hispanic, African American, Asian, Other, and Specify.

Scale, and the questions are utilized as part of circumplex model testing (Olson, 2011), which is incorporated into the Prepare/Enrich assessments (Olson, 2000; Schumm et al., 1986).

The MAT (Locke & Wallace, 1959) has 15 items in its questionnaire, and the test evaluates five factors (see Appendix C). The first factor measures general satisfaction in a relationship (see Questions 1, 2, 9, 13, and 14), whereas the second factor measures leisure and sociality in a relationship (see Questions 3, 5, and 11). Intimacy in a relationship is the third factor (see Questions 4 and 6), shared philosophy in a relationship is the fourth factor (see Questions 7 and 8), and the last factor is leisure time in a relationship (see Question 12; Jiang et al., 2013).

Locke and Wallace (1959) concluded that the MAT has a split-half reliability of .90, with validity demonstrated as differentiating between well-adjusted from maladjusted marriages; the maladjusted couples were in counseling or divorced within a few months. Graham et al. (2011), in their meta-analysis among published studies, reported an average reliability of .785 for this instrument.

MAT Items' Scales. The MAT's 15 items are not measured using one global scale. It uses eight scales with varying anchor points, which require attentiveness when reviewing the items. Overall, these test items include such topics as finances, quality time as leisure time, communication, problem solving, sexual relationships, and norms or rules. These topics are considered components of relationship satisfaction, as described in Chapter 2 (Jiang et al., 2013; Locke & Wallace, 1959). For clarity sake, I quickly describe the items and the scales associated with them.

The first item is a subjective measure of a couple's happiness, as part of the factor of general satisfaction. This item has a scale of 7 points, and the average of a couple's

happiness is in the middle. This question measures overall marriage satisfaction with a

scale ranging from *very unhappy* with 0 points to *perfectly happy* with 35 points (Locke &

Wallace, 1959). The values are not distributed proportionally because more points are given

to those responses that indicate happiness. The next eight items measure agreement about:

a. Finances (as part of the factor of general satisfaction),

b. Recreation (as part of the factor of leisure and sociality),

c. Demonstration of affection (as part of the factor of intimacy),

d. Friends (as part of the factor of leisure and sociality),

e. Sexual relationships (as part of the factor of intimacy),

f. Conventionality (as part of the factor of shared philosophy),

g. Philosophy of life (as part of the factor of shared philosophy), and

h. Ways of dealing with in-laws (as part of the factor of general satisfaction).

The scale has six answers from *always agree* to *always disagree* with values

ranging from 5 to 0 points, respectively. The exception is affection, which has values

ranging from 8 to 0 points, and sex, which has values ranging from 15 to 0 points (Locke &

Wallace, 1959). The 10th item measures the level of agreement between husband and wife

with a value of 0, 2, and 10 points, respectively, showing that consensus is better for

marital satisfaction; this item is not part of any factor. The 11th item is about sharing

outside interests together, with the answers *all*, *some*, *very few*, and *none* having values of

10, 8, 3, and 0 points, respectively; this item is part of the factor of leisure and sociality in a

relationship. Item 12 is about preferences regarding the use of leisure time for the

individual and spouse, with answer choices being *to be on the go* or *stay at home.* The

values are 10 points when both want to stay at home, 3 points for on the go, and 2 points

for disagreement (Locke & Wallace, 1959). This item is part of the factor of leisure time in a relationship (Jiang et al., 2013).

Item 13 refers to "wishing you had not married," with answer choices being *frequently*, *occasionally*, *rarely*, and *never* and having values of 0, 3, 8, and 15 points, respectively. This item is part of the factor of general satisfaction in a relationship. Item 14 asks, "Would you marry the same person if you could live your life again?" with answer choices being *the same person*, *different person*, or *not marry at all,* and having values of 15, 0, and 1 point(s), respectively. This item is part of the factor of general satisfaction in a relationship. Finally, the last item is about "confiding in your mate," with answer choices being *almost never*, *rarely*, *in most things*, and *in everything*, and having values of 0, 2, 5, and 10 points, respectively. This item is not considered to be a part of any factor (Locke & Wallace, 1959).

Criticism. Some researchers have criticized the MAT because they consider people may answer it according to social desirability, but any self-report test may be answered this way; therefore, biases are part of any social phenomena research (Sabatelli, 1988). This test was developed in 1959, and the concept of a well-adjusted marriage may be different today regarding three questions. The first one is about engaging in outside interests together, where the highest score is when both people engage in all of them. The second and third items are about leisure time, where the highest score is for both wanting to *stay at home* and not being *on the go* (Sabatelli, 1988). The procedure used to validate the MAT tends to inflate reliability, and the method used to discriminate couples in need of therapy is considered trivial to ultimate accomplishment (Sabatelli, 1988).

Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale. The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS) is a brief, three-item, individual self-report subjective measurement for marital satisfaction

(see Appendix C; Schumm et al., 1986). It was used to collect relationship satisfaction

scores as part of the preworkshop and postworkshop data collection. The KMSS asks three

questions about how satisfied the husband or wife is with their marriage, their relationship,

and their spouse. The Likert scale ranges from *extremely dissatisfied* to *extremely satisfied*

for each question, with values from 1 to 7 points, respectively (Schumm et al., 1986). The

cutoff score to differentiate distressed from nondistressed couples is 17 points (Crane et al.,

2000). The KMSS uses *distressed* and *nondistressed* in reporting its scores instead of

satisfied and *dissatisfied* as indicated in each of the scale items. Individual scores of 16 and

lower indicate marital distress and scores of 17 or higher fall into the nondistressed

category. An average score of 5.67 indicates that the couple is distressed.

There are several reliability and validity studies regarding the KMSS. Calahan's

research (1997) on 113 church couples reported a Cronbach alpha of .94. The KMSS'

initial validation was concluded by Schumm et al. (1986) with correlations using the

Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976) with alpha of .94 and the Quality of Marriage

Inventory (Norton, 1983) with alpha of .93—but it has a skewness and kurtosis tendency

from the normal curve. The KMSS has been reliable in several studies, with alphas ranging

from .89 to .93 (Sabatelli, 1988). Graham et al. (2011), in their meta-analysis, reported an

average reliability of .95 for this instrument.

TAHA-Generated Questions. In the pre- and postworkshop questionnaires, 16

questions (see Appendix D) were used to collect information about each participant's

Catholic religious practices and the couple's behaviors regarding communication,

emotional needs, finances, work–life balance, forgiveness, dating, and sex. The possible

answers for these questions are "yes," "no," and "somewhat" (for clarity, this response is

referred to as "sometimes" the remainder of the manuscript). These answers were

arbitrarily scored with numbers: "no" with Score 0, "sometimes" with Score 1, and "yes" with Score 2. I acknowledge that the TAHA-created questions, although used for several years, were and have not been empirically validated.

Religious Questions. Questions 1–6 and 13 focused on attending church, praying, considering God as a priority, reading the Bible, frequenting the Sacraments of Eucharist and Penance, and asking for forgiveness. Forgiveness was included in this category because is related to the Sacrament of Penance.

Behavioral Questions. Questions 7–12 and 14–16 asked participants to indicate the likelihood that they or they and their spouses engaged in specific behavioral activities. The behavioral questions focused on three categories: sex, leisure, and partnership. The category of sex included two questions (see Questions 15 and 16) related to enjoying and talking about sex. The category of leisure included two questions (see Questions 10, 14) related to going on a weekly date and having a balance of leisure, work and spiritual life. Finally, partnership category contained five questions (see Questions 7, 8, 9, 11, 12) related to discussing emotional needs, leaving together as a team, approaching finances, taking care of spouse first, and turning to spouse first when having problems (see Appendix D). The last 10 questions evaluated the individual's perception of a presence or absence of a behavior with three response choices: *yes, no,* and *sometimes*. Items 2 through 9 in the MAT evaluate agreement, with a scale describing different grades of agreement or disagreement. TAHA's questionnaire evaluates presence or absence of certain activities in the couple's relations. These activities focus on finances, leisure time, demonstration of affection, and sex, among others. These questions have been used by TAHA for several years, with no analysis of major themes.

Current Study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of TAHA's couples workshop by analyzing preworkshop data and data collected from a 4-year postworkshop follow up. Data were collected from individuals who attended TAHA workshops in four south central Texas cities. The data included demographics, responses from two standardized measures, and responses to TAHA-generated religious and behavioral questions.

Participants

Considering that the sample frame consisted of all couples who answered both pre- and postworkshop questionnaires, the sampling strategy for the archival data was a convenience sample in order to increase robustness of the results. A power analysis indicated that for a population of 224 individuals, a sample size of 160 individuals was required to conduct a regression analysis. This number of individuals ensured sufficient power at a 95% confidence level (Calculator.net, n.d.). This level of confidence was not reached, because only 71 individuals answered both the preworkshop and postworkshop questionnaires—and, of the 71 individuals, only 61 fully answered the demographic questionnaire. The level of confidence with a postworkshop sample of 61 individuals has a level of confidence less than 70% (Calculator.net, n.d.).

The participants of the four workshops in south central Texas were 18 years and older, in a committed relationship, presumed Catholic, and primarily Latino.

Data Analyses

In order to address the research questions, I conducted analyses to determine whether the data followed a normal distribution. The preworkshop and postworkshop data were not normally distributed, and almost 50% of the preworkshop and postworkshop data needed to be excluded from the analyses in order to attain a normal distribution. Therefore,

nonparametric statistical analyses were conducted in this research. The following statistical analyses were conducted: descriptive statistics, comparison tests (i.e., the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, the crosstabs test, the Kruscal-Wallis H test, and the Mann-Whitney U test), and a regression analysis. The objective was to answer this study's questions:

1. Does TAHA's couples workshop impact long term relationship satisfaction?

2. Which Catholic religious and behavioral practices are most strongly associated with TAHA's workshop participants' relationship satisfaction scores prior to the completing the workshop?

3. Which demographic factors best predict increased relationship satisfaction scores for individuals who participated in TAHA's workshop?

Table 11 indicates the data, variables, and statistical analyses used to answer each research question.

Table 11

Research Questions with Statistical Analyses and Data

Research question	Data	Variables	Statistical analyses
1. Does TAHA's couples workshop impact long term relationship satisfaction?	Pre and postworkshop	KMSS	Wilcoxon signed-rank test
2. Which Catholic religious and behavioral practices are most strongly associated with TAHA's workshop participants' relationship satisfaction scores prior to the completing the workshop?	Preworkshop	Religious and behavioral practices and KMSS	Crosstabs, Kruskal-Wallis H test, and Mann-Whitney U test
3. Which demographic factors best predict increased relationship satisfaction scores for individuals who participated in TAHA's workshop?	Postworkshop	Demographic factors and KMSS	Generalized linear model

Note. TAHA = The Alexander House Apostolate; KMSS = Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale.

