

EVALUATING THE EFFECTS OF THE RE|ENGAGE MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT

PROGRAM ON THE USE OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

by Erica P. Holmes

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfilment

Of the Requirements of the Degree

Doctor of Education

School of Behavioral Sciences

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

2020

APPROVED BY:

Daniel Marston PhD, Committee Chair

Angelina Dickens PhD, Committee Reader

ABSTARCT

The purpose of this program evaluation is to evaluate the church-developed marriage small group intervention, re|engage, for its effects on the use of spiritual disciplines of the Christian faith to improve marital satisfaction of program participants. Utilizing quantitative archival data from the sole empirical study, *Engaging with re|engage : A Study of Watermark Community Church's 16-Session Marriage Intervention Program – re|engage* (Boyd & Charlemagne, 2016), pre-test / post-test responses were evaluated to assess the effects of the re|engage marriage program on the use of Christian spiritual disciplines, including faith in God, prayer, and forgiveness, to improve the marital satisfaction of program participants. It was hypothesized that a statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest implementation of spiritual disciplines would be present. Results indicate that change attributable to the re|engage program, specifically regarding forgiveness, faith as expressed through dependence upon God, and prayer, finds that 52% of participants reported improvement in the area of forgiving a spouse, 39.3% of participants reported increased faith or dependence on God, and 40.3% of participants reported that praying with a spouse increased.

Keywords: marriage, marriage education, marriage enrichment, re|engage, religious participation, marital satisfaction

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	2
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	5
Overview.....	5
Background.....	5
Problem Statement.....	5
Purpose Statement.....	7
Significance of the Study.....	9
Research Question(s)	10
Definitions.....	11
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	12
Overview.....	12
Conceptual or Theoretical Framework	12
Related Literature.....	13
Summary.....	22
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS	24
Overview.....	24
Design	24
Research Question(s)	25
Hypothesis(es).....	25
Participants and Setting.....	25
Instrumentation	26
Procedures.....	27

EFFECTS OF RE ENGAGE	4
Data Analysis	27
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS	29
Overview.....	29
Research Question(s)	29
Hypothesis(es).....	29
Descriptive Statistics.....	31
Results.....	35
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS	52
Overview.....	52
Discussion.....	52
Implications.....	55
Limitations	56
Recommendations for Future Research.....	57
REFERENCES	59
APPENDIX or APPENDICES	66

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

This chapter will highlight the need for an independent program evaluation on the effects of the church-developed marriage small group study, re|engage, for its effects on the use of spiritual disciplines of the Christian faith to improve marital satisfaction of program participants. While the effectiveness of relationship education on marriage satisfaction has largely been clinically proven effective by numerous independent studies, the specific effects of the re|engage marriage small group intervention, previously evaluated in a single study, have yet to be verified through an additional independent study; therefore, a program evaluation is necessary.

The review of literature initially explores the types, role, effects, and utilization of marriage enrichment programs across a broad spectrum of social organizations and populations. Specifically, the implementation and results of public programs, those implemented in clinical settings, and church sponsored marriage enrichment programs are discussed. Additionally, the problem statement identifies a gap in the research of the re|engage marriage enrichment program, while the purpose of the current research and accompanying empirical significance are addressed. Finally, the research question is presented to further clarify the intent and focus of the study.

Background

Relationship education is defined by Markman and Rhoades (2012, p.171) as “efforts or programs that provide education, skills, and principles that help individuals and couples increase their chances of having healthy and stable relationships.” Research has shown that not only can relationship education improve relationship satisfaction with couples who previously rated low

satisfaction levels, but relationship education has also been shown to help high-risk couples maintain relationship satisfaction (Halford & Bodenmann, 2013).

According to Markman and Rhoades (2012), although divorce rates in the United States are declining, they remain high at 45%. Additionally, research indicated that divorce negatively impacts the stability of the family unit and its negative consequences reverberate through the community, claiming the development and social adjustment of children along with the mental and physical wellbeing of divorced adults (Markman & Rhoades, 2012). Additionally, Markman and Rhoades (2012) review of the literature determined that relationship education, such as marriage enrichment programs, are widely accepted as empirical evidence mounts and is utilized in clinical, educational, and government programs. Throughout research special consideration is given to the effects of relationship education on various populations including low income families, distressed couples, military couples, premarital couples, cohabitating couples, college couples, and expecting couples (Markman & Rhoades, 2012).

Church-developed marriage education and enrichment programs are spreading from church to church, largely based on anecdotal evidence, often portrayed in written or video testimonies that highlight dramatic changes in the trajectory of the marriage, including increased marital satisfaction. Research indicates that religious organizations are often used as hubs for relationship education dissemination (Hook, Worthington, Hook, Miller, & Davis, 2011); therefore, it is not far-fetched for churches and other religious organizations to take the initiative to develop faith-based relationship intervention models that appeal to other faith organizations because of its integrative nature. In an examination of the effectiveness of religiously tailored marriage interventions in Christian therapy, high religious commitment level was shown to influence the client's perception of closeness to the therapist and greater improvement of the

presenting problem (Wade, Worthington, & Vogel, 2007). Research has yet to be conducted to establish whether this assertion is also true of church-developed marriage education received within the context of church small groups, as re|engage is developed to do.

Problem Statement

Unfortunately, only one independent study has been conducted to establish the effectiveness of the re|engage marriage enrichment program and although it supports the effectiveness of the intervention to improve marital satisfaction of participants through a religious program, it has not been substantiated. According to the afore mentioned study, *Engaging with re|engage : A Study of Watermark Community Church's 16-Session Marriage Intervention Program – re|engage* (Boyd & Charlemagne, 2016), most of the study's 353 participants indicate significant marital improvement, including increased marital quality and happiness. Moreover, the study identifies three behaviors that correlate with improved marriage ratings: (1) seeking God for strength; (2) connection with others; and (3) spousal unification (Boyd & Charlemagne, 2016). Correspondingly, the initial study reveals that participants believe the re|engage small group bolsters relationship with God and finds significance in God's grace and forgiveness. However, the study does not indicate how participation in re|engage impacts the specific spiritual disciplines of faith in God, prayer and forgiveness on marital satisfaction.

Although religious programs and empirical research do not always overlap, scholarly evaluations of such programs can provide valuable information on their implementation, effectiveness, future directions, and generalizability. Furthermore, faith-based initiatives often serve as the cornerstone of community outreach and stability. Therefore, the impact of church-developed programs that seek to improve marriages and support the family unit, as the

foundational building block of society through participation in marriage enrichment should be independently evaluated to determine its effects on the church body and spiritual disciplines.

Correspondingly, Watermark Community Church (2018) articulates six claims of the benefits of the re|engage program: (1) preventing staff burnout and fatigue by creating a clear path for counseling couples; (2) creating service opportunities for members of the local church; (3) attracting couples to the church who may not attend a church aside from seeking marital help; (4) providing an avenue to make disciples; (5) boosting children's and students' ministries as those can grow when marriages and families are healthier; and (6) adding authenticity to the church. Specifically, regarding claims two, four, and five which speak to re|engage participants serving in the local church, making disciples, and the reverberating effects of creating healthier families, Watermark Community Church (2018) posits that those in leadership roles exercise spiritual disciplines in order to build and maintain the spiritual integrity and overall spiritual health of the church body.

Finally, Boyd and Charlemagne (2016) suggests that future research evaluate the impact of the re|engage marriage enrichment program on the overall church health of the congregation. Given that the church-based re|engage program is now used in nearly 400 churches and has only been empirically evaluated once, the problem lies with the lack of substantiated empirical evidence to support the program's effects on the use of spiritual disciplines of the Christian faith, including faith in God, prayer, and forgiveness, to improve marital satisfaction of program participants.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the current study is to assess the effects of the re|engage marriage enrichment program on the use of Christian spiritual disciplines, including faith in God, prayer,

and forgiveness, to improve the marital satisfaction of program participants. To that end, this study utilizes quantitative archival data from the sole empirical study, *Engaging with re|engage : A Study of Watermark Community Church's 16-Session Marriage Intervention Program – re|engage* (Boyd & Charlemagne, 2016) to evaluate changes in pre-test / post-test responses to questions of faith, prayer, and forgiveness as they relate to marital satisfaction. This data consists of the pre-test / post-test survey responses of three hundred fifty-three study participants involved in closed re|engage groups at Watermark Community Church in Dallas, Texas. Due to the nature of archival data collection, no identifying information has been shared and no participants from the original study have been contacted. However, demographic information reflects the participation of 128 married couples and 97 individuals (whose spouses opted out of submitting survey responses) that range in age from 19-70 years old and represent various ethnicities and education levels.

Significance of the Study

The implications of this study could guide the use and implementation of church-developed marriage enrichment programs seeking to support and maintain the foundational structure of the family, the building block of community, and to ensure the overall health of the church body through the implementation of spiritual disciplines.

Community Marriage Initiatives across the country have received support from local and government organizations as an effective means of providing communities with marriage saving information with the possibility of creating stronger, healthier family units within the community. Even with such support, and government funding in some cases, the effectiveness of such programs coupled with the challenges of program implementation are largely unknown (Doherty & Anderson, 2004).

Evaluation of these programs can help to determine if each program accomplishes what it sets out to do, if the assumptions that guide the action of the program are accurate, and if the participant satisfaction that is expected is achieved. It has been acknowledged that literature concerning Christian approaches to couple therapy and couple enrichment is sparse (Hook, Worthington, Ripley, & Davis, 2011). Although the re|engage marriage intervention may contain some positive components of similar Community Marriage Initiatives (Boyd & Charlemagne, 2016), additional research is necessary to validate previous findings and offer valuable data for program improvement.

Research Question

RQ1: Does the re|engage marriage enrichment program impact the use of spiritual disciplines of faith in God, prayer, and forgiveness of participants within the Christian church?

Definitions

1. *re|engage Marriage Enrichment Program*– A 16-week marriage enrichment intervention administered in a small group format that applies Biblical principles to help married couples grow closer together (Watermark Community Church, 2018).
2. *Closed Group* – “Consists of 4-5 participating couples and a facilitator couple who will walk through the 16-lesson re|engage curriculum together” (Watermark Community Church, 2018, p7).
3. *Christian Church* – The body of Christ, often referred to as a group or local assembly of believers (1 Corinthians 1:2, 2 Corinthians 1:1, Galatians 1:1-2); A universal group of people who trust and believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (Ephesians 5:23-27).
4. *Spiritual Disciplines* – Habitual practices or training that encourages depth of relationship with Christ and community.

5. *Faith* – Belief in or reliance on God as the source.
6. *Prayer* – Conversing with God about thoughts and experiences.
7. *Forgiveness* – “A decision to pardon an offense and give up the right to be repaid”
(Wagner & McGee, 2016, p. 28).

Summary

In summary, assessing the influence of the re|engage marriage enrichment program on the use of Christian spiritual disciplines including faith, prayer, and forgiveness, to improve marital satisfaction of program participants may provide valuable information that directs the future implementation of the church-based marriage curriculum and its effects on overall church health. In so doing, the use of the church-developed marriage program, re|engage, could garner additional empirical support that validates the anecdotal evidence and faith-based assumptions that guides its use, thereby addressing the gap in the research that currently exists.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework of marriage education and the empirically supported evidence of notable marriage enrichment programs are examined to establish the necessity of such independent studies. In addition to evaluating the proven effectiveness of marriage education, evidence supporting the integration of evidence-based relationship interventions with faith-based practices is detailed. The concept of small group utilization in the Christian church is examined within the context of largely unsubstantiated, yet popular, marriage enrichment curriculum usage and the sole research study of the re|engage marriage enrichment program is outlined.

Theoretical Framework

Based on the conceptualization of skills training, relationship education serves, primarily, as a preventative intervention that largely focuses on equipping couples with communication skills and attempts to define correlates of marital satisfaction (Cottle, Thompson, Burr, & Hubler, 2014). Research indicates that learned communication skills such as active listening foster intimacy and depth of relationship that improves marital satisfaction. Additionally, marital quality has been shown to be positively correlated with the use of communication skills and the intentional application thereof (Cole & Cole, 1999). More recent research also confirms these findings stating that marriage and relationship education were effective at improving both communication and relationship quality (Hawkins, Blanchard, Baldwin, & Fawcett, 2008).

