

ABSTRACT

IMPACT OF A CULTURALLY SENSITIVE, COMPETENCE-  
BASED MARITAL EDUCATION PROGRAM ON  
MARITAL SATISFACTION, COMMITMENT  
AND RELATIONSHIP COMPETENCE IN  
THE DUTCH CARIBBEAN

by

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## ABSTRACT

University of Morelos

Department of Psychology

Title: IMPACT OF A CULTURALLY SENSITIVE, COMPETENCE-BASED MARITAL EDUCATION PROGRAM ON MARITAL SATISFACTION, COMMITMENT AND RELATIONSHIP COMPETENCE IN THE DUTCH CARIBBEAN

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### Problem and Aim of the Study

High incidence of divorce in the Netherlands and the Dutch Caribbean may be attributed to the absence of marital/premarital education, rather than solely to the commonly accepted determinants, such as lack of communication, short courtship period, financial problems, and personality differences. The aim of this research was to assess the impact of a newly developed comprehensive culturally sensitive marital and relationship education (MRE) program geared toward the development of relationship and family competences among couples in the Dutch Caribbean. The three core research questions guiding the study were: (1) Do culturally sensitive and competence-oriented MRE programs affect marital satisfaction in couples positively

and significantly? (2) Do they stimulate significant development of competences? (3)

Does MRE completion increase the level of commitment in couples?

### Method

The study sample comprised 310 individuals, aged 19 to 63 years, residing in Curacao and Bonaire. Pre-assessment allowed these individuals to be separated into a distressed and adjusted group. A quasi-experimental Solomon design was adopted and was applied to both experimental and control groups. The gathered data was analyzed using the planned contrast for One-Way ANOVA, allowing pre- and post-intervention results achieved by each group to be compared.

### Results

The results yielded by these statistical tests indicate that the culturally sensitive MRE implemented in this study significantly increased (1) marital satisfaction, with the effect size of 2.18 for the adjusted group and 4.44 for the distressed group; (2) commitment, with the effect size of 1.98 and 2.90 for the adjusted and the distressed group, respectively; and (3) the 12 relationship competences, with the effect size of 1.62 and 6.27 for the adjusted and the distressed group, respectively.

### Conclusion

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the observed increases in relationship and family competences are linked to a simultaneous increase in marital satisfaction and commitment, which may improve marriage quality and durability. In sum, cultural sensitive and competence-based marital and relationship education

program increases marital satisfaction, relationship commitment and level of mastery of family and relationship competences, which may contribute to longevity of relationships.

University of Montemorelos

Department of Psychology

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Thesis  
submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor in  
Family Life Education

by

Cherrel Justino Francisca

July 2015

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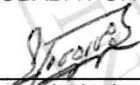
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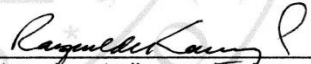
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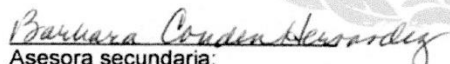
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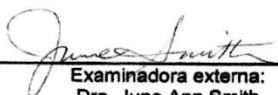
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## **DEDICATION**

To my lovely, patient, supportive, superb one, who deserve all kudos in my life; to her who betters my quality of life emotionally, socially, physically and spiritually; to my wife Enid! To my two lions Donovan and Genthle, who are the best that came out of me. Of course to the Most High, that surprised me as dust of the earth by calling me to serve Him as King of the Universe. I love you, God.



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## ABREVIATIONS

FCTM = Family Competence Training Model

MRE = Marital and Relationship Education

CRE= Couples Relationship Education

LCMMS = Leadership, Commitment, Maintenance of Marriage through Stages

EMEIL= Emotional Management, Emotional Intelligence & Love

FLCM= Family Life Cycle Management

FMP= Family Management & Planning

PDM= Personality Differences Management

ECCPM= Effective Communication, Conflict Prevention & Management

GDM= Gender Differences Management

GHFC= Generate Healthy Family Characteristics

FRM= Financial & Resources Management

SIM= Sexual & Intimacy Management

PSCBN= Parenting, Satisfaction of Children Basic Needs

SM= Spiritual Mastery

Es= Effect Size

SD= Standard Deviation

M= Mean

N= Amount of participants

Df= Degree of Freedom

SEM= Structural Equation Model

ANOVA=Analysis of Variance

CFA= Confirmatory Factor Analysis



## **CHAPTER I**

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

This chapter introduces and provides an overview of the study, which explored the impact of a marital education program geared toward the development of competences. It addresses cosmovision of this particular study, and provides statement of the problem, current problems in the field, the aim of the research, research questions and hypotheses, significance and justification of this study, definition of terms, and limitations and delimitations of this study.

#### **Cosmovision: Theological relevance of marital and relationship education**

Although not intended as a counseling textbook, scripture may be used effectively and successfully in every form of counseling, including premarital counseling. The Bible has been a valuable resource for understanding human behaviour, as well as promoting changes in attitudes and practices. Considering the fact that the institution of marriage predates the existence of all modern human culture, civilization, and reliable recorded history, the Bible may emerge as the sole reliable source of information regarding the origin of marriage in the Christian culture. Thus, it may play a paramount role in providing salient arguments and information to restore marital success, starting with laying sound foundations through premarital and marital counseling (Akin, 2003).

This study assumes that the role of biblical theology in marital education is important. It takes into consideration the concept of marriage in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, and during the middle ages, as well as the role of clergy as insightful sources of information to understand the marital relationship in Judiochristian context.

A brief literature review on this topic suggests:

1. In ancient or biblical times, life was relatively simple and survival was of paramount importance to humankind. Consequently, from early childhood, both men and women were prepared for clearly defined gender-based roles. Women learned skills required of wives and mothers, and men were trained for their duty of providing a home and sustaining their family. This practice based on traditional gender roles persisted until the 19th century (Cate & Lloyd, 1992; Rothman, 1984). Premarital education started in childhood, as both sexes were being raised and socialized.

2. Jewish and other cultures adopted six steps in their wedding and marital system (Fruchtenbaum, 2005). The process commenced with the arrangement for children to be married, usually conducted by their parents. It was followed by the preparation step, also known as the betrothal period. In this period, the future husband and wife were trained and prepared to take their respective roles in marriage. Women learned household-related skills and men would leave to build a house to show their capability to provide for their future family. This period of preparation would last a minimum of one year, but could extend to many years. Once the couple was deemed ready, fetching of the bride would take place, followed by the

wedding ceremony, and the marriage feast. The betrothal period was considered important and was well known in biblical and ancient times.

3. In post-biblical times, premarital education, as a concept, continued to exist and was formalized in some cultures (Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997). Initially, premarital education started with clergy. Since 398 AD, the Synod of Carthage assumed the use of priestly benediction in the ceremony and in 1164, the church officially established marriage as sacrament (Stahmann & Hiebert, 1997). Thus, the concept of premarital preparation was introduced. With the movement to officially establish marriage as sacrament came clergy's involvement with parallel premarital preparation and assessment of preparedness.

4. According to Stahmann and Hiebert (1997), during the 1940s and 1950s, many changes took place in the field of sociology, whereby the role of minister as a screening and education agent became more pronounced. The declining participation of the minister in marital preparation, combined with the declining influence of the church in the choice of partner, might in part have contributed to proliferation of marriages without preparation, which consequently resulted in divorce. Among other factors that have contributed to the decline during this period, most notable are post-war family changes, a new emphasis on the role of science in family life, women's movement, and the beginning of Child Guidance process. For a thorough discussion of biblical foundation underpinning this research project contact the author for a brief essay.

The Netherlands and the Dutch Caribbean (former Netherlands Antilles) are the specific focus of this study, where absence of marital education is speculated to

be related to, or even play a fundamental role in, high divorce rates. A brief literature review suggests that theological foundation harmonizes with, rather than juxtaposes, empirical conclusions regarding the importance and benefits of premarital/marital education (Akin, 2003; Dillow, 1977).

### **Statement of problem**

#### General discussion of problem

Divorce is one of the principal social maladies of our time, prompting researchers to study extensively both the possible causes and consequences of divorce (Amato & Kane, 2011; Amato & Rogers, 1992; Cherlin et al., 1991; Kapinus, 2005; Sieben & Verbakel, 2013). In the US and some European countries, researchers have extensively investigated causes and consequences of divorce in an attempt to understand and potentially assist with the reduction in the prevalence of divorce (Furtstenberg, 1994; Amato & Deboer, 2010; Brown & Lin, 2012). Despite significant progress in this field, the divorce rates remain at 30-50% in most of the developed and developing countries, including the Netherlands and Dutch Caribbean. In the Netherlands, according to the recent statistics, the divorce rate has reached 38%, while an alarming 55% was cited for the Dutch Caribbean (Central Bureau of Statistics Curacao, 2014; Central Bureau of Statistics Netherlands, 2013). Even more astounding is the estimated divorce rate of 67% for first marriages in the US over a period of forty years (Gottman, 1999).

This problem has much wider and far-reaching consequences than the marriage itself. According to the extant research, divorce has economic, social, and



psychological consequences for adults, children, and adolescents (Fagan & Churchill, 2012; Kelly, 2000; McLoyd, 2008; Trivedi, Sareen & Dhyani, 2009; Waite & Gallagher, 2007; Wallerstein, 1991). It affects the post-divorce family dynamics, e.g., parent-child relationship, child's self-esteem, child's peer relationships, as well as academic success (Ambert, 2009; Larson, Sawyers & Larson, 1995). It also impacts on the religious experience and dynamics (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 1992, 2004, 2008; Kiesling, 2011; Maruardt, 2011). It may result in antisocial behaviour, alcohol and drug abuse, early sexuality, and even depression and suicide (Fagan & Rector, 2000). Furthermore, all parties affected by the divorce are at a greater risk of suffering from psychological distress, which may have long-term negative impact on their physical health (Lorenz, Wickrama, Conger, & Elder, 2006). Given these alarming facts, the level of interest vested in discovering the reasons behind divorce is not surprising.

Currently, the most common predictors of marital dissolution are: (a) parental divorce (CBSN, 2005); (b) different religious affiliations and beliefs (Ellison, Burdette, & Wilcox, 2010); (c) personality differences (Fine, 2006; Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg, 2001; Seung-woo, 2009); (d) inappropriate partner selection (Lou, 2009); (e) short duration of courtship (Linlin, 2004); (f) age at first marriage (Janssen, Poortman, de Graaf, & Kalmijn, 1998; Manting, 1993); (g) wife's employment status (Poortman, 2005); (h) premarital cohabitation (Harms, 2000; Janssen, 2000; Wagner & Weiss, 2004; Waite & Gallegher, 2000); (i) incompatibility in interests, hobbies, and leisure activities (Fowers, Montel, & Olson, 1996); (j) sexual dissatisfaction (Fowers et al., 1996; Rahmani, 2009; Sidi, 2007); (k) incompetence in problem-solving (Downing,

2009); (l) prior divorce; (m) difference in intelligence and educational attainment (Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003); (n) failure to attend premarital courses (Stanley, 2001); and (o) financial disagreements (Dew, Britt, & Huston, 2012). Ineffective communication and lack of conflict management skills are considered the most common causes of marital discord (Akhlaq, Malik, & Khan, 2013; Billow, 2013; Khan, 2005; Markman, Rhoades, Stanley, Ragan, & Wilton, 2010; Tulane, Skogron, & DeFrain, 2011).

Although these factors have been widely accepted as determinants and predictors of marital dissolution, they may be symptoms, rather than causes. Marital/premarital education, however, could be seen as an effective solution, one that encompasses all these predictors. Several experts, including Olson, Carroll, Doherty, and Larson (2003), found that premarital education enhanced marital satisfaction and marital stability, while Stanley (2001) and Giblin (1994) found that it tends to reduce divorce risk. Additionally, Fawcett, (2006) and Fawcett, Hawkins, Blencher, and Carroll, (2010) conducted a meta-analytic review of marriage education programs, concluding that there is strong evidence that marital education programs work (i.e., improve communication and problem-solving skills). Thus, strong favorable scientific evidence, combined with the array of marital/premarital education programs available (especially their curricula), leads to the conclusion that the absence of marital/premarital education could result in the emergence of all the other commonly mentioned predictors or determinants of marital problem and, ultimately, divorce.

Researchers focusing on the Netherlands and the Dutch Caribbean also tended to overlook the absence of premarital education and preparation as potential causes of increasing divorce rates ( Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003; Janssen et al., 1998;

Kalmijn, de Graaf, & Janssen, 2005; Khan, 2005). As a result, they focused on other recurring divorce predictors, interpreting them as causes, rather than symptoms. Janssen (2000), as well as other authors, upon conducting a nationwide research project, reported that hasty selection of a partner, short courtship, and personal differences were the major causes for divorce in Holland. The latest CBS (2006) report revealed that couples cited incompatible personality and character, affairs, different goals and future plans, and financial problems and the most common reasons for divorce (CBS, 2006).

Other authors, such as Matthijs, & Poortman (2002), and Kalmijn, de Graaf and Poortman (2004), considered that partnerships in which women work or focus on their career and education are more likely to result in divorce. In brief, premarital education was consistently excluded as a variable.

Cohabiting is presently a widely accepted practice in the Netherlands, United States, and some European countries, as it is seen as a form of preparation for marriage, or a preventive measure against divorce (Leahy, 2004). In contrast, research shows that cohabiting has a detrimental effect on marriage, thus increasing, rather than decreasing the likelihood of divorce (Doherty, 2003; Harm, 2000; Hill, 2006; Janssen, 2000; Olson & Olson, 2007; Seltzer, 2000; Waite & Gallagher, 2000; Williams, 1997). The negative effects of cohabitation, which emerge consistently in research studies and scientific literature, acquired the label the “cohabitation effect” (Stanley, Rhoades, & Markman, 2006). The likely explanation for this phenomenon is that couples are under false impression that intuition rather than formal marital education is sufficient for marital success. Many couples also mistakenly believe that

premarital cohabitation has tested their relationship in a realistic scenario that includes sufficient number of experiences, thus proving that the marriage would succeed. Currently no research has been conducted in the Netherlands and the Dutch Caribbean to explore and establish: (a) a correlation between divorce rates and lack of marital/premarital education; (b) reasons, if any, for the ignorance regarding the relevance of premarital/marital education in enhancing relationship competence and marital success; (c) why, despite the existing evidence in support of the effectiveness of marital/premarital education in enhancing marital quality and stability, there is still a notable number of couples that get married without premarital education; (d) if couples in the Netherlands and the Dutch Caribbean were made aware of the findings regarding the importance of premarital/marital education (i.e., effective dissemination of information), would they attend premarital education programs? (e) if couples attend marital and premarital education, will their relationship improve, thus increasing likelihood for marital satisfaction and success? (f) what impact would exposure to a culturally sensitive marital and relationship education program geared toward the development of competences have on marital satisfaction, level of commitment, and mastery of relationship competencies? and (g) whether marital education programs could contribute to a significant decrease in the divorce rate in both locations.

#### Succinct statement of the problem

Marital and relationship distress lead to relationship meltdown and divorce, causing extensive problems “universally” and particularly in the Dutch Caribbean. The rate of divorce remains high despite considerable efforts on behalf of international

researchers to address the problem. In the Dutch Caribbean, more specifically Curacao, the divorce rate is presently at a troubling 55% (CBSC, 2014). This is alarming because it has been established that divorce and family distress have consequences for social health, children's achievement, and overall social wellbeing. Researchers have investigated divorce determinants and predictors for decades apparently without much effect. Although couple's therapy has been a valuable resource, it has failed to reduce divorce rates. It is evident that additional intervention treatments and even preventive approaches are urgently needed. Marital and relationship education (MRE) programs should be investigated, as this may assist in establishing their potential links with improvements in marital satisfaction, relationship commitment, and development of competences. The existing treatment approaches tend to focus mostly on the symptoms, rather than the causes of the problem. Hence, more research on the topic is needed, in order to identify the scope and content of potential alternative treatments. In particular, is essential to ascertain whether MRE is effective in improving relationship durability.

**State of the art and scientific field problems/  
additional challenges that demand  
more research**

Premarital and marital Education programs face some challenges that demand more research, including the following:

1. An arrear or backlog in cultural sensitive marital and relationship programs.

Most premarital and marital education programs are either "one size fits all" models or designed in the US and thus geared towards Western cultural background and mindset. Lately, some efforts have been made to mitigate this shortcoming; however,

it will take time for all programs to be updated by introducing culturally sensitive models.

2. No research has been conducted on this issue in the Caribbean and the Dutch Caribbean context. Most marital and premarital education programs were created in the US, targeting the US population, and only a limited number of studies has been performed in Europe and other countries. Although some marital education programs have been recently translated, aside from translation and contextualization, none have addressed cultural needs and challenges of the target population. Given that individual's cosmovision is based on his/her culture, it plays a major role in the attempts to address marital issues in other countries. The paucity of MRE programs designed by international researchers with the particular attention to cultural differences points to the urgent need for more research in this field.

3. Authors of most MRE programs have not reported rigorous investigation steps followed. Available evidence indicates that neither qualitative nor quantitative approach has been followed while creating the programs. In addition, the authors fail to report whether they have conducted a pilot study, either qualitative or quantitative, which could help validate the content. Besides, most MRE tend to focus on "universal" issues couples may face and lack attention on cultural differences or cultural relevancy.

4. Most research in the field of marital education has been quantitative, with very few qualitative studies. This indicates the need for more work in this field, as the goal is to ascertain importance and effectiveness of MRE.

5. Lack of attention and emphasis on development of competencies characterizes most marital education programs. In most MRE programs, imparting knowledge seem to be of primary importance. As noted by Hopkins (2002, 2011), possessing knowledge is insufficient to sustain behavioral changes. In other words, knowing what needs to be done to achieve long-term marital satisfaction does not guarantee results. Thus, developing competences for successful relationship may be imperative for more significant and long-term marital satisfaction. These competences and skills empower and strengthen the marital and relationship immune system against the risk factors, reducing the likelihood of divorce. Shifting the focus towards the development of competences helps investigators move beyond skill-based MRE to competence-based MRE programs.

6. Curricula of most marital education programs address classical issues (e.g., communication, conflict management, etc.), rather than contemporaneous problems, which have been shown as to increase the chances of divorce, such as the aim of marriage, how to prevent affairs, how to prevent or overcome porn addiction, family management, profile of a successful and healthy family, etc. These topics are not addressed in most of the conventional marital or premarital programs. One of the leading causes of divorce in modern marriages worldwide is infidelity, rather than lack of communication (Amato & Previti, 2003). Empirical evidence shows that, owing to the advances in technology and growing prevalence of social media, addiction to porn and Internet are presently among leading problems affecting marriages and destroying families (Doherty, 2003; Manning, 2007). These issues must be addressed when we design a marital education program, because they pertain to the

cyberculture increasingly affecting couples. Additionally, considering that couples challenges and even perception tend to defer depending on the generation that they pertain to (e.g. generation X, generation Y- Millennials tend to face different challenges and needs) it is mandatory to take their current needs in consideration as MRE are develop. Thus, there is a need to update marital education programs in Holland and the Dutch Caribbean to include both culturally specific and modern-day issues.

7. Most extant studies are based on the premise that marital satisfaction is the key to longevity and persistence of marriage (Rusbult, Martz & Agnew, 1998). However, Rusbult (1998), the creator of the Investment Model, argued that, even though the two may be highly related, it may be overly simplistic to assume that satisfaction (love, positive affect, attraction) is the primary predictor of the decision to continue or end the relationship. She argued that many researchers have assumed that the best route to understanding persistence in a relationship is to explore the determinants and the consequences of positive affect, such as attraction, satisfaction, or love. The implicit and explicit assumption is that, if both partners love each other and feel happy with the relationship, they will be more likely to persist. However, Rusbult also pointed out that this assumption fails to answer questions such as: Why do some relationships persist despite dissatisfaction? Why do some satisfying relationships end? How can we account for persistence in the face of ordinary fluctuations in relationships, given that satisfaction ebbs and flows even in the most gratifying involvement? Furthermore, given that tempting alternatives threaten even the most smitten partners, why do some relationships survive such fluctuations while



others do not? Rusbult's investment Model extends such "feel good" models (i.e., the idea that, as long as we feel good in the relationship, we will stay together) by emphasizing the centrality of commitment to breakup decisions and to a broad array of major relationship processes. Rusbult found that level of commitment depends on three main factors—level of satisfaction, size of investment, and quality of alternatives. Rusbult's model, however, overlooks the fact that commitment may be symptomatic, i.e., symptoms of problems may be remediated with education (such as MRE programs addressing this topic). She may have also overlooked the fact that commitment is a state or frame of mind that can change. However, her instrument, which measures and predicts longevity of marriage based on commitment, is very useful and is considered in this investigation, alongside other presently used instruments.

8. Very few research projects that reported positive results have been subsequently validated or replicated in other settings. Additionally, most researchers in this field tend to turn to American research projects and media as a sole source of information and inference, without considering important local issues (Ambert, 2009).

9. Research in this field has historically focused on troubled marriages and relationships, overlooking adjusted marriages (Lauer & Lauer, 1986; Nimtz, 2011). Even in the US, Phillips and Wilmoth (2010), among others, acknowledged that most African American researchers have historically focused on "problem-oriented" marriages (i.e., relationships with problems), rather than follow a dual-track approach by examining both healthy and troubled relationships.

## **Aim of the research project**

The main objective of this research is to provide and test a new culturally sensitive marital education program that has a strong emphasis on the development of competencies and skills for high marital satisfaction with long lasting effects.

Specifically, this research project:

1. Investigated the impact and measured the effects of a new culturally sensitive marital education program, named *Profile of Successful Couples/Families*, which is based on a Family Competence Training Model designed by the author. This new culturally sensitive marital education program is based on a contemporary and up to date curriculum with a strong emphasis on developing competences. It aims to increase relationship satisfaction and level of commitment, as well as assist couples in the development of relationship competences. It is expected that the results or outcome of the program *Profile of Successful Couple/Families* results in the validation of both the program and the Family Competence Training Model on which undergird the program.

2. Attempted to provide an empirically tested checklist with critical competencies that healthy, highly-satisfied, and successful families tend to possess, which also contribute to the sustainability and longevity of marriage. In summary, couples were trained in competences that tend to propel marriages toward durability and longevity. This enabled the researcher to provide an updated profile of successful families today (i.e., critical qualities families should have in order to be healthy, successful, highly satisfied, and sustainable in the long term). This “checklist concept” is based on an analogy to the worst aircraft disaster that took place in the US in 1987,

which was caused by failure to review a checklist (National Transportation Safety Board Report, 1988). Today, marriages take off without reviewing their compatibility checklist, simply because such a list does not exist either in the Netherlands or in the Dutch Caribbean. The literature review and the experimental part of this research served as a foundation in the effort to make a significant contribution in this field in the form of a checklist for religious clerks, government officers who perform marital ceremonies, as well as couples planning to get married. Based on the research findings, it is recommended that lawmakers discuss the proposal to make completion and revision of the couple's marital checklist compulsory. Ideally, this process should be coordinated and conducted by relevant government bodies prior to granting a marriage license.

3. Validate a new created inventory for measurement of Family and Relationship Competence, namely *Inventory of Pivotal Competences for a Long-lasting/ Sustainable Relationship* as potential Instrument for diagnose of couples level of competence.

### **Research questions**

The research questions guiding this study were:

1. Do marital education programs affect marital satisfaction positively and significantly in the Dutch Caribbean (former Netherlands Antilles)?
2. Does a marital education program stimulate significant development of relationship competences?
3. What impact does a culturally sensitive marital education program have on level of commitment of the couples?

## **Hypotheses and variables**

The hypotheses that were tested in this research are:

1. When exposed to a culturally sensitive MRE program that is geared towards the development of competences, there will be significant differences in the satisfaction levels of couples when compared to those prior to attending the MRE education program.
2. When couples are exposed to a culturally sensitive MRE program geared toward the development of competences, they will demonstrate significant development of competences and skills needed for relationship success and satisfaction.
3. When couples attend a culturally sensitive MRE program geared toward the development of competences, they will experience significant increases in their level of commitment.

### **Research variables**

There is only one independent variable, namely: Culturally Sensitive Marital and Relationship Education Program and three dependent variables.

The dependent variables are marital satisfaction, competences and skills for a satisfactory relationship and commitment level.

### **Significance or justification**

Primary reasons for this research are:

1. Alarming divorce rates in the Netherlands and the Dutch Caribbean demand more research on this topic. The high cost and alarming consequences that have

been previously mentioned need to be investigated further. Moreover, according to some experts, divorce in one generation tends to increase probability of divorce in the next generation. For example, Amato and Booth (1997) found that children whose parents divorced were 76% more likely to divorce themselves, while Rufus (2010) cited an alarming 91% probability of divorce in the next generation. As this phenomenon is so prevalent, it has been referred to as “divorce cycle” (Wolfinger, 2005, 2011). The current research is significant because its results may provide an informative, heuristic, and epistemological understanding of MRE as a potential preventive measure, as well as treatment and intervention program.

2. Results regarding the effectiveness of premarital education in the US are considered by some professionals as modest, inconclusive, and inapplicable to other national and cultural settings. Liverpool (2001), for example, recommended that replication with populations of different backgrounds is necessary. Fawcet (2006) contended that, despite emerging evidence of marriage education’s value in sustaining relationships, its overall effectiveness has yet to be proven. She agreed with the statement issued by Centre of Law and Social Policy, “in any new field it can take years, even decades, before there are enough rigorous evaluations to definitely answer the question – does it work?” (p. 3). The relevance and significance of the current research stems from its attempt to increase the current understanding of the potential universal character of certain theories, prior findings, and concepts.

3. There is a need for a comprehensive culturally adapted marital and premarital programs, due to the view that the benefit of premarital education diminishes after few years (Carroll & Doherty, 2003; Center for Marriage and Family,

1995). This research proposes a comprehensive marital education program, which includes post-marital education, assessment, and guidance after the marriage ceremony.

4. Cohabitation is a common practice in both the Netherlands and the Dutch Caribbean, and is seen as the sole means of preparation for marital life. This research project offers ample array of alternatives for marital preparation by providing empirically proven method (namely MRE/CRE programs) that may contribute more significantly to marriage longevity than mere “intuition” and prior cohabitation.

5. No formal studies have been conducted in either the Netherlands or in the Dutch Caribbean, where the goal was to establish a correlation between the aforementioned variables (Central Bureau of Statistics Netherlands, 2011; Central Bureau of Statistics Curacao, 2014).

6. Short-term effects of premarital education programs require more investigation and should be the basis for creating a more comprehensive program. This research is significant because it enhances the current understanding of the effectiveness of MRE/CRE in the Dutch Caribbean. In particular, it provides a new, thus far unexplored focus, namely development of family and relationship competences. As a part of this research, a new MRE/CRE was proposed, which moves beyond the current skill-based models to a more comprehensive competence-based model.

7. Need to create awareness in the Netherlands and the Dutch Caribbean, as well as in the global scientific community, that intuition is not a sufficient foundation

for a successful marriage. Rather, marital and premarital education is imperative and of paramount importance in achieving a goal of a life-long partnership.

8. Dutch lawmakers in both territories require valid empirical basis for decision-making regarding laws that may require compulsory premarital guidance prior to wedding ceremonies. It is anticipated that this study will provide data to support strong recommendation for making premarital guidance compulsory. In other words, an implication of this study would be to provide empirical evidence that guidance may be helpful in stemming the tide of divorce.

9. Divorce is very costly to the international community, with an estimated cost of 112 billion USD to the US alone in 2008 (Myrick, Ooms, & Patterson, 2009; Scafedi, 2008; Mrozek & Walberg, 2009). Similarly, Canada reported annual expenditure of 7 billion CAD (Mrozek & Walberg, 2009), while divorce cost Australia 14 billion AUD in 2013 (Meuhlenberg, 2014), and United Kingdom reported 37 billion GBP.

10. Mental health consequences of divorce and family breakup demand more research. For example, David Satcher, Surgeon General working in the US, reported that 30-40% of those undergoing divorce have shown a significant increase in symptoms of depression and anxiety (Satcher, 1999). Research conducted by Carney, Rich, Tevelde, Saini, Clark, & Jaffe, (2007), in which 1,346 women took part, indicated that marital separation could contribute to an elevated risk for psychiatric disorders among women. A longitudinal study conducted by British scientists tracked a national sample of children born in 1958, revealing that parental divorce is associated with 39% increase in the risk of psychopathology (Chase-Lansdale et al.,

1995). Similarly, Swedish researchers reported that children raised in single-parent families (who experienced divorce, etc.) were 56% more likely to show signs of mental illness compared to those from intact homes (Howell, 2014).

11. The increasing divorce rates internationally and their dire consequences are prompting researchers to seek quick solutions. As a result, they tend to overlook marital education as a viable solution to this issue (Resecher & Berdica, 2013; in Ling Pan, 2014).

12. MRE has been overlooked as potent prevention, treatment and intervention program while couple therapy has been seen as sole alternative for distress families.

Given the aforementioned shortcomings of extant studies and the needs for further research, this study is significant because it contributes to the understanding of the phenomenon of interest. In particular, it proposes a viable solution for the increasing divorce rates in the Netherlands and the Dutch Caribbean. It attempts to provide an empirically tested and culturally sensitive marital education program based on Family Competence Training Model, which will better prepare couples for current challenges. By offering an empirically tested marital education program, it demonstrates that cohabitation cannot be used as the only means of preparation for marriage. Its particular contribution lies in its culturally sensitive content, geared toward competence development. Finally, it also addresses the need for studies conducted outside the US, thus providing some indication of whether marital education programs work in other contexts.



## **Study limitations and delimitations**

One limitation of this research is that some questions can only be answered by applying an experimental design that would span over at least a decade for the results of two groups to be strongly generalizable or for long-term effects to emerge. The fact that this research project is bound to a dissertation inherently limits the possibility for a solid longitudinal approach. Thus, this study is delimited to first-time marriages or couples that cohabited prior to getting married. Its span is also limited to a period of two years. Finally, the focus is on heterogeneous couples who live in the Dutch Caribbean, specifically Curacao and Bonaire.

## **Definition of terms**

**Marital satisfaction.** Marital satisfaction is a mental state that reflects the perceived benefits and costs of marriage to a particular person. The more costs a marriage partner inflicts on a person, the less satisfied one generally is with the marriage and with the marriage partner. Similarly, the greater the perceived benefits are, the more satisfied one is with the marriage and with the marriage partner (Stone, 2007; Stone & Shackelford, 2007).

**Marital commitment.** Tripartite nature of marital commitment includes (a) personal commitment, which refers to the sense of wanting to stay in the relationship; (b) moral commitment, pertaining to the feeling of a moral obligation to remain in the relationship; and (c) structural commitment, which refers to feeling constrained/obliged to stay regardless of the level of personal or moral commitment and satisfaction (Johnson, Caughlin, & Huston, 1999).

**Marital and relationship education program (MRE).** MRE is defined as a couples training course in which structural or non-structural information is imparted and couples are stimulated to develop skill to deal with challenges in the marriage relationship. Couples gain new insights and knowledge, which allow them to improve their relationship skills. In short, MRE provides information and skills-based group programs for the prevention and remediation of marital distress. These programs are also referred to as marriage enrichment (Larson, 2004).

**Counselor.** In the context of this study, counselor is a professional, who is either a master's degree student enrolled in the master's level internship class, or a doctoral student in a counselor program.

**Premarital personal and relationship evaluation (PREPARE).** The PREPARE program is a pre-marital and marriage education and enrichment program utilized in partnership with the Empowering Couples Workshop for the duration of 16 hours, according to the treatment protocol (Olson, 1997).

**Competencies.** Competencies are a cluster of related abilities, commitments, knowledge, and skills that enable a person to act effectively in a job or a situation (Businessdictionary.com). They may also be defined as behaviors that contribute significantly to the effective functioning of an organization or a relationship (Frola, 2012).

**Family competences.** Family competences comprise knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills that work towards enhancing family functioning. They enhance opportunities for development and health of individual family members, and are based

on egalitarian family norms, as the foundation of strong family ecology

(Shanmugavelayutham, 2012)

**Skills-based.** An ability and capacity acquired through systematic and sustained effort to smoothly and adaptively perform complex activities or job functions involving ideas (cognitive skills), things (technical skills), and/or people (interpersonal skills).

**Culturally sensitive.** Cultural sensitivity means being aware that cultural differences and similarities exist and have an effect on values, learning, and behaviour (Stafford, Bowman, Eking, Hanna, & Lopoies-DeFede, 1997). For this particular study, Culturally Sensitive Marital Program refers to a newly developed model or program specifically designed for (but not limited to) the Dutch Caribbean (former Netherlands Antilles).

**The Netherlands Antilles.** The Netherlands Antilles consisted of five islands in the Caribbean that are part of the Netherlands Kingdom. It is currently referred to as the Dutch Antilles. The Netherlands Antilles was considered an autonomous country within the Netherlands. However, since its dissolution in 2010, all of its constituent islands remain part of the kingdom under a different legal status (the term is still used to refer to these Dutch Caribbean islands). This study focused on Curacao and Bonaire.

**Cosmovision.** A term used to describe a worldview, indicating a particular view or understanding of the world, especially the view of time and space and its ritualized representation and enactment. It can also be understood as a way of thinking about the world (Cambridge, 1998).

## **Organization of the study**

The current research project has been organized in five chapters. Chapter one provides an overview of the study, and presents the statement of the problem it aims to address. It also briefly discusses current problems in the field, before stating the aim of the research and presenting the research questions and hypotheses. This is followed by the significance and justification of this study, operational definition of terms, and study limitations and delimitations.

Chapter two presents a review of extant literature and antecedent studies in the field. It starts by presenting the MRE as a potential treatment and intervention program, as well as discussing the key determinants and consequences of divorce, as well as characteristics of successful and long-lasting marriages. This is followed by the discussion of the four variables evaluated in the current study, namely culturally sensitive and competence-based MRE program as the independent variable, and three dependent variables—marital satisfaction, marital or relationship commitment, and family or relationship competence. Furthermore, chapter two also addresses the relevance and implications of cultural differences, along with the procedures and protocols typically used when measuring impact of such programs. Their objectives and importance are discussed next, before exploring existing types and models of MRE vs. competence-oriented MREs. This is followed by the theoretical rationale underpinning this study and the discussion of the new family competence training model on which the content of the MRE implemented in this study is based. Finally, the findings of both qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the MRE program are discussed, before summarizing the key results and making concluding remarks.

Chapter three presents the methods and procedures employed in order to gather empirical evidence that is subsequently analyzed for the purpose of answering the research questions and testing the hypotheses. After reiterating the statement of the problem, the study aim, and the research methodology employed, the focus shifts to discussing the research questions and hypotheses in operational terms. Further, the chapter also presents the sample selection process and the sample composition (demographic characteristics of the participants). The intervention process is discussed next, followed by the data collection instrument and procedures, and the data analysis plan. The theoretical rationale underpinning the research design and methodology, along with the internal and external validity threats and approaches used to address them are also the topics of this chapter, which closes with the ethical considerations followed in the thesis and the brief discussion of the expected findings.

The Chapter four summarizes the extensive information collected as a part of this research and provides answers to the research questions guiding the study. This is followed by the hypotheses testing and outcomes, and the main study results. The research purpose, questions, and hypotheses are stated once again, in order to align the study findings with each and discuss the baseline measurement data pertinent to the study variables. Further, the chapter discusses the three core research questions, in relation to the study findings. Study results are also revisited in relation to each of the 12 competences, before summarizing the main findings and concluding the chapter.

Chapter five interprets the results presented in the preceding chapter by tying or contrasting them to the existing theories and studies in this field. It also provides a

summary of the problem the study addressed, and recapitulates and discusses the main findings, as well as their implications, before stating the study limitations. The chapter closes with the main conclusion of the thesis, and recommendations for the future work in this field. This chapter is followed by an appendix, reference section, and the researcher's curriculum vitae.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to present a brief review of pertinent literature. This is followed by the description of the conceptual framework used to construct a platform from which to proceed with the present study, in an attempt to make a novel contribution to the field of marital education programs. A systemic literature review approach suggested by Stagner's and team (Stagner, Ehrle, Reardon-Anderson, & Kortenkamp, 2003) and Petticrew and Robert's (2006) was followed as a search strategy for identifying, selecting, organizing, assessing, and synthesizing relevant studies and findings regarding the impact of marriage and relationship programs, as well as determinants of marital durability and marital meltdown, among other topics (The literature review protocol used for underpinning of the scientific data for this research is given in Appendix A).

This Chapter addresses antecedents of this research, the importance of marriage and relationship education, the objectives pursued in this research, the different types and models of marriage and relationship education programs, the theoretical frame utilized in this study, the proper "dosage" (i.e., the amount of information provided to the participants), and characteristics of a successful marriage relationship education program. Additionally, it addresses the instructional or delivery

method for marriage and relationship education program, and research findings regarding marriage and relationship education, using both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. It ends with the discussion of a new culturally sensitive and competence-oriented Marriage Education Program (MRE), followed by a conclusion indicating its effectiveness. As previously mentioned, the Systemic Review of Impact of Marriage and Relationship Programs proposed by Stagner et al. (2003) and Petticrew and Robert's (2006) Systemic Review were used as a literature review protocol.