The Wilcoxon signed-rank test is used to compare and determine if two sets of data from Time 1 to Time 2 are significantly different. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test is frequently used to define if there is a significant difference between the mean of two groups or the same group before and after an event. Kruskal-Wallis H test is an analysis of variance used to analyze the means from several groups to determine whether they are equal by statistical significance. A generalized linear model is a nonparametric, statistical analysis equivalent to a regression. Generalized linear model is a statistical analysis for estimating relationships among variables. This relationship may be between several independent variables and one dependent variable. Generalized linear model explains how changes on the dependent variable happen when one independent variable changes and the other independent variables are fixed.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of The Alexander House Apostolate's (TAHA) couples' workshop in helping individuals increase relationship satisfaction. This research used a quantitative paradigm and a correlational research design to answer the study's research questions. The primary goal was to determine if TAHA's faith-based couples workshop enhanced couple's relationship satisfaction. The secondary goals were to examine the relationships between data on religious practices and relationship satisfaction; behaviors and relationship satisfaction; and demographic data and relationship satisfaction. This study analyzed archival data collected from a population of predominantly Latino and White Catholic couples in south central Texas. This research used a convenience sample, and collected preworkshop and postworkshop survey data, which were important to answering the study's questions:

1. Does TAHA's couples workshop impact long term relationship satisfaction?

2. Which Catholic religious and behavioral practices are most strongly associated with TAHA's workshop participants' relationship satisfaction scores prior to the completing the workshop?

3. Which demographic factors best predict increased relationship satisfaction scores for individuals who participated in TAHA's workshop?

This chapter includes three sections. The first section describes the results of the preworkshop questionnaires: the demographic questionnaire, the Marital Adjustment Test (MAT), the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS), and the religious and behavioral questionnaire. The second section describes the postworkshop questionnaire results (i.e., the demographic questionnaire, the KMSS, and the religious and behavioral questions). The

last section describes the results of the analyses used to answer the study's research questions, with results for each question and a summary of the research results.

Preworkshop Results

Participants in the four workshops in south central Texas between the years 2015 and 2016 were 18 years and older. Every participant was in a committed relationship and Catholic. In total, 227 individuals completed the preworkshop questionnaires given before the start of TAHA workshop. I included those participants who answered a minimum of 80% of the questionnaire or who could be matched with a partner. However, three individuals of the 227 participants (1.3%) did not meet the criteria described previously for participation. Therefore, these individuals were excluded from the dataset, resulting in 224 participants in the preworkshop sample.

Demographics

Of the 224 participants, all of them were in a relationship; 112 (50%) were men, and 112 (50%) were women. The majority of participants—a total of 90 (40.1%)—were from West City; 80 (35.7%) were from San Antonio; 30 (13.4%) were from Rio Grande; and 24 (10%) participants were from Houston. The majority of participants (129 individuals; 57.5%) identified as Latinos, 86 (38.4%) as White, seven (3.1%) as Other, and two (0.9%) as African American (see Table 12). Participants ranged in age from 21 to 76 years old, with the majority between 30 and 49 years old (136 individuals; 60.7%).

With respect to children, 16 (7.1%) participants reported having no children (see Table 12). For the 208 (92.9%) participants with children, 22 (9.8%) participants reported having one child, 64 (28.6%) participants reported having two children, 82 (36.6%) participants reported having three children, 22 (9.8%) participants reported having four children, eight (3.6%) participants reported having five children, and 10 (4.5%) participants

reported having six children. The majority of the participants, 146 individuals (65.2%), reported having two or three children (range 0–6, $M = 3$, $SD = 1.11$).

Participants reported a range of children's ages from infants to adults. Sixty-eight (30.3%) participants reported having children between 0 and 12 years old, 82 (36.6%) participants reported having children between 13 and 17 years old, 68 (30.6%) participants reported having children between 18 and 25 years old, and 54 (28.6%) participants reported having children 26 years old or older (see Table 12). The largest category based on children's ages was children between 13 and 17 years old, with 82 (36.6%) participants. The total number of responses for this item was 272, or 68 responses more than the number of possible respondents—indicating participants selected multiple responses based on the age categories of their children. Table 12 shows preworshop sample demographics.

Table 12

Preworkshop Sample Demographics

Characteristic	Response	Frequency	%
Gender			
	Male	112	50.0
	Female	112	50.0
Age			
	20s	38	17.0
	30s	78	34.8
	40s	58	25.9
	50s	33	14.7
	60s	14	6.3
	70s	3	1.3
Ethnicity			
	Latino	129	57.5
	White, non-Hispanic	86	38.4
	Other	7	3.1
	African American	2	0.9
Number of children			
	0	16	7.1

Characteristic	Response	Frequency	%
	1	22	9.8
	2	64	28.6
	3	82	36.6
	4	22	9.8
	5	8	3.6
	6	10	4.5
Ages of children			
	0 – 12 years old	68	30.3
	13 – 17 years old	82	36.6
	18 – 25 years old	68	30.3
	26+ years old	54	28.6
Location			
	West	90	40.2
	San Antonio	80	35.7
	Rio Grande	30	13.4
	Houston	24	10.7

Note. ($n = 224$)

Measures

Marital Adjustment Test. In total, 224 (98.7%) participants completed the MAT and were considered for the statistical analyses. The MAT is an individual self-report instrument used to measure marital satisfaction (Locke & Wallace, 1959). Total scores can range from 2 to 158 points, with a cutoff score of 100 (Sabatelli, 1988). The test differentiates distressed from nondistressed couples. The majority of participants' scores ($n = 150$; 66.4%) fell in the nondistressed relationship range, and only 76 (33.6%) participants' scores fell in the distressed range (range 34–156, $M = 111.5$, $SD = 23.9$) for the MAT total score, suggesting most participants perceived their relationship as satisfying. The MAT has 15 questions and includes five subscales: happiness, leisure and sociality, intimacy, philosophy, and leisure time. Table 13 shows MAT's five factors with the median, standard deviation, and range of each subscale.

Table 13

MAT Preworkshop Subscales Outcomes

Subscales	*M*	*SD*	Minimum range	Maximum range
Satisfaction	51.03	16.05	4	74
Leisure and sociality	16.72	4.25	3	20
Intimacy	7.15	2.07	0	10
Philosophy	15.26	4.34	3	20
Leisure	5.35	3.80	2	10
MAT Total Score	111.58	23.97	34	156

Note. (*n* = 224)

Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale Outcomes Postworkshop. In total, 224

(98.7%) of the original 227 participants completed the KMSS and were considered for

statistical analyses. The KMSS has three questions about how satisfied the husband or wife

is with their marriage, their relationship, and their spouse. The scale for each question

ranges from *extremely dissatisfied* to *extremely satisfied*, with values from 1 to 7 points,

respectively (Schumm et al., 1986). The cutoff score to differentiate distressed from

nondistressed participants is 17 points or higher (Crane et al., 2000). Scores of 16 and

lower indicate marital "distress," and scores of 17 or higher indicate "nondistress." Table

14 and Figure 1 show frequencies for the three KMSS questions. Figure 2 shows the

number of participants whose KMSS scores fell in the distressed and nondistressed ranges.

The majority of participants (*n* = 125; 55.8%) scored in the nondistressed range, and 99

(44.2%) scored in the distressed range (range 3–16, *M* = 16.5, *SD* = 4.42). Figure 3 shows

similarities in the percentages of the 224 preworkshop participants who scored in the range

of nondistressed and distressed between the MAT and the KMSS. It also shows KMSS'

scores are skewed toward satisfaction, meaning the majority (*n* = 125; 56.2%) of

participants fell within nondistressed range.

Table 14

Frequencies and Percentages for KMSS Questions

KMSS Responses	KMSS 1		KMSS 2		KMSS 3	
Scale	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Extremely satisfied	61	27.3	70	31.3	57	25.5
Very satisfied	58	25.9	73	32.6	59	26.3
Somewhat satisfied	54	24.1	41	18.3	61	27.2
Mixed	24	10.7	13	5.8	21	9.4
Somewhat dissatisfied	8	3.6	13	5.8	10	4.5
Very dissatisfied	14	6.3	7	3.1	9	4.0
Extremely dissatisfied	5	2.2	7	3.1	7	3.1

Note. ($n = 224$)

Figure 1

Frequencies for KMSS Questions
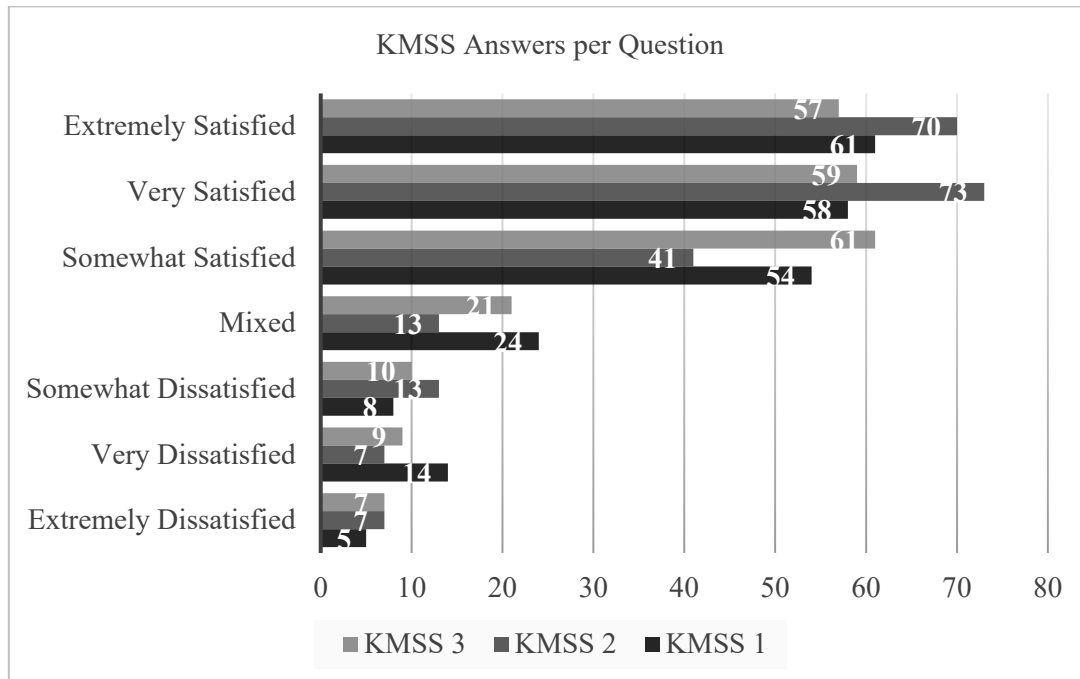
Note. n = 224