A more in depth look at relationship education, including re|engage, reveals that the foundational principles of Experiential Learning (Kolb, 1984) are often used to engage adult learners. This particular approach considers learners to be active participants as opposed to

passive learners of new information, while honoring the learning experiences that individuals have encountered outside the formal learning environment of a classroom. Experiential learning involves four kinds of experiences, including: (1) concrete; (2) reflective observation; (3) abstract conceptualization; and (4) active experimentation (West, Bubenzer, Co, & McGlothlin, 2013). The concept of learning a new skill, reflecting on the skill through small group activity such as dialog or journaling, recognizing how new skills can be implemented into daily life, and putting those skills into practice represents the four modes of experiential learning and outlines the general structure of the re|engage marriage enrichment program, which is presented and implemented in a small group setting. Given the practical nature of Experiential learning theory and the inclusion of Biblical principles in the re|engage program, this study assesses participant's active implementation of the use of faith, prayer, and forgiveness as spiritual disciplines that could inform the health of the marriage relationship.

Related Literature

The purpose of this literature review is to evaluate the literature surrounding the effectiveness, implementation, and empirical research of marriage education programs. The review will explore the types, roles, and effects of marriage enrichment on special populations and will provide a literature review of both empirically supported and church-developed marriage enrichment curriculum.

Special Populations

Distressed couples. In general, the literature indicates overall improvement following the implementation of relationship education. Although the immediate effects of relationship education on low-satisfaction couples reveals a moderate increase, as opposed to significant relationship satisfaction gains (Halford et al., 2015), couples whose profiles qualify as being at

high risk of developing relationship problems experienced their greatest change in cognition and behavior four weeks post-participation in relationship education (Barton, Futris, & Bradley, 2012).

For those couples whose relationships sustained occurrences of physical and emotional abuse or isolation, a pre-test/post-test self-report measure found that abuse and isolation occurrences decreased following relationship education interventions (Antle, Karam, Christensen, Barbee, & Sar, 2011). Similarly, individuals who experienced depressed affect and qualified their relationship as relationally unstable reported improvements in their mood (Bradford et al., 2014). Even though relationship enrichment was not designed specifically with distressed couples in mind, research does not support the clinical assumption that distressed couples are less likely to attend marriage education programs and that distressed couples are not good candidates for marriage education programs (DeMaria, 2005).

High School and College Students. The impact of relationship education on emerging adulthood has garnered increasing attention recently. Early adulthood serves as a time of exploration and, for many, preparation for the long-term committed relations of marriage. One longitudinal study evaluated the effectiveness of a high school relationship education curriculum designed to promote healthy relationships and it found that an evaluation four years post-intervention indicated a decrease in relationship violence and increase in family cohesion (Gardner & Boellaard, 2007).

In addition, a multi-site randomized controlled trial concerning relationship intervention education on emerging adults was evaluated. The research assessed whether relationship education affected maladaptive relationship beliefs, mutuality, relationship decision-making, relationship quality, and psychological distress and found that maladaptive relationship beliefs

decreased while intentional decision making and levels of relational mutuality increased (Holt, Mattanah, Schmidt, Daks, Brophy, Minnaar, & Roer, 2016). Regarding college students, significant results were found in the knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs of college students who participated in a quasi-experimental exploratory study that evaluated the effects of individual-oriented relationship education (Polancheck, 2014).

Small Groups

The changing structure of the evangelical Christian church in the United States has yielded large megachurches with congregations that number in the thousands. The increasing congregational sizes have prompted church leaders to search for ways to cultivate a culture of inclusiveness and connectedness that fosters active participation and a sense of belonging. Small groups, therefore, are touted as the intimate in-group cure that offers congregants manageable units within which to build social relationship and strengthen community (Daugherty & Whitehead, 2011). Although the recognition of religious small groups increasing in the United States can be pinpointed in the 1960's, references to small group gatherings surrounding religious fellowship and activities can be traced back to the Holy Bible, in books like Philemon and Acts, authored by the Apostle Paul.

Marriage Education Small Groups

In addition to the use of small groups for the purpose of fostering connection within the context of increasing congregation size, religious organizations are widely used to provide relationship education for four main reasons: (1) most couples marry in association with religious institutions; (2) religious organizations recognize relationship education and divorce prevention as important; (3) relationship education is consistent with the values of religious organizations; and (4) religious organizations are culturally embedded and adept to provide

relationship education to minorities (Hook, Worthington, Hook, Miller, & Davis, 2011). It is not hard to imagine, then, why the concept of religious small groups and marriage education have been combined to provide members of the community both social connection and marriage education. According to Nelson, Kirk, Ane, and Serres (2011), commitment to marriage and marital health is reinforced by religious and spiritual values.

Empirically Supported Marriage Education

The empirically supported treatment (EST) movement of marriage education programs has grown over the past decade, establishing criteria that evaluates the effectiveness of individual programs (Jakubowski, Milne, Brunner, & Miller, 2004). Given the popularity of marriage education in church settings and the growing government funding available to such programs in an effort to promote stable relationships and home life, the use of empirically supported interventions becoming more and more relevant (Doherty & Anderson, 2014). Markman et al. (2004) suggests that empirically supported marriage education interventions should meet the following three criteria: (1) relationship education should be empirically informed; (2) programs should engage in ongoing efficacy testing research; (3) education content should be updated regularly based on emerging data.

Clinician-Developed Marriage Education Programs

Marriage education small groups, such as *re|engage*, are frequently used in church settings, but not all programs offer empirical support of their effectiveness. The following three marriage education programs represent those empirically supported marriage education programs that have undergone randomized controlled studies and were proven efficacious in their ability to improve marital relationships in the format of small group implementation. The empirically supported interventions used by these programs allows clinicians, clergy, and government

sponsored programs to implement these marriage enrichment programs with confidence, knowing that rigorous clinical testing has identified program strengths, weakness, and areas of future research to further strengthen the validity of each program.

Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP). *PREP* is a skills-directed preventative intervention intended for either clinical, self-study, or group administration and focuses on communication, conflict management, relationship expectation, commitment, and bonding for relationship success (Jakubowski, Milne, Brunner, & Miller, 2004). One longitudinal study has been devoted to the assessment of relationship education adaptation and efficacy of a specific empirically based couple's intervention programs, *PREP* within religious organizations (Kline et. al, 2004).

Repeatedly, randomized controlled studies have found *PREP* to be effective in increased relationship confidence, increased communication, increased problem solving, greater relationship satisfaction, lower divorce rates, and decreased problem intensity (Jakubowski, Milne, Brunner, & Miller, 2004). In one longitudinal study by Markman et al. (2004), that evaluate the use of the *PREP* program by clergy found that once trained clergy used *PREP* increasingly and experienced results similar to preceding research.

PREPARE/ENRICH (Marriage Group). *PREPARE/ENRICH* is a customizable couple assessment tool that evaluates nine core scales of the relationship, including; (1) communication; (2) conflict resolution; (3) partner style and habits; (4) financial management; (5) leisure activities; (6) sexual expectations; (7) family and friends; (8) relationship roles; and (9) spiritual beliefs. Although primarily conducted with individual couples, the development of the group format also facilitates relationship skill straining that includes assertiveness, active listening, conflict resolution, and relationship closeness and flexibility (Johnson, 2015).

Results of several independent studies suggest that relationship improvements can be contributed to the *PREPARE/ENRICH* marriage group and include improved couple types among happy couples from 9% to 36%, a decreased of unhappy couple types from 59% to 23% (Johnson, 2015). Additionally, Childs (2009) reviewed eight marriage preparation programs and ranked *PREPARE/ENRICH* group program as number one with a content score of 92% and an instructional content score of 90%. In a separate study, Futris, Barton, Aholou, & Seponski (2011) posit that participants reported improved understanding of relationship improvement skills and application following a one-day *PREPARE/ENRICH* group workshop.

Hope-Focused Enrichment. The Hope-Focused enrichment program is a trans-theoretical approach that draws from solution-focused therapy, acceptance and commitment therapy, and emotion-focused couple therapy. This brief intervention focuses on love, faith, and working together in order to initiate forgiveness, restoration, and overall relationship improvement, specifically with regards to communication and intimacy (Jakubowski, Milne, Brunner, & Miller, 2004). Interventions focused on handling problems and forgiveness within six months of marriage show lasting positive changes in couples (Worthington et al., 2015).

In a comparative study, couples participated in either five sessions of strategic hope-focused enrichment counseling or simply received three written assessments. Couples who received 5 sessions of hope-focused relationship enrichment counseling rated higher levels of relationship satisfaction (Worthington et al., 1997). Research found that the couples who received the strategic hope-focused enrichment counseling reported higher levels of marital satisfaction (Worthington et al., 1997). Randomized controlled studies of the program resulted in couples reporting improved marital satisfaction, improved communication, and improved overall quality of life (Jakubowski, Milne, Brunner, & Miller, 2004).

Marriage Matters

Willow Creek Community Church, of Chicago, Illinois, developed a church-based marital education program in the 1980's which still exists today. The program was created, not by trained clinicians or researchers, but by pastors and counselors at Willow Creek Community Church. The purpose of the nine-week workshop is to enrich the relationship of couples with good marriages and to help restore the relationships of couples with distressed marriages.

Contrary to the afore mentioned empirically supported marriage enrichment programs, Marriage Matters has not been rigorously researched using controlled studies, despite its popularity and implementation among church congregations (Hook, Worthington, Hook, Miller, & Davis, 2011). The Marriage Matters curriculum covers topics of empathic communication, conflict resolution, family-of-origin issues, boundaries, intimacy, trust, and anger management. One study indicated that participants expressed satisfaction with the marriage enrichment program.

Additionally, participants reported feeling better about marriage following the Marriage Matters intervention. Researchers, though, were cautious of attributing perceived marital improvement to actual improvement based on the Marriage Matters program, citing the use of retrospective rating of the marriage without pre-test measures prior to attending the workshop (Hook, Worthington, Hook, Miller, & Davis, 2011).

re|engage

Likewise, Watermark Community Church in Dallas, Texas developed the re|engage marriage enrichment program in order to restore and strengthen marriages in 2006. One of the newest and largely unsubstantiated church-developed marriage enrichment curricula, the program began with a twenty-four session format that was refined in 2012 to a sixteen-session

weekly format, conducted in a small group setting. re|engage was designed to be implemented in churches, specifically within the context of small groups, both large group testimonies and closed groups, which help to facilitate highly valued authentic relationships and provide an environment conducive to life change in marriages (Watermark Community Church, 2018).

Watermark Community Church (2018) contends that the implementation of re|engage at local churches, although not facilitated by professional marriage and family therapists, helps to prevent church staff burnout by offloading the marriage counseling burden to volunteers who have been trained in applicable biblical principles. Additionally, Watermark posits that re|engage causes a synergistic effect for church student ministries due to the increased healthy marriages of re|engage participants.

Finally, Watermark believes that the re|engage marriage intervention creates a culture of authenticity as a direct result of the use of closed group transparency and intimacy that fosters true freedom of knowing and being known by others. Although Watermark Community Church (2018) does not specifically promote re|engage as a program that improves marriage relationships, the anecdotal testimonies associated with the program and promoted by the church boast of its effectiveness. Given these strong claims of effectiveness, the re|engage marriage program should undergo additional independent research to verify the findings of the initial study and test the claims of effectiveness.