### **Antecedents**

Underpinning MRE as a treatment and prevention program by understanding the determinant of divorce

Marital and relationship education could be instrumental in preventing and addressing the most common divorce determinants and risk factors. Couples therapy has been extensively researched during the last three decades (Snyder, 2012) and has been largely considered an effective approach in mitigating both determinants as well as generic risk factors that can contribute to divorce (Klann, Hahlweg, Baucom, & Kroeger, 2011; Lebow et al., 2012). However, poor responses to, and contradictory results of, couples therapy reported by researchers oblige experts to continue to investigate the topic while exploring other alternatives as a means of addressing the divorce determinants and preventing relationship meltdown (Halford, Markman, Kling, & Stanley, 2003; Snyder, Castellani, Whisman, 2006; Wudarczyk, Earp, Guastella, & Savulescu, 2013). Recently, MRE programs started to be recognized as potentially



effective preventive measures, as well as potent treatment intervention programs that could reduce divorce incidence (Blanchard, Hawkins, Baldwin, & Fawcett, 2009; Hawkins, Blanchard, Baldwin, & Fawcett, 2008; Hawkins & Fackrell, 2010). This growing recognition of MRE stems from its potential to address the determinants of divorce and the associated risk factors.

Researchers and scholars in the US are known for pioneering research on determinants and predictors of divorce, as well as for contributing with a long list of empirically proven determinants. Their efforts and the findings yielded have prompted other researchers to replicate their studies and establish whether similar results would be obtained in their respective countries. While numerous divorce determinants and predictors have been put forward, those that are presently the most relevant include (a) personality differences (Fine & Harvey, 2006; Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg, 2001; Seung-woo, 2009); (b) inappropriate partner selection (Lou, & Klohnen, 2009); (c) short duration of courtship (Linlin, 2005); (d) age at first marriage (Janssen et al., 1998; Manting, 1994); (e) wife's employment, even though the available results tend to be conflictive (Cook et al. 2014; Poortman, 2005; Schoen, Astone, Rothert, Standish, & Kik, 2002; South, 2001); (f) premarital cohabitation (Harms, 2000; Janssen, 2000; Wagner & Weiss, 2004; Waite, & Gallegher, 2000); (g) incompatibility in interests, hobbies, and leisure activities (Fower et al., 1996); (h) sexual dissatisfaction (Fowers et al. 1996; Rahmani, 2009; Sidi et al. 2007); (i) incompetence in problem solving (Hawkins & Fackrell, 2009); (j) prior divorce (Lillard, & Waite, 1990; Teachman, 2008); (k) parental divorce (Amato & Booth, 1997; CBSN, 2005; Kapinus & Johnson, 2003; Wolfinger, 2003); (l) difference in intelligence and education levels

(Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003); (m) failure to attend premarital courses (Stanley, 2001); (n) financial disagreements (Dew et al., 2012); (o) ineffective communication and lack of conflict management skills (Billow, 2013; Khan, 2005; Markman, Rhoades, Stanley, Ragan, & Whilton, 2010; Markman et al. 2001; Tulane, 2011); and (o) different religious affiliations and beliefs (Ellison et al., 2010). These 15 category of determinants may also include additional determinants when findings of international researchers are considered.

Social scientists conducted research in several countries, allowing them to expand the list above with numerous additional variables, as well as confirm the applicability of some or all of these variables in their respective countries. Their findings contributed to a better understanding of divorce determinants and/or predictors by identifying those that may be seen as “universal.” In the Netherlands, for instance, Kalmijn, de Graaf and Poortman (2004) found a relationship between gender roles and divorce (e.g., women’s employment was a determinant of divorce). Other studies conducted in the Netherlands also found a relationship between parental divorce and divorce of offspring (CBSN, 2005). In Uruguay, Bucheli and Vigna (2005) found that cohabitation and woman’s level of education, specifically her employment status/economic independence, were among principal determinants of divorce. In India (Ettumanoor), adjustment to the life with the spouse’s parents, alcoholism, and other relationship dynamics were the main determinants of divorce (Vasudevan, 2014). On the other hand, in Korea, researchers found incompatible personalities, different way of thinking, and economic bankruptcy as common divorce determinants (Chun & Sohn, 2009). Studies conducted in Canada revealed that

economic factors (i.e., female economic independence) and sociological factors (i.e., change in norms and values), along with cohabitation, family of origin (e.g., one or both partners being brought up in non-intact families), etc., are highly related to divorce (Zheng & Hart, 2002). In England, the most influential factors that could lead to divorce included female wages, unilateral no default divorce, financial matters, etc. (Binner & Dnes, 2001). In China, extramarital affairs have risen in prevalence and have thus become the leading cause of divorce (Fan & Hon-Kwong, 2004). Relational reasons were also the principal reasons Australian men and women cited for divorce. In this study, couples tended to cite affective dimensions, in particular communication problems, incompatibility, changes in lifestyle desires, instances of infidelity, and unsatisfying relationship as principal determinants for marital meltdown (Wolcott & Hughes, 1999). A more recent research revealed that socio-structural reasons have become the leading reason for divorce (Hewit, 2008). For example, US researchers Trent and Scott (1989) investigated the determinants of divorce in 66 countries, revealing that structural determinants, industrialization-modernization, women's participation in labor force, age at marriage, and sex were most prevalent globally.

However, in this study, these determinants are assumed as symptoms rather than causes of problems and could thus be addressed in an MRE program aiming to mitigate or even prevent them. As these determinants as symptoms were largely overlooked in extant studies, this research is unique in this respect. In addition, the majority of authors that have explored this phenomenon focused on determinants of divorce in an attempt to discover its instrumental causes, thus overlooking determinants of long-term/lasting relationships. In short, while considerable effort has

been invested in investigating troubled marriages and factors that cause marital meltdown, very little work has been done on understanding the characteristics of successful and long-lasting marriages (i.e., 35 years or more). By adopting this dual track approach, this study could identify the key factors that could contribute to the quality and longevity of marriages. In short, the study takes the view that the effort to uncover determinants of long-term/lasting marriages should be combined with the endeavor to study determinants of divorce. Yet another weakness in contemporary research is the lack of attention dedicated to relationship competences. None of the variables discussed in the reviewed literature pertained to the relationship competences, and there is evident paucity of studies that investigated their association with marriage durability.

Most of the aforementioned determinants are related to and/or may influence marital satisfaction and marital quality, commitment, and relationship skills. These three variables have also been extensively investigated and are discussed later in this literature review (Animasahun & Oladeni, 2012; Armenta-Hurtarte, Sanchez Aragon, Diaz-Loving, 2012; Carroll, Hill, Yorgason, & Sandberg, 2013; Claxon, O'Rourke, Smith, & De Longis, 2012; Cowan & Cowan, 2007; Fox, 2009; Hartley et al., 2011; Hawkins & Johnson, 1969; Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2009; Perren & Von Wyl, 2005; Ngazimbi, Daire, Soto, Carlson, & Munyon, 2013; Rivera, Cumsille, Dominguez, & Hidalgo, 2015; Shackelford, Besser, & Geetz, 2008; van Steenbergen, 2011; Walker & Luszcz, 2009; Weis & Palos, 1988; Weiss, & Palos, 1988).

In this study, these three variables were adopted when measuring effectiveness of the culturally sensitive marital and relationship program.

## Underpinning MRE as a treatment and prevention program by understanding the consequences of divorce

The impact and consequences of divorce have also received considerable attention of researchers and investigators both in the US as the leading country in the research on the topic, as well as internationally. Their findings indicate that (a) divorce can have profound long-term effects on psycho-social wellbeing and life trajectory (i.e., it affects psychological wellbeing, life situation, health behaviour, social networking, and interpersonal relationships) (Huurre, Junkkari, & Aro, 2006); (b) parental divorce affects the academic performance and educational attainments of children; (c) divorce jeopardizes parent-child relationship and social skills. More specifically, it weakens the relationship with both father and mother, and affects emotional closeness with parents, grandparents, as well as child's view on divorce, child's ability to handle conflicts, and child's social skills, while increasing behavioral problems. It is also often responsible for early departure from home, and can have significant influence on the child's sexual practices and general sexual behaviour. As a result, children may experience a range of romantic problems, as divorce affects children's attitude toward marriage, resulting in increased cohabitation (Fagan & Churchill, 2012); (d) divorce often has profound socio-economic consequences, not only to the couple, but the society in general. For example, in the US, divorce cost the tax payer 33 billion USD in 2003 (Schram, 2006), which increased to 112 billion in 2008 (Myrick et al., 2009; Scafedi, 2008; Walberg & Mrozek, 2009). In Canada, researchers reported annual expenditure on divorce of 7 billion CAD (Walberg & Mrozek, 2009), while Australia reported 14 billion AUD annually (Meuhlenberg, 2014),

United Kingdom reported 37.01 billion GBP annually in 2009, and New Zealand reported 1 billion in 2008; (e) divorce is related to increased crime rates, abuse, and neglect. Empirical evidence indicates that it also increases tendency towards drug abuse and other antisocial behaviors (Arkes, 2013; Strohschein, 2005); (f) divorce also affects religious practices and diminishes church attendance and prayer (Fagan & Churchill, 2012); (g) it affects physical wellbeing of both adults and children (Das & eBook, 2011; Fagan & Churchill, 2012;); (h) divorce reduces household earnings and home ownership; and (i) it affects religious dynamic, practice, and experience of both children and parents (Keisling, 2011).

The list of consequences presented above, while not exhaustive, tends to transcend cultural barriers. In various countries, researchers have also identified some determinants that could be unique to their specific socio-cultural contexts. For example, in Croatia, divorce tends to bring serious socio-legal consequences (Resetar & Berdica, 2013). In Taiwan, researchers found that consequences of divorce depend on the age of the child (i.e., the timing of divorce is pivotal). Divorce also affects child's marriage expectations, subsequent involvement in romantic relationships, and availability or openness to the romantic partner (En-Ling, 2014). In British-Indian culture, researchers found that divorce had a negative impact on financial perspectives of the affected family (i.e., the consequences have a ripple effect), as well as caused parental logistical and commuter problems (e.g., non-custodial parent could be forced to move and have less contact with children). It can also have physical consequences, due to changes in residence, carers, and family structure or constitution, along with profound emotional consequences, and social

impact, such as stigmatization, etc. Children of divorced parents may be faced with a loyalty dilemma and conflict and many tend to underperform academically (Das & eBook, 2011). In South Korea, researchers reported that divorce tends to affect the “filial piety” (i.e., the respect and absolute devotion that children have and show to their parents). It also affect the child’s/young adult’s “self-view,” his/her social interactions, and life plans. Children’s self-image is severely damaged by stigmatization associated with divorce and they thus need conscientious effort to reinvent their “self” (Kim & Tasker, 2013). In South Africa, researchers reported recurrent logistic, structural, and classical problems that arise due to divorce, including relocation problems, difficulty adjusting to new environment and new home, instability due to disruption in former lifestyle, poor academic performance, etc. (Bojuwoye & Akpan, 2009). In Latin American studies, poorer relationship with father but warmer relationship with mother, better emotional support, and better support for independence were cited as the main outcomes of divorce (Riggio & Valenzuela, 2011). In the Netherlands, researchers reported association of depressive syndrome with divorce for girls, as parents were less aware of child’s behaviour and emotions. Moreover, children of divorced parents were found to speed up their first romantic relationship (Ivanova, Mills, & Veenstra, 2011; Oldehinkel, Ormel, Veenstra, De Winter, & Verholst, 2008). Swedish researchers reported that, when regression analysis was performed and when children of divorced parents were adults, the study participants found it more difficult to adjust, reported poorer mental health, as well as more illness, and more negative life events (Angarne-Lindberg & Wadsby, 2015).

The wide range of divorce consequences noted above is likely to persist or even expand if researchers continue to misdiagnose the causes of divorce by considering and investigating the recurrent classical determinants. It is evident that most researchers tend to focus on symptoms rather than attempting to uncover the real causes of relationship meltdown. By narrowing the focus on the recurrent variables, most researchers have overlooked MRE as a potentially significant variable in divorce prevention. The assumption is that the ultimate aim is to discover and establish causal relationships between the previously discussed determinants and divorce and consequently be able to effectively propose solutions for this social malady. Yet, this approach overlooks MRE and thus limits the range of effective solutions to the growing issue of divorce. In the Dutch Caribbean, even though an alarming divorce prevalence has been established, there is paucity of studies regarding divorce determinants, its impact, and consequences. In addition, MRE has not been studied as an alternative approach to addressing the recurrent variables recognized in the extant studies.

#### Underpinning MRE as a treatment and prevention program by understanding the determinants of long-term marriages

As previously discussed, due to the growing prevalence of divorce world-wide and its devastating consequences, a plethora of research has discussed the determinants and the consequences of divorce. However, for a more comprehensive understanding of marital relationship durability and longevity, it is imperative to study both the determinants of divorce as well as determinants of relationship durability and



stability. One side of the coin is not enough to comprehend the marital meltdown phenomenon (Bachand & Caron, 2001). In other words, the key factors contributing to longevity of marriage and high levels of relationship satisfaction are as important as knowing the determinants of divorce.

Determinants or predictors of marital longevity include (a) marital satisfaction and high quality of dyadic interaction (Schmitt, Kliegel, & Shapiro, 2007); and (b) commitment, loyalty, strong moral values, and sexual fidelity (Banchand & Caron, 2001). Studies conducted in Canada, Germany, Israel, Netherlands, South Africa, Sweden, and the US confirmed that marital satisfaction and happy childhood are related with lasting marriages and thus have universal implications. In particular, love, loyalty, and trust were key elements for marital durability or long-term marriages.

Schmitt et al. (2007) attempted to fill the gap in the scientific literature regarding one of the most influential factors of marital satisfaction, which is highly related to long-term relationships. The authors focused on the marital satisfaction and longevity of relationships among middle- and old-aged couples in long-term or lasting marriages. They found that marital interaction (which included interaction-specific behaviors, such positive communication skills, conflict resolution skills, and capacity to efficiently cope with stressful life events) was a predictor of marital satisfaction and thus contributed to marital durability/relationship longevity.

Clements and Swensen (2000) also studied older marital couples, thus providing valuable contribution to the understudied topic of lasting relationships in this age group. Their findings indicate that commitment to the spouse was the strongest and the most consistent predictor of marital quality (among the other variables

studied). In addition, it was negatively related to marriage problems and positively related to expression of love and dyadic adjustment. This conclusion was consistent with the findings reported by Lauer and Lauer (1987) and Broderick and O'Leary (1986).

Marital satisfaction and commitment are considered the most prominent variables for longevity of marriages. Both variables are core variables in this research project and will be addressed below, together with the family or relationship competences. While extant studies have explored marital satisfaction and commitment, there is no research on their relationship with family or relationship competences, making the present study unique. In addition, there is a gap in literature regarding a cohesive approach where these two most prominent variables are studied in relation to multiple variables. The research method adopted in the current study differs from the existing theoretical and methodological research approaches in the sense that these variables (i.e., commitment and marital satisfaction) are addressed and investigated in relation to twelve relationship competences (rather than a single variable). As a result, it is possible to better understand the multidimensionality of marital problems and marital success and avoid a fragmented view of facts. Additionally, the culturally sensitive or culturally relevant aspects are interwoven in the research for even better understanding of the dynamics related to these variables.

#### Underpinning MRE as a treatment and prevention program by addressing four pertinent variables

In this research project four variables were studied, namely (a) measurement of the impact and effect of a New Culturally Sensitive Marital and Education Program

geared toward the development of competences as independent variable; and (b) Marital Satisfaction, (c) Commitment, and (d) Family or Relationship Competences as dependent variables. These variables are discussed in more detail below.

### **Marital satisfaction and MRE**

Marital satisfaction is a mental state that reflects the perceived benefits and costs of marriage to a particular person. The more costs a marriage partner inflicts on a person, the less satisfied one generally is with the marriage and with the marriage partner. Similarly, the greater the perceived benefits are, the more satisfied one is with the marriage and with the marriage partner (Stone, 2007).

Marital satisfaction has been previously associated with numerous variables. Extant research shows that it has been linked to classical variables, such as marital expectations (Ngazimbi et al., 2013), parenthood transitions (Dominguez, 2012; Hartley et al., 2011; Perren & Von Wyl, 2005; van Steenberg, 2011), demographics, including age, education, number of children, employment status, and length of marriage (Animasahun & Oladeni, 2012; Armenta-Hurtarte et al., 2012; Jose & Alfons, 2015), income and psychological distress (Dakin & Wampler, 2008), personality differences (Claxon et al., 2012; Dominguez, 2012), unrealistic marital expectations (Sharp & Ganong, 2000), emotional intelligence (Torkashvand, Farhadi, Feizi, Moghadam, & Poor, 2014), and similarity in terms of gendered personality and values (Gaunt, 2006), among others. Infidelity due to personality differences has also been linked to marital dissatisfaction (Shackelford et al., 2008), couple's dynamic (Walker & Luszcz, 2009), relationship perceptions (Hawkins & Johnson, 1969), the number of children a couple has (Animasahun & Oladeni, 2012; Weis & Palos, 1988),

and length of courtship or dating (Grover, Rusell, Schumm, & Paff-Bergen, 1985). Additional contextual factors have been linked to marital satisfaction (Armenta-Hurtarte et al., 2012), including socio-demographic variables (Weiss & Palos 1988), body image and sexual satisfaction (Meltzer & McNulty, 2010), and management of emotions (Cooley, 2006). Finally, gender, communication, alexithymia, and psychological wellbeing were significantly related to and predicted marital satisfaction (Erhabor & Ndloyu, 2013). International research has resulted in the inclusion of additional variables, such as partner's education, self-perception, compromise, and relationships with in-laws (Ayub & Iqbal, 2012). Family-to-work spillover hypothesis (Sandberg, Yorgason, Miller & Hill, 2012) also found support. Finally, researchers from America, Britian, China, and Turkey also found support for the homogamy hypothesis (Lucas et al., 2004). Lately, marital satisfaction has been linked to better ability to cope with PTSD by war veterans (e.g., Operation Iraq Freedom) (Ponder, Smith-Osborn, & Granvold, 2012).

Based on the brief literature review presented above, it is evident that marital satisfaction and marital quality have (a) an universal character (i.e., elements that tend to be consistent across different cultures) (Georgas et al., 2001), as well as (b) a particular character (i.e., elements and issues related exclusively to a specific country or culture, which are not necessarily relevant in other contexts). Due to the fact that the majority of extant literature on marital quality or satisfaction focuses on Western countries, we tend to consider marital quality and marital satisfaction determinants reported by researchers in the US (were most extant studies were conducted) as unarguable and generalizable. However, further empirical studies are required before

it can be ascertained that this is the case. Lately, researchers in other countries have started investigating the determinants of marital quality or satisfaction, helping us better understand how these differ across cultures. For example, marital quality was investigated in Turkey (Fisiloglu & Demir, 2000), Bolivia (Orgill & Heaton, 2005), China (Pimentel, 2000; Shek & Cheung, 2008), Cameroon (Gwanfogbe, Schumm, Smith, & Furriw, 1997), Japan (Lee & Ono, 2008), Nepal (Allendorf & Ghimire, 2013), Malaysia (Manaf & Razak, 2009), Australia (Parker, 2002), Hong Kong (Fan & Hon-Kwon, 2004), East Asia, or more specifically Taiwan (Chang, 2013; Cheng & Li, 2015) and Pakistan (Ayub & Iqbal, 2012), as well as Canada (Mitchell, 2010), etc. Each study utilized several elements to define and measure marital quality. For example, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) is a well-known American instrument frequently used in studies evaluating marital satisfaction. It has been developed in reference to an American sample, to evaluate marital satisfaction and quality. However, in this instrument, the researchers consider frequency of kissing as an indicator of marital quality. Even though this may be applicable for the Western society and the US in particular, it may be irrelevant for a non-Western country. For example, Shek and Chueng (2008) posited that kissing is not a sign of marital satisfaction in China. Similarly, Pimentel (2000) and Xu and Whyte (1990) discussed how parental approval in the choice one's partner shapes the experience of marital quality. In addition, Lee and Ono (2008) indicated that, for Japanese, quality/good marriage is that in which husband provides for the family while the wife stays at home. This, however, may be considered an outdated concept in Europe and the US. Another example of cultural

differences is that researchers in Taiwan, for example, found that marital satisfaction is linked with familiar relationships, filial piety, etc. (Chen, 2014).

Given the specificity of some determinants, Huang (2005), for example, recommended moving beyond these differences and focusing on the core theoretical differences that underpin certain postulations and certain studies. In the author's view, this will lead to a better understanding and cultural adaptation of certain universal theories and postulations. After discussing these differences in the Asian context, Huang posited that the well-known Attachment Theory could be considered as universally applicable and acceptable. Yet, due to its origin and conceptualization in the West, where the emphasis is on individualism, it could mistakenly categorize certain relationships as unhealthy. While this may be true for the West, in Eastern cultures it could be quite healthy and appropriate (Huang, 2005)

In addition to the cultural differences that are to be considered as we assess marital satisfaction as one of the variables affecting marital longevity/dissolution, it is also important to consider Rusbult's critique. The author's contribution to the discussion is notable due to challenging the assumption of most researchers that marital satisfaction could be the sole variable to measure or determine marital durability. Most researchers assume that marital satisfaction is the key to predicting longevity and persistence of marriage (Rusbult et al., 1998). However, Rusbult, the creator of the Investment Model, argued that even though it may be highly related, it may be simplistic to assume that satisfaction (love, positive affect, attraction) is the primary predictor of the decision to continue or end the relationship. This assumption, according to her, fails to answer questions such as: Why do some relationships

persist despite dissatisfaction? Why do some satisfying relationships end? How can we account for persistence in the face of ordinary fluctuations in relationships given that satisfaction ebbs and flows even in the most gratifying involvement?

Furthermore, given that tempting alternatives threaten even the most smitten partners, why do some relationships survive such fluctuations whereas others do not?

Rusbult's investment model extends such "feel good" models (i.e., the idea that, as long as we feel good in the relationship, we will stay together) by emphasizing the centrality of commitment to breakup decisions and to a broad array of major relationship processes. Despite these notable objections, Rusbult's Marital Satisfaction remains a pivotal variable in the study of marriage durability and longevity.

In sum, due to the fact that marital satisfaction is related to so many factors and is consistently studied and successfully used in so many cultures, it emerges as an important variable in the measurements of marital quality and durability. Marital and Relationship Education Program should address some of the determinants of marital satisfaction. This research project builds on these previous studies by using marital satisfaction as one of the important criteria for both predicting marital durability and measuring marital success. Extant studies in this field have already established how changes in marital satisfaction may affect divorce decisions (Fan & Hon Kwon, 2004). Finally, marital satisfaction is included as a variable in this research, as thus far, no study has explored its relationship with family and relationship competences.

## **Commitment and MRE**

The common expectation of marital couples is “to live happily ever after.” However, the assumption behind the marital vows, as well as their implications, suggests that challenges are inherent part of life in general, and are usually faced by a marital couple. Marital life is faced by unpredictability, as couples encounter unknown and unforeseen challenges as they progress through life together. Consequently, marital success depends on how committed marital couple is to one another and their willingness to face together both internal and external relationship challenges.

Among the numerous variables that could be classified as “variables of interest” in relation to marriage durability and longevity, most notable are marital satisfaction and commitment. These aspects have successfully withstood the test of investigation for decades and remain high on the list of the key factors that determine marriage longevity and durability.

While there are several definitions of marital commitment, in this research, it is understood to refer to the tendency to proceed in a marital relationship even when challenges, troubles, and problems emerge or more appealing alternatives to the marriage exist (Amato & DeBoer, 2001). Another key conceptualization and premise is the Rusbult’s Investment Model that considers three pivotal dimensions of commitment, namely satisfaction, quality of alternatives, and investment size (Rusbult et al., 1998). The Rusbult model draws from Kelley and Thibaut’s Interdependence Theory positing that, in a relationship, individuals tend to seek the maximization of rewards and minimization of costs (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). Finally, another



dimension of marital commitment is the Johnson's tripartite concept, which suggests that marital commitment has a tripartite nature, namely (a) personal commitment, which refers to the sense of wanting to stay in the relationship; (b) moral commitment, pertaining to the feeling of a moral obligation to remain in the relationship; and (c) structural commitment, which refers to feeling constrained/obliged to stay regardless of the level of personal or moral commitment and satisfaction (Johnson et al., 1999).

For a better understanding of marital commitment as a construct, it is imperative to study the determinants, predictors, and risk factors related to marital durability and commitment. Researchers found marital commitment to be linked to, influence or depend on several factors (Zang & Tsang, 2013), including women's income and marital satisfaction (Rusbult et al., 1998), belief in sanctity of marriage (Adams & Jones, 1997), and positivism (i.e., "things will improve"), as well as happiness, reward, investment, quality of alternatives, and church attendance, among others.

Marital commitment is transmitted as children observe their parental model. The socialization theory posits that children learn behaviors through observation of significant adults (Amato & De Boer, 2001). They also found that relationship skills as well as commitment are trans-generationally transmitted. Their findings coincide with those reported in other longitudinal studies, indicating that poor relationship skills jeopardize marital durability, while marital commitment could improve relationship competences.

Commitment has also been studied in relation to sacrifice as its sub-construct (Stanley & Markman, 1992; Stanley, Rhoades, & Markman, 2006). They found

sacrifice as a predictive factor of marital success and maintenance of relationship adjustment. High level of sacrifice and marital satisfaction were linked to non-distressed relationships and relationship adjustment. The authors also reported a link between sacrifice and healthy relationships.

In an earlier study, Larson and Goltz (1989) found that marital commitment was fuelled and influenced by religious homogamy, religious affiliation, and church attendance. The authors thus argued that predictors of structural commitment should include church attendance, duration of marriage, and satisfaction with marital life. In addition, empirical evidence suggests that rewarding relationships lead to commitment and vice versa.

Among variable that have been investigated as potential determinants of marital commitment, particularly notable are economic dependency, occupational, and labor dependency (referring to disproportionate division in labor across household and employment duties). The underlying assumption behind their inclusion is that commitment is partly influenced by dependency. More specifically, an unemployed wife with no income and with no marketable skills would be more constrained in her options than employed women, and would be consequently more committed to the marriage. This hypothesis has been extensively researched and its relationship with abuse was confirmed (Kalmuss & Straus, 1982; Steinmetz, 1987). Similarly, Nock (1995) confirmed its relationship with commitment. However, it is important to note the small effect size in the latter study, as well as the fact that Nock did not control for “marital satisfaction,” both of which make his conclusions questionable.

When marital commitment was investigated in relation to other variables, for example remarried couple or remarried parents, some pivotal findings were reported. Considering that, internationally, 50% of marriages end in divorce and the partners subsequently remarry in 65-75% of these cases (according to the data collected in Canada), being remarried emerges as important variable for investigation. In a recent qualitative study, Robertson and Ehrenberg (2012) investigated marital commitment among remarried couples. They posited that a person's commitment is a dynamics process that is affected by life occurrences, both inside and outside the relationship. They also asserted that commitment could be a predictor of marital satisfaction and durability. This affirmation coincides with the findings reported by Givertz, Segrin and Hanzal (2009), as well as Davis, Bird, Chaffin, Eldride (2012). Finally, Robertson and Ehrenberg observed that, in a relationship, one person's commitment tends to prompt the other person to commit, i.e., stimulate reciprocity.

In the assessment for influential factors related to marital commitment, it is also imperative to consider demographic (ethnicity, gender, education, relationship length, etc.), and cultural (i.e., incorporate findings yielded by studies conducted in other cultures, rather than relying solely on Western research) characteristics. In the US, Davis et al. (2000) investigated relationship characteristics among professional African American couples, aiming to assess the link between commitment (Rusbult Investment Model) and eight variables, namely investment, satisfaction, romantic alternatives (three established variables of the Rusbult Investment Model), equity, power, romantic ideals, physical attractiveness, and sexual relations. Their findings indicated that, for both genders, perceived investment into relationship was the most

influential factor predicting commitment. Additionally, Davis et al. (2000) reported that, for men, romantic alternatives failed to predict commitment, while equity, power, physical attractiveness, and sexual relations did not contribute in explaining commitment. For the women, the three Rusbult's model variables significantly related to the commitment; however, equity, romantic ideals, and sexual relations failed to explain commitment.

In China, researchers examined the impact of income on marital happiness and commitment among urban Chinese women. They found that women married to a partner with lower income tend to be less happy with their marital relationships. Their results also indicated that women with higher income tend to be less happy unless they possessed willingness to sacrifice and are committed to the relationship. The hypothesis that personal commitment was positively correlated with marital happiness was also supported.

In Japan, Utsunomia (2011) investigated the influence of parental marital commitment on the identity formation of Japanese university students. The study findings were interesting and indicated parental marital commitment to be influential both directly and indirectly on identity formation on adolescence.

Researchers in Turkey found parental divorce to be influential on professional women's marital commitment (Kavas & Gunduz-Hosgor, 2011). More specifically, if a woman grew up in a dysfunctional family or her parents divorced, she tends to be less patient and persistent when her marriage does not "function" properly. Interestingly, the participating couples were not aware of the role of commitment in marriage success and thus tended to seek divorce as soon as problems started to emerge. In

sum, the authors concluded that parental divorce tends to influence young couples' views on commitment and marriage negatively.

Although the contributions of the studies discussed above are noteworthy, the link between commitment and relationship or family competences has been consistently overlooked as a potential pivotal contributor to relationship durability and longevity. Consequently, marital problems could potentially be misdiagnosed by focusing only on recurrent symptoms and overlooking MRE as both potential determinant of marital meltdown and a potential tool for an effective treatment of marital problems.

In sum, MRE programs should address some determinants of marital commitment, as it is instrumental in the measurement of marital durability and longevity.

#### Underpinning MRE as a treatment and prevention program by proposing a culturally sensitive and competence-oriented MRE

Currently, marriage and relationship education is widely accepted as a credible and scientifically proven approach aimed at maximizing the potential for marital success. Hawkins, Professor of Family Life at Brigham Young University, in a comprehensive review of MRE history and research, summarized the findings of what he referred to as first generation of MRE studies, which spans over a period of 1975-2005. After reviewing 150 evaluation studies of a great variety of MRE programs delivered mostly in university, clinical, and religious settings, the author concluded that MRE is effective and has the potential to improve relationship quality for about

40-50% of participating couples, and enhances communication skills in about 50-60% of cases (Hawkins, Blanchard, Baldwin, & Fawcett, 2008).

In addition, findings of several research studies indicate that MRE remains effective even 7-12 months following its completion (Blanchard et al., 2009). There is some evidence that its benefits are felt for up to 10 years (Hahlweg & Richter, 2007). In addition, according to some researchers, inclusive divorce rate tends to decrease due to the effectiveness of MRE (Stanley et al., 2010; Stanley et al., 2006).

Even De Paulo (2010), one of the critics of MRE, referring to an analysis conducted in 2009, in which more than a 100 academic studies that evaluated the effectiveness of marriage education were examined, affirmed that they have found at least modest evidence that the programs work. Marital education programs are definitely better than “no marital education at all” (Howell, 2006; Mc Carty, 2010). However, MRE supporters have been at times referred to as “uncritical thinkers” by some journalists, including De Paulo (2010). De Paulo thus called for scientists to stick to the facts. She showed that MRE/CRE programs have also failed to provide the expected results in terms of improving the relationship and couple’s chance of happiness. However, latest evidence has shown that marriage and relationship education has the potential to contribute to a more stable relationship (Caroll & Doherty, 2003).

Considering that most of the aforementioned studies have been conducted in the US, it is evident that further investigation in other settings is needed before making universal assumptions regarding expected MRE benefits. In particular,

replication of the studies in other countries would help evaluate the cultural factors that contribute to marital discord.

Marriage and relationship education programs have existed since the 1930s (Ooms, 2005). However, it was not until the 1960s and 1970s that marital education and enrichment programs started to proliferate and were offered to couples in the US, Australia, and other Western countries (Carroll & Doherty, 2003; Ooms, 2005). Prior to these contemporary initiatives, informal marriage and relationship education was typically given.

In primitive times, men and women were prepared from childhood for their future married lives. Gender roles were clearly defined, whereby men were seen as providers and women as nurturers. Even the Bible provides some insight regarding Biblical times, when women were supposed to nurture their offspring and dedicate themselves to household tasks (Proverbs 31: 10-29; Titus 2: 3-5; Genesis 3:16). Meanwhile, man was expected to provide (1 Timothy 5:8; Genesis.3:17-19).

Later, when civilization brought economic demands that surpassed men's capacity to provide, women realized that they could also contribute financially to their family by pursuing employment outside the home. In so doing, they also became stronger participants in public society. As women were introduced to the formal labor force, their roles as nurturers and home educators were affected. As a result, modern women are expected to attend school and/or pursue a career, keep the home, raise the children, and be emotionally responsible for their marriage, while men are not held to the same standards. This new development geared toward providing additional financial support to the home has compromised marriage quality, which

could be remediated by providing MRE/CRE. In particular, in addition to being offered to married couples or those planning to marry, if MRE/CRE were offered as a part of school curriculum, this initiative could assist in early prevention and early mitigation of potential problems. However, unfortunately, most schools prepare their students for their careers, but not for parenting or the household role. Even though, lately, some schools started to include marriage and relationship courses in their curricula ( Adler Bader, Kerpelmar, Schramm, Higginbotham, & Amber, 2007; Gardner, 2001), this is still not a general practice in the US and other countries. Globally, preparation for marriage has not been part of the mainstream curriculum in most schools, which focus on preparing their students for professional careers, rather than for household and marital life. Consequently, preparation of men and women for their roles as spouses and caretakers of their offspring has been in a subtle way replaced with preparation for life in a modern and civilized world. Hence, given the limited significance marriage and family life has been afforded, it should not be a surprise that the divorce rate has been increasing in line with industrialization and civilization.

One solution to this growing problem is the creation of MRE programs. Their provision is the first step in solving the modern marriage issues, since divorce brings with it catastrophic social consequences for both the family and the community. MRE/CRE as both prevention and intervention treatment programs can remediate the lack of preparation for the parental role and provide alternative education to better prepare both men and women for their future roles as couples and parents.

That is why efforts to introduce MRE/CRE as a program with potential to increase marital success must be supported. The US was first to introduce MRE



programs. Its origins date back to clergy and community counseling, and a few college classes prior to World War II. This later led to a more systematic pastoral counseling and therapy in the two decades following the war (Stahmann & Hiebert, 1987). In the last 15 years, research studies on marriage preparation have proliferated. The convergence of scholarly consensus (Arcus, 1995; Center for Marriage and Family, 1995; Coie et al., 1993; Etzioni, 1993; Gottman, 1994; Larson, Sawyers, & Larson, 1995) regarding the potential benefits of marital and premarital education indicates the importance of MRE programs in the future. The growing popularity and interest in couples' relationships books and other material covering this topic (Gottman, 1994; Gray, 1992; Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg, 2001), national conferences such as Association for couples in Marriage Enrichment, (Dyer & Dyer, 1999), and media coverage (Coalition for Marriage, Family, and Couples Education, 1999; Gleick, 1995); Marriage movement in America) have confirmed the need for more such initiatives. They also point to the need-satisfying role played by MRE/CRE programs. However, their findings could be viewed as being applicable only in the US context, as their relevance in other countries, where culture may play a significant role in relationships, is questionable. Even though some marital education programs/inventories have been translated (e.g., FOCCUS, ENRICH, and RELATE) and subsequently implemented in some European countries (Fawcett, 2006), more work must be done in order to generalize the findings related to effectiveness of such initiatives. With respect to cultural differences and their potential role in marital success, it is imperative that further research be conducted on the effectiveness of culturally sensitive MRE/CRE programs in other countries in order to establish their

broader significance. Hence, even though some divorce determinants tend to be “universal” (e.g., women’s employment and participation in labor force, personality differences, etc.), both divorce determinants and predictors tend differ by country, ethnicity, age (life development phase, etc.) and culture, e.g., “no-fault based system” (Australia and Western countries) vs. fault based system prevalent in Korea (Hughes, 2005; Young-Ju & Tae-Hong, 2009).

The extant approaches to evaluating MRE/CRE programs scientifically have also been criticized, as most studies of this type were based on predominantly middle-class, well-educated, non-distressed couples, and the samples were often small and not randomized. Only a few studies were based on randomized clinical trials, and while the component of the courses they evaluated varied, aspects of healthy marriage were not present in most programs (PhyllisLan, 1994). Types of families were not considered in many studies either—e.g., foster families, immigrants, military families, extended families, ethnic minorities, low-income families, etc. While some recent studies included some of these aspects, more research needs to be conducted outside the US, as some of these aspects still raise a host of questions about whether and how programs designed for a relatively small number of white, middle class, committed couples can be adapted for more economically challenged and racially diverse populations (Ooms, 2005). According to some experts, it is not until these challenges are addressed that we can affirm that MRE programs really work.

Many authors advocate for replicating extant studies to confirm their findings (Fawcett et al., 2010). In The Netherlands and Antilles, no studies have been

conducted thus far where the aim was to corroborate the functionality and effectiveness of an MRE/CRE program. No culturally sensitive MRE/CRE program has been developed, nor a competence-oriented MRE program created.

Thus, given the above, the following questions must be considered as we investigate the effectiveness of MRE in the broader context: Do couples in Europe, Caribbean, Asia, Latin America, and the Netherlands face the same stressors as those living in the US? Will cultural difficulties or other specific relationship issues, when addressed, influence the outcome or the impact of MRE/CRE programs? Do economically challenged couples in other countries and cultures face the same challenges as those in the US? In particular, more studies are needed in Arabic countries, which tend to differ significantly at almost all levels, when compared to the US. All these aspects must be considered as we investigate effectiveness of MRE/CRE.