Figure 2

KMSS Total Scores in Distressed and Nondistressed Categories

KMSS Total Scores

99

125

■ Distressed   ■ Non-Distressed
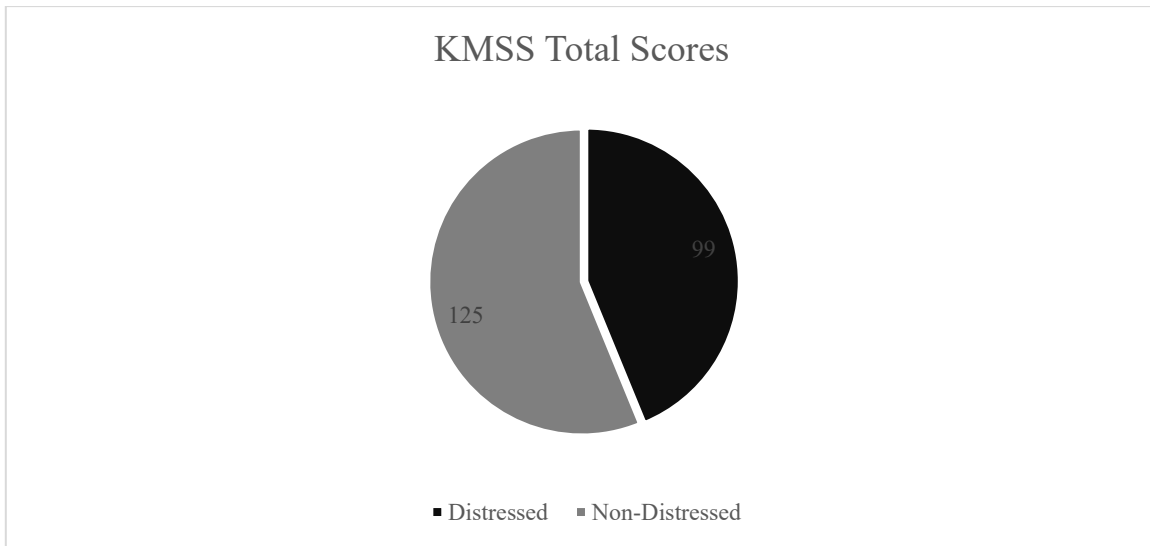
Note. (*n* = 224)

Figure 3

Percent of MAT and KMSS Total Scores in Distressed and Nondistressed Categories

■ Non-Distressed   ■ Distressed
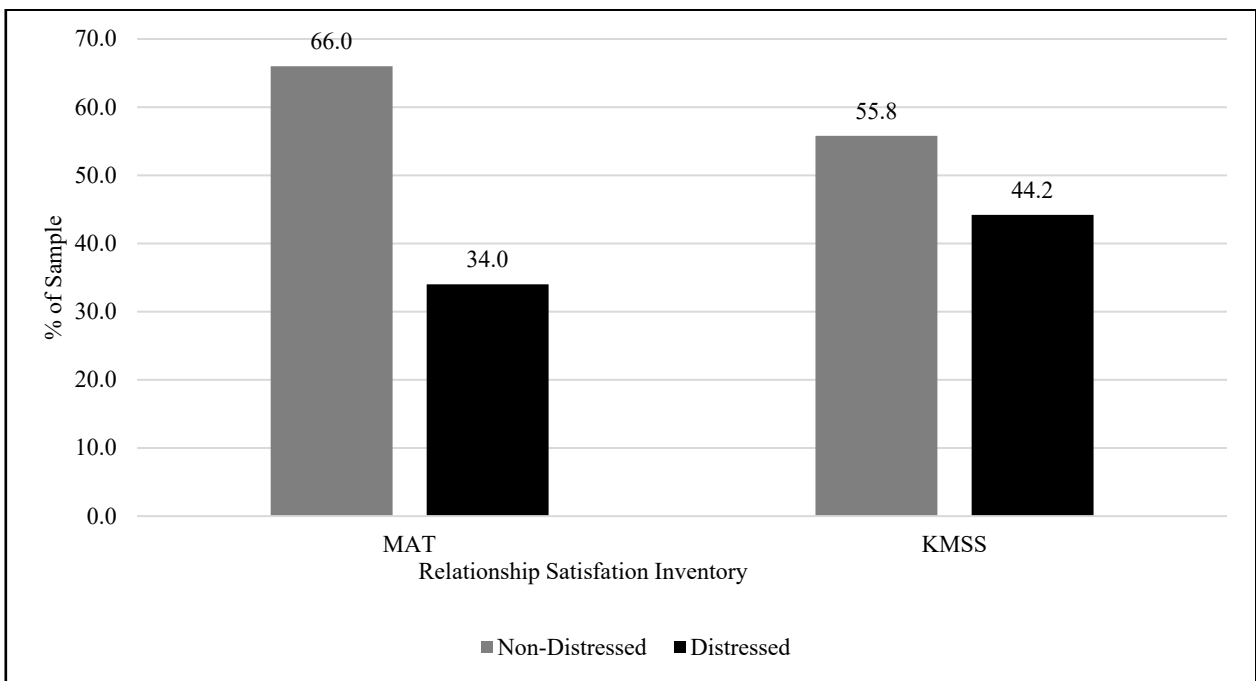
Note. (*n* = 224)

Religious and Behavioral Questionnaire. Participants were asked to answer TAHA's religious and behavioral questionnaire before the couple's workshop. The answers for each question were "yes," "no," and "sometimes." In terms of religious practices, the overwhelming majority of participants answered "yes" to attending church at least once a week (87.2%), considering God their first priority (79.3%), frequenting the Sacrament of the Eucharist (79.3%), and asking for forgiveness, making "yes" (64.3%). In terms of the practice of relationship behaviors, the majority reported (i.e., responded "yes") taking care of spouse when partner is not feeling well (80.6%), turning to spouse first when having a problem (67.8%), approaching life together as a team (63.9%), enjoying their sex life (63.4%), and discussing their sex life (52.4%). Table 15 shows the 16 religious and behavioral questions, frequencies of each possible answer.

Table 15

Preworkshop Frequencies for Religious and Behavioral Questions

Q	Question text	Yes	%	Some-times	%	No	%	Missing	%
1	Do you attend church at least once a week?	198.0	87.2	21.0	9.3	8.0	3.5	0.0	0.0
2	Do you pray together daily?	64.0	28.2	74.0	32.6	89.0	39.2	0.0	0.0
3	Do you consider God your first priority?	180.0	79.3	34.0	15.0	11.0	4.8	2.0	0.9
4	Do you read or discuss the Bible or Church teachings together?	61.0	26.9	78.0	34.4	85.0	37.5	3.0	1.3
5	Do you frequent the Sacrament of the Eucharist?	180.0	79.3	16.0	7.0	30.0	13.2	1.0	0.4
6	Do you frequent the Sacrament of Penance?	91.0	40.1	74.0	32.6	60.0	26.4	2.0	0.9
7	Do you discuss your emotional needs with your spouse?	106.0	46.7	86.0	37.9	34.0	15	1.0	0.4
8	Do you approach life together as a team?	145.0	63.9	63.0	27.8	19.0	8.4	0.0	0.0
9	Do you struggle with finances?	53.0	23.3	69.0	30.4	104.0	45.8	1.0	0.4
10	Do you have a healthy balance of work, leisure, and spiritual life?	101.0	44.5	77.0	33.9	46.0	20.3	3.0	1.3

11	Do you take care of your spouse when he/she is not feeling well?	183.0	80.6	37.0	16.3	3.0	1.3	4.0	1.8
12	Do you turn to your spouse first when you have a problem?	154.0	67.8	51.0	22.5	18.0	7.9	4.0	1.8
13	Do you ask for forgiveness when you have hurt your spouse?	146.0	64.3	57.0	25.1	23.0	10.1	0.0	0.0
14	Do you take the time to go out on a date with each other weekly?	58.0	25.6	71.0	31.3	98.0	43.2	0.0	0.0
15	Do you enjoy your sex life?	144.0	63.4	63.0	27.8	17.0	7.5	3.0	1.3
16	Do you discuss your sex life?	119.0	52.4	61.0	26.9	45.0	19.8	2.0	0.9

Note. (*n* = 224)*; Q* = Question number

Postworkshop Results

Participants were asked to answer the KMSS test and the TAHA's religious and behavior questionnaire 4 years after they participated in the couples' workshop. Seventy-two (72) participants completed the postworkshop measures. One individual (1.3%) did not respond to at least 80% of the postworkshop KMSS questionnaire and that person was excluded from the final sample, resulting in 71 participants completing the KMSS postworkshop questionnaire. The postworkshop measures were comprised of demographic questions, the KMSS, and the 16 religious and behavioral practices questions from the preworkshop questionnaire.

Demographics

Of the 71 postworkshop participants, the majority were female (40, 56.4%). The majority of participants were from San Antonio (25, 35.2%), and then, in descending order, from West City (23, 32.4%), Rio Grande City (8, 11.2%), and Houston (15, 21.1%). Racially, the majority were Latino (37, 52.1%), followed by White (32, 45.1%), and African American (2, 2.8%). Similar to the preworkshop sample, Latinos and Whites made up the majority (69, 97.2%) of participants, and Latinos were the majority (37, 52.1%).

Concerning age, seven (9.9%) participants were in their 20s, 13 (18.3%) participants were in their 30s, 25 (35.2%) participants were in their 40s, 18 (25.4%) participants were in their 50s, six (8.5%) participants were in their 60s, and two (2.8%) participants were in their 70s. Table 16 summarizes this demographic information. Similar to the preworkshop sample, more than half (*n* = 43; 60.6%) of participants in the postworkshop were in their 40s and 50s.

Three (4.2%) participants reported having one child, 26 (36.6%) reported having two children, 18 (25.4%) reported having three children, 14 (19.7%) reported having four children, three (4.2%) reported having five children, two (2.8%) reported having six children, and five (7%) reported having no children. The majority of participants (65, 91.5%) had children 17 and under. Thirty-two (45%) participants reported adult children 18 years and older (see Table 16). The total responses for this item were 97, or 26 responses more than the number of possible respondents—again indicating that participants selected multiple responses based on the age categories of their children. Almost all postworkshop participants (66, 93%) identified as parents, and the majority (44, 62%) of participants reported having two or three children. These results are similar to those that emerged from preworkshop data in regard to number of children, children's ages, and location. Table 16 shows postworshop sample demographics with frequency and percentage.