Study Findings. Boyd and Charlemagne (2016), upon conducting a mixed-method design, consisting of pre-test/post-test self-report survey, reviewed video testimonies, and in-person naturalistic observation field study, of 353 participants found that the majority (96.9%) either strongly agree (81.9%) or agree (15%) that they would recommend the re|engage marriage intervention to others. Additionally, 92.4% of participants reported that their marriage either

somewhat (36%) or greatly (56.4%) improved. Notably, the study identified three behavior changes associated with participation in re|engage which include: (1) looking to God for strength to work on the marriage; (2) staying connected to others who can help keep the relationship strong; and (3) spousal agreement of things that truly matter. Boyd and Charlemagne's (2016) findings support existing literature which states that faith and religious participation benefit marriages.

Regarding the testimonial analysis and the field study data and prior to attending re|engage, participants indicated a self-focused perspective and a lack of authentic, transparent community ties. Following participation in re|engage, participants noted stronger team-focus in the marriage and towards problem solving, as well as deeper more transparent community connections (Boyd & Charlemagne, 2016).

Similarly, findings suggest that prior to re|engage participation, couples more heavily relied on their own strength and knowledge to address marital problems, while reporting post-re|engage results reflecting deeper reliance on God for strength and wisdom in marriage. Finally, those participants who viewed themselves as victims prior to attending re|engage were able to recognize their contributions to the marital discord following the re|engage intervention, in addition to recognizing the presence of God's grace and forgiveness throughout the intervention.

Boyd and Charlemagne (2016) noted the primary strength of their study as the time allotted between pre and post-test measures, citing the decreased likelihood of participant's emotionality associated with the study message altering responses. Instead, changes sustained over the course of the 16 sessions are more likely to be attributable to the program. Furthermore, the relatively large sample size of participants allows for meaningful conclusions to be drawn from the research.

re|engage Future Research. Boyd and Charlemagne (2016) suggests that future research seek to diversify findings across several ethnically diverse church locations currently implementing re|engage across the country. Intentionally enrolling more minority populations would garner greater understanding about the effectiveness of re|engage. At the time that the study was released, 137 churches offered re|engage, with 80 additional churches in the pre-launch phase of implementation. Alternatively, future research should focus on the effects that implementing the re|engage intervention has on church staff and the overall church health of the congregation (Boyd & Charlemagne, 2016).

Evaluating the ways in which Watermark Community Church (2018) believes that churches can benefit from the marriage enrichment program, including preventing staff burnout, enhancing student ministries, and adding authenticity to the church is necessary. Although each claim is supported by scriptural references, no empirical evidence validates those claims. Finally, Boyd and Charlemagne (2016) notes that husband and wife survey responses have yet to be compared to one another to assess connections and correlations between responses. Similarly, other mitigating facts, such as addiction and its effects on marital satisfaction have not been explored. Neither has the impact of having an active faith in God and the corresponding effect on marital satisfaction been examined.

Summary

In an effort to provide married couples with programs that offer educations, skills, and principles to improve relationships, marriage education has become widely popular in the public sector. Relationship education, such as marriage enrichment, which serves as a preventative intervention, has been shown to improve relationship satisfaction including relationship quality and communication. From distressed couples, who report low marital satisfaction and are at the

greatest risk of relationship problems, to those with good marriage relationships looking for a relational boost, marriage education is a valuable tool. So much so, that relationship education is increasingly being implemented in high school and college classrooms with great success of positively effecting relationship attitudes and expectations.

When provided within the context of small groups through local churches, marriage education can foster intimate relationship cohesion between married individuals and deep relationship ties with other couples. Because religious organizations, such as churches, are uniquely positioned to administer marriage education to the community, considering proximity to the community and cultural influence, small group marriage enrichment has the potential to be quite effective. This assertion has been validated through extensive empirically supported and clinically developed marriage education programs such as *PREP*, *PREPARE/ENRICH*, and *Hope-Focused Enrichment*.

There are, however, popular church-developed marriage education programs that are largely based on anecdotal evidence of success in positively impacting marriages. It is not difficult to understand why churches may develop such curriculum, given that marriage unions are closely associated with faith-based organizations, but the examination of these religiously tailored marriage interventions lack empirical evidence that validates their effectiveness. re|engage is one such church-developed marriage enrichment program. Although it is now being used in nearly 400 Churches across the United States, with only one research study verifying its effectiveness, it too is lacking adequate empirical support. For that reason, additional research is needed to address several unknown facets of how the re|engage marriage program effects the implementation of spiritual disciplines.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This research methods overview identifies the working research question, describes the participation and recruitment guidelines, and provides an overview of the methods procedure. Additionally, this methods draft outlines the measurements used during the study, the independent and dependent variables, as well as the statistical procedures used to analyze the data. Finally, consideration is given to the impact of both internal and external validity of the study.

Design

This study uses a nonexperimental design to analyze the archival data of the original *Engaging with re/engage* (Boyd & Charlemagne, 2016) mixed-method study that utilized both naturalistic observation and pre- and post-surveys to collect data. According to Warner (2013), nonexperimental designs measure a number of meaningful variables, in this case, at multiple points in time. Nonexperimental design does not involve a manipulated treatment variable and because it does not use comparison groups it is not necessarily considered an experiment. Nonexperimental design typically provides higher external validity and lower internal validity or causality, due to the observation of two correlated variables that may not be causally related (Warner, 2013). Due to the archival nature of the current study, new study participants were not recruited. Instead, qualitative data was obtained from the original *Engaging with re/engage* study (Boyd & Charlemagne, 2016) where participants were recruited from a population of re|engage closed group participants at Watermark Community Church in Dallas, TX and consented to participate in that study.

Research Question

RQ1: Does participation in the re|engage marriage enrichment program increase the use of Christian spiritual disciplines including faith in God, prayer, and forgiveness, to improve marital satisfaction of program participants?

Hypothesis(es)

H_{a1}: There will be a statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest implementation of spiritual disciplines after participation in the re|engage group. The re|engage participants will report higher use of Christian spiritual disciplines including faith, prayer, and forgiveness.

Participants and Setting

Participants for this study include three-hundred fifty-three married individuals attending a re|engage marriage small group at Watermark Community Church in Dallas, TX. The 353 participants consist of 128 couples (256 individuals) and 97 individuals who whose spouses chose not to participate in the study. Study participants range in age from 19-70 years of age and constitute a multi-ethnic group of couples who have been married from 1-44 years, with varying education levels. Most participants (59.2%) attend Watermark Community Church, while the remaining participants (40.8%) either attend other area churches or do not attend church at all. This study exceeds the minimum number of participants (153) when $\alpha=.05$, two-tailed with a desired statistical power of 80%. The sample size for this study allows for adequate statistical power to support correlations and avoid extreme outliers that may have a significant effect on the size of the sample r .

Recruitment. Due to the archival nature of the current study, new study participants were not recruited. Instead, qualitative data has been obtained from the original *Engaging with*

re/engage (Boyd & Charlemagne, 2016) study where participants were recruited from a population of re|engage closed group participants at Watermark Community Church in Dallas, TX. Those volunteer participants received a pre-test survey during the first group meeting and a post-test survey at the conclusion of the re|engage program. At the conclusion of the group, survey results were compared and analyzed by researchers. Pertaining to the current study, the researcher had no direct contact with research participants and received no identifying information regarding group participants.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria. For any volunteer who expressed interest in participating in the research study, the following criteria was met: (1) participants actively attend a re|engage marriage small group at Watermark Community Church at the time the original *Engaging with re/engage* study was conducted; (2) participants must be married; (3) participants must be over the age of 18 years old; (4) participants volunteer to fill out a self-report survey prior to the beginning of the study and following engagement in the study. The criteria for participation exclusion from the study includes individuals who are not currently married, individuals who are not currently enrolled in a re|engage marriage program, individuals under the age of 18-years-old, and those unwilling to provide self-report measures prior to and following re|engage participation.

Instrumentation

Measures

re|engage Pre- and Post- Surveys. Participants completed paper and pencil surveys that collected demographic information, marriage-related questions, and the Marital Happiness Measure (Booth & Amato, 2009).

Marital Happiness Measure. This measure serves as a self-administered survey that measures one's happiness in marriage using the 10-question format. Scale measures a global assessment of marriage as well as an assessment of specific facets of the marriage. Participants are asked to identify whether they are: (1) very happy; (2) pretty happy; or (3) not too happy with the amount of understanding received from spouse, the amount of love and affection received from spouse, the level of agreement with spouse, sexual relationship with spouse, how spouse takes care of things around the home, your spouse as someone to do things with, and your spouse's faithfulness. Measure reliability coefficient reflects an $\alpha = .88$, with husbands' and wives' reflecting similar reliability over time.

Procedures

First, IRB approval was obtained to begin research study. Once approved, consent was garnered from researchers and data was collected from the original *Engaging with re|engage* (Boyd & Charlemagne, 2016) study. Upon receiving archival data, previously discussed statistical analyses are evaluated and conclusions are drawn.

Data Analysis

Variables

Independent variable. The independent variable in this study is the treatment condition, which is the re|engage marriage enrichment intervention. The intervention program is implemented over the course of 16 weeks. Each week a different topic is covered, including brokenness, humility, grace, forgiveness, conflict resolution, sexual intimacy, and expectation, to name a few.

Dependent variable. The dependent variable in this study is the use of spiritual disciplines. For the sake of this study, Christian spiritual disciplines are measured by participant's implementing faith in God, prayer, and forgiveness, as identified in the pre- and post-test surveys.

Statistical Procedures

The current study employs a within-subjects or within-S repeated measure design that observes and analyzes all participants twice (pre- and post-test). According to Warner (2013, p. 953), "...when the same persons are tested under several different conditions, their scores are correlated across conditions". This form of repeated measures analysis addresses the violation of the assumption of independence of observation and provides a smaller error term with a more powerful test for differences among groups (Warner, 2013). To that end, a quantitative methodology and a nonexperimental, one-sample, pretest-posttest within-subjects research design used and a Sign tests were conducted.

Internal and External Validity

Historically, quasi-experimental designs have low internal validity and high external validity. Internal validity issues threaten the assumption of correlation in reference to the re|engage intervention directly effecting the use of spiritual disciplines. Design contamination is an internal validity risk if spouses share with one another how they scored their views on the inclusion of spiritual disciplines and attempt to replicate shared information in the post-test phase of the study. Unforeseen confounding variables that may impact the increased use of spiritual disciplines. Regarding external validity, because the re|engage marriage intervention is conducted in a real-world setting (i.e.: churches and homes) it may have stronger external validity than laboratory studies (Warner, 2013).

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This program evaluation study used a quantitative methodology and a nonexperimental, one-sample, pretest-posttest within-subjects research design to address a single research question: “Does participation in the re|engage marriage enrichment program increase the use of Christian spiritual disciplines including faith in God, prayer, and forgiveness, to improve marital satisfaction of program participants?” Although a single research question was posed, 14 quantitative (rating scale) dependent variables were collected from program participants to address that research question from a variety of perspectives. Ten of these dependent variables were pretest-posttest outcome variables that were collected both before (pretest) and after (posttest) participants completed the re|engage program. These pretest-posttest variables enabled evaluating changes in the characteristics and quality of participants’ marriages from pretest to posttest that could be attributed to the re|engage program. One posttest-only outcome variable was collected only at posttest and provided participants with the opportunity to evaluate the state of their marriage upon completing the program in comparison to before beginning the program. Finally, three reaction measures were collected at posttest which focused on participants’ reactions to and evaluations of the re|engage marriage enrichment program.

This chapter begins with a description of procedures used to clean the data file prior to performing further statistical analyses. The chapter next provides a description of the sample based on six demographic variables that were collected for that purpose. Program outcome and reaction measures are then described in more detail, including a justification for the subsequent use of nonparametric statistical procedures in data analysis. The results of those statistical

analyses for program effectiveness and participant reactions to the program are presented next, and the chapter concludes with a summary and segue to Chapter 5.