### **Cultural differences relevancy and implications**

Even though MRE has scientific foundations and has gained relatively wide acceptance, research still falls short of explaining the effect or role of cultural factors in the outcome of MRE programs. Given that culture has been shown to affect communication styles, customs, expectations, and roles within marriages (Halford et al., 2003; Stutzman, 2011), it is imperative to investigate how MRE performs when cultural factors are considered. Thus, it is important to assess the MRE results achieved in different cultures, in order for its general effectiveness to be ascertained.

The definition and understanding of culture has changed dramatically with the globalization of the world we live in and increased mobility and communication among

different social and national groups. While it has been considered and viewed as a way of accepting a person and his/her worldview (cosmovision), culture is perceived as unique, fluid and potentially changing over time (Laird, 1998, cited in Stutzman, 2011).

According to Higgins, Zheng, Liu, and Hui Sun (2002), culture exerts a strong influence on people's attitudes toward love, marriage, and sex. Findings of a study conducted by the aforementioned team, comparing 505 university students in China with 338 students in the United Kingdom, indicate that people from more conservative or conventional societies (e.g., China) are more likely to reach consensus on gender roles, adhere more strictly to traditional morality and values, and are less open about sexual freedom. Although China and Great Britain have both experienced movement toward gender equality, the gap between men and women still exists. Furthermore, compared with China, Great Britain appears to be a modern, liberal, and open society. Yet, if compared with the US or some other Northern European countries, Britain would be perceived as a traditional, conservative country. British sexual culture is still somewhat restrictive when compared to that prevalent in Germany, according to Mittag (Higgins et al., 2002). The Dutch society, when compared with other societies globally, tends to be very organized, law abiding, extremely gender equality oriented, very assertive, open, and direct (which is sometimes experienced by others as offensively direct and tactless). In the Dutch community, position and hierarchy are perceived as having a functional role, rather than reflecting one's status. Maanen and Lak among others, discussed the theories of Geert Hofstede and Fons Trompenaars—two experts on culture and economy. After comparing the Dutch and

the American society, they identified nine theoretical differences, including (a) Universalism vs. Particularism; (b) Power distance—in America the boss is superior, and in the Dutch society, there is more the feeling of “you are among equals”; (c) titles (such as Dr.) are not used in the community; (d) Individualism vs. Collectivism—both cultures are individualistic; and (e) Basic attitudes toward time, etc. Schmidt (2013) point other differences out such as: American tend to be more goal oriented while Dutch tend to be more consensus driven, American tend to take decision faster and maintain that decision while Dutch tend to take longer to make decision and depends on growing insight. Other authors, such as Windenfelt (1996) also discussed cultural influences and compared the US with the Dutch, reporting that couples in both societies tend to first cohabit, have children later in life, and usually get married only when starting family. Van Widenfelt, Hosman, Schaap, & Van der Staak (1996) also discussed previous findings on c

ultural differences between the Netherlands and the US, (e.g. in a family context) such as the mean age at first marriage, gender roles, etc. They revealed that Dutch male partners tend to be more feminine, and thus hold fewer sex-role stereotypes than their American counterparts. Other authors, such as Celenk and Van der Vijver (2013), explained that Dutch families are mainly nuclear, more expressive, and hold tolerance and personal freedom of choice as a core family value, both in relation to individuals and relationships. In the Netherlands, cohabitation precedes marriage in a 90% of cases and families tend to be less collective and less extended family oriented (Georgas et al., 2006). Moreover Van den Troost (2005) found that familialism has also decreased, concluding that cultural,

ethnic, and race differences among couples could significantly influence their marriage processes and marital success. It is common knowledge among professionals that this must be addressed when two persons are planning to get married. They must be committed to working on bridging the gaps and compromising if they are to avoid experiencing marital discord. When MRE programs are being designed, authors should consider cultural differences; thus, topics covered must be adapted in line with the needs of that particular society, not just translated to the local language.

The Dutch Caribbean culture could be defined as a cross between individualism and collectivism. It is also highly extended family oriented (contact with extended family is encouraged and maintained), and is more filial piety oriented than the mainstream and native Dutch, with the evident need for work on gender equity (i.e., traditional sex role attitudes are still dominant, with the involvement of women in decision making processes *sometimes* limited to those pertaining to home and household affairs). In short, there is less equalitarian division of spousal roles. On the other hand, romantic relationships are initiated by the couples (i.e., not family-initiated) and are companionship oriented. Despite its prominent African history, consanguineous marriages are considered outrageous and unacceptable. Endogamy is not a predominant practice, as interracial, interethnic relationships are widely accepted. Nonetheless, due to the limited accessibility of other groups (due to the logistic location of the island), locals tend to marry locals. One notable difference in comparison to the Dutch Caucasian culture is the need to seek parental approval for a relationship. In the Dutch Caribbean, Holland remains the most influential country,

followed by the US and Latin America. Culinary customs show strong influences of the Netherlands, Africa, Latin America, and Middle East. Core family values emphasize respect for senior members, reciprocal parent-child care, being loyal to and participative in local traditions, supporting complementary views of gender roles, whereby men provide and women nurture (i.e., women are primarily in charge of childrearing and domestic household chores despite holding a career), and demonstration of unconditional love to children are considered pivotal. Marital conflicts tend to be approached indirectly, rather than taking a more confrontational approach, typical of most European societies. Georgas and colleagues investigated the relationship among culture, structural aspects of the nuclear and extended family, and functional aspects of the family. Their study focused on 16 different cultures and was conducted with a sample of 2,587 university students as their participants. The students' countries or origin included Bulgaria ( $N = 57$ ), Canada ( $N = 328$ ), China ( $N = 162$ ), Cyprus ( $N = 180$ ), Czech Republic ( $N = 189$ ), Germany ( $N = 100$ ), Greece ( $N = 280$ ), Hong Kong ( $N = 96$ ), India ( $N = 167$ ), Mexico ( $N = 589$ ), The Netherlands ( $N = 125$ ), Serbia ( $N = 183$ ), Turkey ( $N = 325$ ), the United Kingdom ( $N = 104$ ), Ukraine ( $N = 94$ ), and the USA ( $N = 108$ ). The three contextual patterns, or universal prototypes of family found by Georgas et al. are apparently also present in the Dutch Caribbean families, namely interdependence (i.e., co-dependence with extended family with overall material and emotional interdependence), independence (nuclear family separate and functions independently both emotionally and materially), and emotional interdependence (Georgas et al., 2001).

For Dutch Caribbean couples, marital satisfaction tends to be related to interpersonal relationship satisfaction, mutual provision capability by both genders (rather than sole traditional role compliance), and pragmatic/functional aspects of the relationship. See Appendix T for a brief discussion of some cultural differences of Dutch Caribbean individuals versus European and US, and some pragmatic aspects and implications of these differences.

### **Competence-oriented vs. skill-oriented MRE programs**

Many MRE programs tend to be skill-oriented and move beyond the sharing of information and knowledge. Upon closer scrutiny, experts still see more information being facilitated than activity being suggested to promote development of skills and competences. In the business and educational world, these disciplines moved away from “skill concepts” to “competence concepts.” Skills are limited to expressions of what students and managers must have in order to perform a job competently and establish strategic goals. Skills are required to perform certain aspects of a job; however, managers and teachers tend to be evaluated on achievements, rather than solely on certain ability. The terms *skills* and *competencies* are often used interchangeably; however, they are not necessarily synonymous. While competencies may refer to sets of skills, it is an umbrella term that includes behaviors and knowledge, whereas skills are specific learned activities that may be part of a broader context (or a part of a competency). When explaining the difference between skills and competences, Oman (2013) explained that problem solving could be considered as a competency that requires several skills, knowledge, and behaviors, to be



performed well. Event planning could be considered a skill, because it can be taught to anyone with the ability to learn the several steps that must be considered when planning an event. Still, the hard skills needed for event planning can be part of an overall competency, such as leadership. Communication could be considered as a competence, which requires the skills to listen, paraphrase, interpret body language, understand cultural diversity, express feelings competently, and behave with patience. In the business world, communication, as competency, may include, for example, skills required to make good presentations, etc.

In short, being able to present well is a skill needed in order to possess the competency of communication. Following a review of a wide range of related literature, Vathanophas and Thai-ngam (2007), of the University of Mahidol, defined competency as

An underlying characteristic of an individual that is causally related to criterion-reference effective and/or superior performance in a job or situation. Job competency is a set of behavior patterns that a job incumbent needs to bring to a position in order to perform its tasks and functions with competence (p. 4).

Another insightful definition of competence is that it implies particular cohesion of *knowledge, traits, skills, and abilities*. Knowledge involves understanding facts and procedures. On the other hand, traits are personality characteristics (e.g., self-control, self-confidence) that predispose a person to behave or respond in a certain way. Skill is the capacity to perform specific actions (a person's skill is a function of both knowledge and the particular strategies used to apply knowledge). Abilities, according to experts, are the attributes that a person has inherited or acquired through previous experiences and brings to a new task (Landy, 1985; Lane & Ross, 1998).

University of Minnesota Humphrey School of Public Affairs (1995) presented a list that makes a clear distinction between skills and competences. According to this work, General Competencies include, for example, (a) organizational leadership, (b) management, (c) collaboration, and (d) innovation, etc. In order to develop one of these competences, such as organizational leadership or management, one must possess skills, such as strategic planning, effective communication, computer, literacy, etc.

As previously discussed, the Family Competence Training Model is based on the premise that 12 general relationship competences are important contributors to the relationship quality and marital satisfaction, and can affect the level of commitment and durability of relationship. Each one of these competences includes dimensions, such as knowledge, attitudes, skills, and traits. For example, the first competence—*Leadership, capacity to commit and maintain a relationship as it undergoes different phases*—would include *knowledge* of the different stages or phases that family and relationship undergoes, would require the couple to develop an *attitude* that would include commitment to remain in and maintain a marriage despite challenges, and turn toward each other instead of from each other in challenging time, as well as *skills* that include problem solving ability and capacity to pursue and maintain prior established objective and goals in mind. Thus, as the couple weathers through challenges, both individuals transform into more mature beings as they successfully and happily advance toward a more rewarding future. In terms of *traits*, both partners are expected to develop self-control, patience, maturity, and other virtues that enable them to be happy in whatever circumstances arise. A

couple that possesses and/or develops these 12 competences will thus increase the likelihood of enjoying a long-lasting relationship. These 12 pivotal and critical competences are:

1. *Leadership, capacity to commit and maintain a relationship as it undergoes different phases.*
2. *Effective management of emotions (i.e., emotional literacy), possessing stability and emotional/social intelligence, and the ability to keep love alive.*
3. *Adaptability and foresight*, which implies being able to manage and cope in a competent way with the stages families undergo and the relationship life cycle, as well as ability to anticipate and deal with challenges and potential stressful situations.
4. *Family management and leadership*. This implies being able to create functional structure, assign tasks, and optimize the internal functioning.
5. *Ability to understand and capacity to deal successfully with different personalities.*
6. *Competent communication and problem solving capacity.*
7. *Management of gender differences.*
8. *Ability to foster, stimulate, and nurture healthy family characteristics.*
9. *Successful financial and/or resource management.*
10. *Capacity to consistently satisfy the partner sexually and manage intimacy.*
11. *Parenting capability.*
12. *Mastery of spirituality.*

## **Establishing empirical procedures and protocol for measuring the impact of the New MRE**

Development of an MRE program and measurement of its impact is pivotal especially for subsequent dissemination purposes. Even though standard protocols for this purpose are sparse, some authors and experts in the marital relationship field made some salient contributions and have proposed very beneficial and useful recommendations. For example, Markman and Rhoades (2013) suggested that developers should (a) explore and assess the population needs (Higgibothan Henderson, & Adler-Beader, 2007; Markman & Rhoades, 2013); (b) develop, use, and adapt a pilot program; (c) use a pre-post, no control group design, to explore possible effects over time; (d) perform the quasi-experimental study first, before proceeding with the randomized clinical trial; and (e) disseminate the study findings (Markman & Rhoades, 2013; Markman et al., 2004).

Stagner et al. (2003) proposed a protocol for a systemic review of impact of marriage and relationship programs, which is inspiring as both a model and a professional tool. It includes (a) establishing the study type that would be most beneficial (for example, experimental studies should be conducted when the goal is to obtain empirically proven results); (b) focus on participants, i.e., determine the participants that the study will be focused on, such as heterosexual, adjusted vs. distressed family, etc. (c) base the assessment on the type of interventions; and (d) define the type of outcome expected. Performing a thorough literature review prior to the development of program is also imperative. Naturally, the resource search should include the Internet, government agencies, research organizations, professional associations, information services agencies, faith-based groups, universities and

foundations, etc. In addition, manual searching and professional contacts are also considered significant endeavors in the attempt to gather comprehensive information on the phenomenon of interest. Data management is another aspect deemed of high importance and typically includes data collection and analysis, which may include computing the effect size, measuring the mean effect, management of missing data, homogeneity analysis, moderator's influence, fixed or random effect model analysis, and sensitivity analysis.

Hawkins, Carrol, Doherty, & Willoughby (2004) proposed a comprehensive theoretical framework for Marital Education Program designers, aptly named the Comprehensive Framework for Marriage and Relationship Education Model. In so doing, the authors attempted to provide marriage educators with the tools to think thoroughly, systematically, and creatively about opportunities to strengthen marriages thorough education. Their model draws attention to the elements of content, intensity (proper dosage), method (i.e., type of teaching/learning process), timing (appropriate schedule), setting, target, delivery, and their implications for MRE.

Even though neither competence-oriented nor culturally sensitive MRE are addressed in terms of how to develop and measure their impact, the general guidelines provided help new researchers to explore the gap (mostly by trial and error approach) as they develop pilots and definitive versions of their measurement instruments.

Bernal (2006) contributed to the intervention development discussion by adding the cultural adaptation element. The author considered context as the hallmark of the family system approach, positing that culture is a logical aspect of

family intervention programs. He is not alone in concluding that treatment intervention research is in urgent need of improvement when developing, adapting, and testing novel approaches with diverse populations (Bernal, 2006; Bernal & Scharorrón-del Río, 2001). The development of intervention treatments is particularly important given that demographics are changing globally and many countries are facing immigration, making integration and interchange with other cultures imperative/unavoidable. In the US, by the year 2050, according to the estimates made by Passel and Cohn (2008), racial and ethnic minority groups will constitute 82% of the total population. However, few treatments and interventions have been tested with culturally diverse groups. The aforementioned projection implies extreme need for understanding cultural differences, designing empirically grounded interventions, and being able to deal with different cultural needs in the US alone.

Bernal proposed a conceptual framework that could be helpful when developing treatments and conducting intervention development research. His framework provides a good overview of the complex process involved in the development, testing, and dissemination of treatment. Three major dimensions are discussed, namely (a) conceptualization, (b) development, and (c) testing the intervention. Bernal's suggestions for adopting the framework include the following steps:

1. Basic research, which should precede treatment and development of intervention programs.
2. Intervention development, including refinement and adaptations.
3. Testing the intervention efficacy.

4. Deployment, dissemination of findings, and practice research.

5. Review and integration of findings.

This research project could be considered an intervention treatment that was conceptualized and developed and is now in the testing phase, focusing on the evaluation of treatment viability by assessing its impacts. Prior to this stage, the needs of couples in the Dutch Caribbean were assessed/examined via exploratory research.

#### Need assessment for development of program

In the pilot study, which was conducted in the Netherlands as well as in the Dutch Caribbean, in addition to couples, professionals working in the mental health field and religious clerics were also approached for their input.

The amount of 25 couples that took part in the pilot study were 15 assessment questions were asked. These questions included: What are the most common problems you as couple face? What would be a deal breaker in your relationship? What is the most important need you have? What are the growth areas in your relationship (areas you need to improve)? What are your preferences with respect to the MRE programs? Additionally, fourteen mental health professional were asked to identify the most common problems and challenges that couples who approached them for help face. This was performed in an qualitative informal interview approach. For example some of the questions were: at what life developmental stage are most couples that approach them for help? What are demographic characteristics of couples that approach them for help? Are there gender differences in the attitudes of couples who approach them for help (i.e., do man ask for help more frequently than

women)? What are the most frequent and challenging problems couples face? Other content-oriented questions. Additionally, eight, religious clerics were asked almost the same questions as those put forth to the professionals. Finally, six psychologist were interviewed using the same format as the mental health professionals.

While developing treatment and intervention programs has been discussed by several researchers, instrument development is another important dimension that requires careful consideration. The instrument for measuring the impact of a program is as important as its development, because it allows evaluation of the program effectiveness. When discussing the development of an instrument for PPI (patient and public involvement in health and social care), Staniszewska and colleagues suggested some key aspects that could be applied to developing instruments for family or couples treatment and intervention measurement instruments: (a) proposing a theoretical model or framework; (b) developing a sensitive instrument targeting a specific audience; (c) ensuring content validity (judgment of whether an instrument addresses all the relevant or important domains (Streiner & Norman, 2008); (d) having a clear understanding of the extent of the impact the instrument is measuring; and (e) understanding effects on specific groups and in various circumstances..

Not all researchers propose development of evidence-based intervention treatments or MRE. Some advocate for cultural adaptations of evidence-based family interventions to strengthen families, rather than focusing on creating new cultural programs. For example, Kumpfer, Magalhaes, & Xie (2012) posited that culturally adapting programs, such as EBP, is the best route to positive family outcomes, rather than creating a new unproven programme. This postulation must be challenged,



considering the international needs and variety of cultures worldwide. The challenges when adapting a program include: (a) culturally relevant language adaptation, considering colloquialisms, examples, presenter effect advantages, etc.; (b) culturally relevant accepted norms/values and role behaviour consideration; (c) culturally and context appropriate systems providers; (d) culturally relevant definitions of undesirable behaviors; (e) potential compromise of the theoretical and conceptual integrity; (f) the original aim and population created for, etc.; (g) assessment of what is universal and what is not; (h) rigorous testing of the culturally adapted version, with a control group and random sample design, etc.; and (i) validity of the measurement instrument and the program, among other issues. When these aspects are carefully considered, the balance is usually tipped toward creating a new culturally relevant MRE rather than making major adaptations or translating the existing programs. This approach minimizes the possibility of type I error (i.e., potential for rejecting a valid null hypothesis). Conversely, there is a chance that the researchers would make a false claim that MRE/CRE works by increasing marital satisfaction, relationship commitment, and increasing level of mastery of family competences, even though the “real evidence” does not support that assertion (as the researchers have not measured what is really important for couples in that particular culture). It is also important to note that, not only should increasing confidence level or establishing acceptable level of alpha be seen as possible ways to minimize possibility of type I error, but the focus should be on proper design, taking in consideration pivotal design issues as well. Additionally, not considering cultural issues properly could also lead to type II error, i.e., accepting the null hypothesis and rejecting the alternative

hypothesis. This would result in stating that MRE/CRE does not work (or has only a moderate effect), while the research design may have had flaws and has only been translated with some slight modifications instead of considering relevant cultural aspects that may influence the results.

### **Importance and objective of marital education program**

MRE/CRE is the provision of information designed to help individuals and couples achieve long-lasting, happy, and successful marriages. It aims to impart knowledge, stimulate changes in attitude and teach the skills and behaviors needed to conduct successful intimate relationships (Myrick, Ooms & Patterson, 2007; Ooms, 2005). It provides training to couples by means of courses, seminars, or counseling, assisting them in addressing potential problems and developing the knowledge, attitudes, expectations, and characteristics that are vital to creating a satisfying relationship (Boyle, 2010). For the purpose of this study, MRE is considered to include premarital education programs. However, the emphasis is on the broader sense of the meaning of MRE, defined as an attempt of the professional to reduce marital dissatisfaction, marital instability, and the high divorce rate that dominates in many cultures.

MRE/CRE is important for several reasons:

1. It helps relationships succeed, by allowing the couples to acknowledge that relationships require work, addresses common marital problems, and builds a supportive environment (Scott, Trent, & Shen, 2001).

2. It significantly strengthens marriages and its impact tends to persist through a couple's lifetime (Centre for Marriage and Family, 1995).

3. It prevents escalation of problems that typically require costly couples therapy and mitigates the collateral damage caused by distressed couples. Between 80% and 90% of divorcing couples in the US report that they have not consulted with a therapist (Halford et al., 2003). Thus, it appears that MRE is the only chance for many couples to prevent marriage problems.

4. MRE helps remediate problems and distress symptoms in early stages. It is probably easier for couples experiencing no or little distress to enhance their marriage than it is for those with severe relational problems to alter entrenched negative patterns (Larson, 2004).

5. Most couples experiencing problems do not seek professional help because they fear that treatment may do more damage, as it would not work, or would violate their privacy. Some even fear being stigmatized as a dysfunctional family unit.

6. MRE increases marital satisfaction, contributes to better conflict-resolution skills, strengthens spousal commitment, and increases expressions of positive feelings and affections (Dion, 2005; Faircloth, Schermerhorn, Mitchell, Cummings, & Cummings, 2011; Yilmaz & Kalkan, 2010).

7. It increases marital success by at least 30%, compared to the rates experienced by couples that do not participate in such programs.

8. It tends to improve communication, dedication, and commitment between the partners, thus improving overall relationship quality.

9. MRE prevents divorce and/or bad marriages (i.e., unhealthy or dysfunctional marriages) from occurring, by helping couples recognize their incompatibility prior to making the commitment (Doherty & Carroll, 2007).

10. It has a significant complementary role in relationship development. “Choosing the right partner” has until now been considered the sole factor in lasting relationships. However, research shows that possessing the appropriate skills is as important as choosing one’s partner wisely. In other words, choosing one’s partner wisely is as important as being skilled in conducting marriage, because marriage is a skill-based relationship (McCarty, 2010).

11. MRE significantly improves consensus, satisfaction, affection, and cohesion for both distressed and non-distressed participants (Eisenberg et al., 2011).

12. By improving relationship skills, MRE tends, according Falciglia and Schindler (2010), to produce many positive long-term effects, including reduced health cost, teen pregnancy, poverty, crime, incarceration, school drop-out rates, and other social maladies, which are related to distressed and divorced families.

13. It helps families weather financial challenges (Eisenberg & Falciglia, 2010).

14. It improves sex lives of couples attending MRE programs (Eisenberg & Peluso, 2011).

### **Types and models of marital and premarital education programs vs. competence-based programs**

Even though MRE programs have been proliferating in the US, partially due to government funding, their effectiveness is still being questioned by some researchers.

Livingston (2006) argued with resentment against the consideration of MRE programs as the only effective approach to better or improved marital adjustment.

In a quasi-experimental design study, the brief Integrative Couples Counselling Model (Young & Long, 2007) was compared with the conventional MRE program *PREPARE/ENRICH* (Olson & Olson, 2000). No significant differences were found in the level of change in marital adjustment scores between the two treatment groups, not even when follow-up analysis of co-variance (ANCOVA) was conducted on marital adjustment using demographics as co-variants. Gottman (1994), Parrot (2003), and Young (2005) and Livingston (2006), are also among the renowned experts on marriage and relationships who do not favor the sole MRE approach, advocating instead for support and combination model (i.e., marital education programs that include both counseling and marital education classes). While Livingstone's proposal and research suggest the potential benefits of such combination, other authors posit that the MRE approach is more effective than any other available model.

Busby, Ivey, Harris, and Ates (2007) conducted a study, whereby they compared the effectiveness of three models of premarital education: (a) a workbook-only self-directed program; (b) a therapist-directed (unstructured) program; and (3) an assessment-based (RELATE) relationship enhancement program. The *RELATE* program was employed because it was deemed the most effective of the three inventories that received substantial attention in the research literature (Halford, 2004)—Facilitating Open Couple Communication Understanding and Study (FOCCUS); PRE-marital Preparation and Relationship Enhancement (PREPARE) by

Olson, Fournier, and Druckman (1996); and RELATE (Relationship Evaluation) by Busby, Holman, & Taniguchi, (2001). From these three, according to Busby et al. (2007) and Larson et al. (1995), RELATE, and their previous version PREP\_M, offered the most thorough coverage of all the domains (e.g., emotional readiness, family background, effective communication, conflict resolutions, etc.) that are predictive of marital outcomes. The results of the comparison among the three models revealed significant differences in their effectiveness at the six-month follow-up. The assessment-based approach (RELATE) appeared to result in more influence on relationship success, compared to the therapist-directed and self-directed approaches. This was particularly the case in relation to specific problem areas, such as financial matters, communication, heaving and rearing children, decisions on who is in charge, time spent together, etc. Moreover, it was better than the therapist-directed program at improving communication and relationship satisfaction. According to the researchers, the participants indicated that the most helpful aspect of these programs was the opportunity to discuss previously ignored issues, along with the improvements in communication patterns.

In addition to this study, in February of 2005, the most rigorous of all the reviews to date was conducted by a team at the Urban Institute (Ooms, 2005). The team conducted an extremely extensive and systematic search and review that included all the relevant studies, obtaining nearly 13,000 abstracts of research on marriage education, counseling, and therapy programs. Of these, 500 were selected for full review. Only 39 of these evaluations passed the rigorous screening for inclusion in the detailed meta-analysis, such as goal of intervention, counterfactual

treatment (whereby each study must have at least one treatment group and one no-treatment or wait-list control group), study quality (random sample selection or high quality quasi-experimental design), acceptable attrition rate (no more than 40 percent of the original sample, which was pre-and post-tested), etc. (Anderson-Reardon, Stagner, Macomber, & Murray, 2005).

It is important to underline that the aforementioned study was not restricted to MRE programs, as just over half of the programs chosen were based on counseling and therapy offered to the distressed couples. The authors concluded that their findings “support evidence from previous narrative reviews and meta-analysis that a marriage and relationship program provides benefits for the couples they serve” (Ooms, 2005, p. 23). Even though some cautious researchers considered it premature to conclude that extant studies provide adequate assessment of the field, it is evident that there are indications that MRE/CRE has the potential to improve and contribute to sustainable marriages. Without trivializing the contribution of counseling programs and laboratory investigations, it may still be safe to conclude that these approaches shed light that improves various MRE/CRE programs. Thus, such alternative models must not be considered as concurrent, but rather partners in the process of educating couples for sustainable marriage. With this in mind, this study utilized the MRE/CRE approach as a preventive as well as intervention treatment program, including certain ideas of the counseling approach, when designing a culturally sensitive MRE model for the Netherlands and the Dutch Caribbean. Additionally, competence-based MRE synchronize better with the Dutch Caribbean culture than skilled-based model. The inclusion of attitude change aspect is a pivotal

asset that competence-based MRE has. More information and further discussion of the MRE model is given in Appendix B. The existing MRE have been classified under 12 major models in order to avoid discussion of more than 200 individual programs.

### **Theoretical framework for the MRE employed in this study**

The marital education program developed as a part of the present study is based on an eclectic theoretical framework, rather than undergirded by any sole theory. The blind man and the elephant metaphor and a systemic and comprehensive literature review approach has guided the researcher toward the framework adopted here (Daigneault, 2013). This metaphor is an Indian metaphor used to illustrate a wide range of truths and misconceptions. Broadly, the parable implies that, while one's subjective or even objective experience can be true, such perception or experience is inherently limited by its failure to account for other truths or a totality of truth. For this reason, more than one theory forms the array of theories that underpin the family competence training model was considered. Detailed information regarding specific theoretical framework that underpins each competence is given in Appendix C, Table 1-12. Furthermore, the systemic or family systems theory (Asen, 1997; Burnham, 2010; Johnson, 2010), as well as the comprehensive framework for marriage education (Hawkins et al., 2004), were the most dominant theories used, among other relevant approaches, as a theoretical lens for the initial elaboration of the MRE/CRE adopted in this study.

The Comprehensive Framework for Marriage and Relationship Education Model (Hawkins et al., 2004) attempted to provide marriage educators with the tools



to think thoroughly, systematically, and creatively about opportunities to strengthen marriages through education. It draws attention to the elements of content, intensity (proper dosage), method (i.e., type of teaching/learning process), timing (appropriate schedule), setting, target, and delivery, and their implications for MRE.

Systemic Theory Model examines the way components of a system interact with one another to form a whole. Rather than just focusing on each of the separate parts, a systemic approach perceives the value of the connectedness, the interrelations, and the interdependence of all the constituent parts. It allows one to see how a change in one component of the system affects its other components, which in turn affects the initial component and the system as a whole. The application of the systems perspective has particular relevance to the study of family, as families are comprised of individual members sharing several living conditions and emotional bonds with each other. More specifically, family is characterized by some degree of emotional and physical/biological interdependence and the so-called systemic meta-theory developed by Von Bertalanffy (1968), as the foundation of the systemic theory, is highly applicable.

Von Bertalanffy (1968) described a universally valid model that can be applied to diverse systems with common laws and general assumptions. He referred to systemic process that gives rise to interactions that are different and more complex than linear causal effects between two single entities. Every system has its own internal order, which maintains itself and all of its participants in a sort of equilibrium. If this balance is disturbed, whether in a family (by, for example, children maturing to become adolescents or young adults and moving out of the parental home), or within

a couple's relationship (e.g., through one partner losing his/her job), the system becomes out of balance and its position becomes threatened. As a buffer against this threat, at least one person develops symptoms, such as behavioral disorders, psychological disturbance, or illness.

The premise that this research is based on is that couples or family members should know how the family works better, what may guarantee its existence and sustainability, what phases or stages families undergo, what the aim of a relationship or family is, as well as what nurtures and threatens the system. The underlying assumption is that problems tend to emerge due to lack of knowledge pertaining to the effect of family members' actions on the system or each other. Lack of knowledge regarding competences couple or family members should have in order for the family to be sustainable and durable tends to undermine durability and healthiness of a relationship. However, mastery of relationship competences will increase and maintain high level of satisfaction and commitment, which are related to relationship durability and sustainability. The content of the Culturally Sensitive MRE program geared toward the development of competences is based on a new "Competence Training Model" which was empirically tested in this research. This Competence Training Model will be discussed further later on in this thesis.

### **Dosage**

The proposed dosage of the MRE program in question is moderate, i.e., 9-20 hours. Research shows that moderate dosage programs produce stronger effects on relationship quality and communication skills than do low dosage program lasting up to 8 hours (Hawkins & Fellows, 2011). The lack of precedence and total absence of

antecedent studies in Dutch Caribbean regarding assessing the population preference on dosage lead us to propose the established dosage that worked in other countries.

### **Instructional method**

Even though marital education programs have proliferated in recent years, not much effort has been devoted to delivering instruction using the Internet and other latest technologies. Three most common instructional methods that have been used to facilitate marital and premarital education thus far are the self-directed approach, the marital counseling or therapist modality, and the classroom (structure) modality. Several studies have recently been conducted to investigate the effectiveness of these three categories of facilitation or deliverance of knowledge. The workbook-only self-directed program, the therapist-directed (unstructured) program, and the assessment-based (RELATE) relationship enhancement program were compared in an experimental research conducted by Busby et al. (2007).

Busby and his team reported a significant difference in the effectiveness of assessment-based program, in comparison to the remaining two approaches at a 6-month follow-up. Its advantage stemmed from the fact that a professional could assess and then instruct the group by asking each participant to answer questions, etc. Even though part of the RELATE is delivered using the Internet, most of the marital and premarital education facilitators tend to overlook the benefits of using state of the art technology.

Due to the widespread Internet usage, it has become a platform for social networking and interactive communication for almost all generations. It is proving to

be a convenient and effective tool for communicating positively with others, irrespective of their geographical location. It is undisputable that the advent of Internet has revolutionized peoples' lives, and the way we work, learn, communicate, and conduct commercial activities. Owing to its popularity, the Internet holds the potential to transform and shape the nature of traditional written correspondence and verbal interaction. However, there is still some skepticism regarding its effectiveness as an instructional tool, in comparison to traditional modes of communication, counseling, and teaching.

However, given the widespread Internet access, it is logical to propose online training or online instructional method for MRE programs as a potential valid alternative to the currently available models. The validity of the proposal is supported by the extant literature review, which revealed numerous studies that have investigated the effectiveness of Internet-based counseling and therapy. The findings of these studies suggest that, within certain specific areas of mental illness, online delivery has been effective in treating certain symptoms. Success of Internet-based therapy has been reported in treating depressive disorders (Christensen, Griffiths, & Jorm, 2004; Robertson, Smith, Castle & Tannenbaum, 2006), as well as some anxiety disorders (Kenardy, McCafferty, & Rosa, 2003).

Numerous studies of online learning effectiveness reveal no significant differences between online learning/instruction and traditional learning. For example, Russel (1999) has been monitoring this dispute between online learning and traditional learning since 1999, noting "no significant difference phenomenon" (p. X). On his website, Russel presented 355 studies, summaries, reports, and papers that

found no significant differences between learning outcomes of students learning online or over distance, and those learning in traditional classical or classroom form (Russell, 1999; Swam, 2003).

In another study, Maki, Maki, Patterson, and Whittaker (2000) conducted a two-year-long quasi-experimental study where undergraduate students were compared with respect to their learning styles—online learning vs. traditional classroom. The authors found that online students outperformed their counterparts. However, the dispute persists, and some researchers, such as Brown and Liedholm (2002), still advocate focusing on traditional learning modes. The authors conducted a study entitled *Can web courses replace the classroom?* whereby the microeconomics students who learned conventionally significantly outperformed their online counterparts. Nonetheless, such results are still in minority (Swam, 2002). Several studies that are more recent reported that students who took all or part of their courses online performed better on average than those taking the same course through traditional face-to-face instruction. Moreover, the effect sizes were greater for studies in which the online instruction was collaborative (i.e., instructor-directed) than for those where online learners worked alone. This finding was published in a report of the US Department of Education, entitled *Evaluation of the Evidence-based Practices in the online learning: A Meta-Analysis and Review of Online Learning Studies* (Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones, 2010), which was based on a study investigating more than a thousand online learning courses.

This development makes it interesting to attempt to design and implement online MRE courses and compare the results with those achieved through traditional

models, in order make a recommendation with regard to which instructional method could offer better results. However, such an undertaking is beyond the scope of this research project. From the point of view of the author, however, these methods should not necessarily replace each other, as it is likely that they could be complementary. The use of social media is the new trend in the field of education, as it allows reaching wider audiences. Thus, it is likely that MRE would benefit from exploring online delivery.

Considering the contributions and propositions of preceding investigations that posit the effectiveness of manualized MRE approach, this research has been limited to the workshop delivery mode.

### **Marriage and relationship education program content**

The content of MRE programs is of paramount importance for successful training and for equipping couples with the pertinent tools that would enable them to develop a healthy and successful relationship. However, little effort has been invested into developing an integrative conceptual framework of marriage education. As previously noted, Hawkins et al. (2004) provided marriage educators with a framework, a map, and a set of concepts that would help them think systematically and creatively about intervention opportunities designed to strengthen marriage.

Content is one of seven educational dimensions to be included in MRE programs. Researchers also draw attention to the importance of intensity (dosage) of the programs; methods (how does learning occur); timing (when does learning occur); setting (where does the instruction or training take place); target (who receives the

training); delivery (how is the training disseminated); and content (what is taught). Researchers also point out the potential value of developing marriage education programs with greater specificity in content, timing, and target. Despite extensive explanation of the seven dimensions noted above, a list of the most common, universal and potentially useful topics to be included in the MRE program content was overlooked. However, the comprehensive framework model is a significant contribution to the field, as it helps provide insight into how and what to consider as we create or employ MRE programs.

Even though stepfamily couples are growing in number and face unique challenges, no attention has been dedicated nor program provided for them. In response to this oversight, Adler-Beader et al. (2010) provided a conceptual framework for MRE programs specifically designed for stepfamily couples, focusing on the socio-economic context. However, this conceptual framework does not discuss potential content that benefits these family units.

Most MRE programs focus on popular topics, such as communication, conflict resolution, managing finances, etc. Given that most couples face their most serious challenges during the first five years of marriage, some programs tend to focus on other problem areas that emerge during this period: (a) balancing job and family; (b) intimacy and sexuality; (c) finances; (d) communication; (e) problems with parents and in-laws; and (f) lack of time together, among others. Even though this expansion in the program focus is positive, it is not appropriate to base MRE programs solely on inferences from negative experiences of couples or failed relations (Nimtz, 2011). MRE programs must also base their topics on research conducted on successful

marriages. Schmitz and Schmitz (2008) have conducted extensive qualitative research, interviewing couples for about 25 years, and have discovered seven secrets that help couples to form successful and durable relationships. Some of these results overlap with findings of some quantitative research studies. In their book *Building a love that lasts; Seven Surprising Secrets of Successful Marriages*, Charles and Elizabeth Schmitz pointed out seven key factors that may guarantee a successful and healthy marriage:

1. *It takes two to tango*. Here, they explain the importance of “fusion” (a term that they use to discuss the idea of intimacy; i.e., the concept of becoming one and having real intimacy. Marriage works best if the partners move with synergy and become a unit—a “we” instead of “you and me”—in all aspects of life.

2. *No sacred cow communication system*. The authors underline the importance of intimate communication—talk about everything and anything.

3. *Golden role treatment*. Here, they underscore that whatever one wishes for him/herself, he/she should do it for the other. In other words, the partners should strive to make the other happy and to show respect.

4. *Your body is your castle*. Here, they discuss the idea that couple should care mutually for each other. They should try to look their best for the other, as well as care for their partner’s health, etc.