Table 16

Postworkshop Sample Demographics

Characteristic	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Gender			
	Male	31	43.6
	Female	40	56.4
Age	20s	7	9.9
	30s	13	18.3

Characteristic	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
	40s	25	35.2
	50s	18	25.4
	60s	6	8.5
	70s	2	2.8
Ethnicity	Latino	37	52.1
	White, non-Hispanic	32	45.1
	African American	2	2.8
	Other	0	0.0
Number of Children	0	5	7.0
	1	3	4.2
	2	26	36.6
	3	18	25.4
	4	14	19.7
	5	3	4.2
	6	2	2.8
Ages of Children	0–12	33	46.4
	13–17	32	45.1
	18– 25	17	23.9
	26+	15	21.1
Location	San Antonio	25	35.2
	West	23	32.4
	Houston	15	21.1
	Rio Grande	8	11.2

Note. ($n = 71$)

Measures

KMSS Outcomes Postworkshop. Three fourths of participants ($n = 51$; 71.8%)

scored within the range of nondistressed, and 20 (28.2%) participants scored within the

range of distressed (range 3–21, $M = 17.41$, $SD = 4.21$) for the KMSS. The preworkshop

KMSS scores for this sample showed 41 (57.7%) scored in the range of nondistressed and

30 (42.3%) scored in the range of distressed (range 3–16, $M = 15.5$, $SD = 4.9$)—a change of

10 participants from the distressed category to the nondistressed category. The Crosstab

chi-square, for the 71 participants, had a value of 1.854, with a p value of 0.173; therefore,

results were nonsignificant. Table 17 and Figure 4 show the KMSS results between the

preworkshop and postworkshop questionnaires for 71 participants. These comparisons

show a 33.3% decrease in the distressed group and a 19.6% increase in the nondistressed

group.

Table 17

Crosstabs—KMSS Preworkshop and Postworkshop Scores

KMSS Status	Preworkshop	Postworkshop
Distressed	30	20
Non-distressed	41	51

Note. (*n* = 71).

Figure 4

KMSS Relationship Satisfaction Status for Preworkshop and Postworkshop
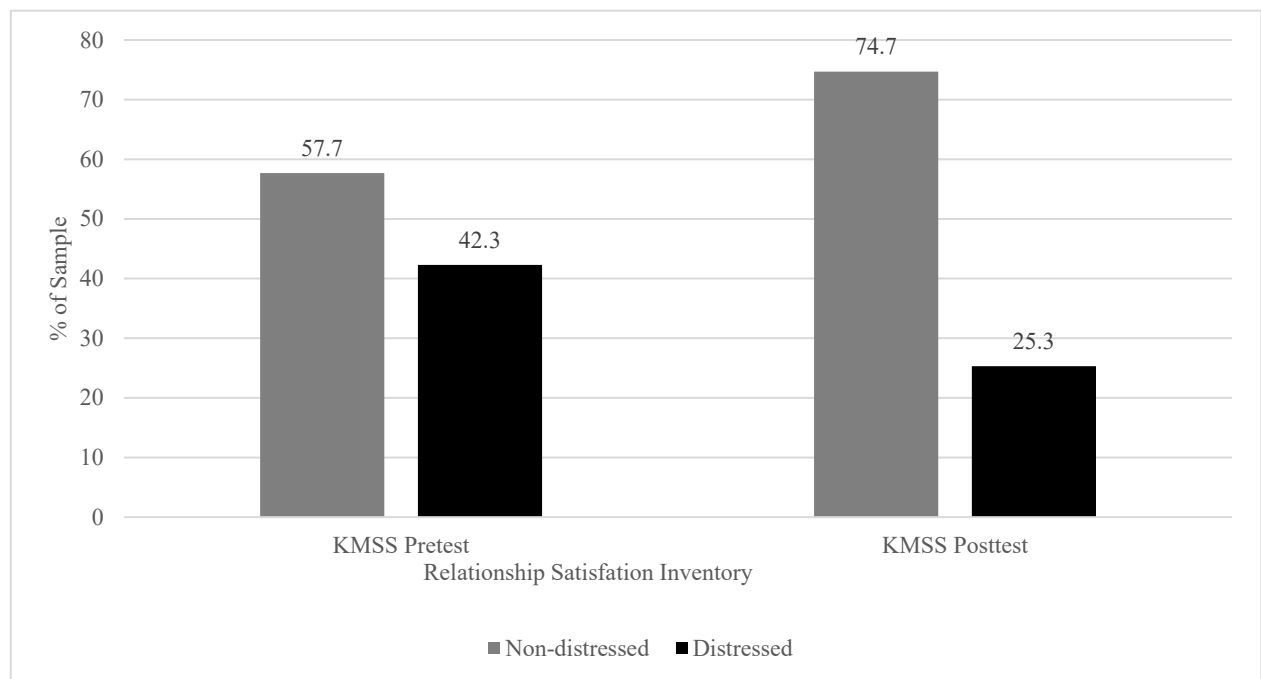
TAHA's Religious and Behavior Questionnaire of 16 Items. Of the 71 post

workshop participants, only 55 answered these questions. The possible responses for each

question were "yes," "sometimes," and "no." Table 18 shows the results obtained for each

question in order of their appearance in the questionnaire. Participants' responses indicated

the majority of participants (i.e., those who responded "yes") consider God their first

priority (53, 96.4%), take care of their spouses when they are not feeling well, and attend

church at least once a week (48, 87.3%).

Table 18

Postworkshop Frequencies for Religious and Behavioral Questions

Q	Question	Yes	%	Some times	%	No	%	Missing	%
1	Do you attend church at least once a week?	48.0	87.3	3.0	5.5	4.0	7.3	0.0	0.00
2	Do you pray together daily?	22.0	40.0	12.0	21.8	21.0	38.2	0.0	0.00
3	Do you consider God your first priority?	53.0	96.4	2.0	3.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.00
4	Do you read or discuss the Bible or Church teachings together?	29.0	52.7	14.0	25.5	12.0	21.8	0.0	0.00
5	Do you frequent the Sacrament of the Eucharist?	48.0	87.3	2.0	3.6	5.0	9.1	0.0	0.00
6	Do you frequent the Sacrament of Penance?	35.0	63.6	12.0	21.8	8.0	14.5	0.0	0.00
7	Do you discuss your emotional needs with your spouse?	44.0	80.0	4.0	7.3	7.0	12.7	0.0	0.00
8	Do you approach life together as a team?	45.0	81.8	6.0	10.9	4.0	7.3	0.0	0.00
9	Do you struggle with finances?	9.0	16.4	10.0	18.2	36.0	65.5	0.0	0.00
10	Do you have a healthy balance of work, leisure, and spiritual life?	43.0	78.2	10.0	18.2	2.0	3.6	0.0	0.00
11	Do you take care of your spouse when he/she is not feeling well?	52.0	94.5	3.0	5.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.00
12	Do you turn to your spouse first when you have a problem?	46.0	83.6	6.0	10.9	3.0	5.5	0.0	0.00

Q	Question	Yes	%	Some times	%	No	%	Missing	%
13	Do you ask for forgiveness when you have hurt your spouse?	44.0	80.0	9.0	16.4	2.0	3.6	0.0	0.00
14	Do you take the time to go out on a date with each other weekly?	25.0	45.5	12.0	21.8	18.0	32.7	0.0	0.00
15	Do you enjoy your sex life?	43.0	78.2	8.0	14.5	4.0	7.3	0.0	0.00
16	Do you discuss your sex life?	34.0	61.8	7.0	12.7	14..0	25.5	0.0	0.00

Note. $n = 55$; Q = question number

From the 55 individuals who answered the religious and behavioral questions, 48 individuals and their partners were paired, thereby forming 24 couples. Based on their combined preworkshop KMSS total scores and their combined postworkshop KMSS total scores, five couples moved from the distressed to the nondistressed range and two couples moved from the nondistressed to the distressed range. For 17 couples, their combined postworkshop KMSS totals stayed within the same range as their combined preworkshop KMSS totals: four couples stayed in the distressed range, and 13 couples stayed in the nondistressed range. Table 19 shows the means and standard deviations for couples both preworkshop and postworkshop.

Table 19

Couples' Preworkship and Postworkshop Means and SD for KMSS Total Scores

Pre- to postworkshop status	Couple ID	*PreWork Mean	*PreWork SD	*PostWork Mean	*PostWork SD
Distressed to nondistressed	5	14.0	1.41	18.0	0.00
	8	4.5	2.12	19.5	2.12
	24	14.5	0.71	18.0	0.00
	103	8.0	0.00	21.0	0.00
	107	16.0	1.41	19.0	0.00
Maintained nondistressed	10	18.0	0.00	21.0	0.00
	18	19.0	2.83	19.5	2.12
	21	18.0	0.00	21.0	0.00

	38	21.0	0.00	18.0	0.00
	47	19.5	2.12	18.0	0.00
	49	19.5	2.12	18.5	3.54
	73	21.0	0.00	18.0	0.00
	74	20.0	1.41	19.0	1.41
	87	17.5	0.71	21.0	0.00
	89	18.5	3.54	18.0	0.00
	91	18.5	0.71	21.0	0.00
	95	19.5	2.12	21.0	0.00
	112	18.0	0.00	19.5	2.12
Maintained distressed	29	12.5	0.71	15.0	0.00
	50	8.0	1.41	11.5	3.54
	63	15.5	2.12	15.5	0.71
	108	16.5	0.71	16.0	1.41
Nondistressed to distressed	71	17.5	0.71	15.5	0.71
	90	17.5	0.71	13.5	2.12

Note. *Prework = Preworkshop, Postwork = Postworkshop

Research Questions

This study was based on participants who attended TAHA's couples' workshops between 2015 and 2016 in four cities in south central Texas. In total, 226 participants answered the preworkshop questionnaire. Of these, 71 participants answered the postworkshop questionnaire in 2020. This study's primary question (Research Question 1) was: Does TAHA's couples workshop enhance relationship satisfaction? The research also asked two secondary questions. Research Question 2 asked: Which Catholic religious and behavioral practices are most strongly associated with TAHA's workshop participants' relationship satisfaction scores prior to the completing the workshop? Research Question 3 asked: Which demographic factors best predict increased relationship satisfaction scores for individuals who participated in TAHA's workshop? Instead of answering the research questions in the order presented above, I will answer Research Questions 2 and 3 first, and finish with the primary research question (i.e., Research Question 1).

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 was: Which Catholic religious and behavioral practices are most strongly associated with TAHA's workshop participants' relationship satisfaction scores prior to the completing the workshop? To answer this question, I considered two nonparametric statistical analyses because the data were not normally distributed and almost 50% of the data were excluded from the analysis to attain a normal curve. The first nonparametric statistical analysis was crosstabs and the second Kruskal-Wallis H test. The crosstabs statistical analysis used categorial data from the 16 religious and behavioral questions and the preworkshop KMSS total score ($n = 224$). A crosstab Chi-square is a nonparametric analysis and was used to determine if the religious and behavioral practices were significantly associated with the KMSS distressed and nondistressed scores. Categories for the 16 questions were "yes," "no," and "sometimes." Categories for the KMSS were distressed and nondistressed. Nine of the 16 relationships were statistically significant, showing that the individuals who perform these nine practices are more likely to be nondistressed in the relationship. Participants who do not perform these nine practices are more likely to be distressed in the relationship. Table 20 shows the nine statistically significant religious and behavioral practices based on the crosstab test results.