Preliminary Data Cleaning

Data were collected from 353 participants in the re|engage marriage enrichment program. Prior to performing any other data analyses, the data were cleaned in the manner recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013). Data cleaning began with the identification and elimination of a small number of cases with excessive amounts of missing data. In the present study, six participants (1.7%) were missing values on half or more of the 10 program outcome variables that were collected at pretest. These cases were eliminated from further analyses. Four additional participants (1.1%) were missing values on half or more of the 14 program outcome variables that were collected at posttest and these cases were also eliminated from further analyses. With these deletions, 343 cases remained in the data file. Some additional scattered missing data remained, but the average amount of missing data across the 343 cases was only a fraction of one item ($M = 0.16$, $SD = 0.70$) and 315 cases (91.8%) showed no missing values on any of the program outcome variables examined in the study.

At the next step in data cleaning, frequency distributions were generated for all variables in an effort to identify out-of-range values, variables with excessive missing values (as opposed to cases with excessive missing values), and variables showing restricted data variability (i.e., variables that were virtually constants). Two out-of-range entries were found on the religious affiliation sample descriptive variable (“18” and “19”). Those entries were grouped into an existing “Other” religious affiliation category. No other out-of-range data entries were identified. No variables were identified that displayed large amounts of missing data. Across all 30 demographic, pretest, and posttest variables examined in the study, the number of missing

values ranged from 0 to 6, with a mean of 2.07 missing values ($SD = 2.16$). Two variables were identified with substantial restricted variance. Those variables asked participants at both pretest and posttest if they were motivated to work on their marriage by their duty to: (a) their spouse, and (b) God. Extremely strong agreement was expressed to both of these items at both pretest and posttest, with pretest agreement so strong that there was virtually no room for increased agreement at posttest on either item. The items were left in the analysis with the knowledge that the ceiling effects would likely prevent observing any noticeable changes from pretest to posttest on those variables.

Sample Descriptive Statistics

With data cleaning complete, sample descriptive statistics were generated on six demographic variables. Participant ages ranged from 19 to 70 years ($M = 38.18$, $SD = 10.41$) and participants reported that their current marriages had a duration between 1 and 44 years ($M = 10.43$, $SD = 9.32$). Other sample descriptors were categorical in nature and are summarized in Table 1. That table shows approximately equal numbers of males (49.3%) and females (50.7%) and a primarily Caucasian (80.2%) sample that was almost entirely Christian in some manner. The sample was exceptionally well educated in comparison to the general population of the United States, with 74.9% of the sample having earned a bachelors degree or higher.

Table 1

Sample Descriptive Variables

Variables	<i>f</i>	%
Gender		
Male	169	49.3%
Female	174	50.7%
Missing	0	0.0%
Total	343	100.0%

Ethnicity		
Caucasian	275	80.2%
Hispanic	29	8.5%
All Other*	37	10.8%
Missing	2	0.6%
Total	343	100.0%
Religious Affiliation		
Christian	199	58.0%
Non-denominational	32	9.3%
Baptist	33	9.6%
All Other*	73	21.3%
Missing	6	1.7%
Total	343	100.0%
Education		
Some College	68	19.8%
College Graduate	157	45.8%
Graduate or Professional	100	29.2%
All Other*	18	5.2%
Missing	0	0.0%
Total	343	100.0%

Note. *Only categories which captured at least 5% of the sample are listed in this table. Categories which captured less than 5% of the sample have been grouped into the “All Other” category. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding error.

Program Outcome and Evaluative Reaction Variables

Pretest and posttest surveys were used in this study to collect a large amount of information pertaining to participants’ characteristics, perceptions of program effectiveness, and evaluative reactions to the re|engage marriage enrichment program. All available demographic items were analyzed to provide the best possible sample description and there were relatively few reaction measures which permitted their full analysis, but logistical considerations demanded that the number of program outcome measures analyzed be limited to a subset of the available measures. Program outcome and reaction measures used in the study are described next.

Pretest-Posttest Outcome Variables

Dependent (or outcome) variables used to assess changes from pretest to posttest included five 6-point Likert rating scales which asked participants to reflect on the strengths and

sources of their motivation to work on their marriages. These five items all began with the same stem: “I feel a responsibility to work on my marriage because I have a duty to...” and then solicited ratings to each of the following five sources of motivation: (a) spouse, (b) family, (c) church, (d) community, and (e) God. After reverse-scoring ratings so that higher ratings would indicate stronger agreement, scale points on these five items were anchored as follows: 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *somewhat disagree*, 4 = *somewhat agree*, 5 = *agree*, and 6 = *strongly agree*.

Two other pretest-posttest rating scale items asked participants to evaluate their and their spouse’s level of marital commitment. These items asked participants to use a 5-point rating scale to: (a) “describe your own level of commitment to your marriage at the present time,” and (b) “describe your spouse’s level of commitment to your marriage at the present time.” These marital commitment items were anchored so that higher ratings reflected greater commitment as follows: 1 = *not at all committed*, 2 = *not very committed*, 3 = *unsure*, 4 = *committed*, and 5 = *highly committed*.

Three additional pretest-posttest items used 6-point rating scales to obtain information about how often each of the following processes were experienced in the marriage: (a) mutual spousal forgiveness, (b) looking to God for strength to work on the marriage, and (c) spouses praying together. After reverse-scoring ratings so that higher ratings would be indicative of greater frequency of experience, these three rating scale items were anchored as follows: 1 = *never*, 2 = *rarely*, 3 = *occasionally*, 4 = *more often than not*, 5 = *most of the time*, and 6 = *all the time*.

Posttest-Only Outcome Variable

A single 5-point rating scale item was used at posttest only to evaluate participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of the re|engage program. This item asked participants to rate "the overall state of your marital relationship now as compared to before you started the program." The rating scale was anchored to allow participants to express both improvement and deterioration in their marital relationship, with higher ratings reflecting greater perceived improvements as follows: 1 = *much worse than before*, 2 = *somewhat worse than before*, 3 = *about the same*, 4 = *somewhat better than before*, 5 = *much better than before*.

Posttest-Only Participant Evaluative Reaction Measures

Three 5-point rating scale items were included in the posttest survey to solicit participants' evaluative reactions to the re|engage program. These items were not concerned directly with the program's effectiveness in enhancing the marital relationship, but rather, with the strengths and weaknesses of the program itself. With these three reaction measures, participants rated the degree to which: (a) the information presented in the re|engage marriage enrichment program was applicable to their marriage, (b) the program met their expectations, and (c) participants would recommend the re|engage program to others. All items were anchored so that higher ratings indicated more positive assessments of the program as follows: 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *no opinion*, 4 = *agree*, and 5 = *strongly agree*.

Scale of Measurement

There is much debate in the literature regarding the scale of measurement that is displayed with rating scale data, and thus, what types of statistical analyses are appropriate for use in analyzing those data (Brown, 2011). The debate is over whether to treat rating scale data as ordinal or interval. The defining feature of ordinal scale data is that equal score differences do

not necessarily reflect equal attribute differences, while in interval data equal score differences do reflect equal attribute differences (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The distinction is an important one because it influences the choice of statistical analyses.

Allen and Yen (1979) and Gadermann, Guhn, and Zumbo (2012) have argued that it is impossible to show that the amount of increase in the attribute being rated is the same from one rating scale point to the next. They concluded, therefore, that rating scale data are ordinal. Diekhoff (1996) and McKelvie (1978) noted that just as it cannot be proven that there are equal attribute changes from one rating scale point to the next, it cannot be proven that these increases are *not* equal and those authors concluded that it is up to the researcher to decide what to believe about the data—whether ordinal or interval. Brown (2011) has taken the position that the data from individual rating scale items should be treated as ordinal, while scores derived by summing or averaging ratings across a series of ratings items can more easily be defended as interval. Brown's advice was followed in this study.

Consequently, all measures used in analyzing program outcomes and participants' reactions to the program were individual rating scale items; there were no multi-item scales and the creation of such scales was obviated by the use of different numbers of rating scale points across different items. Consequently, it was concluded that the program evaluation and reaction measure data collected in this study were ordinal and required analysis through the nonparametric statistical procedures that are suited to ordinal data.

Results

The results of statistical analyses of pretest-posttest outcome variables, the posttest-only outcome variable, and participant evaluative reaction measures are presented in the following sections.

Analysis of Pretest-Posttest Outcome Variables

Sign tests were used to evaluate the statistical significance of pretest to posttest changes on each of the 10 variables used for that purpose. Because of a small amount of missing data, sample sizes vary slightly from one analysis to the next. The sign test is a nonparametric procedure that is designed for use with ordinal scale data (Warner, 2013). The Wilcoxon T test (also known as the Wilcoxon signed-ranks test) is also used with ordinal data and has the advantage of using all of the available data, rather than just data from those cases who showed some change from pretest to posttest (Laerd Statistics, 2015). However, the Wilcoxon T assumes that the distribution of difference scores (calculated as posttest minus pretest) is symmetrical (Sheskin, 2011).

In the present study, with 10 pretest-posttest outcome measures to be evaluated, it was deemed to be unlikely that all of measures would satisfy the assumption of difference score symmetry. For that reason, the sign test, which makes no distributional assumptions, was used in place of the Wilcoxon T. The large sample size available in this study was trusted to mitigate against the somewhat lower statistical power offered by the sign test and it was also reasoned that there is little value in identifying pretest to posttest changes as statistically significant which are not large enough to be significant in any practical sense.

The sign test works by counting and comparing the signs of the difference scores (posttest rating minus pretest rating) across cases in the sample to determine if there is a significant imbalance between the positive and negative signs (Sheskin, 2011). An approximately equal number of positive differences and negative differences indicates that approximately the same number of cases showed increases as decreases from pretest to posttest, which would suggest the intervention was not systematically effective. A significant advantage

in favor of positively signed differences would be consistent with an intervention that increased ratings from pretest to posttest. A significant advantage in favor of negatively signed differences would indicate that the intervention may have brought about a decrease in ratings from pretest to posttest.

Table 2 presents pretest and posttest descriptive statistics on each of the 10 outcome variables that were used in pretest-posttest evaluations of the re|engage marriage enrichment program. That table also provides counts of negatively and positively signed difference scores (and ties) and shows two-tailed significance levels of the exact sign tests. Figures 1 through 10 are graphs which depict the balance of negatively and positively signed difference scores (and ties) for each of the 10 pretest-posttest measures. On most pretest-posttest outcome variables, the majority of participants showed no change in their ratings from pretest to posttest, but all 10 pretest-posttest measures of program effectiveness showed more positively signed changes than negatively signed changes, and eight out of 10 outcome measures showed statistically significant ($p < .05$) improvements from pretest to posttest.

The two outcomes that failed to demonstrate significant changes from pretest to posttest improvements asked participants to judge the strength of their motivation to work on their marriages that derived from duty to: (a) spouse, and (b) God. In both cases, failure to achieve significant improvement from pretest to posttest was attributed to a ceiling effect at pretest; there was simply very little room left for improvement moving to posttest.

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics at Pretest and Posttest on Pretest-Posttest Program Evaluation Variables**With Results of Sign Tests of Significance*

Program Outcome Variable	N	Pretest		Posttest		Differences ¹			Sign Tests ²	
		M	SD	M	SD	Negative	Positive	Ties	z	p
I feel a responsibility to work on my marriage as I have a duty to... ³										
my spouse	340	5.79	0.55	5.85	0.46	25(7.4%)	40(11.8%)	275(80.9%)	1.74	.082
my family	338	5.64	0.66	5.75	0.66	28(8.3%)	48(14.2%)	262(77.5%)	2.18	.029
my church	334	5.28	1.07	5.45	0.93	49(14.7%)	86(25.7%)	189(59.6%)	3.10	.002
my community	334	5.12	1.09	5.39	0.94	44(13.2%)	103(30.8%)	187(56.0%)	4.78	<.001
God (higher power)	341	5.90	0.33	5.94	0.32	12(3.5%)	23(3.8%)	306(89.7%)	1.69	.091
How would you describe your ⁴ own level of commitment to your marriage?	343	4.60	0.63	4.80	0.45	17(5.0%)	75(21.9%)	251(73.2%)	5.94	<.001
How would you describe your ⁴ spouses' level of commitment to your marriage?	342	4.39	0.85	4.61	0.78	43(12.6%)	99(28.9%)	200(58.5%)	4.62	<.001
My spouse and I are able to ³ forgive one another.	341	4.41	1.21	5.08	1.03	31(9.1%)	179(52.5%)	131(38.4%)	10.14	<.001
I look to God (higher power) ³ for the strength I need to work on my marriage.	341	4.80	1.10	5.24	0.89	31(9.1%)	134(39.3%)	176(51.6%)	7.94	<.001
My spouse and I pray together. ³	340	3.30	1.55	3.70	1.49	60(17.6%)	137(40.3%)	143(42.1%)	5.42	<.001

Note. Percentages of negative differences, positive differences, and ties do not always sum to 100% due to rounding error. ¹Differences were calculated as posttest minus pretest ratings. ²Significance levels are all two-tail. ³Ratings could range from 1-6. ⁴Ratings could range from 1-5.