5. *Financial unity*. Couple should have everything in common—no “my money” and “your money” concept.

6. *Loving touch*. Here, the authors stress the idea that successful and healthy couples tend to touch each other on a daily basis.



7. *Beyond boring.* Couples should be innovative, avoid routine and predictability. These aspects, together with other elements, are present in healthy families and should be part of every MRE program.

### **Family competence training model: A proposed theoretical framework for content**

As mentioned in chapter one, the second aim of this research is to provide an empirically tested checklist with critical competences that healthy, highly-satisfied, and successful families tend to possess, which also contribute to the sustainability and longevity of marriage. In sum, the goal is to establish the key competences that tend to propel marriages toward durability and longevity. The content of the MRE discussed in this research project is based on twelve competences comprising the training model. As previously mentioned, this new training model is titled *Family Competence Training Model* and is proposed as treatment and intervention program for families/couples that face challenges, or those that want to prevent emergence of problems and marital meltdown.

First, competence in this research project entails the cohesion of knowledge, attitude, and ability (skills). Second, in developing and proposing the *Family Competence Training Model*, the researcher for this study theorized and assumed that marital satisfaction, durability, healthiness, longevity, and sustainability could be the results of marital relationship training courses. The Family Competence Training Model is built on the notion that important elements, such as communication, financial management, family development stages, and others discussed herein, are critical for marital satisfaction and high level of commitment and durability.

The researcher developed this model based on the assumption that successful and healthy families tend to possess and display certain pivotal qualities or competences, which are major contributors to the health, satisfaction, sustainability, and durability of a relationship. For this reason, the MRE/CRE program is titled *Profile of Successful Couples/Families*.

### **Preliminary discussion of family competence training model**

The Family Competence Training Model is comprised of 12 critical competences. In order to test it, the researcher conducted a pilot study, the results of which indicated that couples who master/possess these competences enjoy better, longer relationships, and tend to report more relationship satisfaction. As mentioned previously, it can be argued that most of these competences are based on existent theoretical frameworks that withstood both the test of time and research. In addition to seeking input from fellow professional counselors, when developing this model, the researcher also consulted psychologists and researchers. The competences addressed in this model include the following:

- 1. Leadership, which includes the capacity to commit and maintain a relationship as marriage undergoes the development stages. Commitment is a pivotal element for members of a family to achieve the aim of marriage, which is reaching their maximum potential. Couples must have the capacity to make the relationship work and for this, it is imperative for them to know what the aim of marriage is in order to reach this goal. The aim of marriage is character development and achieving an individual's maximum potential as a human being. This is why commitment is the*

underlying and very important factor for this competence. *Commitment* and *know how* will take couples through all the stages that marriages undergo. In fact, commitment is important for the sustainability, longevity, long-lasting healthiness, and happiness in a marriage (Bartle-Haring, 2010; Hendrick, Hendricks, Adles, 1988; Johnson, 1985; Kelley, 1983; Meier, Hull, & Orty, 2009; Nimtz, 2011; Nock, Sanchez, & Wright, 2009; Rusbult, 1983; Weigel, 2010; Wiegel & Ballard-Reisch, 2008). A more thorough discussion of this competence is given in Table 1 in Appendix C 1-12.

2. *Effective management of emotions (i.e., emotional literacy), possessing stability and emotional/social intelligence, and the ability to nurture/keep love alive.* In short, this competence pertains to emotional management, emotional intelligence, and the ability to express and receive love effectively. This implies that the individual must possess an understanding of true love, and possess and develop the capacity to recognize his/her own feelings and those of others. The couple must be able to understand and regulate mood and emotions, as well as adapt and control impulses. Both individuals must be capable of expressing love effectively and functionally (in ways that both synchronize with the partner's style/preference and nurture the relationship). As a couple, they must be able to maintain a loving relationship during all the stages that families undergo and display emotional intelligence, which is manifested by and translated into a behaviour that exudes fidelity. Love is a fundamental element for sustainability, longevity, and happiness in a marriage (Acevedo, Aron, Fisher, & Brown, 2012; Argov, 2009; Berg & McQuin, 1986; Berscheid, 2010; Collins, Cramers, & Singleton-Jackson, 2005; Demir, 2008; Foster, 2010; Hegi & Bergner, 2010; Hendrick et al., 1988; Hill, Rubin, & Peplau, 1979;

Huston, Caughlin, Hoots, Smith, & George, 2001; Kernberg, 2011; Lee, 1973, 1988; Less & Parrot, 2006; Lund, 1985; Nicastro, 2008; Ortigue, Bianchi-Demicheli, Patl, Frum, & Lewis, , 2010; Rubin, 1970, 1973; Shelon, Trail, West, & Bersieker, 2010; Steinberg, 1986; Titus, 2012; Wolf, 2005; Xiaohe & Whyte, 1990; Young, 2009; Zeki, 2007;). A more detailed discussion of this competence is given in Table 2, Appendix C, which contains tables pertaining to each of the 12 competences under discussion.

3. *Effective management of life cycle, adaptability, and foresight—i.e., life cycle management competency.* Couples should know the phases that marriages undergo, and be able to foresee, adapt to, and deal with the changes that accompany these phases. They should be able to respond to the demands and challenges of each stage. Thus, couples should possess the capacity to weather through the challenges and changes of the family life cycle, while retaining a sense of happiness and fulfillment. They should be resilient. The management of the life cycle (or life development stages) is also relevant to the discussion of critical factors that contribute to the sustainability, longevity, long-lasting healthiness, and happiness in a marriage. The Family Life Cycle emerged from existing theoretical frameworks and research literature (Aldous, 1990; Black & Lobo, 2008; Cherlin, 2010; Click, 1977; Duvall, 1957; Falicov, 1988, 1984; Hareven, 1978; Hill, 1949; Hill & Rodgers, 1964; Knox & Schacht, 2013; Mattessich & Hill, 1987; Nichols, 2004; Prima, 2009; Taylor & Bagd, 2005; White, 1991, 2003). A more elaborated discussion and further details on this competence are given in Appendix C, Table 3.

4. *Family management competency.* This competency implies that a couple should be family management literate, i.e., possess the following skills/abilities: (a)

the capacity to manage family issues and achieve planned goals; (b) an ability to create a functional structure that optimizes internal functioning; (c) the capability to make plans, schedule activities, establish goals, assign roles/distribute household tasks and manage them efficiently; (d) an ability to display time management and comanagerial ability as a couple, with the absolute absence of male or female superiority and with an emphasis on complementary roles (Covey, 2007; Iowa State University of Science and Technology, 1988; Peel, 2007; Schurman, 2008; Wilcox & Nock, 2006; Wilson, 2006). For additional information regarding this competence, please see Appendix C, Table 4.

*5. Personality difference management and competence in handling different personalities.* A couple must understand and possess the skills to successfully deal with different personalities. They must be capable of making plans while considering the needs of those with different personalities than theirs. They should perceive personality differences not as defects, but rather assets. Even though compatibility and a couple's ability to deal with different personalities do not belong to the factors that most researchers have chosen to focus on, the concepts of personality and marital satisfaction have been studied for decades, especially when attempting to establish a relationship between marital satisfaction and similarity in personality traits (Blum & Mehranbian, 1999; Caspi & Herbener, 1990; Gattis, Berns, Simpson, & Christensen, 2004; Heaton, 1984; Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Lou & Klohnen, 2005; Meyer & Pepper, 1977; Robins, Caspi, & Moffitt, 2000; Russel & Wells, 1991; Stout, 2004; Watson et al., 2004). However, the contradictory conclusions these studies reached have been a source of confusion among researchers (Gattis et al., 2004;

Gaunt, 2006; Glicksohn & Gordon, 2001; Robins et al., 2000; Watson et al., 2004). It is likely that the complementary role of personality differences has been overlooked due to assuming that similarity leads to marital satisfaction and sustainability (Stout, 2004). On the other hand, empirical evidence shows that personality difference management may be critical and pivotal for sustainability, longevity, long-lasting healthiness and happiness in a marital relationship. More details on this competence can be found in Appendix C, Table 5.

6. *Communicative ability.* This competence implies the capacity to communicate effectively, assertively, tactfully, and openly. It implies the ability and willingness to both prevent and solve problems. Additionally, it pertains to the capacity to negotiate and, consequently, prevent the escalation of problems. Thus, an individual that possesses this competence is able to prevent, manage, and solve marital conflict in a competent way. This can be achieved by knowing the escalation ladder theory and by possessing capacity and skills to intercept building process of conflicts (Glasl, 1997; Jordan, 2000; Ten Hoedt & Lingsma, 2008).

Communication is one of the most critical factors that contribute to the sustainability, longevity, and long-lasting healthiness and happiness in a marriage. This conclusion emerged from a myriad of research projects and is a fundamental element that for decades withstood the test of time and research (Akhlag et al., 2013; Beavers & Voeller, 1983; Bloom, 1985; Braun et al., 2010; Gottman, 1994; Gottman, 2004; Impett, Peplau & Gable, 2010; Khurshid, Khatoon, & Khurshid, 2012; Mark et al., 2010; Stinnett & BeFrain, 1985; Olson & BeFrain, 1994; Olson, 2000; Mark,

Dollahite, & Baumgartner, 2001; Stanley, Markman, & Whitton, 2004; Wheeler et al., 2010;) (see Appendix C, Table 6 for more details).

*7. Gender management competency.* This competence implies an understanding of the complementary roles of men and women. It includes the capacity to effectively cope with and manage gender differences. An individual must be capable of satisfying the needs of both genders in the family. Thus, partners must not only be gender equity minded but able to connect and see gender differences as assets, rather than defects. Gender difference management is also critical to the sustainability, longevity, and long-lasting healthiness and happiness in a marriage (Child, 2009; Ciccotti, 2008; Knox & Schacht, 2013; Walker & Luszcz, 2009; Wilcox & Nock, 2006; Zaidi, 2010) (more details can be found in Appendix C, Table 7).

*8. Ability to create a structure and a way of functioning that generate or stimulate emergence of healthy family characteristics. Know and manage family in a healthy way, considering the characteristics of healthy families.* Lack of knowledge and information regarding characteristics of a healthy family deprives potential couples and families from achieving their goal of becoming a happy and healthy unit (Lin, 1994). Knowledge regarding healthy family characteristics is a compass that helps families reach their goal of living “happily ever after”; it acts as a navigation plan for couples and helps them keep on track (Allgood & Bakker, 2009; Amato, Boot, Johnson, & Rogers, 2007; DeMaris, 2010; Dowd, 2009; Gottman & Carrere, 2000). More details on this competence are available in Appendix C, Table 8.

*9. Resource and financial management competency.* This competency encompasses the capacity to make and stay on a budget. An individual must possess

the ability to augment assets, make plans, and establish both short- and long-term goals and achieve them. This competency also includes the ability and willingness to adjust one's desires to match one's income. In other words, an individual must possess the ability to postpone actions related to immediate gratification in order to reach long-term goals. Debt is often symptomatic of maintaining a lifestyle beyond our means. Financial management has been researched for decades and has been shown to be critical and pivotal for the sustainability, longevity, and long-lasting healthiness and happiness in a marital relationship (Ajzen, 2011; Amato et al, 2007; Duba, 2012; Eisenberg & Falciglia, 2010; Henry, Miller, & Giarrusso, 2005; Madern & Van der Schors, 2012; Mitchell, 2010; Nibud, 2008, 2012) (See Appendix C, Table 9 for more details).

*10. Sexuality management competency.* This competency suggests an individual's capacity to consistently satisfy her/his partner and maintain a passionate and exciting sexual life as the culmination of intimacy. It implies complete mastery of her/his sexuality, which may be conducive to preventing major marital challenges, including infidelity and addiction to pornography. Sexuality plays a prominent role in the durability of a marital relationship. Even though understudied (Elliott & Umberson, 2008), this competency is a key factor that has withstood the test of time and research as a fundamental element that has the potential to contribute to the sustainability, longevity, and long-lasting healthiness and happiness in a marital relationship (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Call, Sprecher, & Schwartz, 1995; Christopher & Sprecher, 2000; Duba, 2012; Eisenberg et al., 2011; Elliot & Umberson, 2008; Greenblat, 1983; Impett et al, 2005; Lauman et al., 2006; Neto &



Pinto, 2013; Timm & Keiley, 2011; Waite & Joyner, 2001; Yabuku & Gager, 2009; Yeh, Lorenz, Rand, Conger, & Elder, 2006). More details on this competency are given in Appendix C, Table 10.

*11. Parenting competency.* This competency is comprised of the capacity to satisfy the needs of the children and foster their healthy development. It includes the ability to stimulate children's development so that they might be able to self-govern and be productive members of society. This skill/ability has also withstood the test of time and research as a critical element to the sustainability, longevity, and long-lasting healthiness and happiness in a marriage (Claxton & Jenkins, 2008; Claxton & Jenkins, 2011; Cui & Donnell, 2009). For further details, consult Appendix C, Table 11.

*12. Religious and spiritual competency.* An individual possessing this competency is capable of living a healthy, functional, spiritual, and highly productive religious life. Such individual is connected to society and inspires/influences others for good. Studies show that couples who participate regularly in religious activities (e.g., church attendance) report greater marital happiness and satisfaction and may be less likely to divorce compared to their less religious counterparts (Curtis & Ellison, 2002). Spirituality and religiosity are not only intertwined, but also an inextricable part of life, value system, daily activity, and cosmovision of the family. Consequently, ability to weather storms and challenges in life and successful management of life stages may be the results. Marital satisfaction, relationship quality and a well-balanced family life exempt of fanaticism are the expected results experienced by the family that adheres to religious norms and postulates. Religiosity and spirituality as pivotal components of family life have also withstood the test of time and research as important elements

contributing to family sustainability, longevity, and long-lasting healthiness and happiness in a marital relationship (Amato et al., 2007; DeMaris, 2010; Ellison et al., 2010; Green & Elliot, 2010; MacArthur, 2010; Mark et al., 2010; Phillips & Wilmoth, 2010; Sullivan, 2001). For further information, please consult Appendix C, Table 12.

In summary, families with durability potential will display and master the aforementioned competences. They tend to fit a certain profile and possess the knowledge, attitude, and ability to take their families through all the stages that marriages undergo and help each family member to reach his/her maximum potential. They possess love that translates into a behavior that nurtures the relationship. They can weather all of the developmental stages that marriages undergo successfully and happily. They have the capacity to manage and provide a nurturing environment and a family structure that respects and meets the needs of each member of the family. They are competent in managing gender differences and complement each other, rather than compete with each other. They create structure, schedule activities, and provide plans that lead to achievement of long- and short-term goals. Additionally, they create a structure that prevents the emergence of quarrels caused by unmet needs. They competently manage their finances and resources, helping their family to achieve financial goals without financial stress and acute debt problems. The marriage partners frequently and consistently satisfy each other sexually. They parent productive and well-balanced children. Finally, they tend to be productive, church-going and religious people, who are connected to the society and serve indiscriminately.

Appendix D provides an extract or synthesis of these competences, which are discussed in more detail in Appendix C, where each of the 12 competences is dedicated a corresponding table (Table 1-12). Additionally, it is good to mention that each table also discusses the theoretical rational that underpin each competence, statement of the problem that the particular competence focus on, empirical documentation that underpin this competence, formulation of the competence, etc.

### **Marriage education curriculum assessment guide**

Recently, Hauer, McDowell, Andrew, & Swanson (2012) designed a curriculum guide to assist organizations in their selection of marriage and relationship education programs, when they plan to provide marriage education services, or when they want to design a program. They listed questions to consider when selecting an appropriate curriculum for a specific audience, and offered an assessment guide to help practitioners systematically analyze, compare, or create a curriculum. The assessment instrument included topics arranged under *Minimum Required Content*, *Advised Content*, and *Optional Content*. Practitioners are asked about the audience for the training, learning goals, materials, learning activities, instructional methods, and topics that will be covered. Additionally, the guide the authors developed addressed aspects, information, and implementation of the program that their clients would adopt. Even though the *Marriage Education Curriculum Assessment Guide* is extremely useful, it does not provide criteria for evaluating marital education programs on one of the most important topics that should be included in marital education programs—the aim of marriage. Researchers and experts who designed most of the

popular MRE programs also tended to overlook this pivotal topic in their design. The aim of marriage is virtually absent in most programs.

Based on the author's expertise and counseling experience, it is evident that lack of understanding regarding one of the aims of marriage could be a determining factor in failed relationships. The author has noticed a correlation between not knowing the aim of marriage and distress in family relations and divorce. The following excerpt from the book *Profile for an extraordinary relation* (Francisca, 2012) provides additional anecdotal explanation:

The author's hypothesis or assumption is that one of the primary goals of marriage is character development and reaching maximum potential of both the man and the woman. When couple get married they are not the end product yet, rather marriage shapes them into well develop individual. Happiness and optimal character development are correlated (Peterson, Ruch, Beermann, Park, & Seligman, 2007). Happy people tend to have well developed characters, whereas unhappy ones tend to have character deficiencies; this based on my systematic observation of clients and 20 years as minister. This makes me assume or propose the hypothesis that character development contributes to happiness. This must yet be rigorously investigated. However to further explain this point, this line of argument is offered:

Conventionally, incompatibility in personality and character are considered sufficient grounds for divorce. In my view, incompatibility should instead be seen as an invitation for further development—couples should learn basic communication skills, how to negotiate, etc. (Gottman, 1999). In brief, incompatibility should be considered an opportunity to develop qualities, skills and competences that will benefit most people of various characters. It indicates that, "there is a problem...*you need to develop on (x) area.*" Couples need to change their own character, rather than their partner's character. Additionally, we could even say that couples need to change their character rather than change from partner. If couples recurrently change partners every time they discover incompatibility, they will keep divorcing for the rest of their lives.

A Positive view on conflict and marital clashes is important for character development of a couple. Marital clashes should be perceived from other perspective – for example, as an indicator that "marriage might be giving the right effect." In other words, clashes reveal or indicate areas where "couples need to work on and grow"—professionally said: growth areas—(Olson, 2000). Therefore, instead of ending a relationship, or perceiving conflict and clashes

as indicators or reasons for ending a marriage, they should rather be seen as opportunity for development, chance to turn to one another and grow both as a couple and as individuals (Gottman & Gottman, 2006). This view and approach to marriage offers couples opportunity to develop and reach their maximum potential, as it is shown that happiness relates to well-developed character.

It is the author's perspective that couples who are unaware of what some of the aims of marriage are will not be able to achieve them. They will be like an unguided boat, bus, train, or a plane, or a navigation system with no address. They could make the mistake to step out, just when marriage is giving the right effect. Conflict and incompatibility do not necessarily indicate unbridgeable problem, instead they identify where both partners need shaping and development. Like a navigation system, they indicate direction, pinpoint the time, and place when you have taken the wrong exit or turn (p. 23)

### **Marital and premarital education program findings**

#### Quantitative study claims

Most extant research related to marital education programs was conducted by implementing a quantitative design (Fawcett et al., 2010). This approach has been criticized, due to the inherent limitation of quantitative studies, i.e., using questionnaires as data collection instruments, which are typically based on closed questions that do not provide opportunity for in-depth scrutiny of issues. Moreover, in quantitative studies, hypotheses are established prior to the data collection and follow a rigorous order. In contrast, in qualitative research, hypotheses can be established prior, during, and after the data recollection, not necessarily aiming on proving a pre-established notion. For this reason, advocates of qualitative research claim that the

quantitative approach is not enough to make undisputable claims that MRE programs work (Vasquez, 2012). The researchers that adopt a quantitative approach establish a theoretical framework and then try to investigate it by proving or disproving the hypothesis/theory. Conversely, qualitative studies typically start from lived reality or the facts described by participants, and then develop a theory based on data analysis and discovery (Vasquez, 2012). By conducting in-depth interviews, without any prejudice and pre-established theory, data are collected and analyzed in order to interpret and later propose a potential truth (Hernández Sampieri, Fernández Collado, & Baptista Lucio, 2010). Thus, in this study, without trivializing and avoiding being drawn into the scientific disputes of both schools of investigation, extensive literature review was conducted. It revealed that researchers using both quantitative and qualitative approach suggest that marital education programs are effective (Faubert, 2008; Hawkins et al., 2008).

Hawkins et al. (2008) conducted a quantitative meta-analytical study, revealing that marital education programs work by preventing development and escalation of marital problems to unmanageable or irreparable proportions. In their study of 5,000 individuals attending the Marital Education Program *PAIRS* (a brief marital education program lasting only nine hours), Eisenberg et al. (2011) found that marital education programs contributed significantly to augmentation of marital satisfaction and improved attitudes toward marriage. The study participants reported significant improvements in emotional intelligence, capacity to be intimate, family cohesion, and management of practical aspects of relationships, following the course attendance. An additional pivotal asset of this study was that it included minority groups.

### Some qualitative researchers claims

Nimtz (2011) conducted a phenomenological study with couples who had been married for more than 40 years, focusing on satisfaction and factors contributing to non-satisfying long-term marriage. The authors found that marital satisfaction was defined differently by couples with more than 40 years of marriage experience than by young couples. The older couples perceived and defined marital satisfaction as having children, togetherness, and having grandchildren, and attributed successful marriage to their attitudes and actions. By action, they referred to emulating behavior that demonstrates that the relationship is considered a priority.

In a qualitative study of couples' experience related to the preventive and relationship enhancement program (*PREP*), Bergquist (2010) found that *PREP* tended to motivate and make a lasting impact on couples. It improved communication skills, augmented mutual respect, increased levels of commitment, and improved relationship sustainability.

In her thesis entitled *This isn't a Fairy Tale: An Exploration of Marital Expectations and Coping among Married Women*, Faubert (2008) agreed with other quantitative researchers that, while almost all couples experience some unrealistic expectations when married, marital or premarital education can significantly help them to cope with, and adjust to, reality of marriage. Stutzman (2011), on the other hand claimed that little attention has been dedicated to cultural factors in marital education programs. She affirmed that most programs propose a "one size fits all" model, overlooking the fact that both culture and ethnicity may play an important role in marriage success and outcome. In her study, Stutzman explored how couples and

therapists can address the need for cultural diversity, focusing on Latinos attending premarital education programs. Her work provides insight regarding the importance of cultural differences for therapists designing professional MRE programs.

### **The theory tested in this study**

Lack of family and relationship competence will result in reduced marital satisfaction, lack of marital commitment, relationship distress, and marital meltdown. Marital satisfaction, marital commitment, and mastery of relationship or marital competences are interrelated and interdependent. Couples will tend to commit if they are satisfied with the relationship, whereby mastery of competences can be pivotal in increasing both marital satisfaction and commitment. In order to reverse or restrain the growing divorce trend, it is essential to offer couples MRE/CRE, as it is instrumental in teaching and training couples to develop pivotal competences that current families need to succeed. These competences could be considered pivotal for both developing successful families as well as propelling marriages into durability, longevity, sustainability, and happiness. In the process of development of these pivotal competences, couples will experience transformation that will sustain the marital relationship for long-term

### **Succinct summary of literature review**

In the attempt to better understand the divorce phenomenon and propose an effective and functional approach to remediate or even prevent it from occurring, experts have investigated both the determinants of divorce and the characteristics of long-term marriages. Additionally, consequences of divorce have also been studied



and have even motivated scholars to approach the problem from multiple angles. While their contributions have established solid ground to build upon, they have also raised new questions to be answered in order to extend the extant knowledge of this phenomenon. Aiming to contribute and further expand the knowledge in the field, the author has (a) looked at the above mentioned elements, (b) investigated pivotal extant treatment and intervention programs, and (c) examined preventive approaches for divorce, among other pertinent issues. Consequently, the author discovered an important approach (i.e., MRE as treatment and intervention program) that needs to be further investigated from a fresh angle. By so doing, the author proposed competence based model that, up to now, appeared as a gap in scientific literature and documentation. Cultural differences have also been understudied, inviting scientists to explore them in more depth. This has prompted the author to address this element and absence of competence-based MRE in the current study. As various studies were revised, screened, critically assessed, and compared, different theoretical frameworks were evaluated and compared. This comprehensive assessment revealed that the cohesive or “the elephant metaphor” approach has not been exploited by experts thus far. In fact, very few authors have looked at more than one theoretical approach at the same time, and there is evident paucity of studies that have examined potential dynamics and interactions of various theories. Thus, very few attempts to propose an alternative method that would allow different theories to not only be studied but work together, in order to propose a new model capable of mitigating growing issue of divorce. Therefore, in the current study, the author has assessed the determinants of divorce, along with the key characteristics of long-term

marriages. Moreover, the research has included the consequences of divorce, and the most common variables that may be related to the problem and thus may contribute to a solution. Accordingly, the author has assessed extant prevention and treatment and intervention programs, attempting to understand relevancy of cultural differences. He has also examined empirical procedures and protocols for measuring the impact of the new culturally sensitive and competence-oriented MRE/CRE. The theoretical rationale that underpins the MRE/CRE emerged from the assessment of various theories, resulting in the development of the Family Competence Training Model, as a foundation for the new MRE, which was tested as its potential to serve as an effective alternative to both prevention and treatment of marital problems. This proposal should not be seen as “the” alternative, but rather as a discussion starter that invites more research to be done on it.

### **Conclusion**

MRE has been proliferating over the recent decades and has been proven beneficial by both quantitative and qualitative researchers. The fact that hundreds of studies have been conducted on the topic of marital success, and some meta-analytic studies have provided evidence that MRE is successful in reducing marital discord, indicates that MRE programs certainly have the potential to improve relationship quality and subsequently prevent divorce. The majority of these studies concluded that these MRE programs produce meaningful immediate gains, reflected in improved communication, conflict management, and general quality of a relationship. These results tend to persist for at least six months, with some lasting for many years (Halford et al., 2003). However, we must recognize that, up to now, most of the

studies of this nature have been conducted in the US. Thus, it would be wrong to assume that the same results would be achieved in other countries and other cultures. Moreover, when conducting MRE programs, a “standard” model has been mostly utilized, assuming that it applies in a wide variety of contexts. Before we can infer that MRE is universally effective, more research must be conducted in other cultures and other countries, where families may be dealing with different needs or facing other challenges. As one’s culture may determine one’s worldview or cosmovision, it is imperative to extend the MRE research to other contexts before affirming that it is effective. Its content should be adjusted, and topics covered arranged according to the specific needs of a given country or culture. The author of this thesis agrees with Stanley (2001), who cautiously said that it might take decades of research to provide a definitive answer to the question of the effectiveness of premarital education. This author would add that, MRE can only be proven effective, if it is shown as such via research in many contexts, different formats, and regarding different family structures. To make a contribution to this field, this author conducted research in the Netherlands and the Dutch Caribbean (former Netherlands Antilles) to test an MRE program that is culturally sensitive, competence-oriented, and with updated content, addressing issues that are synchronous with the needs of modern couples in these settings.

According to Stanley, Amato, Johnson, and Markman (2006), premarital education programs tend to improve and augment marital satisfaction and decrease divorce in both Caucasian populations and minority groups. These findings were based on a study conducted in four US states—Oklahoma, Arkansas, Kansas, and

Texas. Stanley et al. (2006) worked with a sample of 3,344 individuals and concluded that premarital education tended to reduce divorce by 31% and contribute to reducing prevalence of conflictive episodes.

Busby et al. (2007), however, went beyond the question of whether marital or pre-education works. They compared the effectiveness of three models of premarital education (self-directed, therapist-directed, and assessment-based interventions) for premarital couples. They found that assessment-based interview programs yielded better results, when compared to self-directed and therapist-directed programs (i.e., one-on-one counseling sessions with a professional therapist). This finding was consistent with results of other studies (Norvell, 2009).

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter presents the procedures used to acquire empirical evidence to be analyzed for the purpose of answering the research questions, testing the hypotheses, and function as a blueprint of this research project. It describes the population of interest for this study, the sampling method employed, the data collection process, timing of the data collection, the instruments used, and the procedures and protocols followed to obtain the pertinent data (including ethical procedures, among others).

#### **Reiteration of statement of the problem**

Researchers have long posited that several “classical determinants” are predictors of marital dissolution, including: (a) parental divorce (CBSN, 2005); (b) different religious affiliations and beliefs (Ellison et al., 2010); (c) personality differences (Fine, 2006; Markman et al., 2001; Seung-woo, 2009); (d) inappropriate partner selection (Lou & Klohnen, 2009); (e) short duration of courtship (Linlin, 2004); (f) age at first marriage (Janssen et al., 1998; Manting, 1993); (g) wife’s employment (Poortman, 2005); (h) premarital cohabitation (Harms, 2000; Janssen, 2000; Wagner & Weiss, 2004; Waite & Gallegher, 2000); (i) incompatibility in interests, hobbies, and leisure activities; (j) sexual dissatisfaction (Fowers et al., 1996; Rahmani, 2009; Sidi et al., 2007;); (k) incompetence in problem solving; (l) prior divorce; (m) difference in

intelligence and educational levels (Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003); (n) lack of communication.

Although these factors have been widely accepted as determinants and predictors of marital dissolution, they may be symptoms, rather than causes. Marital/premarital education, however, could be seen as an effective solution, one that encompasses and effectively addresses the risks related to these predictors (i.e., symptoms). Several experts, such as Olson et al. (2009), found that premarital education enhanced marital satisfaction and marital stability, while Giblin (1994) and Stanley (2004) indicated that it tends to reduce the divorce risk.

However, thus far, researchers that have conducted their studies in the Netherlands and the Dutch Caribbean tended to overlook the absence of premarital education and preparation as potential causes of the increasing divorce rates (Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003; Janssen et al., 1998; Khan, 2005). As a result, they focused on classical and recurring divorce predictors, interpreting them as causes rather than symptoms.

Culturally Sensitive MRE program may address these common determinants effectively, as well as increase marital satisfaction, relationship quality, and levels of commitment, thus contributing to the longevity of marital relationships. This research intends to make a contribution to this effort by providing and testing the impact of a new Culturally Sensitive MRE program entitled Profile of Successful Couples/Families, which is an MRE geared toward the development of the key relationship and family competences. This MRE program is based on the newly proposed training model, namely The Family Competence Training Model (FCTM).

The FCTM is based on the premise that 12 competences are important contributors to the relationship quality and satisfaction, and can affect the level of commitment and mastery of pivotal competences. A couple that possesses and/or develops these competences will thus increase the likelihood of enjoying a long-lasting relationship. These 12 pivotal and critical competences are:

1. Leadership, capacity to commit and maintain a relationship as it undergoes different phases.
2. Effective management of emotions (i.e., emotional literacy), possessing stability and emotional/social intelligence, and the romantic skills or ability to remain committed and emotional engaged.
3. Adaptability and foresight, which implies being able to manage and cope in a competent way with the stages families undergo and the relationship life cycle, as well as ability to anticipate and deal with challenges and potential stressful situations;
4. Family management and leadership. This implies being able to create functional structure, assign tasks, and optimize the internal functioning.
5. Ability to understand and capacity to deal successfully with different personalities.
6. Competent communication and problem solving capacity.
7. Management of gender differences.
8. Ability to foster, stimulate, and nurture healthy family characteristics.
9. Successful financial and/or resource management.
10. Capacity to consistently satisfy the partner sexually and manage intimacy.
11. Parenting capability.

## 12. Spirituality.

In sum, one of the core postulations and the key hypothesis is that the aforementioned and previously discussed model will have a positive effect on the couple's relationship, improve the level of marital satisfaction, as well as the level of commitment and mastery of relationship competences. This could contribute to the sustainability, success, and longevity of the relationships.

### **Aim of this research project**

This research project aims to:

1. Investigate the impact of a new culturally sensitive MRE program—designed by the author and named Profile of Successful Couples/Families—geared towards development of competences. This program's content is based on a FCTM developed by the author.

2. Assess the empirical viability of this Culturally Sensitive MRE program geared toward the development of competences namely—which is undergird by the FCTM. Consequently provide an empirically tested or a validated *checklist* which is based on the assumption that couples who possess or develop these 12 competences improve their level of commitment, marital satisfaction, and relationship/marital competence, which subsequently propel marriages in positive direction and prolong their longevity.

3. Validate a new measurement and potential diagnose instrument “Inventory of Pivotal Competences for a Long-lasting/Sustainable Relationship” which was created for the evaluation of the above mentioned program



## **Type of research**

This research adopted a quantitative and quasi-experimental study that is semi-longitudinal in nature, rather than transversal. The Solomon design was used.

## **Core research questions, and hypotheses**

Core questions assessed in this research

This research purports to provide answer to three core questions:

1. Do MRE programs affect positively and significantly marital satisfaction in couples living in the Dutch Caribbean?
2. Does an MRE program stimulate significant development of competences?
3. Does MRE program attendance increase the level of commitment in couples exposed to the program?

## **Hypotheses**

Hypotheses and their operationalization

### **The first theoretical hypothesis**

Couples who participate in the *Profile of Successful Couples/Families* program will demonstrate an increase in marital satisfaction levels and the quality of their relationship, as measured by the *Dyadic Adjustment Scale* (DAS) post-intervention.

1. The independent variable (IV) is the MRE program *Profile of Successful Couples/Families*. This is a new Culturally Sensitive MRE program geared toward the development of 12 competences, considered pivotal for longevity and sustainability of a relationship.

2. The dependent variable (DV) is *marital satisfaction level and quality of relationship*. Marital satisfaction is measured by the DAS, which is a self-reported questionnaire that consists of 32 items or questions. The answers are given on a Likert scale, allowing the researcher to score the responses and convert them to measurable indicators. The DAS is given to the couples to complete prior to and upon completion of the MRE program. The means of the scores each group obtains are used as a measurable indicator and are compared in order to assess the net effect.

### **The first operational hypothesis**

Couples who participate in the Culturally Sensitive MRE program entitled *Profile of Successful Couples/Families* will demonstrate a significant increase in their mean scores pertaining to marital satisfaction and relationship quality, as measured by the Dyadic Adjustment Scale. Their mean scores will change positively following the exposure to the MRE program and this difference will be statistically significant.

### **The second theoretical hypothesis**

Couples who participate in the *Profile of Successful Couples/Families* program will demonstrate a significant positive increase in their relational competency skills, as measured by the *Inventory of Pivotal Competences for a Long-lasting Relationship*.

1. The independent variable (IV) is the MRE program Profile of Successful Couples/Families. This a new Culturally Sensitive MRE program geared toward the development of 12 competences Is considered pivotal for longevity and sustainability of a relationship.

2. The dependent variable (DV) is mastery of relationship competence.

Relationship and/or family competence is measured by the *Inventory of Pivotal Competences for a Long-lasting Relationship*, which consists of 108 items pertaining to the 12 competences necessary for a long-lasting relationship. Each question is answered on a Likert scale, allowing the researcher to score the responses and convert them to measurable indicators. The *Inventory of Pivotal Competences for a Long-lasting Relationship* is a self-reported instrument that the couples are given prior to and upon completion of the MRE program. Both mean scores, i.e. pre- and post-exposure to the MRE, are subsequently compared in order to assess the statistical significance of the changes observed (if any).

### **The second operational hypothesis**

Couples who participate in the Culturally Sensitive MRE program entitled *Profile of Successful Couples/Families* will demonstrate a significant increase in their mean scores pertaining to the mastery of relationship competences, as measured by the *Inventory of Pivotal Competences for a Long-lasting Relationship*. Their mean scores will change positively following the exposure to the MRE program and this difference will be statistically significant.

### **The third theoretical hypothesis**

Couples who participate in the *Profile of Successful Couple* program will demonstrate a significant increase in their level of commitment, as measured by the *Rusbult Commitment Scale*, compared to those they obtained prior to the intervention.

1. The independent variable (IV) is an MRE program entitled Profile of

Successful Couples/Families. This is a new Culturally Sensitive MRE program geared toward the development of 12 competences, considered pivotal for the longevity and sustainability of a relationship.

2. The dependent variable (DV) is level of commitment. The commitment level is measured by the *Rusbult Commitment Scale*, which consists of 15 items, which respondents answer on the Likert scale, allowing the researcher to score the responses and convert them into measurable indicators. The Rusbult Commitment Scale is a self-reported instrument, given to the participants to complete pre- and post-exposure to the MRE. Subsequently, the mean scores achieved at these measurement points are compared in order to assess the statistical significance of any changes noted.

### **The third operational hypothesis**

Couples who participate in the Culturally Sensitive MRE program entitled *Profile of Successful Couples/Families* will demonstrate a significant increase in their mean scores pertaining to the level of commitment, as measured by the *Rusbult Commitment Scale*. Their mean scores will increase following the exposure to the MRE program, and this change will be statistically significant.

### **Null hypotheses**

The null hypotheses for this study are:

1. When couples participate in a culturally sensitive MRE program geared toward the development of competences, there will be no significant difference in their

satisfaction levels when compared to those prior to attending the MRE education program.

2. When couples participate in a culturally sensitive MRE program geared toward the development of competences, there will be no significant development of competencies and skills.

3. When couples are exposed to a culturally sensitive MRE program geared toward the development of competences, there will be no significant increase in their level of commitment.

The level of significance used to accept or reject the null hypotheses was set to .05.