Table 20

Preworkshop Crosstab – KMSS Scores and Religious and Behavioral Practices

Classification	Question Number	Distressed or Nondistressed	No	Sometimes	Yes	X^2
				Answers		
Religious Practice						
Praying daily together	2					12.481
		Distressed	47	35	16	

			Y	ST	N	
		Nondistressed	41	38	47	
Ask for forgiveness	13					29.842
		Distressed	20	30	48	
		Nondistressed	2	25	99	
Sex						
Enjoying sex life	15					34.935
		Distressed	15	40	43	
		Nondistressed	2	23	101	
Discussing sex life	16					8.975
		Distressed	27	30	41	
		Nondistressed	18	32	76	
Leisure						
Healthy balance of work, leisure, spiritual life	10					10.135
		Distressed	24	42	32	
		Nondistressed	21	37	68	
Go out weekly on a date	14					11.834
		Distressed	54	29	15	
		Nondistressed	44	41	41	
Partnership						
Live together as a team	8					53.083
		Distressed	16	45	37	
		Nondistressed	2	18	106	
Taking care of spouse when feeling bad	11					16.143
		Distressed	3	25	70	
		Nondistressed	0	11	115	
Turn to spouse first when having problems	12					16.273
		Distressed	12	31	55	
		Nondistressed	6	18	102	

Note. $n = 224$; *df* $= 2$; *Y = Yes; N = No; ST = Sometimes; P < 0.01 except for discussing sex life, P = 0.011*

I also conducted a Kruskal-Wallis H nonparametric test (i.e., a comparison of means) with the MAT and the KMSS total scores to determine if there were significant differences among the group that participated in religious and behavioral practices, the group that participated only "sometimes," and the group that did not participate at all for

each measure. The analysis used the 16 religious and behavioral questions as the

independent variable, and the KMSS total scores as the dependent variables. I decided that

preworkshop participants with no partner data would not be considered; therefore, the total

numbers of participants considered for the statistical analyses were 224 individuals who

responded to the preworkshop questionnaires. The same analysis was performed for MAT

total scores as a dependent variable. The results were similar to the crosstab Chi-square test,

except "discussing emotional needs with spouse" was also statistically significant.

Comparing the KMSS and MAT total scores, the results were very similar. Tables 21 and

22 provide the Kruskal-Wallis H test results showing the statistically significant

relationships between the practices and the KMSS and MAT scores respectively.

Table 21

Kruskal-Wallis H Test Statistically Significant Results with MAT

Practice's Classification	Question number	Religious and Behavioral Practices	H
Religious Practice			
	2	Praying daily together	21.384
	13	Ask for forgiveness	30.389
Sex			
	15	Enjoying sex life	35.427
	16	Discussing sex life	15.518
Leisure			
	10	Healthy balance of work, leisure, spiritual life	19.309
	14	Go out weekly on a date	14.913
Partnership			
	7	Discuss emotional needs with spouse	9.492
	8	Life together as a team	54.346
	11	Taking care of spouse when feeling bad	16.167
	12	Turn to spouse first when having problems	19.468

Note. $n = 224$; $df = 2$; $P < 0.01$

Table 22

Kruskal-Wallis H Test Statistically Significant Results with KMSS

Classification	Question number	Practices	*H*
Religious Practice			
	2	Praying daily together	13.7
	13	As for forgiveness	24.4
Sex			
	15	Enjoying sex life	25.6
	16	Discussing sex life	22.0
Leisure			
	10	Healthy balance of work, leisure, spiritual life	43.6
	14	Go out weekly on a date	16.6
Partnership			
	7	Discuss emotional needs with spouse	25.4
	8	Life together as a team	74.0
	11	Taking care of spouse when feeling bad	24.0
	12	Turn to spouse first when having problems	40.3

Note. n = 224; df = 2; P < 0.01

The Kruskal-Wallis *H* test determined if significant differences existed between the three groups of respondents on each question, but did not indicate which groups differed significantly. I performed a Mann-Whitney U nonparametric test on the KMSS total scores to identify significant differences between the set of three paired responses for each question that yielded a statistically significant difference with the Kruskal-Wallis *H* test. The same procedure was conducted on MAT total scores.

The Mann-Whitney *U* test showed that KMSS and MAT total scores are statistically significant when comparing the scores of those who answered "no" to participating in the religious and behavioral practices with the groups that answered "sometimes" or "yes," except for the behavioral, leisure practice of "going out weekly on a date." There is a statistical significance between those participants who did not go on a weekly date and those participants who sometimes go on a date; however, there was no significant

difference between those who "sometimes" and those who indicated that they go out on weekly dates. Therefore, individuals who go on a weekly date sometimes, based on the KMSS scores, are more likely to be nondistressed than those individuals that do not go on a weekly date. The same results were obtained considering MAT scores.

Three statistical significant results also occurred between the groups that do not practice and the group that sometimes practices asking for forgiveness, going out on weekly dates, and viewing life together as a team. Individuals who sometimes perform these three practices are more likely to be nondistressed in the relationship and individuals who do not perform these three practices are more likely to be distressed in the relationship. Tables 23 and 24 provide the Mann-Whitney U test results showing the statistically significant relationships between the practices and the KMSS and MAT scores respectively. Groups A and B means what groups of individuals, based on their answers Yes, No, or Some times, are compared. Table 23 shows $p < .01$ except for discussing sex life with groups who answered S and Yes $p = 0.15$, go out weekly on a date with groups who answered N and S $p = 0.038$, discuss emotional needs with spouse with groups S and Yes $p = 0.022$, and taking care of spouse when feeling bad with groups N and Yes $p = 0.027$. Table 24 shows $p < .01$ except for ask for forgiveness with in the groups N and S $p = 0.03$ and life together as a team with in the groups N and S $p = 0.06$.

Table 23

Mann-Whitney U Statistically Significant Results With KMSS

	Group A		Group B			
Category and practice	R	KMSS Mean	R	KMSS Mean	*U*	*z*
Religious						
Praying daily together	S	17.25	Y	19.76	1460.5	-3.714
	N	15.55	Y	19.76	1648.5	4.296
As for forgiveness	N	16.00	S	15.50	315.5	3.282
	S	15.50	Y	18.07	2951.0	2.988
	N	16.00	Y	18.07	562.5	4.987
Behavioral						
Sex						
Enjoying sex life	S	17.38	Y	18.80	2635.5	4.850
	N	5.75	Y	18.80	467.5	4.229
Discussing sex life	S	16.43	Y	18.69	2833.0	2.443
	N	15.71	Y	18.69	1661.5	3.677
Leisure						
Healthy balance of work, leisure, spiritual life	S	15.90	Y	18.44	2686.5	3.722
	N	9.00	Y	18.44	1429.0	3.573
Go out weekly on a date	N	16.17	S	18.45	2791.0	2.070
	N	16.17	Y	18.29	1752.5	3.760
Partnership						
Discuss emotional needs with spouse	S	14.25	Y	18.71	3607.0	2.298
	N	12.86	Y	18.71	1239.0	2.714
Life together as a team	N	7.25	S	15.17	337.0	2.632
	S	15.17	Y	18.91	2031.0	6.347
	N	7.25	Y	18.91	426.0	4.709
Taking care of spouse when feeling bad	S	10.33	Y	18.04	2138.0	3.431
	N	0.00	Y	18.04	73.5	2.211
Turn to spouse first when having problems	S	15.17	Y	18.55	2584.0	3.506
	N	8.67	Y	18.55	772.5	3.191

Note. R = Response; Y = Yes; N = No; S = Sometimes; P< 0.01 see exceptions in the

previous paragraph.

Table 24

Mann-Whitney U Statistically Significant Results With MAT

Category and Practice	Group A		Group B			
	R	MAT Mean	R	MAT Mean	*U*	*z*
Religious						
Praying daily together	S	105.74	Y	117.34	1644.5	-2.859
	N	101.73	Y	117.34	1859.0	-3.446
As for forgiveness	N	87.04	S	99.31	416.5	-2.126
	S	99.31	Y	112.18	2825.5	-3.291
	N	87.04	Y	112.18	727.0	-4.159
Behavioral						
Sex						
Enjoying sex life	S	98.34	Y	112.19	2816.0	-4.338
	N	92.82	Y	112.19	613.5	-3.359
Discussing sex life	S	101.26	Y	114.63	2446.0	-3.581
	N	99.45	Y	114.63	1557.0	-4.023
Leisure						
Healthy balance of work, leisure, spiritual life	S	101.72	Y	118.70	2130.0	-5.288
	N	97.31	Y	118.70	955.0	-5.536
Go out weekly on a date	N	101.79	S	110.72	2643.5	-2.531
	N	101.79	Y	117.40	1719.5	-3.849
Partnership						
Discuss emotional needs with spouse	S	103.21	Y	116.85	2985.0	-3.921
	N	95.03	Y	116.85	914.5	-4.266
Life together as a team	N	80.74	S	91.98	402.0	-1.875
	S	91.98	Y	119.55	1495.0	-7.636
	N	80.74	Y	119.55	317.0	-5.205
Taking care of spouse when feeling bad	S	94.36	Y	112.23	1903.0	-4.058
	N	59.67	Y	112.23	11.0	-2.851
Turn to spouse first when having problems	S	89.75	Y	117.20	1835.0	-5.523
	N	89.78	Y	117.20	611.5	-3.938

Note. R = Response; Y = Yes; N = No; S = Sometimes; p < 0.01 see exceptions in the

previous paragraph.

Statistical Significant Practices for Five Couples

Five family profiles are described showing demographic characteristics such as ethnicity of each partner, ages, number of children, and their place of residence. Additionally described is the KMSS total score range for couples before and after the workshop. Furthermore, I mention couples' behaviors before and after the workshop in regard to their statistically significant religious and behavioral practices. At the end of this section, the percentage covered by the characteristics of these five families is described.

Maria and Pedro are a Latino couple in their late 30s whose KMSS total scores moved from the range of distressed to nondistressed. They live in Houston with their two children, who are 15 and 13 years old, respectively. Before taking the TAHA MRE, Maria and Pedro wrote they did not share religious practices in their relationship. On the postworkshop survey, they stated they shared the religious practice of asking for forgiveness. Similarly, Martha and Juan are a Latino couple in their late 50s whose KMSS total scores moved from the range of distressed to nondistressed. They live in San Antonio, Texas, and have one adult (i.e., 38 years old) child. Before taking the TAHA MRE, Martha and Juan wrote they did not share religious practices in their relationship. On the postworkshop survey, they stated they started certain religious practices such as praying together.