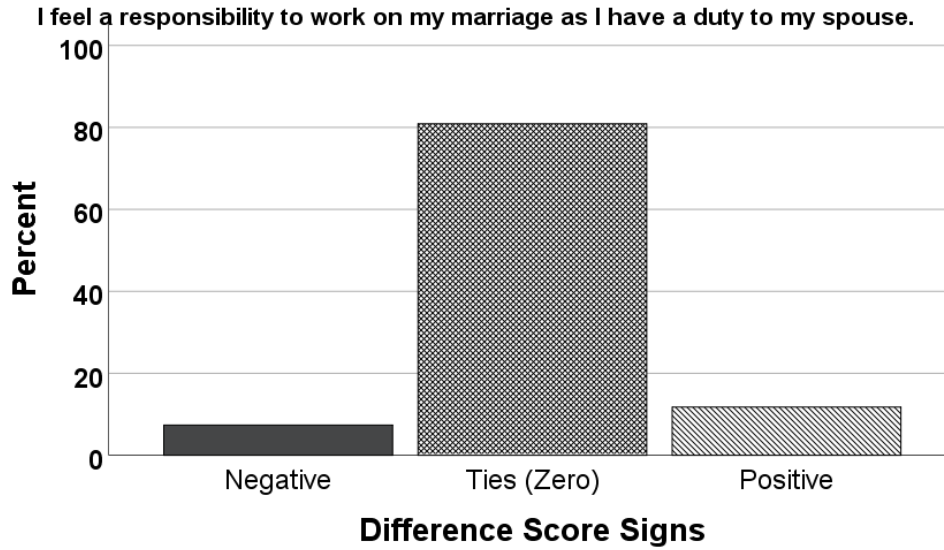


Figure 1. Balance of negatively and positively signed difference scores (and ties) based on pretest and posttest ratings to the outcome, "I have a responsibility to work on my marriage as I have a duty to my spouse."

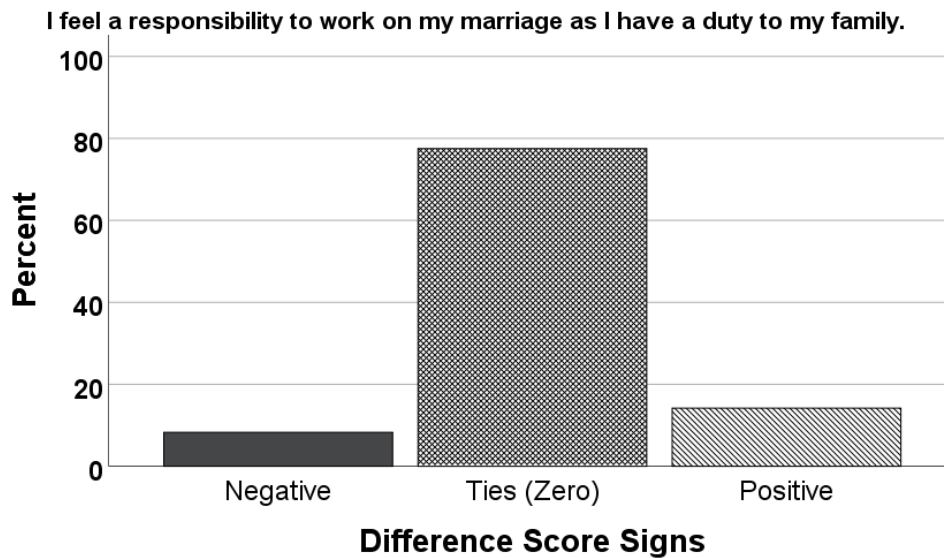


Figure 2. Balance of negatively and positively signed difference scores (and ties) based on pretest and posttest ratings to the outcome, "I have a responsibility to work on my marriage as I have a duty to my family."

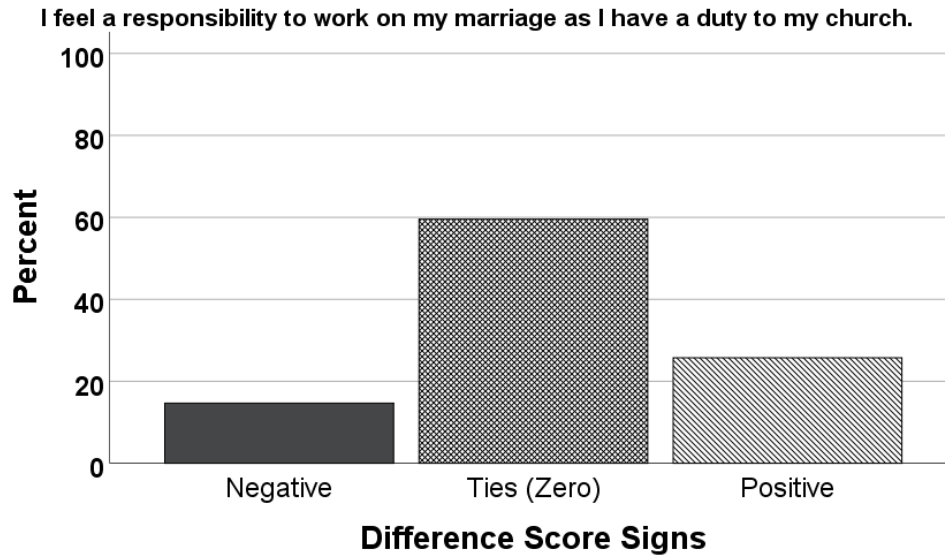


Figure 3. Balance of negatively and positively signed difference scores (and ties) based on pretest and posttest ratings for the outcome, “I have a responsibility to work on my marriage as I have a duty to my church.”



Figure 4. Balance of negatively and positively signed difference scores (and ties) based on pretest and posttest ratings on the outcome, “I have a responsibility to work on my marriage as I have a duty to my community.”



Figure 5. Balance of negatively and positively signed difference scores (and ties) based on pretest and posttest ratings on the outcome, “I have a responsibility to work on my marriage as I have a duty to my God (higher power).”

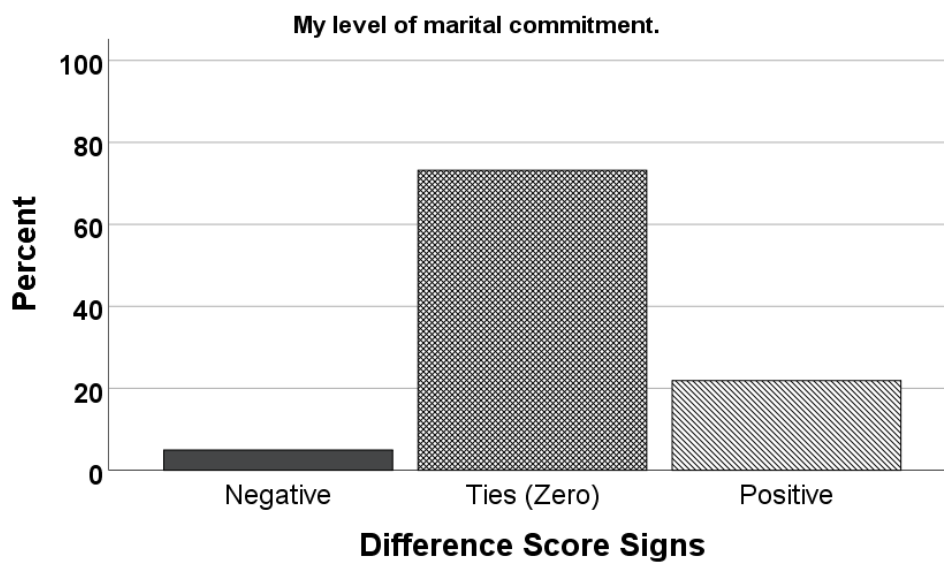


Figure 6. Balance of negatively and positively signed difference scores (and ties) based on pretest and posttest ratings of “My own level of marital commitment.”

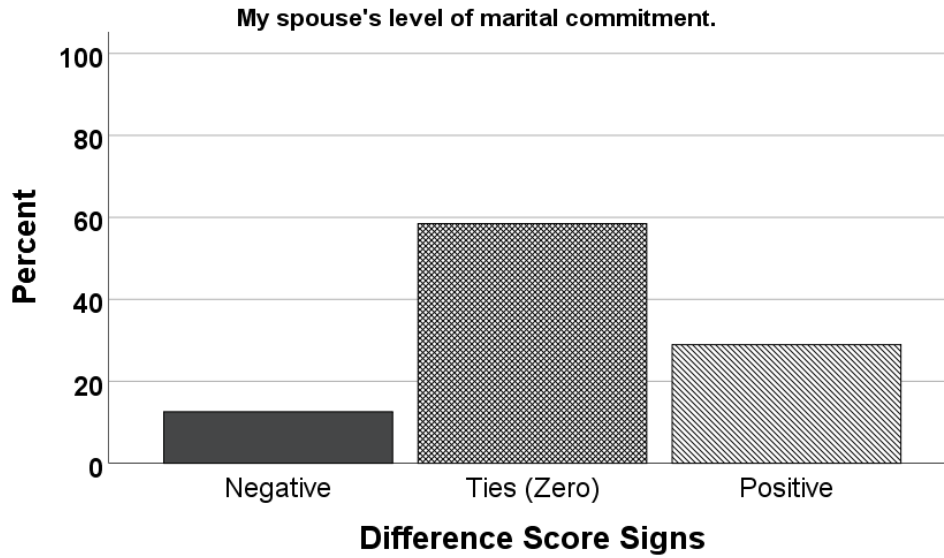


Figure 7. Balance of negatively and positively signed difference scores (and ties) based on pretest and posttest ratings of “My spouse’s level of marital commitment.”

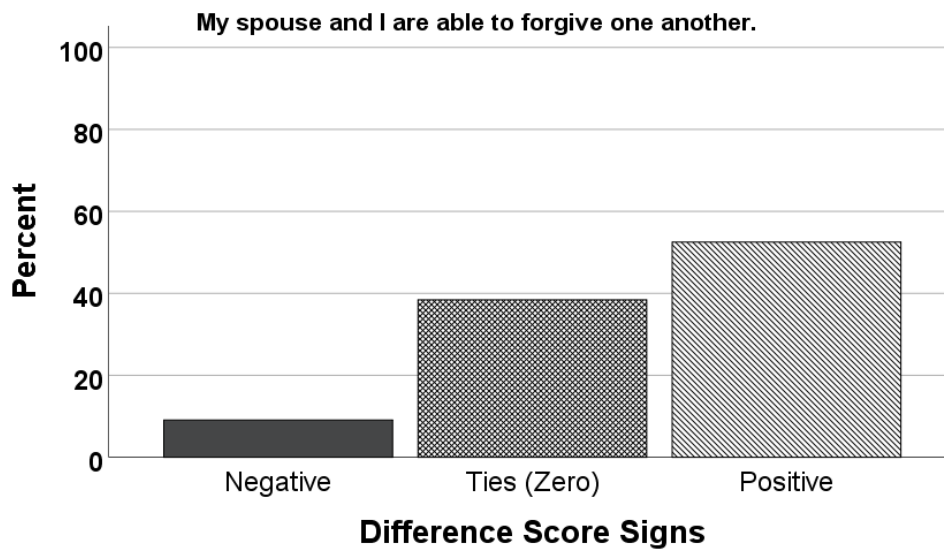


Figure 8. Balance of negatively and positively signed difference scores (and ties) based on pretest and posttest ratings of how often “My spouse and I are able to forgive one another.”