### **Demographic information, population, and sample**

#### Primary target population, Curacao

Curacao is a part of the Dutch Caribbean, which was formerly called Netherlands Antilles. It is located in the southern Caribbean Sea, 35 miles (56 km) north of Venezuela and between Aruba and Bonaire. The population of Curacao consists of a mixture of more than 50 ethnicities and cultures. According to the latest CBSC report (2013), its 153,000 residents come from 142 different countries, making Curacao extremely diverse and culturally rich. While most inhabitants have an African Caribbean background, the society is strongly influenced by both Europe (due to tradition and due to the fact that they pertain to the Netherlands Kingdom) the US, and Latin America, due to geographical location. The official language is Dutch;

however, Papiamentu is the mother language of 79% of the population, followed by Dutch, English, Spanish, and French Creole (CBS, 2013).

In Curacao, 57.9% of families are nuclear, while the remaining 42.1% are of other types. Since 2009, the number of marriages has decreased by 21%, while divorce rate has increased from 49 to 55% (CBSC, 2014). For calculation of suitable sample size for this quasi-experimental study, the population of 25,788 couples has been taken into consideration. A convenience sample was obtained for this research project. The power analysis for ANOVA for three levels indicated a sample of 35 individuals per group as acceptable to a degree of .984 and effect size of 1.000. The error level for this calculation was .05. Each group in this study surpasses required number of subjects for acceptable power (Bruin, 2006).

### **Sample selection process**

For this research, a SMART Family Convention was organized in Curacao, the Dutch Caribbean (see appendix E). The researcher adopted a convenience sampling method, which is a non-probability sampling technique, where the participants are selected due to their accessibility, proximity, availability, and willingness to take part in the research. Subsequently, the DAS scores were considered as criteria to form the distressed and the adjusted group, allowing the researcher to better understand the potential effect of the intervention.

The Smart Family Convention was promoted through radio, government agencies, schools, flyers, churches, social media, and websites of various institutions, including the Family Relation First Foundation. The SMART Family Convention attracted 322 attendants, of whom 276 participated in the research. However, due to

some incomplete questionnaires being submitted, the study sample was limited to 266 participants, or 133 heterosexual couples. This sample was sufficient, due to common sample calculations steps and a known sample size calculation (Creative Research System, 2012; Fox, Hunn & Mathers, 2007; Smith, 2013). Considering a level of confidence of 95%, the confidence interval of 10 and a population of 25,788 (CBSC, 2014), the total sample size needed was 96. On the other hand, a confidence level of 95%, a confidence interval of 6, and a population 25,788 required a total sample of 264 participants. The sample size here exclude the third control group which is composed by individual exposed to only post-test after two years of the event (making the total sample 310). Thus, the total sample size obtained here (including all groups) passed the test. Additionally, the sample size is consistent with prior experimental studies and in some cases exceeded those used in prior studies when total number of participants is considered (Halford et al., 2003). Power is reported in respective table that report results not discussed in narration.

The study participants were subsequently assigned to four groups, namely two experimental groups (adjusted and distressed), the control group, and the post-test only group. After following the classical ethics and information protocol procedures, all participants gave their authorization for the use of their data for research purposes. Subsequently, the participants were informed on the program structure and agreed to take part in the five-day intervention. The first day was introduced as an evaluation day (see Appendix E for complete event planning of the MRE), whereby the participants/couples were evaluated in order to obtain the baseline data. The couples were informed that, in addition to evaluating their relationship, the researchers would

gather other important information for research purposes. Upon completion of this phase of the study, all participants received a report regarding the state of their marriage, their level of satisfaction, quality of their relationship, level of commitment, level of mastering of the competences, etc. Each participant received the three self-report instruments or questionnaires that were distributed at the beginning of the convention. The participants were instructed to fill the instrument separately, i.e., without consulting their partners. The questionnaires were available in two local languages of the Dutch Caribbean, namely Papiamentu and English, and all participants chose the Papiamentu version. The assessment took 1 hour and 15 minutes to complete, including breaks for refreshments and snacks.

#### **Four-group classification of the sample**

The sample was separated into four groups, as noted above. The process of classification included the analysis of the test results and the assessment of the individuals for baseline purposes. It also considered personal willingness to pertain to a group and other inclusion and exclusion criteria. Some of the *inclusion criteria* were: heterosexual couples, DAS scores (discussed in the instrument section), married and cohabitating couples that have lived together for at least two years, and first time married couples (see Appendix G for further details). *Exclusion criteria* were homosexual couples, stepfamily couples, military couples, couples with an incarcerated partner, and other types of couples that might be confronting particular stress situations that need an investigation that may go beyond the scope of this study.

The four groups, as previously mentioned, were:



1. Experimental group 1, which consisted of adjusted couples.
2. Experimental group 2, comprising couples experiencing relationship difficulties.
3. Control group (a group that did not partake in the intervention).
4. Post-test group, comprising couples that were exposed only to the intervention and the post-test.

In order to gather the necessary data, three pre-tests were administered, comprising the DAS that measured marital satisfaction prior the MRE course, the Investment Model of Rusbult that measured the level of commitment, and the Inventory of Pivotal Competences for Long-lasting Relationships, which measured relationship and family competences. Based on the DAS scores, the aforementioned groups were formed for research purposes.

Couples/individuals who scored lower than 91 on the DAS test were categorized as “distressed,” while those that scored higher than 91 were categorized as “adjusted” (Graham, Lui, & Jeziorski, 2006). Even though they were categorized in two groups for research purposes, both the distressed and adjusted couples were exposed to the same intervention simultaneously, a process referred to as “blinding technique” (Cone & Foster, 2010; Schulz & Grimes, 2002).

While the initial intention was to randomize the sample, it was later decided not to proceed with this strategy, because the number of participants was insufficient—a common challenge that researchers in social studies face when using the Solomon design (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Levy & Ellis, 2011; McGahee & Tingen, 2010) and because forming adjusted and distressed group was more suitable for the study

purpose. Moreover, an additional rationale was to challenge a widely accepted assumption that researchers must focus on a problem in order to study and solve it. This is why it is essential to postulate “statement of the problem”; however, a researcher can sometimes both be interested in, as well as learn from situation or condition, where there is apparently no problem, i.e., nothing is going wrong or bothering anyone. However, it is valuable to investigate such situations to discover why things are going well. By having the adjusted group, the goal was to learn how these couples attained their success (Fisher & McNulty, 2008). Concomitantly, considering the systematic program of planned research suggested by scholars and experts (Markman & Rhoades, 2013; Markman et al., 2004), a stepwise procedure was followed (a further explanation and discussion on the steps and phases is given below).

As mentioned above, a convenience sampling approach was used for common reasons, such as force majeure migration, financial limitations, inaccessibility to more representative populations, etc. The two remaining groups—control and post-test—were also formed at this stage. The post-test only group included couples who could not attend the first day because of work, sickness, or other reasons. On the other hand, couples that refused to participate in the MRE, or could not attend due to force majeure or other reasons, formed the control group. This group also included some individuals that could not attend at least four days of the seminar, as well as others, who were promised to be a part of the next Smart Family Convention.

## **Demographic information of the sample and the respondents' characteristics**

The ages of the participants ranged from 19 to 63, with the mean of 36 and the mode of 32. According to the level of education reported by the participants, 12% completed primary school only, 45% finished secondary school, 40% attended college, 1% held a graduate degree, and 2% selected "other" as a response. In terms of their marital status, 77% of the participants were married and 23% cohabitated. The couples were together between 2 and 32 years, with the mean of 11.5, mode of 2, and the median of 9 years. The country of birth was Curacao for 90% of the participants, 5% were from Bonaire, and the remaining 5% from other countries (including Jamaica, Netherlands, Aruba, and Saint Maarten).

## **Intervention process**

The participants were exposed to the Culturally Sensitive MRE to measure its potential effects on their relationship. This Cultural Sensitive MRE has been designed based on a pilot study performed in the Netherlands (Rotterdam and Delft), Curacao, and Bonaire. In the pilot study, the participants were asked to provide their views on the preferences, needs, and exposition to most common contents (universal needs of families and couples), among other aspects. Several psychologists, social workers, and health professionals have also been consulted while the New Culturally Sensitive MRE was being designed. In short, a systemic planned research program procedure suggested by experts and scholars (Markman & Rhoades, 2013) was followed. Their suggestions included: (a) explore and assess the population needs (Higgibothan et al., 2007; Markman & Rhoades, 2013); (b) develop, use, and adapt a pilot program;

(c) use a pre-post, no control group design, to explore possible effects over time; (d) perform the quasi-experimental study first, before proceeding with the randomized clinical trial; and (e) disseminate the study findings (Markman & Rhoades, 2013; Markman et al., 2004).

The Culturally Sensitive MRE geared toward the development of the competences was designed as a nine sessions (5-day) event. It was held on October 2013/2014, at Curacao Hyatt Hotel and 12 different topics were discussed. The event participants were required to pay a modest fee, and churches and sponsors provided assistance to those who could not pay. Each participant received a participant's manual and other standard seminar materials. The event attendees were exposed to four days of intense training course, lasting 3 hours on the first two days, 9 hours on the third, and 5 hours on the fourth day. Thus, the total content was delivered in 21 hours, (see appendix E for details regarding both the implementing plan and the event planning). This number of instructional contact hours was consistent with other family life education programs (Hawkins et al., 2008, 2012; MacLeod & Nelson, 2000; Pinguart & Teubert, 2010a). Moreover, it took into consideration the fact that moderate dosage tends to induce a more positive effect.

The content was delivered by the researcher, her team, and other presenters, who were facilitated with the resources for the training course and a brief instruction prior to the event. The staff members who took on this role were trained to serve as hosts/hostesses and facilitators of group interactions. Interaction activities and group dynamics were a critical part of the program, based on the assumption that these would foster better understanding, generate feedback, and induce reflection in the

couples. Homework or assignments were also considered important and integral aspects of the MRE course, as such tasks provided a venue to evaluate the level of understanding and mastering the competences being discussed. In sum, the presentation of the culturally sensitive MRE program included topic presentations, in depth discussions, group process and activities, educative video clips, drama, assignments aimed at fostering development of competences, and their assessment. A variety of educational or teaching tools/techniques was used, which the researcher assumed would foster development of competences, acquirement of knowledge, mastering of skills, and development of a desired attitude by both partners.

### **Discussion of the data collection instrument, scoring, and hypotheses testing**

Three questionnaires were used for data collection—The Dyadic Adjustment Scale, Investment Model of Rusbult (adapted version), and Inventory of Pivotal Family Competences. Each instrument's version and additional details are available for further consultation in Appendix F 1 – 3. Additionally, the pertinent permission letters for use are also available. A brief discussion of the three instruments is presented in the subsequent sections.

#### **Dyadic Adjustment Scale**

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) was the first questionnaire employed in this study (Spanier, 1976), for both collecting and establishing the baseline data and subsequently measuring the potential improvement or decrease in marital satisfaction post-intervention. The definition of Marital satisfaction in this research project is a mental state that reflects the perceived benefits and costs of marriage to a particular

person. The more costs a marriage partner inflicts on a person, the less satisfied one generally is with the marriage and with the marriage partner. Similarly, the greater the perceived benefits are, the more satisfied one is with the marriage and with the marriage partner (Stone, 2007). Stone's definition is compatible with Spanier, for this reason the Spanier instrument to measure marital satisfaction was used. The DAS was deemed appropriate, as it has been previously used in more than 1,000 studies to assess marital satisfaction and adjustment in a romantic dyad (Graham, Liu, & Jezrowski, 2006; Multi-Health Systems, 2009). It contains 32 items, using a 6 and 7-point Likert scale to measure four areas of relationship quality and adjustment—dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, dyadic consensus, and affectional expression. The maximum possible score obtainable is 151. This questionnaire took about fifteen minutes to complete. As initially discussed, scores below 91 were considered to indicate distress, while those above 91 indicated adjustment (Graham et al., 2006). In short, higher scores indicated greater marital satisfaction or adjustment, while lower scores suggest poor couple alignment or distress. The DAS was reported to have good reliability and validity. It has a test-retest coefficient of .96 consistency and the Cronbach's alpha of .96 (Frances & Guzzo, 2009).

The DAS was translated/contextualized and validated in the context of the local population of Curacao, the Dutch Caribbean, in a study including 204 participants and a Cronbach's alpha of .933 was reported. In addition, DAS is based on the explicit and implicit assumption that marital satisfaction is the key to durable and/or sustainable relationship.

## Rusbult commitment scale

The second instrument that was used for data collection purposes, i.e., to assess the commitment level, was the Rusbult Commitment Scale (Rusbult et al., 1998) or the Investment Model Scale (Rusbult, Kumashiro, Kubacka, & Finkel, 2009). Rusbult refers to commitment as tendency to persist in a relationship. According to her view, satisfaction levels are determined or influenced by the extent to which a partner fulfils the other individual's most important needs. Quality of alternatives is defined as the perceived desirability of the best available alternative to a relationship. According to Rusbult, quality of alternatives is based on the extent to which person's most important needs could effectively be satisfied "outside" of the current relationship/marriage, in a specific alternative involvement, by a broader field of eligible individuals, including friends, acquaintances, and family members, or by the individual him/herself. The investment size, in this context, is understood to indicate willingness of the couple to invest in the relationship. Investment size is the magnitude and importance of the resources that are attached to and invested in a relationship, i.e., resources that would decline in value or be lost if the relationship were to end. However, in this study, only a part of the original instrument was adopted, resulting in a questionnaire that replicated the 15-item section called The Commitment Scale. In The Commitment Scale, the following statements were used to measure commitment: "I will do everything I can to make our relationship last for the rest of our lives"; "I feel completely attached to my partner and our relationship"; "I often talk to my partner about what things will be like when we are very old"; "I feel really awful when things are not going well in our relationship"; "My partner is

more important to me than anyone else in life—more important than my parents, friends, etc.”; and “I intend to do everything humanly possible to make our relationship persist.” An 8-point Likert scale was used to score the participant responses, corresponding to eight answers, ranging from “Not agree at all” to “Completely agree.” Thus, the higher score corresponds to a higher level of commitment and the maximum score that can be achieved is 120.

Rusbult et al. (1998) reported an alpha of .91 to .95 for the commitment level of this instrument and .92 to .95 for the satisfaction level (Rusbult et al. 2009).

The Rusbult test was both translated/contextualized and validated in a study comprising of 102 participants. The translated/validated version reported a Cronbach’s alpha of .956.

#### Inventory of pivotal competences for a long-lasting/sustainable relationship

The third instrument used was designed to specifically assess the presence and development of the couple and family relationship competences. Couple and Family relationship competences are defined as: Family competences comprise knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills that work towards enhancing family functioning. They enhance opportunities for development and health of individual family members, and are based on egalitarian family norms, as the foundation of strong family ecology (Shanmugavelayutham, 2012) This instrument was created specifically for this study, and was tested for reliability and validity. The aim of this instrument was: (a) to determine if the couple/individual mastered the basic competences for sustainable/long-lasting relationship, (b) to assess the capacity of



the couple/individual to comply with the demands couples normally face when they get married or cohabit, and (c) to assess mastery of competences by evaluating couple's knowledge, attitudes, and skills. First, the instrument was assessed for face validity, after which five judges assessed and analyzed the instrument for validity of content. Prior to the administration of the test, it was exposed to the scrutiny of a methodologist of Montemorelos University, family experts, and the thesis assessment team (advisors). Moreover, rigorous testing procedure was followed in the study, to ensure construct validity, criterion validity and concurrent validity, as discussed in prior sections. For brief discussion of the three stages and seventh step trajectory to develop the instrument see Appendix S. It is noteworthy to mention that, a pilot study was also conducted prior to the main study, whereby the test was administered to 130 couples in Mexico and 108 in Curacao, reporting a Cronbach's alpha of .97 in Mexico and .992 in Curacao-Bonaire. When the instrument was tested for sample size appropriateness the results were unacceptable for identification of the 12 competences. The Kaiser-Meyer Olkin was .661. Subsequently, an analysis per competence was performed and the KMO varies from .753 up to .904. When the explained variance test was conducted for the whole instrument it reported .725 (72%). See table below – for report of Cronbach alpha results and KMO of a 130 tested subjects

Table 1

*Comparison between Cronbach's alpha of the pilot and KMO results*

Competence	Cronbach's Alpha 1 <sup>st</sup> Pilot – test/ (#Items)	KMO 1 <sup>st</sup>	Chi- square 1 <sup>st</sup>	Sig.
Competence 1	.711 (11 Items)	.753	373.47	.000
Competence 2	.825 (9 Items)	.831	405.7	.000
Competence 3	.865 (5 Items)	.824	317.2	.000
Competence 4	.869 (10 Items)	.904	779.6	.000
Competence 5	.753 (8 Items)	.757	269.11	.000
Competence 6	.826 (14 Items)	.831	766.6	.000
Competence 7	.877 (9 Items)	.861	617.9	.000
Competence 8	.887 (11 Items)	.887	746.3	.000
Competence 9	.896 (10 Items)	.876	715.8	.000
Competence 10	.930 (10 Items)	.836	440.3	.000
Competence 11	.886 (6 Items)	.905	951.0	.000
Competence 12	.712 (5 Items)	.746	175.5	.000

With the aim to conduct a confirmatory but more rigorous analysis, in a secondary validation test in Curacao, the Dutch Caribbean, the same test was administered to sample of 372 participants and a factor analysis was performed in four phases. These phases are explained and discussed in chapter four. The test however, reported a Cronbach's alpha of .965 for the 109 items. See Table 1 for comprehensive view of the three instrument. For detailed Cronbach's alpha report of each competence see Appendix. Further information regarding the creation details,

Table 2

*Validity and contextualization of the three instruments used in this study*

Instrument	N=	Established Cronbach's alpha	Post- Contextualization version Cronbach's alpha
Dyadic Adjustment Scale	108	.96	.933
Rusbult Commitment Scale	102	.95	.956
Inventory of Pivotal Competences for a Long-lasting Relationship	130	.973*	.992*

Note: \* The Inventory of Pivotal Competences for Long-lasting Relationship has been assessed in Mexico and in the Dutch Caribbean (Curacao and Bonaire); both results are considered established. N=372

and finding regarding the confirmatory and rigorous factor analysis performed of the instrument see the discussion in chapter four.

*The Inventory of Pivotal Competences for a Long-lasting/Sustainable*

*Relationship* contains 109 items, divided into 12 sections. Each section is designed to test the presence and/or development of one competence. These competences are tested through approximately 7-14 items per section.

The competences that are tested are (a) leadership, capacity to commit and maintain a relationship during different phases that marriage undergo; (b) effective management of emotions (i.e., emotional literacy), possessing stability and emotional/social intelligence; (c) adaptability and foresight, which implies being able to manage and cope in a competent way with the stages families undergo and the relationship life cycle, as well as ability to anticipate and deal with challenges and potential stressful situations; (d) family management and leadership. This implies being able to create functional structure, assign tasks, and optimize the internal

functioning; (e) ability to understand and possess the capacity to deal successfully with different personalities; (f) competent and effective communication, including conflict resolution ability; (g) management of gender differences; (h) ability to foster, stimulate, and nurture healthy family characteristics; (i) successful financial and/or resource management; (j) capacity to consistently satisfy the partner sexually and enjoy intimacy; (k) parenting capability; (l) spirituality. A 7-point Likert type scale was used to allow the respondents to choose from a limited number of options, which facilitated subsequent data analysis.

### **Format and design of the third instrument**

Given that a well-formatted survey is easier for respondents to read and complete (Brandburn, Sudman, & Wansink, 2004), and reduces measurement errors (Dillman, 2000), this questionnaire has been professionally formatted to increase response rate and decrease measurement errors. Each question was driven by a specific goal.

Attention has been given to some pivotal components of survey that some experts, such as Bradburn et al. (2004), Dillman (2000), and Fanning (2005) recommended: (a) cover page; (b) directions; (c) page design; (d) ordering of questions; (e) grouping of questions; (f) order effects; (g) navigational path; and (h) survey length. The cover, for example, is attractive and even the color was chosen, based on researchers' suggestion that blue and yellow improve responses rate over black and white (Fanning, 2005). The non-booklet format recommended by Dillman

(2000), with one side 8 ½ \* 11 / A4 in Europe are being used. Finally, the layout is fresh and attractive.

### **Scoring of the instrument**

The instrument consisted of 109 items, divided into 12 sections, aligned with the twelve competences that were being assessed. The questions or items assessed four components of competence, namely knowledge, skills and/ability, character traits, and attitudes. This self-report questionnaire took approximately 25 minutes to complete. The scoring system consisted of adding all points achieved in the test, whereby the sum represented the final score. The maximum score was 756, and a score exceeding 454 indicated that the participant has mastered the competences. In other words, the closer the participant's score is to 756, the more mastery he/she has on relationship competences needed for a successful and sustainable relationship. If the participant scored below 454, it was recommended that he/she seek help through therapy or marital education program.

### **Data collection process**

The group that attended to the convention and the respondents who volunteered through the website were considered for participation in the study. All couples attended to the convention and were willing to participate were exposed to the pre-test, i.e., Dyadic Adjustment Scale questionnaire (henceforth referred to as DAS). To form the sample for this study, the convenience, and volunteer approach was used. For example, couples who scored low on DAS were assigned to the first experimental group (i.e., distressed group) and those that achieved a high score (i.e.,

adjusted couples) were assigned to another experimental group. The DAS score was considered as an inclusion criterion. In other words, once the tests were analyzed, the experimental and control groups were formed based on the scores couples achieved. This decision was made for analysis purposes, because both adjusted and distressed couples were exposed simultaneously to the MRE, as previously noted. The assumption was that a couple who reported low on DAS is deemed at risk of divorce. Both “maladjusted” and “distressed families” are the terms used by the author of the test to refer to a couple who report lower than 91 on the DAS questionnaire. The second group consisted of respondents or participants who arrived late (and thus missed the first day of assessment and evaluation). This group was exposed to the MRE and the post-test, but not the pre-test. A third group was formed, in which the couples were pre-tested and post-tested, without participating in the experimental intervention. This group was considered the first control group. A fourth group was formed and exposed to the post-test only (see Table 2 for better overview of groups) . The intention was to include them in order to control for the influence of the testing procedure. In other words, its aim was to control any contamination factors that might influence the sample. In sum, five groups were formed, following the Solomon “five”-group design, which actually is the Solomon four design but for the purpose of this study the experimental group was divided in two groups adjusted and distress (Fink, 2003) (see Table 3).

Table 3

*Solomon's four group design*

The Solomon Four-Group Design					
	Group	Pre-obs.	Indep. Var.	Post-obs.	Follow-up after 2 years
(S)	E1	O1	X	O2	O3
(S)	E2	O1	X	O2	O3
(S)	C 1	--	X	O2	
(S)	C2	O1	--	O2	
(S)	C3	--	--	--	O1

Notes: **S** – sample; **E1** –experimental group adjusted; **E2** - Experimental group distress; **C1** – Control group Post-Test Only with Intervention; **O** - observation or pre-tested and post-tested; **Indep. Var** -independent variable or experiment; **C2** -control group with no intervention. **C3** - control group with no pre-test and no intervention-only post test after 2 years. The dependent variable was Development of Marital and Relationship Competences.

For ethical considerations, the researcher used the waiting list approach, and the “force majeure” argument to form the control group one and two. In the context of this work, this term refers to participants who wanted to partake in the study but were prevented from doing so (due to work schedule, sickness, travel, etc). In addition, participants who could not participate in all the sessions and those that had no interest in the program but were willing to participate as a control group, were assigned to this group. The post test only control group with intervention was formed by participants that by “force majeure” and other reason have not attended to the first session. All study participants were informed of the objectives of the program and both voted/signed to grant authorization, and comply with other aspects of the study protocol, prior to commencing the study.

## Data analysis plan

Data analysis process used in this research project entailed three major steps. The first step was the data collection and preparation, which included data analysis plan, data collection, preparation of codebook, setting up data structure, merging entered data, and data screening. The data entry processes was realized by the researcher and other assistants. An experienced statistician and methodologist scrutinized the data and guided the analysis process. The second step in this analysis process focused on data exploration, which included performing descriptive statistic analyses using SPSS version 21, e.g., frequency analysis of the data set and the replacement of missing values using a mean series procedure. The third step included analysis of the revised data, which entailed exploring relationship among variables, comparing groups, hypotheses testing, etc., facilitating result reporting.

*The aim of the data collection and analysis was to:* (a) describe the background of the respondents; (b) describe the response rate, typical responses to important questions, and the relevant information regarding the flow of answers to questions; (c) explore and perceive relationships, make comparisons among groups, methods, responses, etc., as well as explore how dependent variables behave in relationship with independent variables; (d) predict findings based on frequency and tendencies; (e) describe behaviour of the measure of central tendency and of the measure of spread or dispersion; and (f) test the hypotheses.

Descriptive analyses were performed and both skewness and kurtosis were calculated to assess data distribution. The results indicated that the data followed normal distribution, implying that parametric tests and procedures are the pertinent



approaches to be adopted in data analysis (Neideen & Brasel, 2007). Criteria used for acceptable skewness and kurtosis is -2 and +2 (George & Mallery, 2010).

For the hypothesis testing a planned comparison following a significant analysis of variance was conducted. The complex contrast or planned contrast for One-Way ANOVA deems appropriate due to the fact that: (a) There are one independent variable and three dependent variable (b) this approach should be planned in advance in order to establish the group comparison that should be made (c) it increases the statistical power of the comparison and reduce possibility of type I error (d) it is more sensitive to detect difference because the number of comparison are reduced (e) the three dependent variables are metric (f) there are various (i.e. five) groups comparison simultaneously (g) there are three comparison/measurement of results at different time and (h) it is more robust approach.

In sum, this statistical approach was implemented in order to ascertain how variables behave and relate, as well as assess significance of differences between groups, and between the means of the pre-test and post-test scores and finally make contrasts. They also facilitated the analysis of follow-up results, and allowed for group comparisons, among other benefits. These tests were used in prior studies that assessed variables in similar experimental designs employing a control group. Other such as Van Windenfelt used other type of test that were more coherent with their design due to the fact that it was consider pertinent for their design. They have not used the Solomon's design (Kalkan & Ersanli, 2008; Kotrla & Dyer, 2008; Van Windenfelt et al., 2001; Wilde & Doherty, 2013). Regarding the Solomon design, statistics experts and methodologist have also discussed the benefits and weakness

of these statistical approaches (Sapp, 1999; Van Engelenburg, 1999). They recognized the complexity and challenges researchers face when attempting to identify the best analysis tools for a quasi-experimental approach using the Solomon design. Van Engelenberg stated, “no single proper analysis technique is known for the Solomon design” (p. 9). This is consistent with the view of Campbell and Stanley (1966) who posited, “there is no singular statistical procedure which use all six of observation simultaneously” (p. 25). Despite these assertions, there seems to be a consensus among relevant professionals that ANOVA and MANOVA could be the most appropriate tools in this research context. Ferguson and Bibby (1999) confirmed this by stating, “With the Solomon’s four group design ANOVA is the most appropriate statistical analysis” (p. 124). These arguments underpin the use of these statistical methods in this research, where they are adopted to evaluate the three core hypotheses. For further details on the data analysis plan, please refer to Appendix G. *For detailed table of Operationalization of variable consult following Appendix R.*

For validation of the instrument “Inventory of Pivotal Competences for Long-lasting relationship” the Confirmatory Factor Analysis(FCA) was conducted.

### **Rationale underpinning the research design and methodology**

This quasi-experimental study using the Solomon design is pertinent because it responds to the research questions and adequately tests the hypotheses being discussed. Additionally, it addresses the most common internal and external threats to validity. Independently of these reasons, there are seven further reasons for choosing this general research approach, as discussed below.

*First*, researchers tend to use existing MRE programs that could be based on “one size fits all” idea instead of creating a new MRE, based on (a) prior field assessment for common needs and interest; (b) consultation with professionals in the field to discover most common challenges couple are facing; (c) cultural issues, which may be of influence and of importance; and (d) secrets and key factors of long-term successful marriages instead of focusing solely on the common determinants of divorce (i.e., addressing only these determinants and predictor assuming that this will help prevent divorce).

For this research project, a culturally sensitive MRE geared toward the development of relationship and family competence was created. This in an attempt to better address marital and relationship challenges of the Dutch Caribbean population and consequently justify need for countries to assess for needs, consult local professionals, and create MRE based on their cultural needs, rather than translate, or even attempt to contextualize, existing MRE. This is important, as contextualization could be based on “certain empirical assumptions.”

*Second*, to the best of the researcher’s knowledge, thus far, no studies in the field have employing the Solomon design been conducted. Thus, to mitigate this shortcoming, the Solomon design was utilized in this study, as it addresses all major validity treats effectively.

*Third*, meager or inconsistent effect size or power are reported in many research studies. This research project reported the sufficient effect size and power in order to better inform other researchers of the effectiveness and validity of this design.

*Forth*, meager exploration of effectiveness of MRE in other cultures (i.e., outside the US or Europe) is evident, e.g. one in Turkey, etc. (Karahan, 2009). This research design attempted to address this shortcoming by assessing the effectiveness of an MRE in the Dutch Caribbean context.

*Fifth*, no quasi-experimental research has been done thus far in the Dutch Caribbean. This design attempts to make a direct contribution to the Dutch Caribbean Island by pioneering research on marital issues in this part of the Dutch Royal Kingdom.

*Sixth*, no or underrepresented simultaneous exploration of two groups (i.e., adjusted and distressed group) has been conducted to date in this field (Doss, Rhoades, Stanley, Markman, & Johnson, 2009; McAllister, Dduncan & Hawkins, 2012). Similarly, the use of blind technique is also scarce. This design would contribute to advancing the knowledge and contribute to the extant array of studies by offering an example of a research project were two groups were analyzed.

*Seventh*, no successful use of instrument created specifically to measure variables that the research projects attempts or aims to measure has been reported thus far. Many researchers have used or adapted/translated instruments (sometimes without reporting validation, contextualization, etc.) for their research projects. Even though this is an accepted approach, it impedes researchers from discovering additional issues that tend to emerge when prior assessments are made in the population of interest to discover important aspects of a culture or specific group. It may also frame and limit creativity.

### **Internal validity threats addressed**

The nine most commonly known internal validity threats have been discussed extensively in literature (Campbell, 1963; Campbell & Stanley, 1963; Cook & Campbell, 1979). An attempt was made to address the most common threats that were applicable to the current research, namely (1) history – events occurring between the assessment of the pre- and post-test that could affect the experimental variable; (2) maturation – naturally occurring changes over time that could be confused with treatment effect/experimental variable; (3) testing or repeated testing of effects (for instance, people tend to do better on the second attempt at any test because of familiarity; (4) instrumentation – calibration need (not applicable); (5) statistical regression – issues can arise if groups are selected on extreme scores; (6) selection bias – when non-randomized groups are used and are not matched at the start of the study, this may lead to misleading results; (7) experimental mortality – loss of subjects due non-random reasons; (8) selection x maturation effects created by non-equivalent (non-random) groups, where the time factor might affect one group more than the another; And (9) expectancy – arises when researcher has a bias regarding some type of result and is in position to influence findings (not applicable) (Romel-Esham, 2010; Shadish, Cook & Campbell, 2002).

These threats were addressed in this study by using the Solomon design for quasi-experimental studies with a control group and three different experimental groups. This approach, according to the experts, is suitable and able to mitigate or address most of the common threats (Beverly & Sherradens, 2001; Campbell & Stanley, 1966; Levy & Ellis, 2011; Posavac & Carey, 1989;). Additionally, by

measuring the difference between pre-test and post-test results following a short period of time (5 days), by having a team involved in collecting and entering the data, by providing several facilitators and participants in both presentation of content, group interaction process or activities, this study has reduced the potential for the aforementioned threats. By forming two groups, namely an “adjusted group” and “distressed group” and by having a control group, the study design has achieved validity. Finally, by using statistical approaches and methods that addressed mortality and attrition, as well as performing baseline measurements between groups at pre-test and post-test, it is possible to ascertain the effect of the intervention without any bias.

### **External validity threats addressed**

A common threat researchers face when designing a research project is the “sensitization effect.” In a pre-test, post-test design, the pre-test may sensitize people to the intervention treatment yet to come. Since pre-testing does not occur outside the laboratory setting, the results may not be generalizable. According to Huck and Sandier (1973), “exposure to the pretest increases the Ss' sensitivity to the experimental treatment, thus preventing generalization of results from the pretested sample to an unpretested population” (quoted in Braver & Braver, 1988, p. 54). Another common threat is the “Hawthorne effect,” which emerges when subjects are aware that they are part of an experiment (Cook, 1967; Wilson & Putman, 1979). Even though this theory is disputed, as a precaution, the researcher has assumed its potential threat and potential implication for the participants' behavior and proceeded to explicitly rule these effects out by using the Solomon design. In sum, these and

other threats have been addressed by choosing the Solomon design and the aforementioned research procedure steps (Levy & Ellis, 2011; McGahee & Tingen, 2009).

### **Ethical considerations**

The current study presented neither physical nor psychological risk for the participants. All participants were informed of the investigative nature of this project. Their consent was requested and ample explanation regarding confidentiality of information has been facilitated. Data regarding the participants, identification of participants, and other personal issues will be maintained confidential during and after the study. The ethical and research requirements regarding privacy and confidentiality of human subjects when conducting research were respected and maintained throughout this project. By confidentiality, the researcher refers to the security of records and information about individuals. Privacy, on the other hand, pertains to individuals' right to control what other people know about them and their interaction with others. This researcher explained this to the participants and promised that information collected would be protected, e.g., no other people would have access to this information. Sensitive information and identifying characteristics would be protected, e.g., name, phone number, social security number, etc. In short, the researcher has made it clear that there would be no disclosing of information to third parties. He even presented the plan for confidentiality, whereby one computer with fingerprint security would be used to manage data, etc. The ethical research practice used for this research is based on the principles or guidelines of the National Institute of Health of US (See Appendix H for the example of a letter requesting authorization

from the participants). The research design and method have been assessed and approved by the thesis committee of the Montemorelos University.

### **Expected findings**

The study was expected to yield three main findings, discussed below.

First, when participants are exposed to the current culturally sensitive MRE program geared towards the development of competences, there will be significant difference in the satisfaction levels of couples when compared to those prior to attending the MRE education program.

Second, when couples are exposed to the culturally sensitive MRE program geared toward the development of competences, they will demonstrate significant development of competences and skills for relationship success and satisfaction.

Third, when couples attend this culturally sensitive MRE program geared toward the development of competences, they will experience significant increase in the level of commitment.



## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter aims to summarize the extensive amount of information collected in order to answer the research questions, test the hypotheses, and present the results and study findings. Additionally, tables, charts, or pertinent graphs are presented to complete, support, and help clarify the content. This research project was quantitative, quasi-experimental, and longitudinal in nature. The Solomon design was used. The current chapter commences by presenting the participants' demographics, i.e., by describing the pertinent characteristics of the sample. This is followed by a brief discussion of the validity of the instrument Inventory of Pivotal Competences for Long-lasting Relationships, as determined by various tests applied to the measures. The baseline data and descriptions of variables are presented next and are followed by hypotheses testing. The chapter closes with the summary of findings, based on which some conclusions are presented.

The major objective of this research was to provide, measure, and analyze the impact of the marital and relationship education program Profile of successful Couples/Families on three prominent variables, namely, marital satisfaction, commitment, and family or relationship competence in the Dutch Caribbean Island Curacao. The second purpose was to validate a newly created measurement and

diagnostic instrument, namely Inventory of Pivotal Competences for Long-lasting Relationships. Finally, the third aim of this research was to provide a checklist for marital counselors, clergy, and government workers, allowing them to utilize a standardized tool when assessing couples and assisting them in attaining the key marriage competencies prior to their wedding or cohabitation.

### **Demographic data**

The sample for this research comprised of 310 individuals, aged from 19 to 63 years (see Table 3). These participants were separated into experimental and control groups, in order to be able to meet the aforementioned study objectives. More specifically, the participating couples were placed into adjusted and distressed group, post-test only with intervention, post-test only without intervention, and pre- and post-test control group without intervention, in line with the Solomon's design. In the experimental adjusted group, a significant difference in the attained educational level is evident. In particular, none of the participants in this group completed primary level of education only. Similarly, in the distressed group, none of the participants completed college or graduate education. When age and length of relationship was compared across the groups, the adjusted group had the highest mean values for both variables. When marital status was examined, the adjusted group was found to have a greater proportion of married couples than cohabitated couples. The mean age of the participants, on the other hand, was very similar across all groups.

Table 4

*Demographic characteristics of the groups comprising the study sample*

Variable	Values	E1/N=	E2/N=	C1/N=	C2/N=	C3/N=
Education	Primary	0	31 (60%)	0	2 (4%)	0
	Secondary	47 (47%)	21 (40%)	29 (46%)	23 (48%)	17 (39%)
	College	51 (52%)	0	33 (52%)	23 (48%)	19 (43%)
	Graduate	1 (1%)	0	1 (2%)	0	8 (18%)
Marital Status	Married	82	37	56	31	31
	Cohabitation	20	15	8	17	10
Relationship Length	M	12.8	8.8	5.8	9.6	7.7
	SD	8.24	13.10	8.17	6.25	4.67
Age	M	39.3	32.6	38.1	34.3	33.5
	SD	10.77	7.38	9.98	7.70	7.47

\* E1 = Experimental group (adjusted), E2 = Experimental group (distressed), C1 = Post-test only with intervention, Control group without intervention, and Control group without pre-test after two years.