Pedro and Teresa are a Latino couple in their 20s whose KMSS total scores stayed in the range of nondistressed. They live in San Antonio with their two children, aged 4 and 2 years old, respectively. Before the TAHA MRE, Pedro and Teresa wrote they shared religious practices in their relationship. On the postworkshop survey, they stated they have continued sharing those religious practices to improve dating, balance of work, and leisure and spiritual life. Jenny and Mark are White couple in their 60s whose KMSS total scores

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stayed in the range of nondistressed. They live in West Texas have four children aged 31, 29, 24, and 21 years old, respectively. Before taking the TAHA MRE, Jenny and Mark wrote they shared religious practices, they did not go on a weekly date, and they enjoyed sex. On the postworkshop survey, they reported the same behaviors.

Monica and John are a mixed couple (i.e., John is White and Monica is Latino) in their late 40s, whose KMSS total scores moved from nondistressed to distressed. They live in West Texas and have two adult children (24 and 21 years old, respectively). Before taking the TAHA MRE, Monica and John wrote they did not share religious practices and they originally went on weekly dates with a healthy balance of work, leisure, and spiritual life. On the postworkshop survey, they stated they stopped going on weekly dates and lost that balance. Tables 25 and 26 show each member of the couples' individual preworkshop and postworkshop answers for the 10 statistical significant religious and behavioral questions.

Table 25

Individual Answers for Pre and Postworkshop for the Statistical Significant Religious and Behavioral Practices

Category and practice	Pedro		Maria		Juan		Martha		John		Monica	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Religious												
Praying daily together	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	S	N	N
Ask for forgiveness	S	Y	N	Y	S	Y	Y	Y	S	Y	Y	Y
Behavioral												
Sex												
Enjoying sex life	S	Y	Y	Y	S	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Discussing sex life	S	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Leisure											
Healthy balance of work, leisure, spiritual life	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	S	Y	N	N
Go out weekly on a date	N	N	N	N	S	S	N	N	N	Y	N	N
Partnership											
Discuss emotional needs with spouse	N	Y	S	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N
Life together as a team	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	S	N
Taking care of spouse when feeling bad	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Turn to spouse first when having problems	S	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	S	Y	S	N

Note. Y=Yes, N=No, S=Sometimes

Table 26

Individual Answer for Pre and Postworkshop for the Statistical Significant Religious and

Behavioral Practices

	Pedro		Teresa		Mark		Jenny	
Category and practice	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Religious								
Praying daily together	S	Y	S	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
As for forgiveness	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Behavioral								
Sex								
Enjoying sex life	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Discussing sex life	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Leisure								
Healthy balance of work, leisure, spiritual life	S	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Go out weekly on a date	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N

Partnership

Discuss emotional needs with spouse	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Life together as a team	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Taking care of spouse when feeling bad	S	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Turn to spouse first when having problems	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Note. Y=Yes, N=No, S=Sometimes

These five families combined represented 97% of the postworkshop sample's ethnicity (i.e., 52 Latino and 45 White respondents); 88% of the cities represented in the postworkshop sample (i.e., 35 in San Antonio, 32 in West, and 21 in Houston); 66% of the postworkshop sample's number of children (i.e., 36 with two children, 25 with three children, and four with one child); and 87% of the postworkshop sample's ages (i.e., 35 in their 40s, 25 in in their 50s 18 in their 30s, and nine in their 20s).

Research Question 2: Conclusion

In reference to Research Question 2, the results of the Crosstabs test, Kruskal-Wallis H test, and Mann-Whitney U test were used to find out which religious or behavioral practices were related to KMSS and MAT scores. The results indicated that individuals who reported "yes" or "sometimes" to following 10 practices were more likely to score in the range of nondistressed on KMSS and MAT tests. The practices were: (1) praying together daily, (2) asking for forgiveness, (3) discussing emotional needs with spouse, (4) approaching life together as a team, (5) having a healthy balance of work, leisure, and spiritual life, (6) taking care of a spouse when the partner is not feeling well, (7) turning to the partner first when having problems, (8) going out in a weekly date with each other; (9) enjoying sex life, and (10) discussing sex life.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 was: Which demographic factors best predict increased relationship satisfaction scores for individuals who participated in TAHA's workshop? I examined this question using a generalized linear model because the postworkshop's KMSS total scores did not have a normal distribution; therefore, I used a nonparametric statistical analysis. The generalized linear model is a nonparametric equivalent of a linear regression. The independent variables were the four cities where TAHA's workshops were presented, plus participants' zip code, ethnicity, number of children, and gender. The dependent variable was the postworkshop KMSS scores of 61 participants because 10 of the 71 who answered the postworkshop KMSS did not complete all the demographic information. The results were insignificant for all the variables. The power analysis indicates a sample size of 160 individuals to ensure sufficient power at a 95% confidence level (Calculator.net, n.d.). Because only 61 individuals fully answered the demographic and the KMSS postworkshop questionnaires, the confidence level was less than 70% (Calculator.net, n.d.). The conclusion is that no demographic information can predict increased relationship satisfaction. This conclusion has a confidence level less than 70%.

Research Question 1

The primary research question, or Research Question 1, was: Does TAHA's couples workshop enhance relationship satisfaction? To answer this question, I considered 71 participants who answered the KMSS just after arriving at TAHA's workshops in 2015–2016 and the KMSS at the 4-year follow up. Plotting the scores on a graph indicated that the KMSS scores were not normally distributed; therefore, I decided to use nonparametric statistical analyses. I decided to use a Wilcoxon signed-rank test to compare the means of KMSS scores before and after workshops to determine if participating in the TAHA's

couples workshop led to a significant difference in relationship satisfaction scores four years later. For the analysis, I used the preworkshop data with the KMSS scores for 71 participants ($\bar{x} = 15.54$; $SD = 4.90$), and the postworkshop data with the KMSS scores for the same 71 participants ($\bar{x} = 17.41$; $SD = 4.21$).

The result of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was statistically significantly, $z = -2.905$, $p = .004$, effect size was .406, and power was .943. These results, considered as a group, show improvement in individual KMSS scores moving from distressed to nondistressed in their couple relationship (see Table 17). The mean of the KMSS preworkshop total scores for the 71 participants, considered in this analysis, was 15.54 ($SD = 4.90$) and within the range of "distressed." Four years later, three fourths of these participants ($n = 51$; 71.8%) were nondistressed with a KMSS mean score of 17.41 ($SD = 4.21$), just above the ≥ 17 cut-off score. This increased number of individuals indicating nondistressed relationships represented a statistically significant change for the 71 participants who took the preworkshop and postworkshop KMSS. Figure 4 shows the differences between KMSS total scores preworkshop and postworkshop for the 71 participants.

Summary of Research Results

A positive answer to the Research Question 1 (i.e., Does TAHA's couples workshop enhance relationship satisfaction?) was supported with a nonparametric Wilcoxon signed-rank test, equivalent to the parametric t test. Participants included 71 TAHA workshop participants who answered the KMSS prior to their TAHA workshop and 4 years after the workshop. As noted above, the results indicated a significant difference between total preworkshop and postworkshop means, and a significant increase in the number of KMSS scores that switched from the distressed range to the nondistressed range.

Research Question 2 (i.e., Which Catholic religious and behavioral practices are most strongly associated with TAHA's workshop participants' relationship satisfaction scores prior to the completing the workshop?) was answered using a Crosstabs test, Kruskal-Wallis H test and Mann-Whitney U test. These tests were conducted by considering the preworkshop data ($n = 224$) to find out which, if any, religious or behavioral practices were related to the preworkshop KMSS and MAT scores. In other words, which skills did participants already possess—and could enhance—by participating in TAHA at potential baseline. The results were statistically significant for 10 of the 16 religious and behavioral practices. Individuals indicating "yes" to performing these practices were more likely to score in the nondistressed range for both measures than those who did not participate in the practices or only participated sometimes.

Research Question 3 (i.e., Which demographic factors best predict increased relationship satisfaction scores for individuals who participated in TAHA's workshop?) was answered using a generalized linear model. The independent variables were the four cities where TAHA's workshops were presented, plus participants' zip codes, ethnicity, number of children, and gender. The dependent variable was the postworkshop KMSS scores. Because only 61 individuals fully answered the demographic and the KMSS postworkshop questionnaires, the confidence level for the results was less than 70% (Calculator.net, n.d.). Results were insignificant for all variables; therefore, no demographic information can predict enhance of relationship satisfaction.

Chapter 5: Summary, Implications, and Recommendations

According to the research literature, more than 20 components contribute to relationship satisfaction. Some of these components are physical and some psychosocial (Chapman, 2015; Gleason et al., 2003; Gottman & Silver, 2015; Stack & Eshleman, 1998). The psychosocial components can be divided into three categories: cultural, behavioral, and relational (Berman, 2013; Chapman, 2015; Dew & Wilcox, 2013; Fitzgibbons, 2010; Gottman & Silver, 2015; Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Several of these psychosocial components are included in marital relationship education (MRE) programs. These MRE programs are designed to inform participants and teach attitudes, behaviors, and skills in a relaxed and fun atmosphere to improve couples' relationships (Halford et al., 2008; Ooms, 2010).

The topics included in MRE programs that correlate with relationship satisfaction are communication skills, conflict resolution skills, finances, friendship, sex, expectations, religion, and commitment, among others (Blanchard et al., 2009; Braithwaite & Fincham, 2009; Halford et al., 2008; Hawkins et al., 2008). These MRE programs may have a religious or nonreligious curriculum. Religious MRE programs address marital and committed relationships using deeply valued, cultural sources to provide meaning to problems and life stressors (McGoldrick & Hardy, 2008). Only a few religious MRE programs have been researched and the results disseminated (McManus, 1995).

Catholics in the United States are the second-largest faith community, constituting 22% of the population, or 68.5 million people yet, limited research has been done regarding Catholic MRE programs (Lindner, 2011; McManus, 1995; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). The existing empirical research on Catholic MRE programs is outdated and out of press (McManus, 1995). Beyond limited research on the effectiveness of Catholic MRE

programs, there are no research studies on how Catholic practices or religious rituals may increase couples' relationship satisfaction.

Results

The main goal for this study was to determine if The Alexander House Apostolate's (TAHA) faith-based couples workshop enhanced couples' relationship satisfaction and was addressed by Research Question 1: Does TAHA's couples workshop impact long term relationship satisfaction? The average KMSS scores of preworkshop participants fell into the range of distressed. When a smaller sample group of these preworkshop participants took the KMSS 4 years later, the average total scores fell into the range of nondistressed. The results were found to be statistically significant for the 71 participants who took both the preworkshop and postworkshop KMSS.

The secondary goals were to answer questions (2) Which Catholic religious and behavioral practices are most strongly associated with TAHA's workshop participants' relationship satisfaction scores prior to the completing the workshop? and (3) Which demographic factors best predict increased relationship satisfaction scores for individuals who participated in TAHA's workshop? In reference to the relationship between religious and behavioral practices and relationship satisfaction, or Research Question 2, the results indicated there was statistically significant difference between the group of individuals who engaged in certain religious and behavioral practices and the group of individuals who did not engage in these practices. When individuals engaged in nine specific religious and behavioral practices, they were more likely to be nondistressed and satisfied in their relationship than those who did not.