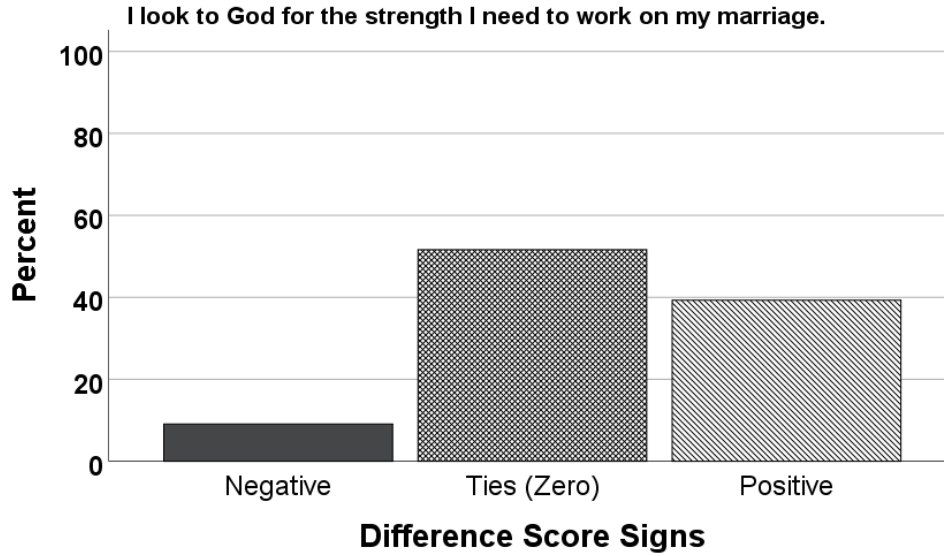


Figure 9. Balance of negatively and positively signed difference scores (and ties) based on pretest and posttest ratings of how often “I look to God for the strength I need to work on my marriage.”

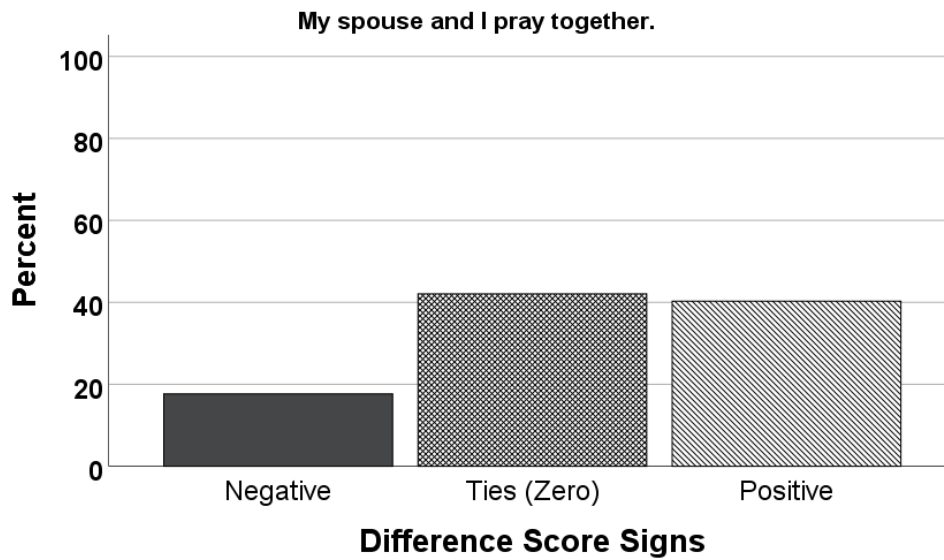


Figure 10. Balance of negatively and positively signed difference scores (and ties) based on pretest and posttest ratings of how often “My spouse and I pray together.”

Analysis of Posttest-Only Outcome Variable

The single posttest-only outcome variable used in evaluating the re|engage marriage enrichment program asked participants to judge the state of their marriage at program's end compared to where it was before beginning the program. Ratings of 1-2 indicated declines in quality, a rating a 3 indicated no change, and ratings of 4-5 indicated improvements. The analysis of data collected using this single item consisted of tabular (Table 3) and graphic (Figure 11) summaries of participants' ratings, sample descriptive statistics, and the calculation of a 95% confidence interval to estimate the population mean. That confidence interval is interpreted as a range of values within which one can be 95% confident of finding the mean rating of the hypothetical population of individuals represented by the sample that was examined in this study. The vast majority of participants (92.1%) reported some level of improvement in the overall state of their marital relationship by the end of the program, 4.7% reported no change, and only 2.3% indicated that their marriage was in a worse state following the program. The mean rating on this 5-point item was 4.47 ($SD = 0.73$), with 95% CI [4.39, 4.55].

Table 3

Responses to the Posttest-Only Variable, “When you think of the overall state of marital relationship now as compared to before you started the program, would you say that your marriage is....” (N = 343)

Rating	<i>f</i>	%
1 Much worse than before	3	0.9%
2 Somewhat worse than before	5	1.5%
3 About the same	16	4.7%
4 Somewhat better than before	121	35.6%
5 Much better than before	195	57.4%

Note. Percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding error.

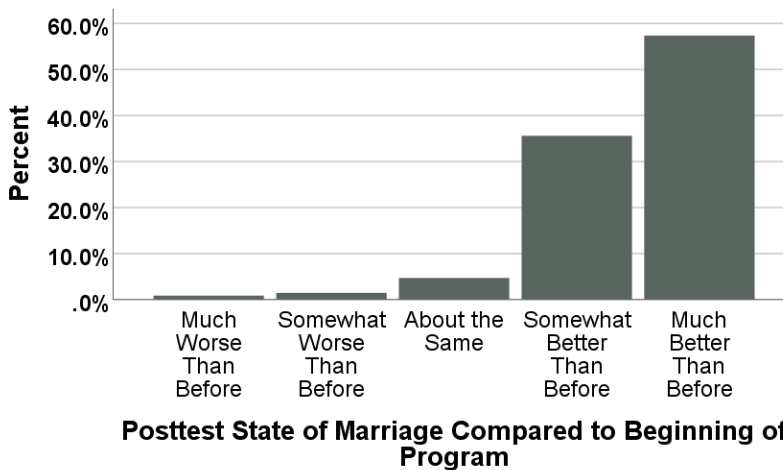


Figure 11. Responses to the posttest-only outcome variable, “When you think of the overall state of your marital relationship now as compared to before the started the program, would you say that your marriage is...” (N = 343).

Posttest-Only Evaluation Measures

The analysis of three posttest-only reaction measures used tabular and graphic summaries of item ratings, sample descriptive statistics, and 95% confidence intervals to estimate population means. On all measures, ratings of 1-2 were negative, 3 was neutral, and ratings of 4-5 were positive.

Applicability of information. Table 4 and Figure 12 summarize ratings to a reaction rating scale item which asked about the applicability of the information presented. The mean rating to the applicability question was 4.74 ($SD = 0.63$), 95% CI [4.67, 4.80].

Table 4

Responses to Posttest-Only Reaction Variable, “The information presented in re|engage was applicable to my marriage” (N = 342)

Rating	<i>f</i>	%
1 Strongly Disagree	5	1.5%
2 Disagree	1	0.3%
3 No Opinion	1	0.3%
4 Agree	65	19.0%
5 Strongly Agree	270	78.7%

Note. Percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding error.

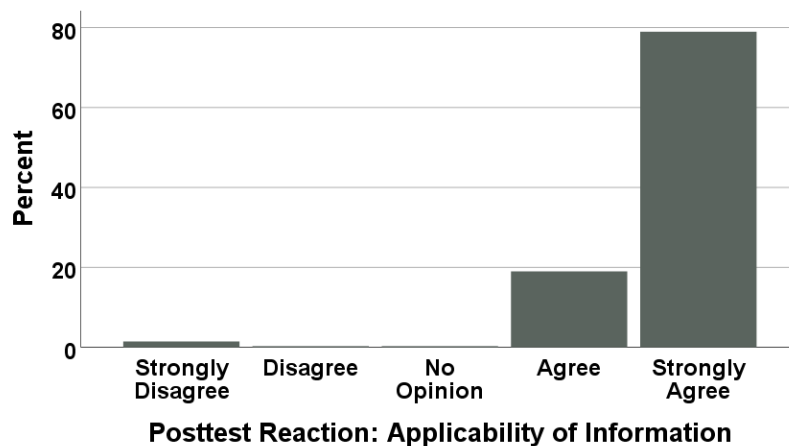


Figure 12. Responses to the posttest-only evaluation variable, “The information presented in re|engage was applicable to my marriage ($N = 342$).

Met expectations. Table 5 and Figure 13 summarize ratings to a evaluation rating scale item which asked if the re|engage program met participants’ expectations. The mean rating given to this item was 4.43 ($SD = 0.83$), 95% CI [4.34, 4.52].

Table 5

Responses to Posttest-Only Evaluation Variable, “re|engage met my expectations” ($N = 341$)

Rating	<i>f</i>	%
1 Strongly Disagree	8	2.3%
2 Disagree	5	1.5%
3 No Opinion	16	4.7%
4 Agree	119	34.9%
5 Strongly Agree	193	56.6%

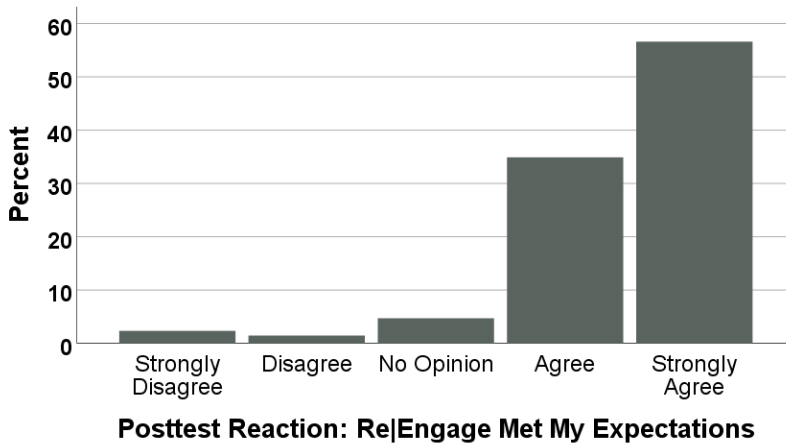


Figure 13. Responses to posttest-only reaction variable, “re|engage met my expectations ($N = 341$).

Would recommend to others. Table 6 and Figure 14 summarize ratings to the third reaction rating scale item which asked if participants would recommend the re|engage program to others. The mean rating to this item was 4.80 ($SD = 0.55$), 95% CI [4.74, 4.86].

Table 6

Responses to Posttest-Only Reaction Variable, “I would recommend re|engage to others” ($N = 337$)

Rating	f	%
1 Strongly Disagree	5	1.5%
2 Disagree	0	0.0%
3 No Opinion	0	0.0%
4 Agree	53	15.7%
5 Strongly Agree	279	82.8%

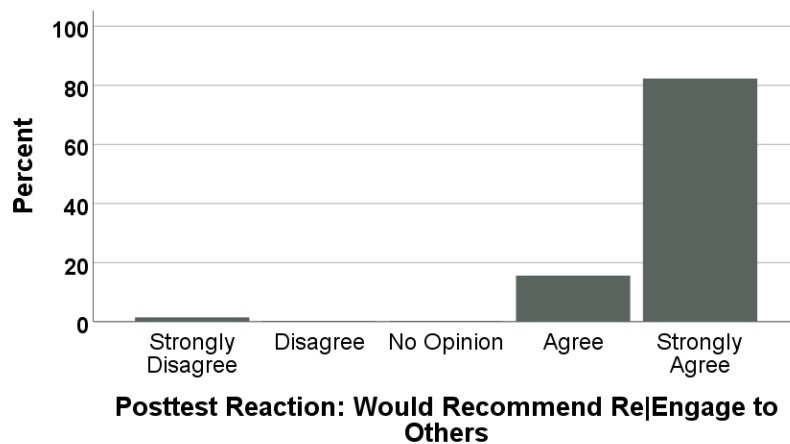


Figure 14. Responses to posttest-only reaction variable, “I would recommend re|engage to others” ($N = 337$).