### **Validity of the inventory of pivotal competences for a long-lasting/sustainable relationship**

Given that one of the study objectives was to validate the newly created instrument, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted, using principal components analysis and varimax rotation. In that respect, the author performed a factor analysis on the data pertaining to all 372 study participants, in four stages, aimed at ascertaining different validity characteristics. The instrument employed in this study was identical to the original 108-item scale tested in a previous pilot study in Mexico and subsequently in Curacao, with the exception of one additional item. Consequently, the new version, which was tested for validity, consisted of 109 items. The four-stage factor analysis procedure that was employed in order to validate this newly created instrument is described below. This four stage procedure is an iterative

revision and analysis process performed in graduate manner until the whole instrument fits the proposed model.

In the first stage of analysis, all 109 items and 12 factors were considered. Based on the analysis findings, four factors were identified, namely competence 10: Capacity to consistently satisfy the partner sexually and manage intimacy; (SIM); competence 9: Successful financial and/or resource management (FRM); competence 8: Ability to foster, stimulate, and nurture healthy family characteristics (GHFC); and competence 4: Family management and leadership (FMP). The KMO for the twelve factors (competences) was .971 and they explained 72.9% of the total variance, while the four identified factors explained 52.9%. As can be seen in Table 5, there are nine items (22%) with factor loadings less than .3, which weakens the factor. However, when all the items are considered, five items with factor loadings exceeding .3 can be identified. This implies that GHFC is the strongest and FMP the weakest.

For the second stage of the validity analysis, 68 items that remained from the previous one were considered, along with eight factors. For the eight factors, the KMO was .970, and the explained variance was 71.0%, while 53.0% was obtained for the three identified factors. These three factors were competence 11: Parenting capability (PSCBN); competence 6: Competent communication and problem solving capacity (ECCPM); and competence 3: Adaptability and foresight, which implies being able to manage and cope in a competent way with the stages families undergo and the relationship life cycle, as well as ability to anticipate and deal with challenges and potential stressful situations (FLCM). Here, only one item was an outlier, because

the factor loading was below .3. However, it is worth noting that some of the items pertaining to this factor did have loadings that exceeded .3.

Table 5

*Factor loading of competences GHFC, FRM, FMP and SIM*

	GHCF	FRM	FMP	SIM
GHCF 70 We express appreciation for each other and validate others...	<b>.760</b>	.305	.259	.147
GHCF 72 We take time on daily basis or weekly basis for each other.	<b>.719</b>	.410	.219	.131
GHCF 68 We have ...the characteristics of a healthy family.	<b>.713</b>	.360	.260	.088
GHCF 73 We are connected with the community and provide help – we....	<b>.697</b>	.337	.131	.158
GHCF 71 We are able to adapt ourselves to new situations.	<b>.691</b>	.412	.180	.127
GHCF 69 We have structure in our marriage,...	<b>.682</b>	.378	.310	.131
GHCF 67 I know the characteristics of a healthy family.	<b>.651</b>	.375	.203	.146
GHCF 74 We have customs and rituals, which are typical of our family –.	<b>.632</b>	.310	.169	.076
GHCF 77 If or when we have problems, we know our limitation ...	<b>.614</b>	.324	.205	.152
GHCF 76 We accept and love each other unconditionally-you do not...	<b>.585</b>	.234	.277	.253
GHCF 75 We share and instill values in our children.	<b>.179</b>	.161	.109	.183
FRM 85 We have an emergency fund.	.420	<b>.424</b>	.515	-.003
FRM 79 In our family meeting, we plan everything that has to do....	.443	<b>.399</b>	.513	.206
FRM 81 We maintain ourselves on our budget and don't buy impulsively.	.456	<b>.390</b>	.561	.220
FRM 84 We work on increasing our income and do not focus only on...	.442	<b>.371</b>	.527	.199
FRM 83 I know the different ways to economize/save.	.449	<b>.367</b>	.500	.246
FRM 82 We can distinguish between that which is desirable and...	.471	<b>.347</b>	.505	.134
FRM 86 We evaluate carefully our motivation before proceeding to	.439	<b>.305</b>	.540	.111
FRM 80 We make a budget.	.327	<b>.297</b>	.634	.160
FRM 87 We have a detailed view of/insight into our expenses.	.590	<b>.273</b>	.514	.218
FRM 78 We have short and long term financial goals.	.544	<b>.226</b>	.456	.177
MFP33 I have a clear idea about how my time is being used. I know...	.413	.406	<b>.372</b>	.039
MFP 35 We have a family meeting every week, where we discuss, make plans, and deal with family issues.	.508	.483	<b>.334</b>	.128
MFP 34 We are constantly under stress because of the many things that need to be done	.191	.414	<b>.327</b>	.172
MFP 32 I can make a management plan... make it happen.	.440	.467	<b>.326</b>	.124
MFP 29 We work and have in our family an itinerary and agenda with most important family activities.	.369	.725	<b>.302</b>	.104
MFP 28 We work and have in our family an itinerary and agenda with most important family activities.	.418	.702	<b>.265</b>	.137
MFP 30 Due to our effective planning we manage to have time for every important thing that must be done.	.290	.773	<b>.259</b>	.086
MFP 31 We have a clear "overview" of what should be done in our family and we achieve our goal of doing them all.	.512	.519	<b>.258</b>	.147
MFP 27 We have clearly defined roles, tasks are well defined and assigned...everybody in our family knows exactly what they must do...	.437	.541	<b>.245</b>	.126

MFP 26 I know what management is and am able to manage things in my family competently.	.348	.628	<b>.125</b>	.122
SIM 93 I know what management is and am able to manage things in my family competently.	.113	.062	.068	<b>.754</b>
SIM92 I know what management is and am able to manage things in my family competently.	.238	.043	-.003	<b>.675</b>
SIM 91 My partner reaches orgasm on a normal basis, or at least when he/she wants to.	.334	.308	.052	<b>.654</b>
SIM 95 My partner reaches orgasm normally.	.206	.111	.128	<b>.629</b>
SIM 94 My partner reaches orgasm normally.	.482	.088	.242	<b>.600</b>
SIM 90 I know the erogenous zones of my partner.	.029	.220	.170	<b>.597</b>
SIM 96 I can openly tell my partner what I like and what I want him/her to do with me.	.589	.130	.306	<b>.488</b>
SIM 89 I know the phases that sexual relationships undergo / pass through and can competently manage all of them.	.447	.292	.320	<b>.435</b>
SIM 97 I know the phases that sexual relationship undergo / pass through and can competently manage through all of them.	.565	.216	.229	<b>.410</b>
SIM 88 I can speak openly and freely about sex with my partner – without any inhibition.	.473	.338	.296	<b>.351</b>

Following from the preceding stage, 43 items remained and, together with five factors, were considered in the third stage of the validation analysis. The test yielded a KMO of .967 and 70.0% explained variance. On the other hand, the two factors that were identified explained 35.1% of the variance. These factors were competence 7: Management of gender differences (GDM), and competence 5: Ability to understand and capacity to deal successfully with different personalities (PDM). All the items had the factor loading higher than .3, in particular those that were grouped together.

For the fourth stage, 26 items and three factors remained. The KMO was .950 and the explained variance was 66.3%. Here, three factors were identified, namely competence 12: Spirituality (MRF); competence 2: Effective management of emotions (i.e., emotional literacy), possessing stability and emotional/social intelligence, and the romantic skills or ability to remain committed and emotional engaged (MEIEA); and competence 1: Leadership, capacity to commit and maintain a relationship as it

undergoes different phases (LEMR). Only two items were outliers; however, even the factors that were affected by these issues possessed five items with sufficient factor loading.

Table 6

*Factor loading for competences PSCBN, FLCM and ECCPM*

	PSCBN	FLCM	ECCPM
ECCPM 56 Communication between us is really good. I feel good about the way we communicate...	<b>.752</b>	.373	.190
ECCPM 57 Communication between us is really good. I feel good about the way we communicate...	<b>.647</b>	.258	.223
ECCPM 54 I can keep my ego out of the question or out of the way as we communicate.	<b>.620</b>	.357	.224
ECCPM 46 I know what may augment emotional tension and hinder good communication between us.	<b>.614</b>	.392	.175
ECCPM 51 We make decisions together ...no one in our family dictates or takes all the decisions alone. There is a balance in power.	<b>.607</b>	.384	.156
ECCPM 49 I have the ability/capacity to "short circuit" or "intercept" an issue that is being discussed.	<b>.594</b>	.447	.153
ECCPM 52 We always have conflict accompanied by a lot of tension in our relationship.	<b>.587</b>	.376	.230
ECCPM 53 We have functional methods to solve problems and conflict...methods that function effectively.	<b>.527</b>	.449	.068
ECCPM 47 I know what can avoid tension from building and stimulate good communication.	<b>.523</b>	.447	.175
ECCPM 44 We cannot speak to each other without it ending up in an argument.	<b>.513</b>	.207	.192
ECCPM 45 I can speak openly and say exactly what I want to my partner. I do not have to hide my feeling at all; rather, I am encouraged to express them.	<b>.505</b>	.386	.078
ECCPM 48 I have empathy capacity; in other words, I can put myself into the shoes of someone else and see things from his/her perspective (point of view).	<b>.438</b>	.483	.232
ECCPM 50 I know the reasons why conflict emerges.	<b>.403</b>	.466	.263
ECCPM 55 Communication between us is really good. I feel good about the way we communicate	<b>.093</b>	.016	-.040
FLCM 25 I have a tentative plan for the stages or phases that my family will undergo.	.433	<b>.719</b>	.250
FLCM 22. I am prepared for the phases that families go through.	.397	<b>.684</b>	.188
FLCM 24 I know what to expect of every phase, what are the typical problems and adjustments that need to be made, etc.	.511	<b>.666</b>	.163
FLCM 23 I know exactly in which phase my family is.	.501	<b>.567</b>	.132
FLCM 21. I know the phases that families undergo (go through).	.485	<b>.548</b>	.073
PSCBN 103 I try to discover and foster development of talents in my children.	.117	.182	<b>.802</b>
PSCBN 102 I play with my children because I know the importance of ...	.279	.108	<b>.746</b>
PSCBN 99 I am able to satisfy the physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual need of my children.	.253	.198	<b>.680</b>
PSCBN 98 I know what the basic needs of children are.	.211	.251	<b>.555</b>
PSCBN 101 I always try to "catch" my children when they are doing something positive to reinforce and reward them.	.659	.294	<b>.511</b>
PSCBN 100 I know and use different ways to discipline my child(ren).	.627	.302	<b>.502</b>

Table 7

*Factor loading of competences GDM and PDM*

	GDM	PDM
GDM 64 I can respect and accept the areas in which we are different and do not pretend or suggest that my partner is defective	.714	.319
GDM 65 What I lack, my partner has; she/he is really my other half.	.702	.310
GDM 61 My partner and I complement/complete each other, she/he has exactly what I lack.	.673	.319
GDM 60 We actually celebrate our differences and see these as "assets" (positive aspects that each one of us brings to our relationship). We don't see differences as defects.	.658	.335
GDM 62 I have knowledge regarding the areas in which men and women are different.	.604	.401
GDM 66 I have trouble when I think of continuing life without my partner; we are such a good team.	.604	.255
GDM 63 In the way I approach and deal with my partner, I always take into consideration the fact that we are different and independent beings.	.594	.399
GDM 59 We are happy and live happily despite our differences. We have a good relationship even though we have our differences.	.577	.399
GDM 58 The differences between partners cause us to argue adamantly and constantly.	.561	.314
PDM 42 I accept my partner's personality.	.506	.542
PDM 36 I know my partner's personality very well.	.182	.506
PDM 43 I do not treat my partner as defective just because she/he has another type of personality.	.578	.506
PDM 37 We make plans taking differences in personality under consideration...differences of every member of the family	.419	.493
PDM 41 I have a good bond and get along well with all the members of my family.	.553	.456
PDM 40 I know my partner's and my family members' weaknesses and virtues.	.373	.444
PDM 38 We do not compare negatively/unfavorably members of our family with each other.	.526	.401
PDM 39 Everybody possesses virtues and weaknesses in their personality...positive character traits and negative character or personality traits.	.316	.345



Table 8

*Factor loading of competences LCMMS, EMEIL, and SM*

	LCMMS	EMEIL	SM
LCMMS 1 We have short- and long-term goals.	<b>.794</b>	.377	.097
LCMMS 9 I do everything I can for us to stay married and grow together (seek information, attend seminars, read a book, and invest by doing my effort).	<b>.783</b>	.394	.172
LCMMS 10 The aim of marriage is to foster symmetric growth and character development, which consequently leads to happiness and intimacy.	<b>.767</b>	.306	.158
LCMMS 11 Choosing the right partner and developing competences and skills for marriage is the secret for a sustainable marriage. In short, finding the right partner alone is not enough.	<b>.761</b>	.354	.145
LCMMS 2 We are aware of what the aim of marriage is.	<b>.744</b>	.424	.148
LCMMS 4 I am aware of the fact that marriage undergoes several phases.	<b>.693</b>	.423	.187
LCMMS 3 I dedicate more attention to the development of my character and personal growth than try to change or look at the character defects of my partner.	<b>.623</b>	.501	.033
LCMMS 8 My marriage is what I have dreamed of.	<b>.575</b>	.578	.027
LCMMS 7 I do everything within my power to satisfy and comply with the expectations that my partner has regarding marriage.	<b>.392</b>	.647	.205
LCMMS 6 I am aware of my partner's expectation (i.e., desires) related to marriage.	<b>.361</b>	.692	.193
LCMMS 5 I am prepared for each coming phase that my marriage / relationship will undergo.	<b>.271</b>	.620	.226
EMEIL A20 I can recognize and help my partner deal with his/her emotions.	.290	<b>.803</b>	.104
EMEIL 19 I can recognize, control and manage my emotions/feelings.	.196	<b>.766</b>	.180
EMEIL 18 I notice immediately when something is bothering my spouse and try immediately to solve or alleviate the problem/situation.	.152	<b>.717</b>	.177
EMEIL 17 I know what I should do in order to keep the passion/excitement alive in our relationship.	.429	<b>.653</b>	.171
EMEIL 15 I continue to do the majority of the loving things I used to do when we were in the courtship period after we got married	.510	<b>.599</b>	.005
EMEIL 16 I make time at least once a week, for a minimum one hour, to specifically dedicate my attention to my partner and/or to our relationship.	.562	<b>.562</b>	.054
EMEIL 13 I know the language and/or the way my partner prefers me to express love to him/her.	.563	<b>.555</b>	.190
EMEIL 14 I constantly focus on making my partner happy.	.664	<b>.545</b>	.071
EMEIL 12 Love is not only a feeling, but a conscious choice (it has its intellectual and choice dimension).	.818	<b>.359</b>	.153
SM 107 Our religion does not hinder our efforts to make new friends (we have friends that belong to other denominations).	.077	.073	<b>.789</b>
SM 109 We teach our children the difference between right and wrong.	.087	.175	<b>.609</b>

SM 106 I can make a connection between biblical stories and their application today—my family can see relevance of biblical stories and make application in their daily life.	.536	.299	<b>.603</b>
SM 105 I regularly attend church services.	.562	.231	<b>.580</b>
SM 108 We work as volunteers in foundation, charities, and other organizations. We are connected to and involved in our community.	.632	.132	<b>.322</b>
SM 104 I regularly have my personal devotionals moments (daily).	.718	.134	<b>.284</b>

The test conducted indicated that the instrument gave evidence of validity, due to the fact that only 12 items deviated from their factors (i.e., competences). When the reliability test was performed, a general Cronbach’s Alpha of .973 was obtained in the prior pilot that was conducted with a sample of 130 individuals. This more rigorous assessment, with a sample of 372 participants, yielded a Cronbach’s alpha was of .992. In Table 2, a more detailed comparison of the Cronbach’s alpha results of the two pilots is given. It also reports on the the factor analysis results obtained in the two pilot studies. As the difference in the two instruments was negligible (only one item was added in this study), it is not surprising that both had highly acceptable Cronbach’s alpha and validity.

### **Variables utilized in this study and baseline data description**

When conducting experimental studies, establishing a baseline measurement prior to the intervention is a standard procedure, as this enables comparing and assessing the measurement indicators prior to the intervention with those obtained post-intervention (Asareca, 2010; Hampton, Berkowitz, & Nagy, 2014; Ditzen, Hahlweg, Fehrm-Wolfsdort, & Baucom, 2011; Menchaca & Dehle, 2005). In sum, baseline data is basic information collected before a program is initiated, used to

provide the means for a comparison, i.e., the assessment of the net effect of the program. It is pivotal that researchers use baseline data (or pre-assessment data) as the standard against which to compare all subsequent changes that are noted post-intervention.

In this research project, the indicators used for establishing the baseline prior to the intervention were Marital satisfaction Level, Level of commitment, and Level of mastery of pivotal relationship and family competences of the participants. As previously discussed, the sample for this research project was divided into four groups, namely (a) the adjusted group, (b) the distressed group, (c) the control group without intervention, and (d) the post-test only group with intervention. Three of these groups were exposed to Culturally Sensitive MRE, and the results were analyzed and compared among these groups and subsequently with the control group. In the next section, the three groups and their scores prior to the exposure to the Culturally Sensitive MRE program are discussed.

Baseline data of the adjusted group when  
marital satisfaction was measured  
as an indicator using DAS

Marital Satisfaction, as well as DAS, as an instrument, has frequently been used as an indicator, to establish a baseline prior to intervention (Menchaca & Dehle, 2005). As previously mentioned, the DAS was the instrument used in this study to form the adjusted group. The adjusted group (as discussed in the previous chapter) included the participants that scored above 91 on the DAS for marital satisfaction.

In Table 10, the differences in means of the groups are evident. On the other hand, the affective dimension seems fairly constant across the groups.

Table 9

*Reliability of the inventory of pivotal competences for long-term relationship*

Competence	Cronbach's alpha
Competence 1: <i>Leadership, which includes the capacity to commit and maintain a relationship as marriage undergoes the development stages</i>	.948
Competence 2: <i>Effective management of and the ability to nurture/keep love alive</i>	.930
Competence 3: <i>Effective management of life cycle, adaptability, and foresight—i.e., life cycle management competency</i>	.930
Competence 4: <i>Family management competency</i>	.946
Competence 5: <i>Personality difference management and competence in handling different personalities</i>	.926
Competence 6: <i>Communicative ability</i>	.947
Competence 7: <i>Gender management competency</i>	.957
Competence 8: <i>Ability to create a structure and a way of functioning that generate or stimulate emergence of healthy family characteristics</i>	.950
Competence 9: <i>Resource and financial management competency</i>	.955
Competence 10: <i>Sexuality management competency</i>	.919
Competence 11: <i>Parenting competency</i>	.878
Competence 12: <i>Religious and spiritual competency</i>	.806

## Baseline data of the level of commitment

The baseline data for the groups with respect to the level of commitment is shown in Table 11. When measuring this variable, the Rusbult Investment Commitment Model Scale was used.

Table 10

*Description of marital satisfaction level for each group*

Variable	Test	E1	E2	C1
Marital Satisfaction	Pre	94.8 (12.37)	48.9 (7.87)	
	Post	112.8 (3.68)	86.1 (10.18)	110.98 (4.84)
Consensus	Pre	3.5 (.49)	2.3 (.36)	
	Post	4.2 (.30)	3.4 (.32)	4.1 (.40)
Affection	Pre	2.1 (.40)	1.9 (.40)	
	Post	2.7 (.20)	2.5 (.25)	2.6 (.34)
Satisfaction	Pre	3.5 (.49)	2.1 (.45)	
	Post	4.3 (.28)	3.7 (.27)	4.1 (.36)
Cohesion	Pre	3.1 (.86)	1.7 (.37)	
	Post	4.0 (.39)	2.8 (.34)	3.6 (.75)

Note. E1 is experimental group one (adjusted), E2 is the experimental group two (distressed), and C1 is Post-test with intervention only group

Table 11

*Description and data pertaining to the commitment levels according to the dimensions*

Dimension of the Commitment Variable	Test	E1	E2	C1
Commitment	Pre	94.8 (12.37)	48.8 (7.87)	
	Post	112.9 (3.68)	86.1 (10.18)	111.0 (4.85)
Intention to Persist	Pre	6.4 (.88)	3.2 (.62)	
	Post	7.7 (.27)	6.3 (.88)	7.7 (.36)
Attachment	Pre	6.5 (.87)	3.4 (.51)	
	Post	7.3 (.38)	5.5 (.60)	7.4 (.57)
Long-term Orientation	Pre	6.1 (.88)	3.2 (.58)	
	Post	7.6 (.36)	5.4 (.79)	7.0 (.54)

Note. E1 is experimental group one (adjusted), E2 is the experimental group two (distressed), and C1 is Post-test with intervention only group

In addition to the total score, five questions were considered as important indicators, as they are directly related to and are the principal indicators of commitment (consult Table 11). The findings pertaining to these questions are presented in Table 12. More information regarding the baseline data is presented in Appendix I.

#### Baseline data of the level of mastery of competences

The baseline data of the experimental adjusted group, the experimental distressed group, the post-test only group, and the two control groups is shown in Table 13. The data was collected using the Inventory of Pivotal Competences for a

Table 12

*Baseline measurement scores – RIM commitment level*

Questions	Pre-test Mean / (SD)	Highest Selected Choice	Post-test Mean / SD	Difference Mean
“I will do everything I can to make our relationship last for the rest of our lives”	6.46(1.021)	25% / 6	7.72 (.534)	1.26
“I am completely committed to maintain our relationship”	6.14 (1.117)	22% / 6	7.53 (.558)	1.39
“I want our relationship to last forever”	6.50 (1.041)	27% / 7	7.77 (.420)	1.27
“There is no chance at all that I would ever become romantically involved with another person”	6.45 (1.216)	17% / 7	7.72 (.515)	1.27
“I intend to do everything humanly possible to make our relationship persist”	6.65 (.863)	37% / 7	7.75 (.460)	1.1

*Note. 8-point Likert scale ranging from 1 corresponding to “Do not agree at all to 8 indicating “Agree completely.”*

Long-lasting Relationship questionnaire, described in detail in the preceding sections. The mean scores the groups achieved in their pre- and post-tests are shown, revealing differences both across and within groups as well as in different competences. A relationship between pre- and post-test scores can also be appreciated, indicating that the baseline differences across groups increased after the intervention. In other words, the pre-test alone was not responsible for the differences that emerged at post-test; rather, the intervention seems to be the main factor in the improvement of the scores of the participating couples. This assertion was further explored as a part of the hypothesis testing, discussed later in this chapter.

### **Perceived correlation among the three variables under study**

A further assessment and analysis of the data collected with the three instruments was performed in order to explore possible relationships among the variables under study. A correlation analysis was performed to assess potential relationship among the three core and latent variables, namely marital satisfaction, commitment, and family or relationship competences. The structural equation model was used to explore a potential relationship. The AMOS software version 20 was used, implementing the maximum verisimilitude (maximum likelihood estimation), as shown in Figure 1. The chi-squared goodness of fit test model has not reached the required criterion level ( $p > .05$ ), according to the criteria established in the pertinent literature (Ruiz, Pardo & San Martín, 2010). However, three additional criteria were also recommended by authors of similar studies, namely CFI  $> .95$ , chi-squared/ df  $< 3$  and RMSEA  $< .08$ . Thus, the results of this study were tested against these

additional criteria and acceptance was achieved. Consequently, the model was deemed a good fit to the data and passed the acceptance tests performed. More specifically, the model demonstrated a clear relationship among the three core variables under study at the  $p < .001$  significance level. Moreover, the effect size was strong because the correlations exceeded .8. Consequently, it can be concluded that the three variables were highly correlated.

### **Hypotheses testing**

For the hypothesis testing a planned comparison following a significant analysis of variance was conducted. The complex contrast or planned contrast for one-way ANOVA deems appropriate due to the fact that:

1. There are one independent variable and three dependent variable.
2. This approach should be planned in advance in other to establish the group comparison that should be made.
3. It increases the statistical power of the comparison and reduce possibility of type I error.
4. It is more sensitive to detect difference because the number of comparison are reduced.
5. The three dependent variables are metric.
6. There are various (i.e. five) groups comparison simultaneously.
7. There are three comparison/measurement of results at different time.
8. It is more robust approach.

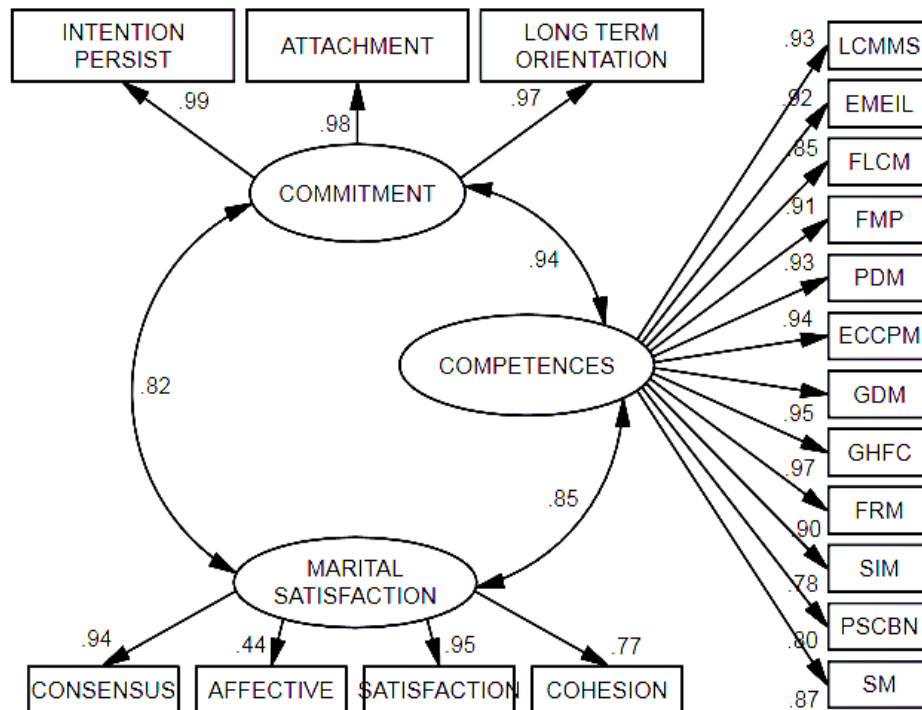


Table 13

*Mean scores on the pre- and post-test, as well as on the follow-up assessment for the five groups*

Competence	Test	E1	E2	C1	C2	C3
		M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Total	Pre	558.0 (57.01)	313.8 (16.93)		420.7 (42.92)	
	Pos	638.3 (40.44)	635.9 (27.00)	631.9 (43.87)	422.7 (41.54)	
	Pos2	652.0 (41.96)	616.6 (47.64)			429.2 (101.1)
LCMMS	Pre	5.4 (.68)	3.1 (.33)		4.2 (.82)	
	Pos	6.2 (.47)	6.1 (.45)	6.1 (.54)	4.2 (.77)	
	Pos2	6.3 (.36)	6.1 (.43)			4.3 (.98)
EMEIL	Pre	5.2 (.68)	3.3 (.55)		3.9 (.79)	
	Pos	6.0 (.51)	6.0 (.38)	6.0 (.59)	3.9 (.75)	
	Pos2	6.0 (.40)	5.9 (.60)			4.0 (1.00)
FLCM	Pre	4.6 (.98)	2.3 (.64)		3.1 (.84)	
	Pos	5.7 (.74)	5.8 (.59)	5.5 (.76)	3.2 (.81)	
	Pos2	5.8 (.71)	5.5 (.83)			3.4 (1.24)
FMP	Pre	4.2 (.82)	2.0 (.13)		3.1 (.71)	
	Pos	5.2 (.78)	5.5 (.58)	5.2 (.73)	3.1 (.68)	
	Pos2	5.4 (.76)	5.3 (.84)			3.1 (1.01)
PDM	Pre	5.3 (.69)	3.2 (.20)		4.1 (.64)	
	Pos	6.0 (.58)	5.9 (.40)	5.9 (.60)	4.1 (.61)	
	Pos2	6.3 (.41)	5.8 (.45)			4.0 (1.11)
ECCPM	Pre	5.2 (.68)	3.1 (.24)		4.0 (.64)	
	Pos	5.8 (.48)	5.9 (.33)	5.8 (.61)	4.1 (.61)	
	Pos2	6.0 (.56)	5.6 (.53)			3.9 (1.03)
GDM	Pre	5.2 (.85)	2.4 (.22)		4.0 (.55)	
	Pos	6.0 (.60)	5.9 (.48)	5.9 (.68)	4.0 (.49)	
	Pos2	6.2 (.56)	6.0 (.39)			4.0 (1.08)
GHFC	Pre	5.1 (.82)	2.2 (.15)		3.5 (.55)	
	Pos	5.8 (.55)	5.7 (.44)	5.6 (.64)	3.6 (.55)	
	Pos2	6.0 (.54)	5.8 (.39)			3.6 (1.14)
FRM	Pre	4.9 (.80)	2.0 (.23)		2.9 (.64)	
	Pos	5.5 (.73)	5.8 (.40)	5.6 (.54)	2.9 (.65)	
	Pos2	5.8 (.73)	5.5 (.75)			3.2 (1.48)
SIM	Pre	5.5 (.75)	4.1 (.42)		4.8 (.67)	
	Pos	6.1 (.61)	6.0 (.30)	6.2 (.55)	4.9 (.65)	
	Pos2	6.3 (.40)	6.1 (.46)			4.9 (.80)
PSCBN	Pre	5.4 (.83)	3.7 (.27)		4.4 (.82)	
	Pos	5.9 (.73)	5.7 (.54)	6.0 (.68)	4.4 (.81)	
	Pos2	6.0 (.53)	6.1 (.43)			4.8 (.88)
SM	Pre	5.6 (.74)	3.6 (.45)		4.2 (.58)	
	Pos	6.0 (.69)	5.7 (.35)	5.9 (.63)	4.2 (.56)	

Note. LCMMS = Leadership, Commitment & Maintenance of Marriage through Stages; EMEIL = Emotional Management/Emotional Intelligence an Love; FLCM = Family Life Cycle Management; FMP = Family Management & Planning; PDM = Personality Differences Management; ECCPM = Effective Communication, Conflict Prevention Management; GDM = Gender Differences Management; GHFC = Generate Healthy Family Characteristics; FRM = Successful Finance and Resource Management; SIM = Sexual & Intimacy Management; PSCBN = Parenting & Satisfaction of Basic Need of Children; SM = Spiritual Mastery.



Experimental Group (N = 154)  
 Chi cuadrada = 235.603 (gl = 137), p = .000  
 Chi cuadrada normada = 1.720  
 GFI = .874  
 CFI = .978  
 RMSEA = .069

Figure 1. Structural equation model of the relationship among the three dependent variables.

Next, the hypothesis testing and the pertinent explanation for the statistical analysis approached used.

**H<sub>01</sub>.** When couples participate in a culturally sensitive MRE program geared toward the development of competences, there will be no significant differences in their satisfaction levels when compared to those prior to attending the MRE education program.

For the hypothesis testing, a planned comparison following a significant analysis of variance was conducted. The complex contrast or planned contrast for one-way ANOVA deems appropriate for comparing the results obtained at the pre- and post-test, as well as across the groups. This approach was chosen because (a) the three dependent variables under study are metric; (b) there are various (i.e., three) groups that can be included in the comparison simultaneously; (c) results collected at different time points (i.e., pre- and post-test results) can be compared; and (d) this analysis has been demonstrated as robust, and was thus deemed pertinent for this investigation. The analysis results provided sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis ( $F(4, 367) = 296.796, p < .001$ ). In general, the model reported an eta-squared of .711 and the power of 1.000 (based on alpha = .05). When the pre- and post-test results of the two experimental groups were compared (see *Figure 2*), a significant positive effect was noted, i.e., the distressed ( $t_{(99.217)} = 22.651, p < .05, ES = 4.44$ ), and the adjusted group ( $t_{(140.31)} = 15.555, p < .05, ES = 2.18$ ). It should be noted that the effect size in the distressed group was stronger/higher than in the adjusted group. When the results of the control group were analyzed, no

significant differences were noted between the pre-test and the post-test ( $t_{(95.941)} = 3.411, p = < .05, ES = .57$ ).

Next, the effect size was calculated to assess and measure the magnitude of change (i.e., the size of the experimental effect or change), using the Cohen method of calculation, as it is widely used for this purpose (Cohen, 1992; Thalheimer & Cook, 2002). Here, the effect sizes are interpreted using Cohen's typology that posits .2 as a small effect, .5 as a moderate, and .8 or higher as a strong effect (Cohen, 1992). In this study, the effect was 2.18, implying a robust level of improvement.

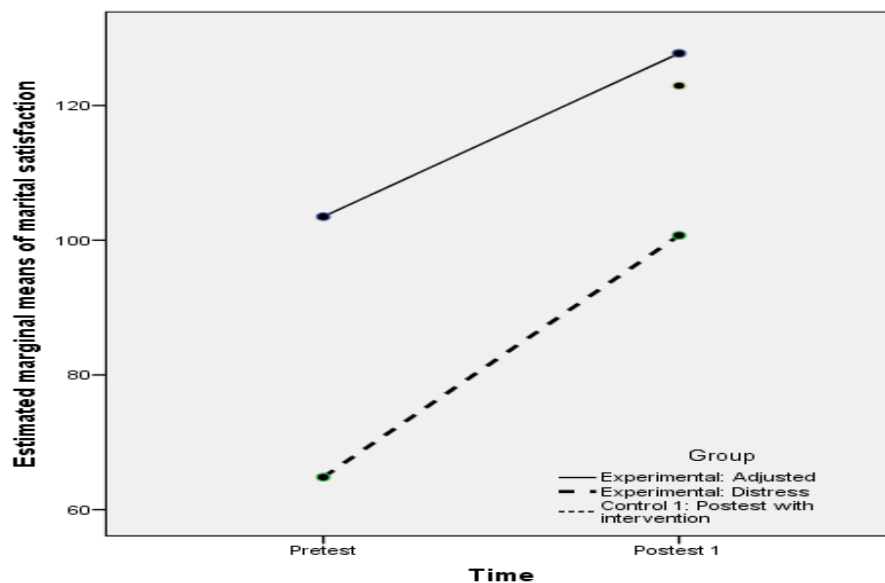


Figure 2. Differences in mean marital satisfaction scores among groups.

The same statistical test was conducted to analyze the dimensions of marital satisfaction. Similar results were reported, indicating significant increase in all the dimensions after the intervention (see Figure 3). Only the differences between the post-test scores of the adjusted group and the scores obtained by the post-test only

group in the consensus dimension were not statistically significant. However, this does not affect the results confirming the effectiveness of the intervention, because both groups received the intervention and reported important and significant improvements in general.

**H02.** When couples participate in a culturally sensitive MRE program geared toward the development of competences, there will be no significant development of competencies and skills.

For testing the hypothesis pertaining to the second research question, a similar procedure to that described in the preceding section was followed. The one-way ANOVA was used again, as the same justifications given before still applied. The analysis yielded findings providing sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis ( $F(4, 367) = 562.140, p < .001$ ) and accept the alternative hypothesis. In general, the model reported an Eta-squared of .839 and the power of 1.000 (based on alpha = .05). According to the comparison results (see Figure 4), there is significant positive effect between the pre-test and the post-test results for marital competence of both experimental groups, i.e., the distressed group reported important significance differences ( $t_{(85.727)} = 72.883, p < .001$ ), as did the adjusted group ( $t_{(182.104)} = 11.590, p < .001$ ). The effect size for the distressed and adjusted group was 14.29 and 1.62,

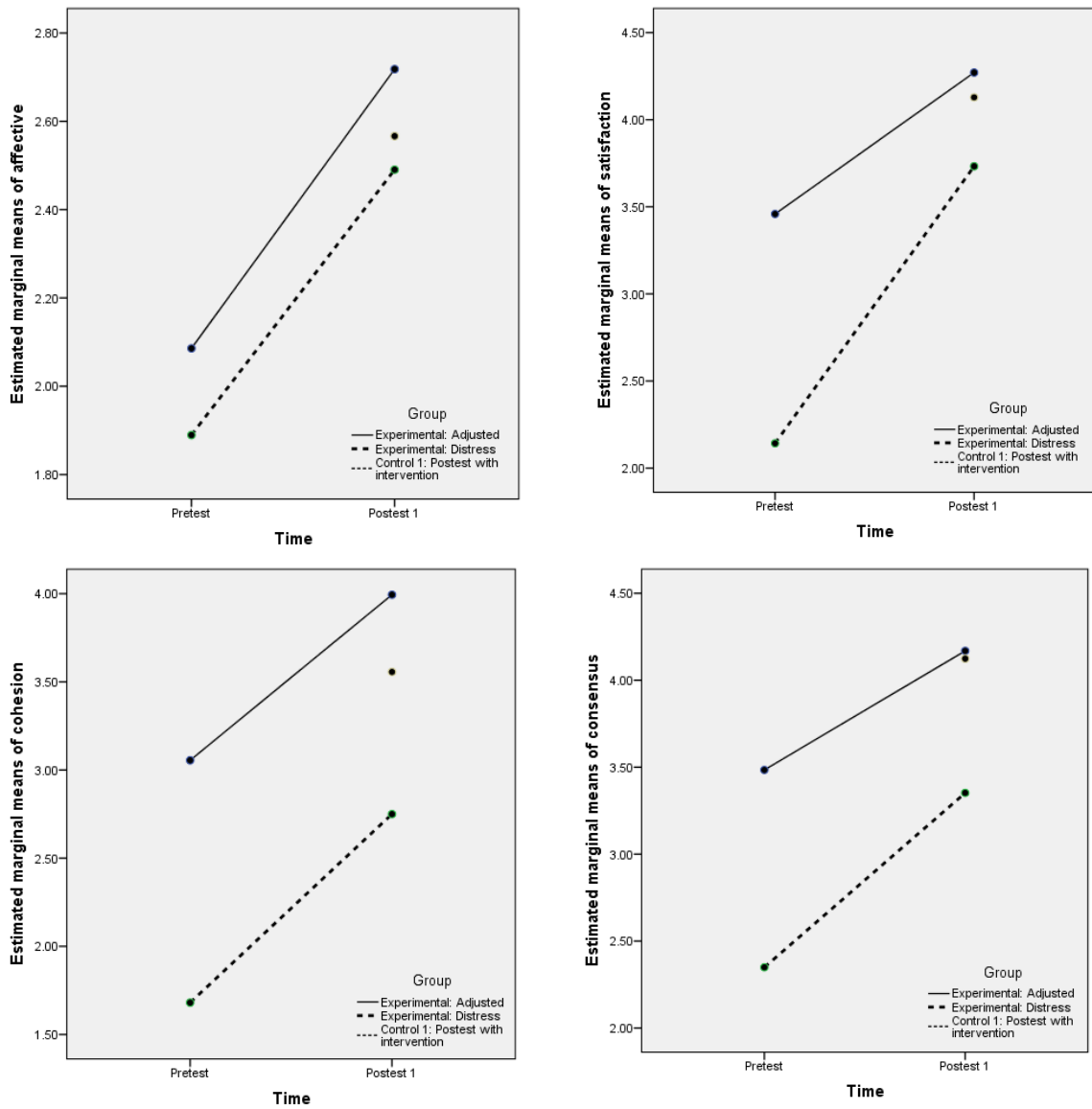


Figure 3. Profile of the marital satisfaction mean scores according to the groups.

respectively. With respect to this second hypothesis, the results pertaining to the control group revealed no significant differences between the pre- and the post-test scores ( $t_{(125.784)} = .930, p = .354$ ).