Two religious practices that were statistically significant in enhancing relationship satisfaction were praying together daily and asking for forgiveness. Seven behavioral

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practices related to the topics of sex, leisure, and approaching life as a team were also statistically significant. These topics, taken as a whole, are important elements to building intimacy, quality time, and trust in a relationship. The analysis also suggested that engaging in these activities sometimes enhanced relationship satisfaction scores to the point that they were statistically significant from the scores of those who reported not participating in these specific activities.

For Research Question 3, the results indicated that there were no preworkshop demographic variables that best predicted increased relationship satisfaction scores for individuals who participated in TAHA's workshop when measured 4 years later.

Discussion

The results of the primary research question were statistically significant, and it can be concluded that TAHA's workshop had a long-term impact on relationship satisfaction for Catholic Latino and White populations in south central Texas; however, the extent of this impact is unknown. This impact must be considered tentative and qualified for two important reasons. First, this study was done with a 4-year gap between the preworkshop and the postworkshop data, whereas the standard research protocol incorporates 6- and 12-month follow ups (Sprenkle, 2002). Time, history, or other life events may have improved or deteriorated a couple's relationship, affecting this study's results.

In those 4 years, for example, couples may have sought individual therapy, couple's therapy, counseling from clergy, or family and friend recommendations, which may have helped a couple's relationship. Because of the time gap between the preworkshop and postworkshop questionnaire, it would be inappropriate to compare TAHA with other MRE programs that use the standard protocol of 6 or 12 months postworkshop posttests because knowledge, attitudes, and skill may decay, or change with time (Cambridge University

Press, 2019). Of the 71 individuals who answered the postworkshop questionnaire, two thirds (i.e., 50 individuals) were still with their same partners. It was not possible to identify if one third of the individuals (21) were with their partners or were with a different partner.

Second, although one third of the 224 initial participants fully answered the postworkshop questionnaire, only 71 participants who completed the postworkshop. This group may have self-selected because they liked TAHA, they were originally referred by their church, or they felt they had improved in their relationship—there was no information indicating their motivation. The individuals who did not answer the postworkshop questionnaire may have not done so because they did not want to damage TAHA's reputation, based on the lack of improvement in their marriage or deterioration of the relationship.

As for the results of the religious and behavioral practices of participants, their presence and impact can be understood in many ways. First, for those individuals whose religion or faith elevates the meaning and sanctity of marriage and condemns those who do not conform, social desirability might affect their responses. If an individual believes, based on religion, that having negative feelings for their partner or their relationship implies that they themselves are a bad person, this may affect how that individual answers the relationship questionnaires. Answering negatively on the relationship questionnaire may make the individual feel that they are bad or doing something wrong; therefore, religious individuals may tend to answer relationship questionnaires in a positive and aspirational way (Brenner & DeLamater, 2016).

Most of the religious and behavioral practices were associated with standardized measure scores indicating relationship satisfaction. Ten religious and behavioral practices were statistically significant when comparing the group that does not engage in religious

and behavioral practices with the group that does engage in them. These practices include: (1) praying daily together; (2) asking for forgiveness; (3) enjoying sex life; (4) discussing sex life; (5) balancing of work, leisure, and spiritual life; (6) going out on weekly dates; (7) discussing emotional needs with spouse; (8) living life together as a team; (9) taking care of spouse when feeling bad; and, (10) turning to spouse first when having problems. It can be argued are all associated with creating intimacy; therefore, it was not surprising that those individuals engaging these practices also rated their relationships as more satisfying and nondistressed.

For two practices, there was a statistical significance between the group that did not engage in that practice and the group that engaged in that practice sometimes. The first one was the religious practice of asking for forgiveness, and the second one was living life together as a team. The results suggested that the more an individual engages in these practices, the more the individual will be satisfied in the relationship.

From a systemic point of view, social exchange theory (SET) focuses on the transactional nature of relationships to understand how relationship satisfaction is enhanced. Based on this study's results, it can be inferred that when participants indicated regular communication about difficult topics (responding "yes" to the practice), such as discussions about sex and emotional needs (Gottman, 2009; Halford et al., 2008), communication was connected to relationship satisfaction. Individuals who listen well and use positive communication skills "give" these behaviors to "receive" similar behaviors from their partners and to achieve a sense of satisfaction with the relationship. They avoid costs, such as hurt feelings, sadness, feelings of betrayal, or feeling unloved, and experience rewards based on enhancing feelings of being heard, appreciated, loved, accepted, and valued by their partners (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008; Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009).

These relational profits, or rewards, are perceived by an individual not only when enjoying sex and going out on dates but also when an individual can trust their partner to be part of the team and talk about personal problems (Berman, 2013; Chapman, 2015; Gleason et al., 2003; Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010). These behaviors are perceived as rewards because when a partner behaves according to one's expectations, it generates satisfaction (Chapman, 2015; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Virtues, such as trust, commitment, and friendship, are expressed when an individual is willing to be available to listen to their partner's problems and the act of listening is perceived as reward-generating satisfaction (Dew & Wilcox, 2013; Fitzgibbons, 2010; Gottman 2009; Johnson, 2004). Behaviors that focus on benefiting the partner and, at the same time, maximize rewards for both partners, enhance relationship satisfaction, because relationships are interdependent (Dalgleish et al., 2015; Sabatelli & Shehan, 2009; White & Klein, 2008). This research lends support to the transactional component of relationships, as well as the wisdom of encouraging couples who possess good relational practices to continue to reinforce or build on those practices through attendance at a MRE.

In the review of literature, there were less than 200 research studies about MRE programs. This study is important because very little published research has been conducted on religious MRE—of the scant existing literature, few studies have reported on outcomes for Catholic MRE programs (McManus, 1995). There has been no research done on a Catholic religious MRE using a predominantly Latino population; therefore, this study may be the only one. Additionally, this study was statistically significant for 10 religious and behavioral questions. Finally, the couples who answered the postworkshop questionnaire 4 years after participating in the workshop improved their KMSS total scores and showed improvement in their marital satisfaction.

Implications

Clinical Implications

MFT and Mental Health. This research serves as information for marriage and family therapists to help couples find relational and religious solutions from a systemic perspective (Mahoney, 2010; McGoldrick & Kardy, 2008). MFTs that incorporate Catholic content in their practices can benefit from sending their clients to a religious workshop to learn research-based religious practices and Catholic content to improve relationship satisfaction (McGoldrick & Kardy, 2008).

Therapists, counselors, and psychologists who use religious and a systemic perspectives in their practice can use research-based religious practices, such as praying together and asking for forgiveness, to improve couples' relationship satisfaction with greater confidence (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; Koening et al., 2001). Mental health professionals in general can benefit from this research using the eight behavioral practices—such as discussing emotional needs with spouses, living together as a team, taking care of spouses when feeling bad, discussing and enjoying sex (see Table 21) and incorporating all of these components (see Tables 1, 2, and 3) to enhance clients' couple relationships (Dew & Wilcox, 2013; Gottman & Silver, 2015; Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Even though this study's results are conclusive, more research needs to be done.

Catholic MREs. Although the research design did not allow for reliable comparisons between the preworkshop and postworkshop scores, the results still have important implications. Catholic MREs, such as Retrouvaille, Worldwide Marriage Encounter, and TAHA's workshops, can benefit from this research incorporating or strengthening the religious practices of praying together and asking for forgiveness—not

just as a practice but also as a Sacrament in their curricula to enhance relationship satisfaction (Calvo, 1988; Retrouvaille, n.d.; Worldwide Marriage Encounter, n.d.b). Couples who attend a Catholic MRE can increase trust in the MRE's curriculum when including the religious practices of praying together daily and asking for forgiveness to improve their relationship satisfaction (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000).

Individuals who are considering the Sacrament of marriage will benefit from attending a Catholic MRE relying on religious and behavioral practices, as described in this research to learn what practices enhance couple relationship satisfaction (Fitzgibbons, 2010). The Catholic faith community benefits from having research that supports the value and impact of religious practices as part of healthy relationship maintenance. Specifically, praying together and asking for forgiveness, which are related to the Sacrament of reconciliation, can enhance relationship satisfaction.

Religious Implications

This research helps not only the Catholic practitioners, but also the Christian community, because prayer and forgiveness are part of the teachings of many faith traditions. Prayer is the idea of getting in contact with God, where God is a supreme being who has the power of listening and helping individuals (Koenig et al., 2001). Prayer has several functions, such as connecting with God, expressing gratitude and praise, gaining perspective with clarity and tranquility, and easing tension, pain, and suffering (McGoldrick & Hardy, 2008). Prayer, therefore, helps couples' relationships. In addition, prayer helps couples' relationships by inviting humility into the relationship. Koening (2001) confirmed that individual prayer may help heal not only different individual conditions, such as depression, cardiovascular diseases, and cancer, but also a couple's relationships promoting marital stability and providing adjustment to relationships. This

research supports the notion that praying together daily improves relationship satisfaction and encourages counselors from all levels and backgrounds (religious and nonreligious) to continue using a tool familiar to them because of faith or training. (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000).

Asking for forgiveness improves relationship satisfaction because it contributes to the process of reconciliation. Enright and Fitzgibbons (2000) described forgiveness as "abandon[ing] resentment and related responses, and endeavor to respond to the wrongdoer based on the moral principle of beneficence" (p. 41); therefore, forgiveness decreases feelings that are barriers to couples' relationships and invites compassion, unconditional worth, generosity, and love, which enhances relationship satisfaction. For Christian and other faith communities, forgiveness is a commandment that generates well-being for an individual; therefore, again, counselors from various traditions and professional training can (and continue to) recommend forgiveness as an act of love for others and love for self (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000).

Limitations

There are four major limitations of this research. First, the research design was a limitation of the study. I wanted to determine if individuals who participated in TAHA's workshop experienced a change in their perception of relationship satisfaction; however, TAHA's archival data and the timing of its collection limited the quality of the results. In addition, the self-reported nature of the measures can render results biased because of social desirability and faulty memories (Carr et al., 2014). Second, the data were provided by predominantly Catholic Latino and White couples from four cities in south central Texas; therefore, interpretation of the results should be keep these characteristics in mind.

Third, the postworkshop's follow-up results are limited because the questionnaires were administered only at a 4-year postworkshop follow up, rather than the standard research protocol of 6- and 12-month follow ups (Sprenkle, 2002). Therefore, the results are not comparable with other MRE research results. Finally, the postworkshop follow-up questionnaires are also a limitation because not all participants answered both the KMSS and the 16-item religious and behavioral questionnaires; therefore, results were obtained with one measure of relationship satisfaction, instead of two collected in the preworkshop.