Summary

This study used a nonexperimental, one-sample, pretest-posttest within-subjects research design to evaluate effectiveness and participants’ evaluative reactions to the re|engage marriage enrichment program. Eleven individual rating scale items served as ordinal scale dependent variables in evaluating program effectiveness. Ten of these variables were collected both before the program began (pretest) and again at the end of the program (posttest) and were used to evaluate changes from pretest to posttest that reflected on the program’s efficacy. The eleventh item was collected at posttest only and measured participants’ perceptions of the degree to which the state of their marriage had improved from the beginning to end of the program. Three ordinal scale rating scale items served as reaction measures to gauge participants’ evaluative reactions to the program and were collected at posttest only. Finally, six demographic variables were collected for the purpose of sample description.

Data were collected from 353 participants in the re|engage program, but data from 10 participants were deleted that did not pass the data cleaning process. The remaining 343 participants were about evenly split between males (49.3%) and females (50.7%) and ranged in

age from 19-70 years ($M = 38.18$, $SD = 10.41$). Participants were mostly Caucasian (80.2%), well educated, and were almost exclusively Christian.

Sign tests were used in evaluating the significance of changes on the 10 pretest-posttest outcome variables. Although most participants showed no changes in their ratings from pretest to posttest on most outcome variables, a strong majority of individuals who did change from pretest to posttest showed changes that reflected positively on the effectiveness of the re|engage program. Statistically significant ($p < .05$) improvements were seen on eight of the pretest-posttest outcome variables, and ceiling effects at pretest were identified as responsible for the failure of the other two variables to show significant improvements from pretest to posttest (i.e., ratings were so high at pretest that there was no room for improvement at posttest). Upon completion of the re|engage program, the vast majority of participants (92.1%) indicated that the overall state of their marriage relationship was either somewhat better than before or much better than before, and the average level of that improvement, on a 1-5 scale, was quite strong, $M = 4.47$ ($SD = 0.73$), 95% CI [4.39, 4.55].

With only a few exceptions, participants expressed strongly positive sentiments toward the re|engage program. When asked if the information presented in the program was applicable to their marriages, over 97% agreed or strongly agreed. When asked if the program met their expectations, over 91% agreed or strongly agreed. When asked if they would recommend the program to others, over 98% of participants agreed or strongly agreed.

Chapter 4 has presented findings of the study which bear on the effectiveness of the re|engage marriage enrichment program and participants' evaluative reactions to that program. Chapter 5 will interpret those results and consider their implications and applications. Chapter 5 will also discuss the strengths and limitations of the study, including limits on the kinds of

conclusions that can be drawn from nonexperimental research, especially in the absence of control or comparison groups. In addition to looking at these limits on the study's internal validity, Chapter 5 will consider limits on the study's external validity, i.e., generalizability of the findings. Recommendations for future research will be offered to address study limitations and to explore questions that were left unanswered by this study.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

The current chapter offers discussion regarding the purpose of the study and examination of the study results as pertains directly to the research question. Implications of the current re|engage study for marriage enrichment programs, in general, and for the Christian faith will be addressed through the lens of a Christian worldview. Additionally, limitations of the study, including threats to internal and external validity will be identified and assessed. Finally, recommendations for future research will be provided to identify additional areas of research that may expand understanding of how the re|engage marriage enrichment program impacts its participants.

Discussion

The purpose of the current study addressed the gap in the research by assessing the effects of the re|engage marriage enrichment program on the use of Christian spiritual disciplines, including faith in God, prayer, and forgiveness, to improve the marital satisfaction of program participants. The research question posed by the researcher asked, “Does the re|engage marriage enrichment program impact the use of spiritual disciplines of faith, prayer, and forgiveness of participants within the Christian church”? The results of the present study suggest that the re|engage marriage enrichment program does affect the implementation and incorporation of faith, prayer, and forgiveness of re|engage participants. Although the extent of empirical research about the re|engage program is limited to a single study that outlines its effectiveness at improving marital satisfaction, existing research does provide some empirically supported information about how spiritual disciplines and marriage enrichment programs, in general, interface to improve marriage relationships.

According to H. Norman Wright (1979, p. 8). “A Christian marriage is a commitment involving three individuals – husband, wife, and Jesus Christ”. This perspective supports the assumption of biblical marriage as a triune relationship between man, woman, and God. Such a covenantal commitment utilizes spiritual disciplines as the cornerstones of successful marriages by utilizing the biblical teachings of faith, prayer, and forgiveness as the binding agents that both strengthen and support the horizontal covenantal relationship between husband and wife and the vertical covenantal relationship between the married couple and God. Likewise, Beach et al. (2011) contends that marriage enrichment programs that place emphasis on faith expressed through relationship with and dependence on God and prayer predict increased relationship quality and improved marital outcomes.

According to the present study, change attributable to the re|engage program, specifically regarding forgiveness, faith as expressed through dependence upon God, and prayer, finds that 52% of participants reported improvement in the area of forgiving a spouse, 39.3% of participants reported increased faith or dependence on God, and 40.3% of participants reported that praying with a spouse increased. Additionally, participants and their spouse’s perceived commitment to the relationship also increased after participation in the re|engage marriage enrichment program. Similarly, Lambert, Finchman, LaValle, and Brantley (2012) found that couples who pray for each other report increased relational trust and unity. In fact, the researchers assert that spousal prayer is predictive of relationship trust ratings. Correspondingly, Finchman and May (2017) researched the connection between prayer in relationships and relationship evaluation. They note that increased religious activities positively correspond to higher marital satisfaction, decreased occurrences of infidelity, and increased ability to negotiate conflict.

Spiritual – Relational Theories

Finchman and May (2017) discuss two theoretical frameworks that address the importance of spiritual factors within the marriage relationship. The relational spiritual framework developed by Mahoney (2010) contends that individuals rely on their spiritual connection with a higher being to determine the direction of their relationships and how to address obstacles. Meanwhile, Finch and Beach (2014) provide partner-focused petitionary prayer as a goal theory perspective on prayer which emphasizes explicit focus on the needs of the partner. In addition, the conceptual framework of a goal theory analysis of prayer (Beach, Finchman, Hurt, McNair, & Stanley, 2008) that expounds upon the implementation of prayer in a relationship as likened to a skills-based intervention that conceptualizes prayer as an active rest from conflict, self-soothing technique, or a form of social support provided through direct connection with God. Although the reengage program does not intentionally subscribe to either of these theoretical models, it does correspond to the underlying assumption that engaging in spiritual practices such as faith in God and prayer serve as to positively influence the marriage relationship.

Experiential Learning Theory

When discussed within the context of marriage enrichment, skills training as outlined by Kolb (1984, p.38) states, “Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience”. As such, experiential learning is rooted in personal experience and provides an opportunity for learners to apply their knowledge through unique experiences. Furthermore, Kolb’s experiential learning model conceptualizes learning as a continual process that requires adaptation and conflict resolution, both of which are also essential to the growth and stability of healthy relationships. Akella (2010) posits that reflection of past experiences is

essential to the learning process and prevents learners from needlessly duplicating the same mistakes. Reflection involves cognitive processing that allows the learner to clarify, comprehend, and make connections that are essential for social relationships. As a result, reflection can be a valuable tool in marriage when used after a catalyst event and prior to initiating a course of action or response.

Kolb and Kolb (2013) contend that experiential learning happens best in learning spaces that facilitate growth producing experiences, evidenced by an experiential life space for the learners, not simply a single experience related to a specific subject. Similarly, the learning space should be a safe place of support that encourages the expression of differences. Also, spontaneous and genuine conversation ignites the educational process by prompting interaction and reflection. Additionally, learning that helps people to focus on their own unique experiences, beliefs, desires, and goals helps them to focus on inside-out learning, creating intrinsic motivation that fuels education from within. Finally, empowering learners to exercise autonomy and responsibility for their learning experience, allows them to actively engage in the therapeutic process instead of passively receiving information. To that end, the re|engage marriage program provides marriage enrichment through a skills-based training model that applies experiential learning techniques and experiences that aim to improve marital functioning.

Implications

The implications of this study may help guide the future use and implementation of church-developed marriage enrichment programs seeking to support and maintain the foundational structure of the family, which is the building block of community, and to ensure the overall health of the church body through the implementation of spiritual disciplines. Specifically concerning ministry, pastoral counseling, and Christian counseling, the current study

adds to the existing body of research by two means: 1) this study examines the effectiveness of the re|engage program, as a church-developed curriculum, to provide effective marriage enrichment that may also increase the spiritual health of the church body; and 2) this study assesses the spiritual aspects that contribute to the overall improvement of marital satisfaction, to include the implementation of actual faith practices as assessed by the program's success in increasing both the horizontal and vertical covenantal relationships that Christianity deems necessary and distinctive about Christian marriage.

In particular, this study may impact ministry related pastoral counselors by providing independent empirical evidence that examines the practical effects the re|engage curriculum has on, not only the improvement of marriages, but on the participant's utilization of foundational Christian practices. These practices are accomplished by the re|engage program when participants are encouraged, through experiential learning and scripture, to examine their individual contributions to the state of the marriage and prompted to examine marital problems and solutions through a biblical worldview. Additionally, participants process their marital experiences within the context of small groups, expanding the level of horizontal support while increasing the depth of vertical relationship with Christ. All of which may prove to support the assertion that the re|engage program helps to foster healthy communities through the use of faith-based practices.

Finally, this study offers significant research that may support Watermark Community Church's (2019) claims that the re|engage program provides opportunities to make disciples through the integration of the Christian gospel and marriage enrichment. It remains to be seen, though, if Watermark's claims of creating a synergistic effect on student ministries by encouraging healthier families through focus on creating healthier marriages can be validated.

Limitations

External Validity

Limits of the present study include the use of archival data from the sole research study of the re|engage marriage enrichment program. The original study (Boyd & Charlemagne, 2016), developed to assess the effects of the re|engage program on marital satisfaction, is limited in its generalizability for several reasons. First, the original study by Boyd and Charlemagne (2016) was conducted in a single location, Watermark Community Church in Dallas, Texas; therefore, the results are representative of Watermark's parishioners, not necessarily the congregants of the nearly 400 churches, both nationally and internationally, who now use the re|engage program. Correspondingly, the ethnicity of the original sample reflects primarily Caucasian participants and may not be representative of more diverse populations. Similarly, most of the original sample were church goers who already attended church services, to varying degrees, prior to attending re|engage. In light of this fact, response from non-church goers or participants who do not regularly attend church services may differ.

Internal Validity

Limitations also exist with regards to the kinds of conclusions that can be draw from nonexperimental research. According to Warner (2013, p. 19), "The problem with nonexperimental research design is that any potential independent variable is usually correlated or confounded with other possible independent variables; therefore, it is not possible to determine which, if any, of the variables have a causal impact on the dependent variable." In that regard, correlations can be identified, although causal relationships cannot easily be inferred. In the case of the present study, the possibility of confounding variables must be acknowledged. One such possibility could be the participant's knowledge of the research study being conducted

at the church location where they attended church services or a knowledge that the research study would reflect on the body of Christ as a whole. This knowledge may have created pretest / posttest ratings that reflect an idealistic view of the state of the marriage and reflect positively for the body of Christ. Additionally, other factors such as seeking supplementary marriage help outside of the re|engage program, including increased social support, self-help books, or increased engagement in non-training related marriage events may present confounding variables.