When the follow-up measurement was conducted two years upon study completion, the findings pertaining to the adjusted group confirmed that the previously

significant differences remained, confirming that the effects of the intervention were permanent. Moreover, the scores for family and relationship competences increased slightly ( $t_{(140.039)} = 2.125, p = .035, ES = .33$ ), when compared with the post-test scores obtained two years prior. For the distressed group, the follow-up results also indicated that the changes were permanent. However, a significant (albeit small) decrease was noted in permanency of the level of mastery of the competences ( $t_{(39.964)} = 2.036, p = .048, ES = .50$ ). Additionally, when the post-test scores of the adjusted group, the distressed group, and the post-test only with intervention group were compared, there were no significant differences. This indicated that these groups have achieved the same level of improvement in their marital competencies solely due to the intervention, rather than some other confounding factors or variables.

Still, Figure 5 reveals another interesting finding, as an equilibrium in the development of the marital competence can be noted. In other words, all competences tend to develop proportionally.

An additional analysis was conducted to assess significance of improvements achieved with respect to individual competences. The scores of the adjusted and the distressed group were assessed using a paired t-test, and the outcome indicated clear improvement with strong effect size per each competence. See Appendix K for this additional discussion, as well as Table 14.

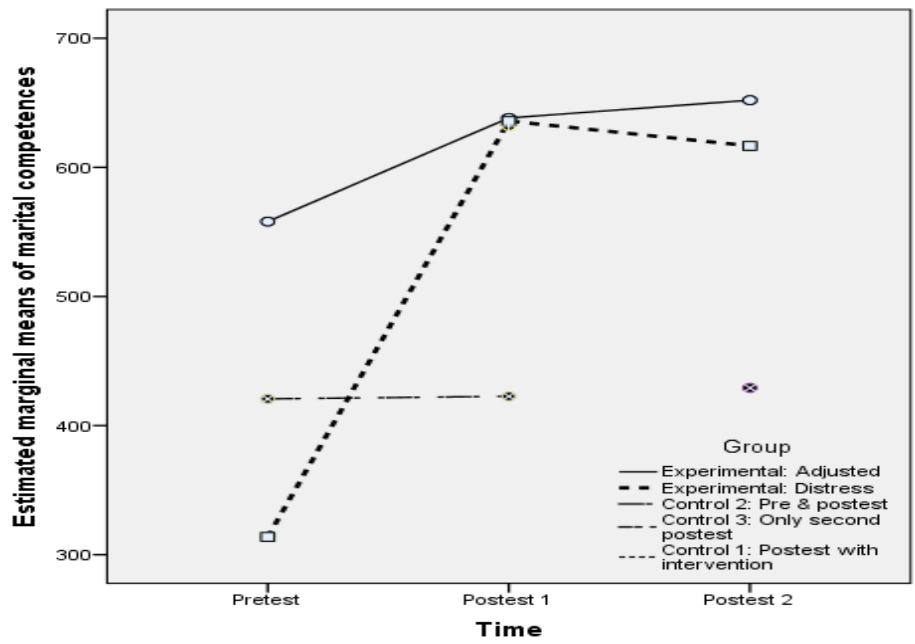


Figure 4. Profile of the means of the family competences for different groups.

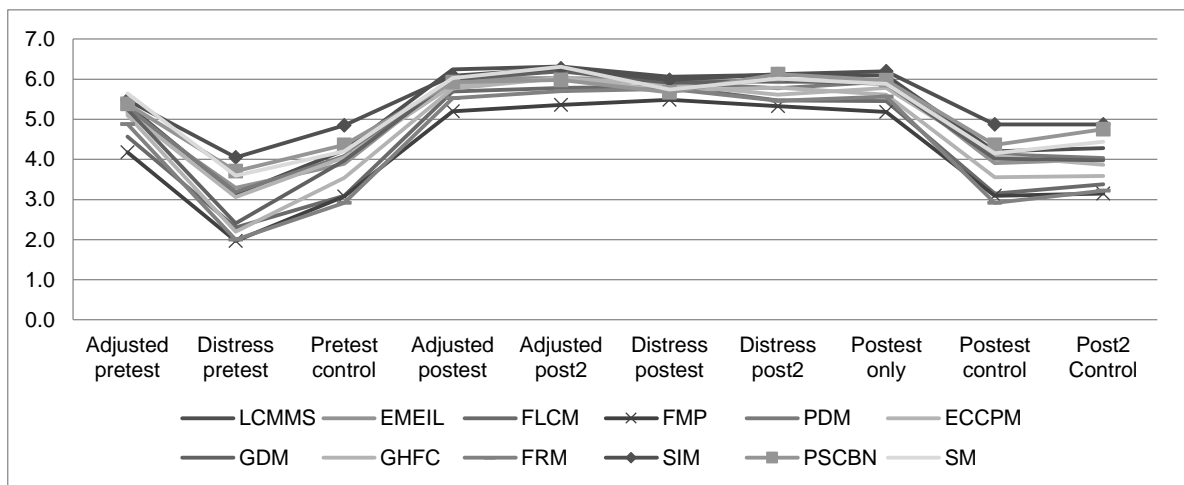


Figure 5. Profile of the means for dimensions of marital competences according to each group.



### Summary of the results the MRE program under study for competence

The MRE program's outcome when relationship and family competences were analyzed separately (i.e., each competence individually) is summarized in Table 13, which presents the results of the analysis of each competence separately. Next the global results of adjusted and distress group, when a paired t-test was conducted per competences.

*Competence 1:* Leadership and management-mastery of stages of marriage. The couples' scores on the *Inventory of Pivotal Competences for a Long-lasting Relationship* increased from the initial mean of  $M = 4.60$  ( $SD = 1.20$ ) to  $M = 6.16$  ( $SD = .47$ ) at the post-test. A paired-samples t-test revealed that the change was statistically significant [ $t(153) = -16.92$ ,  $p < .000$ ]. The effect size of this change ( $d = 1.732$ ) was very strong, with  $\eta^2 = .652$ . This supports the conclusion that attending MRE improved the couples' leadership capacity and the mastery and/or ability to successfully take a family member from one stage to the next.

*Competence 2:* Management of emotions, mastery of love concept and emotional intelligence —ability to nurture relationships. The couples' scores increased from the initial mean of  $M = 4.53$  ( $SD = 1.09$ ) to  $M = 6.01$  ( $SD = .471$ ) at the post-test. A paired-samples t-test revealed that the change was statistically significant [ $t(153) = -16.54$ ,  $p < .000$ ]. The effect size of this change ( $d = 1.757$ ) was very strong, with  $\eta^2 = .641$ . This supports the conclusion that attending MRE improved couples' capacity to nurture a relationship, their mastery of love concept, and their emotional intelligence, in short their capacity to manage emotions. Emotional Intelligence

increase relates to increase in marital satisfaction and increase in level of commitment according to the findings in this research.

*Competence 3: Management of developmental stages/mastery of life cycle concept.* The couples' scores improved from the initial mean of  $M = 3.80$  ( $SD = 1.387$ ) to  $M = 5.74$  ( $SD = .056$ ) at the post-test. A paired-samples t-test revealed that the change was statistically significant [ $t(153) = -16.00, p < .000$ ]. The effect size of this change ( $d = 1.976$ ) was very strong, with  $\eta^2 = .626$ . This supports the conclusion that attending MRE improved couples' capacity to competently manage the developmental stages of family. In short, they improved their mastery of family life cycle.

*Competence 4: Family management, task/role management.* The couples' scores augmented from the initial mean of  $M = 3.43$  ( $SD = 1.25$ ) to  $M = 5.29$  ( $SD = .729$ ) at the post-test. A paired-samples t-test revealed that the change was statistically significant [ $t(153) = -16.00, p < .000$ ]. The effect size of this change ( $d = 1.818$ ) was very strong, with  $\eta^2 = .626$ . This supports the conclusion that attending MRE improved couples' capacity to manage competently their family, making plans, achieving established goals, sharing roles, managing time, etc.

*Competence 5: Mastery of personality differences, ability to comprehend and nurture different personalities.* The couples' scores increased from the initial mean of  $M = 4.59$  ( $SD = 1.15$ ) to  $M = 5.96$  ( $SD = .528$ ) at the post-test. A paired-samples t-test revealed that the change was statistically significant [ $t(153) = -15.23, p < .000$ ]. The effect size of this change ( $d = 1.527$ ) was very strong, with  $\eta^2 = .603$ . This supports

the conclusion that attending MRE improved couples' capacity to master personality differences and nurture different personality and temperament types.

*Competence 6: Effective communication and conflict resolution management.* The couples' scores on the *Inventory of Pivotal Competences for a Long-lasting Relationship* increased from the initial mean of  $M = 4.46$  ( $SD = 1.15$ ) to  $M = 5.86$  ( $SD = .431$ ) at the post-test. A paired-samples t-test revealed that the change was statistically significant [ $t(153) = -14.81, p < .000$ ]. The effect size of this change ( $d = 1.608$ ) was very strong, with  $\eta^2 = .598$ . This supports the conclusion that attending MRE improved couples' capacity to communicate effectively and master conflict resolution competencies.

*Competence 7: Mastery of gender differences management.* The couples' scores improved from the initial mean of  $M = 4.429$  ( $SD = 1.52$ ) to  $M = 5.97$  ( $SD = .560$ ) at the post-test. A paired-samples t-test revealed that the change was statistically significant [ $t(153) = -14.38, p < .000$ ]. The effect size of this change ( $d = 1.467$ ) was very strong, with  $\eta^2 = .575$ . This supports the conclusion that attending MRE improved couples' capacity to understand and manage gender differences.

*Competence 8: Nurturing capacity that generate or stimulates emergence of the characteristics of a healthy family.* In sum, generate healthy family characteristics. The couples' scores augmented from the initial mean of  $M = 4.12$  ( $SD = 1.54$ ) to  $M = 5.76$  ( $SD = .512$ ) at the post-test. A paired-samples t-test revealed that the change was statistically significant [ $t(153) = -13.49, p < .000$ ]. The effect size of this change ( $d = 1.429$ ) was very strong, with  $\eta^2 = .543$ . This supports the conclusion that attending

MRE improved couples' nurturing capacity and capacity to generate the healthy characteristics that distinguish healthy families.

*Competence 9: Resource and finance management.* The couples' scores on the *Inventory of Pivotal Competences for a Long-lasting Relationship* increased from the initial mean of  $M = 3.91$  ( $SD = 1.52$ ) to  $M = 5.60$  ( $SD = .643$ ) at the post-test. A paired-samples t-test revealed that the change was statistically significant [ $t(153) = -12.90$ ,  $p < .000$ ]. The effect size of this change ( $d = 1.462$ ) was very strong, with  $\eta^2 = .521$ . This supports the conclusion that attending MRE improved couples' capacity to manage competently their resources and finances.

*Competence 10: Sexuality and intimacy management - mastery of sexuality and intimacy.* The couples' scores increased from the initial mean of  $M = 4.99$  ( $SD = .945$ ) to  $M = 6.05$  ( $SD = .526$ ) at the post-test. A paired-samples t-test revealed that the change was statistically significant [ $t(153) = -14.68$ ,  $p < .000$ ]. The effect size of this change ( $d = 1.375$ ) was very strong, with  $\eta^2 = .585$ . This supports the conclusion that attending MRE improved couples' capacity and mastery of their sexuality and intimacy in general.

*Competence 11: Mastery of parenting competency.* The couples' scores increased from the initial mean of  $M = 4.82$  ( $SD = 1.055$ ) to  $M = 5.84$  ( $SD = .680$ ) at the post-test. A paired-samples t-test revealed that the change was statistically significant [ $t(153) = -12.69$ ,  $p < .000$ ]. The effect size of this change ( $d = 1.150$ ) was very strong, with  $\eta^2 = .513$ . This supports the conclusion that attending MRE improved couples' parenting competency or skills.

*Competence 12: Religion and spirituality.* The couples' scores on the *Inventory of Pivotal Competences for a Long-lasting Relationship* increased from the initial mean of  $M = 4.95$  ( $SD = 1.172$ ) to  $M = 5.84$  ( $SD = .615$ ) at the post-test. A paired-samples t-test revealed that the change was statistically significant [ $t(153) = -12.01, p < .000$ ]. The effect size of this change ( $d = 1.053$ ) was very strong, with  $\eta^2 = .485$ . This supports the conclusion that attending MRE improved couples' attitude towards religion and spirituality.

**H<sub>03</sub>.** When couples are exposed to a culturally sensitive MRE program geared toward the development of competences, there will be no significant increase in their level of commitment.

For testing the hypothesis pertaining to the third research question, a similar procedure to those used above was followed. Once again, one-way ANOVA was used. According to the findings obtained, there is an important significant difference and sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis ( $F(4, 367) = 562.140, p < .001$ ) and accept the alternative hypothesis. In general, the model reported an Eta-squared of .840 and the power of 1.000 (based on  $\alpha = .05$ ). According to the comparison results (see Figure 6), there is a significant positive effect between the pre-test and the post-test results for both groups, with respect to their level of commitment. Consequently, the null hypothesis can be rejected ( $F(9, 600) = 346.584, p < .001$ ). The significance is further corroborated by the noticeable effect size (es) for the distressed group ( $t_{(95.614)} = 20.881, p < .001, ES = 4.10$ ) and the adjusted group ( $t_{(118.712)} = 14.130, p < .001, ES = 1.98$ ). However, the effect size is higher in the distressed group than in the adjusted group, which is to be expected, as the former

Table 14

*Summary of results (MRE program outcome pre and post intervention)*

MRE Program outcome according to each relationship and family competence									
Measure	Pre Test M SD	Post Test M SD	Df	t value	Sig	Effect Size Cohen	Effect size/ $\eta^2$ =Eta square	Power	
Leadership & Management of Stages of Marriage	4.60 1.20	6.18 .47	153	-16.92	.000	1.732	.652	1.000	
Management of Emotion, Mastery of Love Concept and Emotional Intelligence - Ability to Nurture Relationship	4.53 1.09	6.01 .471	153	-16.54	.000	1.757	.641	1.000	
Management of Developmental Stages /Life Cycle	3.80 1.387	5.74 .056	153	-16.00	.000	1.976	.626	1.000	
Family Management, Task /Role Management & Planning	3.43 1.25	5.29 .729	153	-16.00	.000	1.818	.626	1.000	
Mastery of Personality Differences —Ability to Comprehend and Nurture Different Personality	4.59 1.15	5.96 .528	153	-15.23	.000	1.527	.603	1.000	
Effective Communication and Conflict Resolution Management/Mastery	4.46 1.15	5.86 .431	153	-14.81	.000	1.608	.598	1.000	
Mastery of Gender Difference Management, i.e., Competence in Managing Gender Differences	4.29 1.52	5.97 .560	153	-14.38	.000	1.467	.575	1.000	
Nurturing Capacity – Production of Characteristics of a Healthy Family	4.12 1.54	5.76 .512	153	-13.49	.000	1.429	.543	1.000	
Resources and Finance Management – Competence in Mastery of Resources	3.91 1.52	5.60 .643	153	-12.90	.000	1.462	.521	1.000	

Sexuality and Intimacy Management –Mastery of Sexuality	4.99 .945	6.05 .526	153	-14.68	.000	1.375	.585	1.000
Mastery of Parenting Competency	4.82 1.055	5.84 .680	153	-12.69	.000	1.150	.513	1.000
Religious and Spiritual Mastery	4.95 1.172	5.94 .615	153	12.01	.000	1.053	.485	1.000

had more room for improvement. For the control group, no significant differences were noted between the pre- and the post-test. Additionally, when the results of the post-test only group were compared to those of the intervention groups, no significant differences were noted ( $t_{(69.602)} = 16.205, p < .001, ES = .43$ ). This indicates that there were no significant influences of the pre-test on any intervention group, confirming that the improvement can be attributed exclusively to the intervention. In other words, the intervention was responsible for the improvements reported on all three variables.

The same statistical test was conducted to analyze the dimensions of commitment level of the couples. Similar results were reported, indicating significant increases in all the dimensions after the intervention (see Figure 7). Only the post-test scores pertaining to the attachment dimension of the adjusted group and the post-test only group had no significant changes. However, this does not affect the results because both groups were exposed to the intervention and reported important and significant general improvements in this competence.

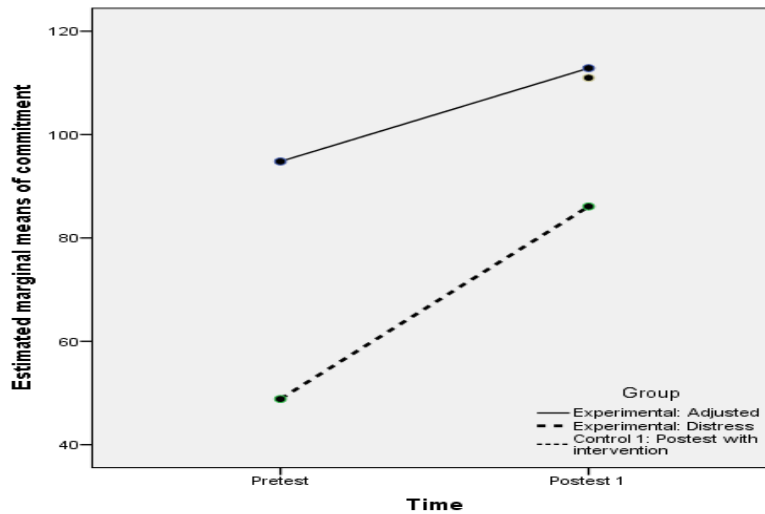


Figure 6. Mean profiles of the level of commitment of the groups under study.

## Conclusion

Lack of family or relationship competences could be related to the absence of marital satisfaction and commitment, resulting in marriage meltdown. In order to ultimately mitigate the growing prevalence of divorce, Culturally Sensitive Marital and Relationship Education Program geared toward the development of relationship and family competences could be instrumental in providing couples with pertinent tools for durability and longevity. Culturally sensitive and competence-based MRE could empower and strengthen the marital or relationship's immune system, so that the couple could be better equipped to handle the risk factors that could lead to divorce. Competence-based MRE moves beyond skill-based content MRE by addressing cognitive, skill, and behavioral aspects.

The *Profile of Successful Couples/Families* program, by addressing the previously mentioned aspects, has demonstrated improvements in marital satisfaction, level of commitment, and level of mastery of competences for a wide range of couples, in terms of ages and years of marriage.



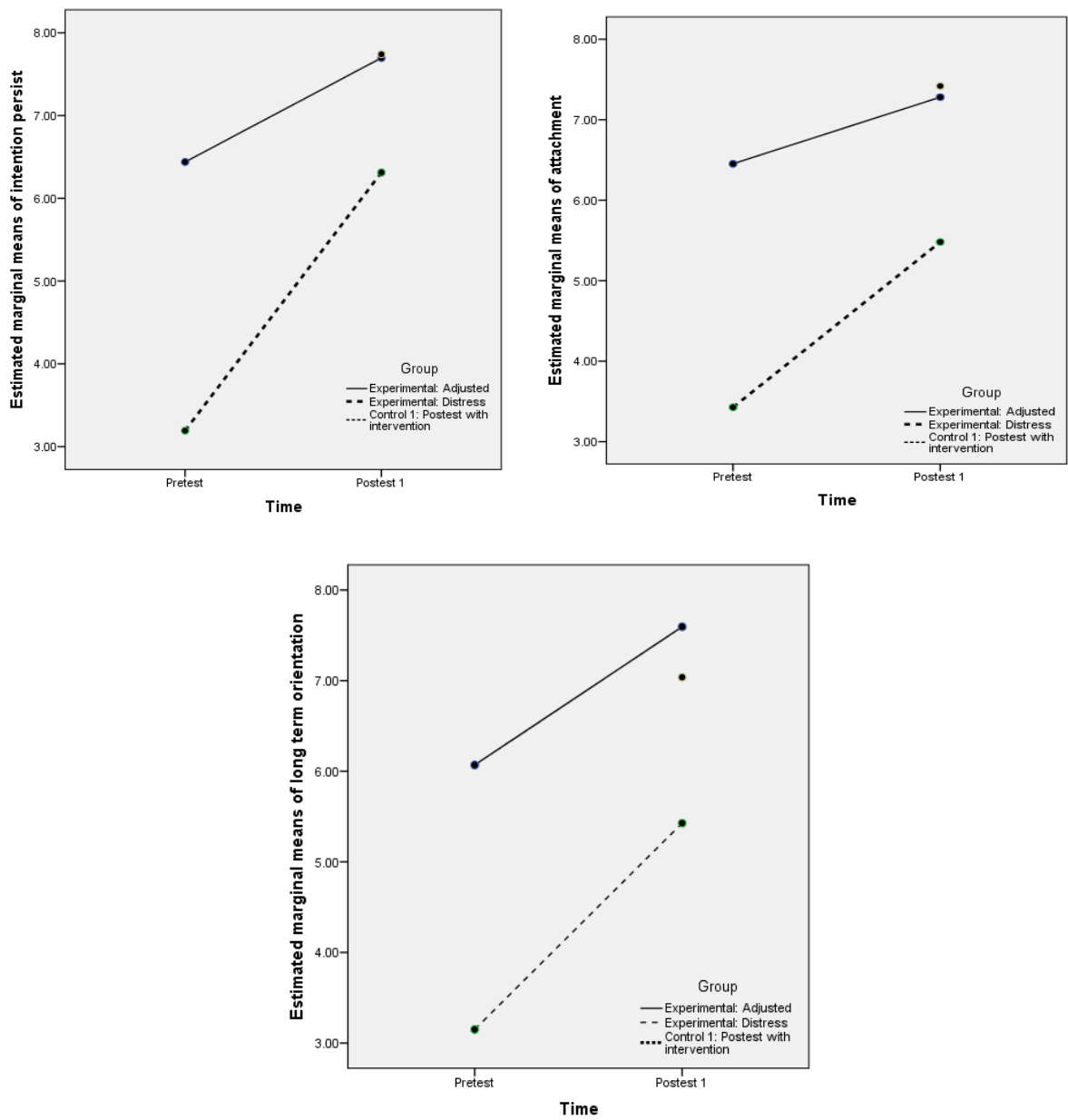


Figure 7. Mean profiles for the three dimensions of commitment.

The current research reported improvements in all three variables, irrespective of the participants' ages and length of the relationship. This implies that, regardless of

the phases of life development of the participants, and irrespective of the length of the relationship, the MRE had a positive and significant effect on the participants. Additionally, this research also reported improvements in all three variables independently of the baseline level and the initial state of the couple that attended the program. Even though significant differences at the baseline level have allowed the participants to be separated into a distressed and an adjusted group, this has not hindered/deterred any of the attendees from experiencing and reporting significant positive changes when exposed to this culturally sensitive MRE.

In sum, couples who participate in the culturally sensitive MRE program geared toward the development of competences titled *Profile of Successful Couples/Families* demonstrated an increase in marital satisfaction levels, commitment level, and mastery of 12 relationship competences. This suggests that this culturally sensitive MRE could be considered paradigmatic and instrumental for improving marital satisfaction, marital quality, and marital durability.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter interprets the study results by tying and contrasting them to the extant theories, as well as extending the existing work in this field, with the potential for extrapolating current knowledge to future or new theories. In essence, the content of this chapter harmonizes and provides sense to the findings and discussions presented in the preceding chapter. It commences by reiterating the problem this study addressed, before presenting a summary of the key findings, followed by their discussion. Next, it delineates the implications of the findings for theory and practice, before stating study limitations. After providing a conclusion to the thesis, the chapter closes by indicating some directions for future research in this field. In short, the results are discussed in light of applicable literature, theoretical foundations provided, and/or conceptual framework, with the emphasis on the knowledge gained and contribution to the scientific community as well as general public.

#### **Synthesis of this study**

##### **Aims of this research**

This research project aims to measure and analyze the impact of the marital and relationship education program *Profile of successful Couples/Families* on three

prominent variables, namely, marital satisfaction, commitment and family or relationship competence. This new marital and relationship education program is cultural sensitive and based on a *Family Competence Training Model* designed by the author. Additional, the aim of this research is also to validate a newly created measurement and diagnostic instrument namely, *Inventory of Pivotal Competences for Long-lasting*.

### Statement of the problem

In the Dutch Caribbean, more specifically Curacao, the divorce rate is presently at a troubling 55% (CBSC, 2014). This is of extreme concern because it has been established that divorce and family distress have consequences for social health, children's achievement, and overall social wellbeing. Even though couple's therapy has been a valuable resource, it has also failed to reduce divorce rates. It is evident that additional intervention treatments and even preventive approaches are urgently needed. Marital and relationship education (MRE) programs should be investigated, as this may assist in establishing their potential links with improvements in marital satisfaction, relationship commitment, and development of competences. The existing treatment approaches tend to focus mostly on the symptoms, rather than the causes of the problem. Hence, more research on the topic is needed, in order to identify the scope and content of potential alternative treatments. In particular, is essential to ascertain whether MRE is effective in improving relationship durability.

## The four variables of interest in research

In this research project four variables were studied, namely (1) measurement of the impact and effect of a New Culturally Sensitive Marital and Education Program geared toward the development of competences as independent variable; and (2) Marital Satisfaction, (3) Commitment, and (4) Family or Relationship Competences as dependent variables.

### **Marital satisfaction**

Marital satisfaction in this research refers to a mental state that reflects the perceived benefits and costs of marriage to a particular person. The more costs a marriage partner inflicts on a person, the less satisfied one generally is with the marriage and with the marriage partner. Similarly, the greater the perceived benefits are, the more satisfied one is with the marriage and with the marriage partner (Stone & Shackelford, 2007).

Marital satisfaction has been previously associated with numerous variables, as discussed thoroughly in the literature review. It has been associated with: marital expectations (Ngazimbi et al., 2013), parenthood transitions (Dominguez et al., 2012; Hartley et al., 2011; van Steenberg et al., 2011), demographics, including age, education, number of children, employment status, and length of marriage (Armenta-Hurtarte et al., 2012; Jose & Alfons, 2015), income and psychological distress (Dakin & Wampler, 2008), personality differences (Claxon et al., 2012), unrealistic marital expectations (Sharp & Ganong, 2000), emotional intelligence (Torkashvand et al., 2014), and similarity in terms of gendered personality and values (Gaunt, 2006), among others. Infidelity due to personality differences has also been linked to marital

dissatisfaction (Shackelford et al., 2008), couple's dynamic (Walker & Luszcz, 2009), relationship perceptions (Hawkins & Johnson, 1969), the number of children a couple has (Animasahun & Oladeni, 2012; Weis & Palos, 1988), and length of courtship or dating (Grover et al., 1985). International research has resulted in the inclusion of additional variables, such as partner's education, self-perception, compromise, relationships with in-laws (Ayub et al., 2012) and family-to-work spillover hypothesis (Sandberg et al., 2012) also found support.

Based on the brief literature review presented above, it is evident that marital satisfaction and marital quality have a (1) universal character (i.e., elements that tend to be consistent across different cultures) (Georgas et al., 2001), as well as (2) a particular character (i.e., elements and issues related exclusively to a specific country or culture, which are not necessarily relevant in other contexts). Due to the fact that the majority of extant literature on marital quality or satisfaction focuses on Western countries, we tend to consider marital quality and marital satisfaction determinants reported by researchers in the US (where most extant studies were conducted) as unarguable and generalizable. However, further empirical studies are required before it can be ascertained that this is the case.

In sum, due to the fact that marital satisfaction is related to so many factors and is consistently studied and successfully used in so many cultures, it emerges as an important variable in the measurements of marital quality and durability. Marital and Relationship Education Program should address some of the determinants of marital satisfaction. This research project builds on these previous studies by using marital satisfaction as one of the important criteria for both predicting marital durability

and measuring marital success. Thus far, no study has explored its relationship with family and relationship competences.

### **Commitment and MRE**

In this research, commitment is understood to refer to the tendency to proceed in a marital relationship even when challenges, troubles, and problems emerge or more appealing alternatives to the marriage exist (Amato & DeBoer, 2001). Another key conceptualization and premise is the Rusbult's Investment Model that considers three pivotal dimensions of commitment, namely satisfaction, quality of alternatives, and investment size (Rusbult et al., 1998, 2009).

For a better understanding of marital commitment as a construct, it is imperative to study the determinants, predictors, and risk factors related to marital durability and commitment. Researchers found marital commitment to be linked to, influence or depend on several factors (Zang & Tsang, 2013), including women's income and marital satisfaction (Rusbult et al., 1998), belief in sanctity of marriage (Adams & Jones, 1997), and positivism (i.e., "things will improve"), happiness, reward, investment, quality of alternatives, and church attendance, among others.

According to Amato and DeBoer (2001), marital commitment is transmitted as children observe their parental model. The socialization theory posits that children learn behaviors through observation of significant adults. Amato and DeBoer (2001) also found that relationship skills as well as commitment are trans-generationally transmitted. Their findings coincide with those reported in other longitudinal studies, indicating that poor relationship skills jeopardize marital durability, while marital commitment could improve relationship competences.

Commitment has also been studied in relation to sacrifice as its sub-construct (Stanley & Markman, 1992; Stanley et al., 2006), fuelled and influenced by religious homogamy, religious affiliation, and church attendance, etc. The authors thus argued that predictors of structural commitment should include church attendance, duration of marriage, and satisfaction with marital life. In addition, empirical evidence suggests that rewarding relationships lead to commitment and vice versa.

In the assessment for influential factors related to marital commitment, it is also imperative to consider demographic (ethnicity, gender, education, relationship length, etc.), and cultural (i.e., incorporate findings yielded by studies conducted in other cultures, rather than relying solely on Western research) characteristics. In the US, Davis, Williams, Emerson, & Hourd-Bryant (2000) investigated relationship characteristics among professional African American couples, aiming to assess the link between commitment (Rusbult Investment Model) and eight variables, namely investment, satisfaction, romantic alternatives (three established variables of the Rusbult Investment Model), equity, power, romantic ideals, physical attractiveness, and sexual relations. Their findings indicated that, for both genders, perceived investment into relationship was the most influential factor predicting commitment.

Although the contributions of the studies discussed above are noteworthy, the link between commitment and relationship or family competences has been consistently overlooked as a potential pivotal contributor to relationship durability and longevity. Consequently, marital problems could potentially be misdiagnosed by focusing only on recurrent symptoms and overlooking MRE as both potential



determinant of marital meltdown and a potential tool for an effective treatment of marital problems.

*Marital and relationship education program  
and family or relationship competence*

First, MRE is defined as a couples training course in which structural or non-structural information is imparted and couples are stimulated to develop skill to deal with challenges in the marriage relationship. Couples gain new insights and knowledge, which allow them to improve their relationship skills. In short, MRE provides information and skills-based group programs for the prevention and remediation of marital distress. These programs are also referred to as marriage enrichment (Larson, 2004).

Second, Family competences is defined as comprising knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills that work towards enhancing family functioning. They enhance opportunities for development and health of individual family members, and are based on egalitarian family norms, as the foundation of strong family ecology (Shanmugavelayutham, 2012).

As discussed in previous chapter, this research project measure the impact of a new cultural sensitive MRE geared toward development of competence. It is based on the Family Competence Training Model that affirm the importance of 12 general relationship competences as important contributors to the relationship quality/marital satisfaction and relationship commitment. Each one of these competences includes dimensions, such as knowledge, attitudes, skills, and traits. These 12 pivotal and critical competences are:

1. Leadership, capacity to commit and maintain a relationship as it undergoes different phases.
2. Effective management of emotions (i.e., emotional literacy), possessing stability and emotional/social intelligence, and the ability to keep love alive.
3. Adaptability and foresight, which implies being able to manage and cope in a competent way with the stages families undergo and the relationship life cycle, as well as ability to anticipate and deal with challenges and potential stressful situations.
4. Family management and leadership. This implies being able to create functional structure, assign tasks, and optimize the internal functioning.
5. Ability to understand and capacity to deal successfully with different personalities.
6. Competent communication and problem solving capacity.
7. Management of gender differences.
8. Ability to foster, stimulate, and nurture healthy family characteristics.
9. Successful financial and/or resource management.
10. Capacity to consistently satisfy the partner sexually and manage intimacy.
11. Parenting capability.
12. Mastery of Spirituality.

## Methodology

The three core research questions guiding the study were: (a) Do culturally sensitive and competence-oriented MRE programs affect marital satisfaction in couples positively and significantly? (2) Do they stimulate significant development of competences? (3) Does MRE completion increase the level of commitment in

couples? The study sample comprised N=310 individuals, aged 19 to 63 years, residing in Curacao and Bonaire. Three instrument were used to measure the three dependent variable. The Dyadic Adjustment scale for assessing marital satisfaction, The Rusbult Investment Model to measure commitment and the *Inventory of Pivotal Competences for Long-lasting*, to assess family and relationship competences.

A pre-assessment procedure consisting in assessing marital satisfaction prior to intervention, commitment level and level of mastery of competences as baseline was performed. This conduct to separation of the above mentioned group into a distressed and adjusted group. A quasi-experimental Solomon design was adopted. Both, experimental as well as control groups were formed. The gathered data was analyzed using the planned contrast for one-way ANOVA for specific group comparison.

### **Summary of the findings**

As described in chapter four the data pertaining to all groups was analysed and significant differences were found in the values of the three dependent variables under study—marital commitment, marital satisfaction, and family or relationship competences. More specifically, the couples that took part in the intervention program experienced improvement on these competences in relation to both their pre-intervention scores and those achieved by the control group. In sum, following their exposure to the MRE/CRE named “Profile of Successful Couples/Families,” the three core hypotheses that were tested in the study were accepted. More specifically, study findings indicated that current program had a positive impact on both the adjusted and the distressed group. When the results obtained post-exposure to the MRE/CRE

were compared to those the couples achieved prior to attending the MRE/CRE, significant improvement in their marital and relationship satisfaction was noted, and the couples also reported greater commitment levels and improved mastery of family and relationship competences. The findings also revealed a relationship among the three variables, indicating their interdependence. More specifically, the participants experienced improvement in each of the 12 competences implicit in the “Family Competence Training Model.” According to the theoretical framework, all these competences are pivotal, critical, and instrumental for durability, longevity, sustainability, and happiness of a relationship. They contribute to marital satisfaction and commitment, which positively transform marital relationship and help couples reach their full potential.

## **Discussion**

The current study assessed the outcomes of an intensive couples’ relationship education program on both adjusted and distressed families. Marital satisfaction, level of commitment, and relationship competence were treated as dependent variables. The results indicate that the MRE/CRE under study improved marital satisfaction, marital or couple commitment, and relationship competence of the participants, as was initially hypothesized. This suggests presence of not only a relationship among the three variables, but also their interdependence. In other words, the evaluated MRE/CRE may contribute in the long term to diminishing the divorce rate, due to its focus on the causes of marital distress, rather than its symptoms. It can also be argued that lack of marital education (which addresses the commonly referred to determinants and predictors of divorce, rather than predictors

recurrently mentioned by researchers) is responsible for the marital meltdown. Hence, it can be posited that couples that develop the twelve competences discussed in this research project will have a better chance for a durable relationship than their counterparts lacking these competences.

While the current research findings are in line with those reported in the extant literature in many aspects, several points of uniqueness and differences can be noted. First, they have improved present understanding of the relationship among the four variables under study. Second, they provide support for several existing theories, such as relationship between marital satisfaction and commitment postulated in the Investment Model (Rusbult et al., 1998) and other theories that underpin each of the twelve competences referred to in Chapter two (For an in-depth discussion of theories that underpin the competences and the extension of these theories by this research, see Chapter two and Appendix C 1-12). Next, a brief discussion of first three theoretical rationale that underpin the competences.