Recommendations

This research contributes to the literature on religious MREs by affirming what Catholic religious practices contribute to improved relationship satisfaction, and it also confirms which behavioral practices contribute to relationship satisfaction. Based on these contributions, I would like to highlight three recommendations from this research. First, TAHA should consider using these results and the 27 components that enhance relationship satisfaction to evaluate and improve their program evaluation or overall research design, as well as the components of its couples' workshop.

Second, TAHA and other religious MREs should consider emphasizing couples' daily prayer and incorporating an exercise where couples can pray together during the workshop. Third, about asking for forgiveness, TAHA can incorporate Enright and Fitzgibbons's (2000) recommendation to make the choice to forgive, abandon resentment, and adopt a friendly attitude toward the partner. Fourth, I would also recommend that TAHA evaluate and consider incorporating some of the behavioral practices that enhance working as a team to enhance relationship satisfaction, such as living life together as a team, taking care of one's spouse when feeling bad, and turning to the spouse first when having problems. These practices can be incorporated in the workshop with exercises

where couples can pull a rope in different directions as a division and not working together, and then both pull the rope in the same direction, where they do not need to make an effort because both work in the same direction. The information generated in this research is useful for those delivering TAHA and other MRES, as well as scholars involved in future research on MREs.

Future Research

This research is a step forward in how religious MREs and religious practices enhance relationship satisfaction. Further research on religious MREs may confirm and reinforce the knowledge that religious MREs enhance relationship satisfaction by analyzing each part of an MRE program—including its concepts and exercises—to identify specifically which religious practices may have the largest impact on improving relationship satisfaction (Marriage Savers, n.d.). Additionally, researchers should conduct studies on other Catholic practices that are included in TAHA's workshop, such as the Sacrament of Confession, because confession can be part of the forgiveness process. Although confession did not appear to be significant in this research, additional research on such Catholic practices—particularly those that may generate relationship satisfaction in individuals and couples—would be beneficial (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000).

Research done with different populations (e.g., people of various ages and from diverse backgrounds here in the United States and around the world) is encouraged to learn what works best for each population and if the results may be generalizable (Markman & Rhoades, 2012). The previous idea is important because there is little research on religious MREs; therefore, any research done on Catholic MREs will contribute to the Catholic population and the mental health field (McManus, 1995).

Future research should include other Catholic MRE programs and also other religious (non-Catholic) MRE programs. This idea is important because further research will allow results from Catholic MRE programs to be compared with other religious and nonreligious MRE programs to determine if religious MRE programs are better in generating relationship satisfaction with religious populations (Halford et al., 2015). In addition, more research may help MRE facilitators consider including other topics in religious MRE curriculums to answer the following question: What religious practices and exercises should be considered to enhance relationship satisfaction that are research-based (Koenig et al., 2001)?

Future research should also take into consideration this study's limitations to address more gaps. A larger sample with Catholic couples would provide a better understanding of the current study's results, and considering a more diverse group of participants, not only from parishes, may make the results more generalizable to Catholic individuals. The use of a diverse sample of participants from other states and countries would be beneficial because results could be generalized to populations from different socioeconomic, religious, and cultural backgrounds (Koenig et al., 2001).

The use of the standard research protocol of 6- and 12-month follow ups would almost certainly increase the number of participants who answer the postworkshop questionnaires—not only the KMSS and the religious and behavioral questionnaires, but also the MAT and other tests that measure relationship satisfaction in different aspects of a relationship (Cambridge University Press, 2019). Considering research studies using KMSS, MAT, other relationship tests, and open-ended questions will lead to a mixed method research design. Using quantitative and qualitative research would contribute to a better understanding of how MRE programs and religion can enhance relationship

satisfaction, resulting in a more robust study generating more information to improve

religious MRE curriculum (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

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Appendix A

Seventeen Principles of Marriage Ministers

1. "Through other Christians' testimony and example we/I found hope for our marriage."

2. 'I experienced God's love and forgiveness."

3. "I made a decision/commitment to love: Christ, mate, self."

4. "I made a decision and commitment to follow Jesus as my Savior and Lord."

5. "Once obedient to God, we were able to begin to love by his standards, not ours."

6. "I became accountable to God for my behavior, thoughts, and actions and became aware of my accountability to others."

7. "We/I made a decision to stay together."

8. "We/I made a decision to forgive mate and myself."

9. "I accepted my mate as he/she is."

10. "I realized that the problem was with myself."

11. "I began to look at myself as needing change to be able to love, no matter what. I became aware that I needed to change, became willing to change, learned what and how to change, and began to change with God's help."

12. "I made an examination of my role in our marriage according to God's Word and changed accordingly with God's help."

13. "I accepted change in my mate."

14. "Through Christ, I began trusting enough to increasingly put my whole self in the care of my mate."

15. "I learned to communicate honestly, truthfully, and openly, in love."

16. "I learned to put God and mate ahead of myself (became humble before the Lord."

17. "We are still in the process and realize that we must share what we have found with others" (McManus, 1995, p. 204).

Appendix B

The TAHA's Letter of Support

Letter of Support

Angel E. Estrada MA, LMFT will be supervising the data collection for The Alexander House Apostolate (TAHA) couple's workshop participants in United States for a research project studying how TAHA's workshop and what religious practices enhance relationship satisfaction, and for what population TAHA is more effective based on TAHA's program. Data collection that started in May 30, 2019, will continue until December 31, 2020, if needed. The primary goal of this research is to collect data helpful to understanding how relationship satisfaction is enhanced as well as finishing Angel Estrada's dissertation, scholarly publications and presentations.

Given the parameters of the research project, TAHA agrees to allow Angel E. Estrada, MA., LMFT, to use data collected and stored by TAHA in its agency database. The principal investigator for the project is Angel E. Estrada. He will be conducting his dissertation research under the supervision of Dr. Carolyn Tubbs, Associate Professor at St. Mary's University. Dr. Tubbs can be reached via email at ctubbs@stmarytx.edu or 210-438-6418.

Greg Alexander   June 17, 2019

Greg Alexander   Date
President CEO/The Alexander House

_____   _____

Angel E. Estrada, MA. LMFT   Date
Ph.D. Student /St. Mary's University

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Appendix C

Marital Survey

MARITAL SURVEY

PLEASE FILL OUT EVERY QUESTION

HUSBAND'S NAME AND AGE:		WIFE'S NAME AND AGE:		
PHONE NUMBER:	EMAIL:		ZIP CODE:	
CHILDREN	YES NO	AGES		
ETHNICITY	WHITE	LATIN/HISPANIC	AFRICAN AMERICAN	OTHER (specify)

Do we have your permission to contact you again in the future for follow up on survey? YES___ NO___

	MARK THE ANSWER THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR RELATIONSHIP	YES	NO	SOMEWHAT
1.	Do you attend church at least once a week?			
2.	Do you pray together daily?			
3.	Do you consider God your first priority?			
4.	Do you read and discuss the Bible or Church teachings together?			
5.	Do you frequent the Sacrament of the Eucharist?			
6.	Do you frequent the Sacrament of Penance?			
7.	Do you discuss your emotional needs with your spouse?			
8.	Do you approach life together as a team?			
9.	Do you struggle with finances?			
10.	Do you have a healthy balance of work, leisure and spiritual life?			
11.	Do you take care of your spouse when he/she is not feeling well?			
12.	Do you turn to your spouse first when you have a problem?			
13.	Do you ask for forgiveness when you have hurt your spouse?			
14.	Do you take the time to go out on a date with each other weekly?			
15.	Do you enjoy your sex life?			
16.	Do you discuss your sex life?			

Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale

MARK THE ANSWER THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR RELATIONSHIP

Item	Extremely Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Mixed	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied
17. How satisfied are you with your marriage?							
18. How satisfied are you with your husband/wife as spouse?							
19. How satisfied are you with your relationship with your husband/wife?							

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ALEXANDER
HOUSE

Locke-Wallace Relationship Adjustment Test

Circle the dot on the scale line that best describes the degree of happiness, everything considered, of your present couple's relationship. The middle point "Happy" represents the degree of happiness that most people get from marriage, and the scale gradually ranges on one side to those few who are very unhappy in couple's relationship and, on the other, to those few who experience extreme joy or happiness in the relationship.

._____._____._____._____._____._____._____.

Extremely Unhappy   Happy   Extremely Happy
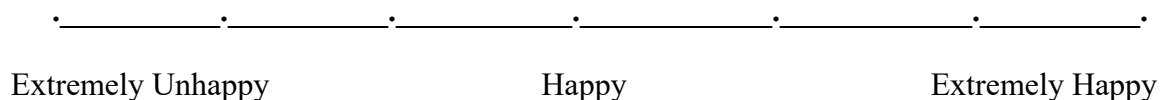
State the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner on the following items. Please check each row.

Item	Always agree	Almost Always Agree	Occasionally Disagree	Frequently Disagree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
1. Handling Family Finances						
2. Matters of Recreation						
3. Demonstration of Affection						
4. Friends						
5. Sex Relations						
6. Conventionality (right, good or proper conduct)						
7. Philosophy of Life						
8. Ways of dealing with In-Laws.						

9. When disagreements arise, they usually result in:
(a) Husband giving in   (b) Wife giving in agreement   (c) By mutual give and take 0 2 10

10. Do you and your partner engage in outside interests together?

Appendix C (cont.)

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(a) All of them   (b) Some of them   (c) Very few of them   (d) None of them

11. In leisure time, do you generally prefer?:
(a) To be "on the go"   (b) To stay at home

12. Does your partner generally prefer?:
(a) To be "on the go"   (b) To stay at home

13. Do you ever wish you had not married?
(a) Frequently   (b) Occasionally   (c) Rarely   (d) Never

14. If you had your life to live over again, do you think you would:
(a) Marry the same person   (b) Marry a different person   (c) Not marry at all

15. Do you ever confide in your partner?
(a) Almost never   (b) Rarely   (c) In most things   (d) In everything

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Appendix D

The TAHA's Religious and Behavior Questionnaire of 16 Items

Mark the answer that best describes your relationship	Yes	No	Somewhat satisfy
1. Do you attend church at least once a week?			
2. Do you pray together daily?			
3. Do you consider God your first priority?			
4. Do you read and discuss the Bible or Church teachings together?			
5. Do you frequent the Sacrament of the Eucharist?			
6. Do you frequent the Sacrament of Penance?			
7. Do you discuss your emotional needs with your spouse?			
8. Do you approach life together as a team?			
9. Do you struggle with finances?			
10. Do you have a healthy balance of work, leisure and a spiritual life?			
11. Do you take care of your spouse when he/she is not feeling well?			
12. Do you turn to your spouse first when you have a problem?			
13. Do you ask for forgiveness when you have hurt your spouse?			
14. Do you take the time to go out on a date with each other weekly?			
15. Do you enjoy your sex life?			
16. Do you discuss your sex life?			