Recommendations for Future Research

Additional research regarding the re|engage marriage enrichment program should include a variety of re|engage locations both nationally and internationally to further assess the impact of the re|engage program on the implementation of faith practices across diverse populations. Further research might assess the impact of the re|engage program through the lens of different theoretical perspectives. Finally, research that assesses the generalizability of the re|engage program across religious lines, including those couples who hold no religious beliefs, would be beneficial to expand the knowledge base of the total impact of the program.

References

- Akella, D. (2010). Learning together: Kolb's experiential theory and its application. *Journal of Management & Organization, 16*(1), 100-112.
- Allen, M. J., & Yen, W. M. (1979). *Introduction to measurement theory*. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Alqashan, H. (2008). Enrichment training program and successful marriage in kuwaiti couples. *Digest of Middle East Studies 17*(2), 1-16. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.19493606.2008.tb00234.x>
- Antle, B. F., Karam, E., Christensen, D. N., Barbee, A. P., & Sar, B. K. (2011). An evaluation of healthy relationship education to reduce intimate partner violence. *Journal of Family Social Work, 14*(5), 387-406. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10522158.2011.616482>
- Barton, A. W., Futris, T. G., & Bradley, R. C. (2012). Changes following premarital education for couples with differing degrees of future marital risk. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 40*(2), 165-177. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/jmft.12006>
- Beach, S. R., Hurt, T. R., Fincham, F. D., Franklin, K. J., McNair, L. M., & Stanley, S. M. (2011). Enhancing marital enrichment through spirituality: Efficacy data for prayer focused relationship enhancement. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality, 3*(3), 201.
- Boyd, A., & Charlemagne, K. (2016). Engaging with re|engage: A study of Watermark Community Church's 16-session marriage intervention program - re|engage. Retrieved from <http://marriagehelp.org/am-site/media/hope-for-the-hurting-home-research.pdf>
- Bradford, A. B., Adler-Baeder, F., Ketring, S. A., Bub, K. L., Pittman, J. F., & Smith, T. A. (2014). Relationship quality and depressed affect among a diverse sample of relationally unstable relationship education participants. *Family Relations, 63*(2), 219-231. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12064>

- Brown, J. D. (2011). Likert items and scales of measurement? *SHIKEN: JALT Testing & Evaluation SIG Newsletter*, 15, 10-14.
- Childs, G. (2009). Marriage preparation marriage education programs: An evaluation of essential elements of quality. (Unpublished master's thesis). Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.
- Cole, C.L., & Cole, A.L. (1999). Marriage enrichment prevention really works: Interpersonal competence training to maintain and enhance relationships. *Family Relations* 48(3), 273-275. doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/585637>
- Cottle, N. R., Thompson, A. K., Burr, B. K., & Hubler, D. S. (2014). The effectiveness of relationship education in the college classroom. *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy*, 13(4), 267-283. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332691.2014.956357>
- DeMaria, R. M. (2005). Distressed couples and marriage education. *Family Relations*, 54(2), 242-253. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0197-6664.2005.00019.x>
- Diekhoff, G. M. (1996). *Basic statistics for the social and behavioral sciences*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Doherty, W.J., & Anderson, J.R. (2004). Community marriage initiatives. Retrieved from <http://krex.kstate.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/2097/16490/AndersonFamRelations200?sequence=1>. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0197-6664.2004.00050.x>
- Duncan, S. F., Box, G., & Silliman, B. (1996). Racial and gender effects on perceptions of marriage preparation programs among college-educated young adults. *Family Relations*, 45, 80-90. doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/584773>
- Fincham, F. D., & May, R. W. (2017). Prayer and forgiveness: Beyond relationship quality and extension to marriage. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 31(6), 734.

- Funk, J.L., & Rogge, R.D. (2007). Testing the Ruler with Item Response Theory: Increasing Precision of Measurement for Relationship Satisfaction with the Couples Satisfaction Index. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 21, 572-583.
Doi:<https://doi.org/10.1037/08933200.21.4.572>
- Futris, T.G., Barton, A.W., Aholou, T.M., & Seponski, D.M. (2011). The impact of prepare on engaged couples: Variations by delivery format. *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy*, 10, 69-86. Retrieved from https://www.prepareenrich.com/pe/pdf/research/2011/futris_prepare_outcome_study.pdf.
Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332691.2011.539175>
- Gadermann, A. M., Guhn, M., & Zumbo, B. D. (2012). Estimating ordinal reliability for Likert-type and ordinal item response data: A conceptual, empirical, and practical guide. *Practical Assessment, Research and Evaluation*, 17(3), 1-13.
- Graham, J.M., Diebels, K.J., & Barnow, Z.B. (2011). The reliability of relationship satisfaction: A reliability generalization meta-analysis. *Journal of Family Psychology* 25 (1), 39-48.
Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022441>
- Halford, W.K., & Bodenmann, G. (2013). Effects of relationship education on maintenance of couple relationship satisfaction. *Clinical Psychology Review* 33, 512-525. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2013.02.001>
- Halford, W. K., Pepping, C. A., Hilpert, P., Bodenmann, G., Wilson, K. L., Busby, D., & Holman, T. (2015). Immediate effect of couple relationship education on low-satisfaction couples: A randomized clinical trial plus an uncontrolled trial replication. *Behavior therapy*, 46(3), 409-421.
- Hawkins, A. J., Blanchard, V. L., Baldwin, S. A., & Fawcett, E. B. (2008). Does marriage and

- relationship education work? A meta-analytic study. *Journal of consulting and clinical psychology*, 76(5), 723. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0012584>
- Holt, L.J., Mattanah, J.F., Schmidt, C.K., Daks, J.S., Brophy, E.N., Minnaar, P.Y. & Roer, K. (2016). Effects of relationship education on emerging adults' relationship beliefs and behaviors. *Personal Relationships* 23, 723-741. DOI: 10.1111/per.12147
- Hook, J. N., & Worthington Jr, E. L. (2009). Christian couple counseling by professional, pastoral, and lay counselors from a Protestant perspective: A nationwide survey. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 37(2), 169-183. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01926180802151760>
- Hook, J. N., Worthington Jr, E. L., Ripley, J. S., & Davis, D. E. (2011). Christian Approaches for Helping Couples: Review of Empirical Research and Recommendations for Clinicians. *Journal of Psychology & Christianity*, 30(3).
- Hook, J.N., Worthington, E.L., Hook, J.P. Miller, B.T., & Davis, D.E. (2011). Marriage matters: A description and initial examination of a church-based marital education program. *Pastoral Psychology* 60,869-875. doi: 10.1007/s11089-011-0398-8
- Jakubowski, S. F., Milne, E. P., Brunner, H., & Miller, R. B. (2004). A review of empirically supported marital enrichment programs. *Family relations*, 53(5), 528-536. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0197-6664.2004.00062.x>
- Johnson, R. (2015). Effectiveness of prepare-enrich group program for married couples. Retrieved from https://www.prepareenrich.com/pe/pdf/research/group_effectiveness_johnson.pdf
- Kline, G.H., Stanley, S.M., Markman, H.J., Olmos-Gallo, P.A., St. Peters, M., Whitton, S.W., & Prado, L.M. (2004). Timing is everything: Pre-engagement cohabitation and increased

- risk for poor marital outcomes. *Journal of Family Psychology* 18(2), 311-318. doi:
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.18.2.311>
- Kolb, A.Y., & Kolb, D.A. (2013). *The kolb learning style inventory 4.0: A comprehensive guide to the theory, psychometrics, research on validity and educational applications*.
Retrieved from
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/David_Kolb/publication/303446688_The_Kolb_Learning_Style_Inventory_40_Guide_to_Theory_Psychometrics_Research_Applications/links/57437c4c08ae9f741b3a1a58/The-Kolb-Learning-Style-Inventory-40-Guide-to-Theory-Psychometrics-Research-Applications.pdf
- Laerd Statistics (2015). Sign test using SPSS Statistics. *Statistical tutorials and software guides*.
Retrieved from <https://statistics.laerd.com/>
- Lambert, N. M., Fincham, F. D., LaVallee, D. C., & Brantley, C. W. (2012). Praying together and staying together: Couple prayer and trust. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 4(1), 1.
- Markman, H. J., & Rhoades, G. K. (2012). Relationship Education Research: Current Status and Future Directions. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 38(1), 169–200. Doi:
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-0606.2011.00247.x>
- Markman, H.J., Whitton, S.W. Kline, G.H., Stanley, S.M., Thompson, H., St. Peters, M....Cordova, A. (2004). Use of an empirically based marriage education program by religious organizations: Results of a dissemination trial. *Family Relations* 53(5), 504-512.
doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0197-6664.2004.00059.x>
- McKelvie, S. J. (1978). Graphic rating scales - how many categories? *British Journal of Psychology*, 69(2), 185–202.

- Navidian, A., & Bahari, F. (2014). The impact of mixed, hope and forgiveness-focused marital counselling on interpersonal cognitive distortions of couples filing for divorce. *Journal of psychiatric and mental health nursing*, 21(7), 658-666. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/jpm.12058>
- Nelson, J. A., Kirk, A. M., Ane, P., & Serres, S. A. (2011). Religious and spiritual values and moral commitment in marriage: Untapped resources in couples counseling?. *Counseling and Values*, 55(2), 228-246. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-007X.2011.tb00034.x>
- Nunnally, J. C., & Bernstein, I. H. (1994). *Psychometric theory*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Polanchek, S. (2014). Effects of individual-oriented relationship education on university students' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=11820&context=etd>
- Ripley, J. S., Worthington Jr, E. L., & Berry, J. W. (2001). The effects of religiosity on preferences and expectations for marital therapy among married Christians. *American Journal of Family Therapy*, 29(1), 39-58. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01926180126136>
- Sheskin, D. J. (2011). *Handbook of parametric and nonparametric statistical procedures* (5th ed.). Boca Raton, FL: Chapman & Hall/CRC Press.
- Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2013). *Using multivariate statistics* (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Wade, N. G., Worthington Jr, E. L., & Vogel, D. L. (2007). Effectiveness of religiously tailored interventions in Christian therapy. *Psychotherapy Research*, 17(1), 91-105. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10503300500497388>
- Wagner, T., & McGee, J. (2016). *Re|engage*. Dallas, TX: Watermark Community Church.
- Walker, D. F., Gorsuch, R. L., & Tan, S. Y. (2004). Therapists' integration of religion and

- spirituality in counseling: A meta-analysis. *Counseling and Values*, 49(1), 69-80. doi:
<https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-007X.2004.tb00254.x>
- Warner, R.M. (2013). *Applied statistics: From bivariate through multivariate techniques*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Watermark Community Church. (2018). Re|engage: What is it? Retrieved from
<http://marriagehelp.org/what-is-it/what-is-reengage/>
- Worthington Jr, E. L., Berry, J. W., Hook, J. N., Davis, D. E., Scherer, M., Griffin, B. J., & Sharp, C. B. (2015). Forgiveness-reconciliation and communication-conflict-resolution interventions versus retested controls in early married couples. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 62(1), 14. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000045>
- Worthington Jr, E. L., Hight, T. L., Ripley, J. S., Perrone, K. M., Kurusu, T. A., & Jones, D. R. (1997). Strategic hope-focused relationship-enrichment counseling with individual couples. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 44(4), 381. Doi:
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.44.4.381>
- Worthington, E. L., Jr., Wade, N. G., Hight, T. L., Ripley, J. S., McCullough, M. E., Berry, J. W., Schmitt, M. M., Berry, J. T., Bursley, K. H., & O'Conner, L. (2003). The religious commitment inventory-10: Development, refinement, and validation of a brief scale for research and counseling. *Journal of Counseling Psychology* (50) 84-96. Doi:
<https://doi.org/10.1037/t00512-000>
- Wright, H. N. (1979). *The pillars of marriage*. Regal Books.

Appendix A: Pretest and Posttest Surveys

Removed to comply with copyright. Survey can be accessed online via the following link:
<http://marriagehelp.org/am-site/media/hope-for-the-hurting-home-research.pdf>