#### Brief discussion of the first three theories that underpinned the competences

The Family Competence Training Model compose 12 competences, each of these competence are based on at least one theoretical rationale.

*The first competence* is based Family Life Development Course and Rusbult Investment Model. For example, Rusbult et al. (1998) posited that commitment depends on three main factors—level of satisfaction, size of investment, and quality of alternatives. In line with this view, the present study aimed to establish the outcome of using the MRE model geared toward the development of competences. In other

words, it answered the question—do the participating couples attain a greater level of commitment and marital satisfaction? The findings reported here confirm that they do, as level of commitment and marital satisfaction increased among couples that were trained and acquired mastery of relationship and family competences. More specifically, the relationship between commitment and marital satisfaction is not only statistically significant, but is also established via the confirmatory structural equation (see Appendix O). Additionally, the theory is extended by the fact that the findings confirm that improvements in family and relationship competences tend to increase level of commitment. Couples tend to commit more when they have the “I got this” feeling (i.e., possess mastery over the relationship and have capability to successfully manage challenges).

*The second competence* is based on the Sternberg theory, Systemic Theory and Emotional Intelligence Theory (see Appendix C).

*Sternberg’s (1988) theory*, is based on the concept of evolving love and is thus very useful for understanding love dynamic. The author claimed that love develops and comprises three elements/components—passion, friendship, and commitment. The *Systemic Theory* posit that each part/unit of a family system can affect the entire system through actions or lack thereof and vice versa and *Emotional Intelligence theory and the model* developed by Coleman, which postulate that emotional intelligence has four dimensions, namely self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Bradberry & Greaves, 2005; Goleman, 1998;). The findings of this research suggest that the interaction and dynamic among units may not only improve through therapy, but also through MRE programs

(specially culturally sensitive initiatives geared toward the development of competences). The love component as well as emotional intelligence could be maintained and even improved through exposure to MRE programs that are culturally sensitive and oriented toward competence development. This subsequently may conduce to increase in marital satisfaction, improvement in commitment and relationship competence as the outcome of the current research indicate.

*The third competence* is based on FLC theoretical framework that postulates and emphasizes the life cycle stages that families undergo in the normal life span. It also identifies the various developmental tasks family members face during their life span, as well as discusses the changes families undergo over time (Knox & Schacht, 2013; Taylor & Bagd, 2005). Marital failure is usually related to the lack of knowledge and proper tools to cope with different stages that family undergoes. The FLC however fails to discuss, marital satisfaction dynamics or commitment's association with durability or relationship and family competence role in family dynamic. Evidence suggests that what makes family remain together is not only knowledge of stages marriages undergo, but marital satisfaction, relationship skills, competences, and commitment. This research contributes to the extant body of knowledge in this field by proposing that MRE is instrumental in helping families go through the life stages successfully and weather storms and challenges. Kapinus and Johnson (2003) proposed presence of a relationship among marital satisfaction, commitment, and FLC theory. However, thus far, the links that family and relationship competences may have with FLC have not been investigated. The current research findings support the notion that when Family Life Cycle management competence increased, it tended

to result in the improvement and increase in marital satisfaction and commitment levels. For further discussion of the other competences theoretical framework (see Appendix C).

### General discussion

Furthermore, the current research contributes to the pertinent body of knowledge by adding clarity regarding the effect of cultural component in the dynamic of treatment and intervention procedures and programs. Cultural component may have had a decisive role in influencing the effect size of the intervention. The significant statistical differences and the large effect size reported as a result of exposure to MRE/CRE could be attributed to the cultural component and competence development focus. In addition to the theoretical implications and contributions discussed above, this finding could also be explicated in thirteen concrete and pivotal outcomes.

*First*, this research finding, for example, coincides with the preceding research on MREs, the findings of which suggested that such initiatives have the potential for significantly improving participants' marital satisfaction (Adler-Beader et al., 2011; Howell, Krafsky, & McAllister, 2013). Exposure to the current MRE program resulted in a statically significant increase in marital satisfaction and relationship quality.

The uniqueness of the current research, however, rests on the fact that it achieved a much greater effect size, implying that the effects of the change experienced following the exposure to the MRE are significantly greater than those reported previously. This positive outcome could be attributed to the updated content that synchronizes the topics discussed with the couples' needs, culture, and modern



life challenges. The MRE under investigation in this study has been developed based on previously assessed cultural and general relationship needs, as well as common challenges and universal needs couples tend to have.

This finding is relevant because it has the potential to improve sustainability and longevity of marriages and relationships. By improving marital satisfaction and relationship quality, it may be safe to assume that divorce rates could decrease, if couples are willing to attend this new MRE. It can also be inferred that MRE as intervention treatment or preventive approach could contribute to marital satisfaction and relationship stability. The findings of this study differ from those reported in extant research, where authors failed to find significant improvements in permanence of the intervention effect (e.g., Van Widenfelt et al., 1996)

*Second*, the findings of this research are also consistent with those previously reported, in that the dosage suggested by experts when designing and presenting MREs was adopted and was proven successful. Similar to other research, the program duration adopted here could be considered moderate, which is recommended by experts (i.e.,  $\pm 20$  hours of training) (Hawkins et al., 2004/2008; MacLeod & Nelson, 2000; Piquart & Teubert, 2010a).

In comparison with the existing research, this study is also unique in that it focused on the development of relationship and family competences. It is a *competence-oriented or competence based MRE/CRE*, which is culturally sensitive and relevant, while other interventions tended to focus on skills and information (i.e. skilled based MRE).

The results and positive outcome of the current research could be attributed to the moderate dosage of instruction, combined with group dynamic and interactive activities, skill and competence practice, all of which helped the couples understand and internalize concepts and develop competences.

The current findings are relevant because they open a new dimension in the development of MRE or CRE programs, by establishing empirical foundation to encourage other researchers to design programs geared toward the development of competences, rather than only information-based or skilled-centred programs. Present study findings indicate that focusing on development of competences—which entails increasing level of knowledge, mastery, and increase in skills, complemented with improvement in attitudes—could be a viable approach to inducing significant changes. While couples could acquire knowledge and skills, if attitudes are not addressed, significant and durable changes may not occur. Therefore, it is imperative for MRE or CRE designers to include the attitude change component and design a strategy that can be adopted to foster attitude changes in couples attending their MRE/CRE programs. The findings reported here suggest that it is appropriate to move beyond skills-based MRE/CRE programs toward competence-based alternatives. Such initiative should have a tripartite focus, namely acquiring knowledge, developing skills, and adopting changes in attitude that work together toward significant and durable changes. Strong emphasis on advantages attained when participants are willing to invest time and effort into making positive or empirically proven changes presented in the MRE/CRE is contrasted with negative short- and long-term effects or consequences of not doing so. In short, couples

adjust, change attitudes, and modify their behaviors when they can see the direct benefits of doing so both personally and in the context of relationship/family life.

Additionally, the results also suggest that some couples, even Christian's believer that have attended to MRE and still reported no benefit, that this could be due to improper dosage, lack of cultural sensitive elements or lack of focus on development of competence. This could be an interesting topic for further research.

*Third*, the current study is in agreement with prior studies in that its findings indicate that attending an MRE could lead to significant improvements in the relationship quality. However, unlike existing research, this study fostered development of specific competences, such as family management, among others. By retaining strong focus on the development of competences the present study could contribute to permanent changes, considering the positive results the participating couples reported at the two-year follow-up evaluation.

*Fourth*, similar to preceding research, this study yielded findings indicating that commitment tends to be associated with marital quality and satisfaction (Clements & Swensen, 2000). Significant improvements in the participants' level of commitment can be linked to marital satisfaction. However, in the study conducted by Clements and Swensen (2000), the participants were predominantly Caucasian, aged 50 and above. This relatively narrow focus limited generalizability of their findings. In addition, the authors did not examine 12 specific competences evaluated in the present study. During the interviews with the study participants, the researcher noted that most couples felt that there is no sense in committing to the relationship if its quality is low

and marital satisfaction limited. On the other hand, acquiring relationship competences tends to increase marital satisfaction and commitment reciprocally.

The uniqueness of this research rests upon the fact that the study targeted a richly diverse population of Curacao and Bonaire. Scholars concur that couple's dynamics and needs are dependent on the ethnic group and can vary significantly, despite some universal characteristics (Adler-Beaver & Hawkins, 2010; Halford et al., 2003). The positive results reported here could thus be attributed to the universality of the content, combined with cultural sensitivity and relevance.

The outcome of this research is relevant because it has the potential to improve durability of cohabiting and marital relationships. It also strengthens the theoretical concept that commitment and marital quality are reciprocally related.

*Fifth*, while this MRE is not designed to treat individual symptoms of depression, its systemic framework may also result in overall wellbeing, regardless of the individual or couples' distress levels. Independently of the fact that it is manualized and is systemic in nature, this intervention approaches the whole family as a system (e.g., children's programs are available and parent-child interaction is examined as much as possible). As a part of the MRE, all participating couples were given homework activity focused on their respective families, which were treated as a system. In this sense, the approach is highly educational and invitational, and a general recovery structured plan is offered.

*Sixth*, one of the main strengths of this model is that the content was created by the researcher, who greatly benefited from an insider status, as he shared the participants' background. This is major underlying argument for conducting culturally

sensitive MRE, as the focus should be not only the content but also the role, background, and affinity of the presenter. Authors of extant studies in this field have explored contextual factors that may contribute or significantly influence the results of an MRE. Their findings show that the presenter, facilitator, or the interventionist that possesses an ability to understand ecocultural niches, and is able to make useful adjustments to the program content, may be an asset to an MRE. In short, in addition to the culturally relevant content, the context is also of pivotal importance for the success of an MRE (Phenice, Griffore, Hakoyama, & Silvey, 2009). The findings reported in this study support this suggestion, which is often referred to “matching hypothesis,” positing that similarity between the interventionist and the participants may promote positive changes (Jemmott et al., 1999; Bradford et al., 2013).

The researcher took on the role of the presenter of this MRE, and the fact that she belonged to the ethnic group of the sample and the population being investigated likely contributed to the positive MRE outcomes. However, this statement should be interpreted with caution, as the effect of the MRE outcomes was not directly measured and compared with the control group or other group that was trained by a presenter of a different ethnic background. This approach was adopted for two reasons (Branford et al., in press), one of which was that making inferences about the effect of the presenter’s ethnic background was not the objective of this study. Moreover, previous studies have already shown that there is a relationship between participants’ and facilitator’s ethnicity, sex, education, and relationship status.

Additionally, the positive outcome and relevance of the results suggest that, when offering MREs, providers could consider facilitators with similar ethnicity, sex,

and other characteristics, as this could potentially enhance the value participants derive from the course. This is vital, considering that scholars assert that presenter's characteristics have a significant impact on individual's experience and even intervention outcome (Bradford et al., 2013; Hawkins et al., 2004). As previously noted, it is of equal importance that the presenter puts content into the cultural context (Phenice et al., 2009). This is certainly easier to achieve if the facilitator/presenter shares the culture and ethnicity with the target population.

*Seventh*, with regard to the baseline differences when conducting the experimental research, several scholars posited that couples' dynamic and needs in the MRE can vary based on their ethnic group and other social aspects (e.g., income, marital status, and attendance status) (Adlear-Baeder & Hawkins, 2010; Halford et al., 2008). Even though significant differences at the baseline level have allowed the participants to be separated into groups, this has not hindered/deterred any of the groups from experiencing and reporting significant positive changes when exposed to this culturally sensitive MRE.

This finding allows making the assertion that the current MRE is effective regardless of the baseline level and the state the couples attending the program were in at arrival. It may even imply that this MRE could be considered instrumental in preventing or decreasing the divorce incidence, given that other researchers have found an association between MRE and a reduction/decrease in the divorce prevalence (Parker, 2007). However, once again, this assertion should be interpreted with caution, as its testing was not within the scope of the present study.

*Eighth*, the current study's inclusion of spirituality as one of the key competencies couples should possess was based on extant evidence that it could have a positive effect on marital satisfaction and happiness, with diminished likelihood of divorce (Curtis & Ellison, 2002).

The relevance of this finding stems from the fact that spirituality and religiousness of a marital or cohabitating couple should not be trivialized, but rather encouraged and respected, as they make an important contribution to the family wellbeing. Thus, an MRE should be integral and holistic, and lawmakers, health professionals, and couples would highly benefit from addressing religious aspects of family lives.

*Ninth*, exposure to the current MRE/CRE program has also resulted in a significant improvement in sexuality management and intimacy in most couples. This outcome is consistent with the findings reported by Eisenberg and Falciiglia (2010), Falciiglia, and Schindler (2010). However, in their studies, these researchers overlooked family or relationship competence as a variable, and have not considered or assessed the group of twelve competences discussed in this research simultaneously, to verify interrelationship.

*Tenth*, the relationship between marital satisfaction and communication that was previously posited was both challenged and taken a step further in this work. Communication is a variable consistently linked to marital satisfaction, which is also correlated or linked with durability and longevity of marriage and relationships. For example, Carroll et al. (2013) reported that teaching communication skills might be a potent intervention for couples who experience high level of work-family conflict. Even

though this is in line with the findings of the present study—in that communication may correlate with or even increase marital satisfaction—it focused on an aspect overlooked by other researchers, namely the importance of content and the form of communication. Content is pivotal in the process of communication and is as valid as the interaction itself. In making this assertion, this study not only challenges existing approaches/theories, but also takes the concept of communication a step further. In the MRE offered as a part of this study, communication is treated as instrumental for creating a functional structure in a family, stressing the importance of family management skills, ability to manage time, share and assign roles, and have family meetings, where both role and tasks are assigned and shared, management is evaluated, and structures are created. When a functional structure is created through communication, it prevents conflict and quarrels from emerging because family needs are discussed and schedules are agreed upon. This allows each member's needs to be satisfied. Family meetings are appropriate for any family structure, as they enable the members to plan, prioritize needs, and appoint time/date for each task that needs to be attended (further discussed in the appendix, under family management). It is lack of structure, rather than absence of communication, that allows problems to emerge. Couples who are literate in family management practices, i.e., know the importance of and how to create a functional structure, tend to score their relationship quality and satisfaction higher compared to those that lack the competence or skills to manage their family effectively.

*Eleventh*, the findings obtained following the exposure to the current MRE program under discussion provide basis for an empirically proven list of 12



competences that may propel marriages and relationships into happiness, durability, adjustment, and longevity. Couples in both adjusted and distressed group reported significant improvements in the three dependent variables, which are interwoven and interdependent. Improvements in these competences are related to marital satisfaction and commitment and vice versa. Therefore, the twelve competences under study may be considered pivotal and critical for relationship quality and marital satisfaction, as well as marital commitment. In other words, when couples possess these competencies, they have better chance to have a durable and happy relationship. Consequently, couples as well as professionals in the Dutch Caribbean, could assess relationship success potential based on these 12 competences that can serve as a checklist.

In the Dutch Caribbean, there is presently no existing empirically proven checklist either for professionals or for couples to assess their marital relationship's potential for success, happiness and durability. It is currently common for couples to enter into marriage without exposure to marital education program. The importance of a checklist and preparation for any action is best demonstrated by the worst aircraft disaster took place in the US in 9187, which would have prevented by a simple use of pre-flight checklist (National Transportation Safety Board Report, 1988). Similarly, marriages take off without an assessment of their potential for success, failing to realize that use of an evidence-based and empirically proven checklist which is sensitive to their culture and context can increase their chances of having a happy and long-lasting marriage.

Based on the results of this study, it can be posited that couples possessing the following twelve competences under study would have a better chance of attaining relationship healthiness, happiness, durability, and longevity.

*Twelfth*, previous studies have drawn attention to some of the hypothesized determinants of divorce, such as marital dissatisfaction (Falciglia & Schindler, 2010), lack of commitment, inadequate communications skills, etc. (discussed in detail in the literature review). However, thus far no study focusing on competences has been conducted. Furthermore, no study has considered all twelve competencies simultaneously. This lack of cohesive approach may limit the view, understanding, and appreciation of the determinants of divorce as a growing and globally prevalent phenomenon. As a result, researchers can only gain a fragmented, rather than comprehensive, view of both marriage durability and its counterpart—marital meltdown. This shortcoming in the approach may have implications for problem diagnostics, as well as treatment and intervention program. However, studying the 12 competences in relationship with the most prominent determinants (i.e., marital satisfaction and commitment) offers a more exhaustive view of the phenomenon of marriage as a whole and increases the likelihood that relationship problems will be addressed before reaching the stage where couples will consider divorce.

Finally, *thirteenth* based on the notion that researchers should not only look at problems, but also analyses couples that have successful relationships, in order to discover what the underlying reasons and factors, in this study, the researcher also formed an adjusted group, which was subjected to the same MRE as the distressed couples. This allowed determining, even prior to the intervention, whether mastery of

the studied competences would imply greater marital/relationship satisfaction, quality, and commitment. Analysis of the pre-intervention data revealed that the couples possessing a greater mastery of the aforementioned competences report better more marital quality, greater marital satisfaction, and stronger commitment. Additionally, the findings pertaining to both distressed and the adjusted group suggest that, as mastery of competences increases so does the level of satisfaction. In sum, the baseline scores on all 12 competencies provided by the adjusted group were higher, indicating that their initial level of marital satisfaction was higher. However, irrespective of the initial scores, the study findings confirm that, as the mastery of competences improves, so does the level of marital satisfaction.

In sum, the current, while unique in many respects, also shares some similarities with prior studies in this field. It has clearly established an association between family or relationship competences and both marital satisfaction and commitment level. By finding a significant relationship between the twelve competences postulated in the current research and marital satisfaction and commitment, this research is not only unique, but also extends the extant knowledge. In particular, it indicates that there are other important factors, beyond recurrent determinants, that can serve as predictors of marital quality and longevity. Conversely, the findings also suggest that lack of mastery of the family or couple's competences implies paucity of marital satisfaction and can thus be assumed as a predictor of marital distress and potential downfall of the relationship.

## **Implications of the findings/results**

### Theoretical implications

This section provides the theoretical, practical and methodological implications of this research supporting the fact that this thesis not only made a significant contribution to knowledge in its immediate discipline, but also for other disciplines.

#### **Implication 1**

MRE/CRE has potential to contribute to lower social maladies such as crime and other. According to criminologists, disintegration of family is the root cause of crime (Fagan, 1994). Social scientists have found strong correlation between family deterioration and crime. In the US, for example, over the last thirty years, the increase in violent crime could be related to the rise in the number of families experiencing problems, and more specifically families that were abandoned by fathers (Fagan, 1996). Other studies in youth criminality indicate similar links. For example, a recent study examining family situation of a broad sample of young people in a correctional center found that 70% of them came from broken homes. In addition, 85% of inmates came from broken home or were raised in a family without the father figure (Estrada Miranda, 2013). In Uruguay, 66% of inmates examined in the study conducted by Kliksberg (2013) came from single-parent or broken home.

Based on this evidence, it would be highly informative to conduct studies providing cost analysis for regions that invest in MRE vs. incarceration and efforts to reduce crime. Findings yielded by such comparisons would serve as a direct evidence of the effectiveness of this MRE in reducing public cost of divorce and social

issues related to incarceration. As a result, policy-makers, community leaders, and parents could make the choice to invest in the health and wellbeing of families by providing/attending MRE geared toward development of competences. The findings of this research confirm that, by addressing family challenges, MRE could be instrumental in preventing and reducing crime. In addition, results reported here underpin and support the notion that education will cost less than detention, procession, correction and repression of inmates, through incarceration and other remediating efforts (CNN Money, 2014; Hawkins, 2010; Jackman & Boyd, 2011; Jealous, Brocks, & Huffman, 2011). Policymakers and community leaders should re-evaluate the “misplaced priorities” of spending money on incarceration and crime combating strategies instead of focusing on funding marital education, absence of which may be the root of the problems they are trying to mitigate.

## **Implication 2**

The current findings also have theoretical implications, by suggesting that the focus should be on potential causes rather than symptoms or recurrent classical problems.

Researchers have proposed and studied numerous determinants of divorce. However, these determinants could be considered symptoms rather than causes of the problems. A comprehensive, culturally relevant, and competence-oriented marital or couple relationship program is thus a much more comprehensive approach, as it could not only address these determinants, but also prevent problem escalation. When offered prior to marriage, and in early stages of a relationship, such initiatives could prevent the emergence some of the recurrent “determinants” of relationship

problems. In particular, evidence suggests that most couples cite communication issues, lack of conflict management strategies, financial problems, and lack of marital satisfaction as the key causes for dissatisfaction. Addressing these, as well as other competences examined in this study, could save marriages even before they start experiencing trouble.

When MRE programs are tailored to address generic factors of social problems, they can contribute to the reduction of mental health problems. Findings of extant research in this field consistently show that quality of family relationships is the key determinant of mental health of all family members. Working preventively to help couples sustain healthy relations is thus a potent way to address a broad array of mental health risk factors and other health issues (Breslau, 2011; Howell, 2007; Staton & Ooms, 2012 ). In 1999, David Satcher, Surgeon General working in the U.S., reported that 30-40% of individuals in the process of divorce show significant increase in symptoms of depression and anxiety (Satcher, 1999). In the study conducted by Carney et al. (1987), in which 1,346 women took part, marital separation was found to be a predictor of elevated risk for psychiatric disorders. Similarly, a longitudinal national study conducted by British scientists tracked a national sample of children born in 1958, revealing that divorce was associated with a 39% increase in risk of psychopathology (Chase-Lansdale, Cherlin & Kierman, 1995). Swedish researches, on the other hand, reported that children raised in single-parent families (due to divorce, separation, death of one parent, etc.) were 56% more likely to show signs of mental illness than children from intact, healthy homes (Howell, 2014). Estrada, referred to several research studies when making the claim that 75%

of mental health patients come from homes where the father figure was not present (Estrada Miranda, 2013).

The current research findings and the findings of previous studies in this field suggest that clinicians and health professionals should consider focusing on prevention of mental health disorders by providing early marital or relationship education geared toward development of competences. Health professionals could enhance their effectiveness by providing MRE, rather than resorting to couple's therapy and other remedial strategies as sole intervention approaches. By ignoring MRE as a potent alternative, marital and relationship problems could escalate and cause collateral damage beyond potential for repair by therapeutic means. In addition, prevention could be more cost-effective and less intensive than remedial approaches (Markman & Rhoades, 2013).

### **Implication 3**

By addressing the generic factors some scientist refer to as spillover hypothesis, MRE may contribute to positive development and better parenting outcomes (i.e., positive development of children).

Even though the objective of this study was not to establish an association between couples' participation in MRE and their parenting outcomes, it is plausible to suggest that gaining the 12 competencies would enhance couples' parenting skills. This assertion is based on the vast body of research conducted by social scientists, suggesting that MRE may positively contribute to child development. Thus, the current program findings may be of utility in preventing divorce and positively affect child welfare. By improving marital satisfaction and relationship quality, MRE has the

potential to contribute to positive cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development of children (Ablow, Measelle, Cowan & Cowan, 2009). In extant studies in which both European and American middle- and high-income families were studied (Cowan & Cowan, 2007), as well as African American low -income sample was used (Kirkland et al., 2011), MRE was found to promote and predict positive child development. On the other hand, it has been established that conflictive relationship between parents has the potential to negatively affect children's cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development (Ablow, Measelle, Cowan, & Cowan, 2009; El Sheikh, Keller & Erath, 2007; Harold, Aitken, & Shelton, 2007; McDowell & Parke, 2009). This is in line with the aforementioned spillover hypothesis. The MRE developed and conducted as a part of this study can address the issues that generate support for the spillover hypothesis.

The findings of current research suggest that the culturally sensitive MRE discussed in this study may contribute to the enhancement of relationship quality and durability by addressing generic factors, which may provide support for the spillover hypothesis. By so doing, it can assist couples in improving their children's chances of positive development. Parents, school boards, teachers, community leaders, and school curriculum developers should invest time and resources into MRE programs geared toward the development of competences. This recommendation is based on the evidence that MRE has a significant potential to contribute in providing more stable homes for children, which consequently may lead to their better development, adjustment, and school performance, among other benefits.



#### **Implication 4**

The program examined in this study contributes to the extent knowledge by reporting the positive effects on the couples' overall relationship quality, increase in the commitment levels, and improvement in relationship competences.

This outcome could strengthen the notion of MRE/CRE as a potentially valid method to combat depression symptoms. While not all marital problems or relationship distress are linked to or considered the cause of the depression symptoms, there is strong evidence relating these phenomena. In addition, working with MRE preventively can help couples sustain healthy relationships. This is a potent way to address an ample array of mental health risk factors (Howell, 2014).

#### Practical implications

#### **Implication 5**

This program may assist couples as well as professionals by providing an evidence-based checklist that can be used to assess potential durability of relationships and provide focus to treatment intervention programs, by revealing pivotal competences couples should work on.

This study has pivotal implications for intervention treatment approaches, *couple's therapy*, as well as *MRE/CRE programs*. It provides mental health professionals with an empirical and evidence-based checklist that can be used as an effective assessment or diagnostic tool. This checklist can be employed to assess readiness for marriage or durability potential of existing relationships/marriages. Based on the assessment, therapists can adjust or customize their therapeutic approach and strategy in order to better align it with the needs of the couples. The

assessment and therapeutic intervention focusing on development of the twelve competences discussed in this study could be instrumental in helping couples to appropriate the tools that will propel their marriage into happiness, sustainability, and longevity. In sum, the Family Competence Training Model that the current program is underpinned by could assume a vital role as a complementary treatment and intervention tool, and should be implemented alongside conventional treatments to help couples cope with relationship challenges.

### **Implication 6**

Exposure to MRE/CRE could prevent countries from spending significant portion of taxpayers' funds on mitigating the consequences of divorce.

Divorce is a significant source of expenditure for most nations worldwide, as developed countries with advanced research teams and renowned economists reported high cost to the taxpayers incurred by divorce. For example, statistics pertaining to the US indicate that, in 2003, divorce, even though a private matter, cost the public (i.e., the taxpayer) 33 billion dollars (Schram, 2003), which increased to 112 billion in 2008 (Myrick et al., 2009; Scafidi, 2008; Walberg & Mrozek, 2009). This conservative calculation excludes an additional 9.1 billion associated with teen childbearing, which is related to marriage dissolution and broken families. Similarly, annual expenditure on divorce in Canada was estimated at 7 billion CAD (Walberg & Mrozek, 2009), Australia reported 14 billion AUD (Meuhlenberg, 2014), United Kingdom reported 37.01 billion GBP in 2009, while the cost to New Zealand taxpayers was reported at 1 billion NZD in 2008.

Considering that both previous research and the findings of the current study support the notion that MRE has the potential to act as a deterrent to family meltdown, it can be posited that an MRE tailored to cultural issues and geared toward development of competences could be a major contributor to marital and relationship stability, sustainability, and longevity. It would thus be beneficial for policymakers and country leaders to invest in MREs in their respective countries, and promote them as a potential solution to the increasing social problems several countries are experiencing. The trendsetting example of the US where millions are invested (Corwin, Bir, Joshi, & Lerman, 2008) in MRE programs is worthy of emulation by other countries. Investing in couple and family education is likely to cost less and be more effective than the expenses incurred by problems arising due to not doing so.

### **Implication 7**

MRE is an essential and pivotal component of a comprehensive strategy aiming to empower families and couples.

Research shows that, for dyadic relationships or marriages, MRE is more effective than traditional counselling or marriage therapy. Additionally, it is less costly than the price and impact of divorce. Extant research shows that four out of five couples that are on the brink of divorce achieve lasting improvements from participation in empirically proven relationship skills classes. According to extant research conducted by PAIRS, marriage education classes offer a road map with practical tools that are useful to attain successful relationships (Myrick et al., 2009).

The current research findings indicate that the MRE titled “Profile of Successful Couples/Families” has the potential to contribute significantly to marital success by

empowering, strengthening, and improving couple's relationship. Therefore, it can prevent the tsunami of negative social impacts on families in the Dutch Caribbean/Curacao population. The family department of the Dutch Caribbean should make an aggressive effort to provide marriage and relationship education to married couples and those planning to get married. Government agencies could even incentivize couples who plan to get married in order to promote MRE (this could be more effective than legally obliging couples to attend MRE prior to marrying or cohabitation).

The findings of the current research suggest that couples who are in love and want a durable, long lasting relationship should invest in MRE, considering the pivotal role that MRE may play in providing them with the tools that can help them have the relationship of their dreams. In short, in order for couples to experience high quality relationships, high level of satisfaction, and high sense of commitment, it is highly beneficial to attend MRE programs that are culturally sensitive and geared toward development of competences.

#### Methodological implications

##### **Implication 8**

The present study findings contribute to the better understanding of the way in which MRE/CRE programs could be more effective and instrumental in helping couples in distress. Through its culturally relevant components as well as evidence-based aspects, this MRE/CRE will provide larger effect size and outcomes that are more significant.

The current study outcomes support the notion that culturally relevant MRE/CRE programs improve marital quality, which may contribute to healthy, stable, highly satisfying relationships/marriages, and thus result in better social health and greater social impact. It is well established and documented that healthy and highly satisfying families are characterized by: (a) better social health (i.e., better physical and mental health, fewer injuries, illnesses, and disability, longer life, emotionally healthier children, lower infant mortality, lower child abuse, lower STD rates, etc.);(b) better children (i.e., greater overall success in school, better reading ability, greater chance to attend college, increased likelihood of attaining a well-paid and prestigious job, less likely to divorce and more likely to get married); (c) better overall social impact (i.e., better parent-child relationships, lower crime rates, lower domestic violence, lower teen pregnancy, lower juvenile delinquency, more educated citizens, more home owners, and greater property values) (Howell, Krafsky, & McAllister, 2013).

In line with the findings of previous studies and those reported in the current research, parents and couples should attend culturally sensitive MRE programs that are manualized, evidence-based, and geared toward development of competences. They should stay together and learn to turn to one another instead of from one another, and provide stable home for their children. By so doing, parents contribute to the social health of their country, better life outcomes for their children, and overall social impact.

Mental health professionals, as well as policy-makers and couples, that expect significant positive outcomes of interventions and large effect size should focus on

culturally relevant and evidence-based tailored CRE/MRE programs in addition to the conventional couple's therapy and other existing approaches. Conflicting results pertaining to the effectiveness of MREs have historically been concern for researchers. In particular, small and moderate effect size has inhibited researchers from confidently proposing MRE/CRE programs as potent and instrumental tools for families aiming to recover from a distressed state. The current research's emphasis on development of competences and cultural relevancy of content could have been responsible for a large effect size. Therefore, it may be safe to suggest that health professionals, as well as couples, should turn to culturally sensitive and competence-oriented MRE/CRE programs as effective means for addressing relationship and family problems. Additionally, it can also be posited that MRE/CRE program developers should consider cultural aspects, inquire about local needs and most frequent family issues, interview local professionals, and tailor their programs toward competence development, as these factors will greatly enhance the outcome of such initiatives. The aforementioned aspects are imperative when designing and creating intervention programs. By choosing not to solely consider "most common determinants" or "universal determinants" as sole determinants that should be addressed in MRE/CRE programs, and instead including cultural aspects, programs such as the one implemented in this study could increase effectiveness and improve outcomes. In sum, besides the currently examined variables, such as social class, race, ethnicity, religion, age, sex, verbal skills, coping patterns, etc., cultural relevancy should be among important elements when designing MRE/CRE interventions (Wodarski & Feit, 2009).

## Limitations

One of the limitations of this study stems from the non-random sample selection, which hinders the potential for generalizing the findings. However, by making the framework more robust by adopting Solomon design and addressing the nine most common validity threats, reliability of the results was ensured. Furthermore, the fact that the intervention evaluated in this study is culturally sensitive (relevant) strongly supports the idea that MREs should be culturally relevant and geared toward the development of competences that the couples with particular culture and ethnicity need. Nonetheless, the quasi-experimental design remains limited and cannot be used to establish undisputable cause-effect relationships.

Another limitation that could bring accuracy of the results into question is the attrition rate in the distressed group that attended the program in Curacao. Although all study participants promised to complete and hand in the self-report questionnaires two years upon study completion, 33% in the adjusted group and 42% of participants in the distressed group has failed to do so. Scholars and experienced reserachers (Anderson-Reardon, Stagner, Macomber, & Murray, 2005) used the criteria that when less than 40% of the original sample which were pre-tested and post-tested fails hand in follow-up results, the research passess the rigourous criteria for the results to be considered reliable. The lack of follow-up data in the distress group hinders the possibility to assess the durability of changes these couples experienced as a result of attending the program after two years. In addition, given the conflicting results stemming from the follow-up measurement post-exposure to the MRE/CRE, in other preceding research further longitudinal research is necessary. Empirical evidence

indicates that long-term follow-up trajectories obtained in many research studies indicate a tendency toward attenuation (Bodenmann, Pihet, Shantinath, Cina, & Widmer, 2006; Markman & Rhoades, 2013). On the other hand, in some studies participants were reported to have continued experiencing positive effects of intervention even five years upon study completion (Adler-Baeder et al., 2011; Eisenberg et al., 2011; Markman, Floyd, Stanley, & Storaasli, 1988; Markman, Renick, Floyd, Stanley, & Clements, 1993).

Yet another potential limitation affecting the present study stems from the potentially longer period couples need to develop family competences. However, while it is acknowledged that not all couples would attain new skills at the same rate, this limitation was addressed by giving all participants specific homework aimed at measuring real development of major competences and finally assess permanence of improvement after two years in a follow-up session.

A further limitation stems from the fact that the intervention outcomes were measured by the researchers who developed and delivered the program (Markman & Rhoades, 2013). While this could potentially introduce bias, this approach was adopted, as the aim was to observe potential positive effect of “presenter’s background effect on outcome.” This, in fact, might be an advantage, as several researchers have argued that the presenter’s close proximity to the participants of same culture and ethnicity is an asset, because it helps participants understand the content better (i.e., content could be effectively adapted to the participants’ needs). Nonetheless, the researcher still involved other local individuals in the presentation and group dynamics discussions. Additionally, as the Solomon design allows



comparisons with the control group, it helps increase reliability, while reducing validity threats.

## **Recommendations**

Next, a brief discussion of practical recommendations for educators and clinicians; theoretical recommendations for government and policies makers, research recommendations for universities and researchers, and additional recommendations for clergy and community leaders.

### **Practical recommendations for educators and clinicians**

#### **Recommendation 1**

For clinicians and educators to use complementary approach when assisting families. The current program's impact and utility demonstrated in the findings provide basis for serious consideration of a complementary approach when addressing problems commonly experienced by couples. In this context, complementary approach refers to a strategy where couple's therapy as well as MRE/CRE are used. Instead of juxtaposing the two approaches, they should be offered in conjunction, in order to yield maximum results. The assessment and therapeutic intervention focusing on development of the twelve competences discussed in this study could be instrumental in helping couples to appropriate the tools that will propel their marriage into happiness, sustainability, and longevity. In sum, the Family Competence Training Model that the current program is underpinned by could assume a vital role as a complementary treatment and intervention tool.

## **Recommendation 2**

The international community of clinicians and educator should play a pivotal role in initiating or propose more research project in their countries were cultural sensitive and competence based MRE are created and validated (or tested). This because, in order to generalize the findings yielded by this study, it is essential that further studies be conducted outside the US. However, given that the key aspect of this intervention was its cultural sensitivity, the program should be either created or adapted to language, culture, context, and other particular issues/problems of countries in which this MRE is offered. Despite its limited context, this study indicates that the MRE provided to the couples that took part in this research can achieve a more widespread success. In the US, thus far, American version of MRE or a “one size fits all” approach has been mostly applied. Thus, in order to evaluate the universal applicability of this program, further studies are needed, in particular those exploring the effect of competence-based marriage and relationship education programs and their culturally-sensitive versions.

Theoretical recommendations for government  
and policies makers

## **Recommendation 3**

An effective approach to mitigate or address the increasing phenomena of divorce is by using both a preventive as well as curative approach. Preventive by creating policies that stimulate couples to attend to MRE prior to marriage or living together and curative by stimulating MRE as effective approach to help couples. The idea of MRE/CRE programs as viable preventive intervention or evidence-based

intervention should be disseminated and promoted. Presently most couples view cohabitation as a viable way of assessing their compatibility, which, given the increasing prevalence of divorce, is clearly incorrect assumption. As a part of these training initiatives, couples could learn how to negotiate, and master the 12 competences discussed in this study prior to and during marriage. Couples should make an effort to fully commit rather than give up at first obstacle. This MRE offers them the tools that have been scientifically proven to enhance their skills, and is a much better alternative to trial and error approach most adopt when dealing with issues. In addition, at the start of a relationship, it is impossible for a couple to fully appreciate and anticipate all potential challenges they are going to face. Evidence shows that marital success primarily depends on coping ability and maturity, and these are acquired through a continuous learning process.

#### **Recommendation 4**

Considering the cost of divorce in developed countries such as US, Europe, Canada, and others, governments in other countries should conduct studies providing cost analysis for regions that invest in MRE in their countries vs. incarceration and efforts to reduce crime. Findings yielded by such comparisons may serve as a direct evidence of the effectiveness of this MRE in reducing public cost of divorce and social issues related to incarceration. As a result, policy-makers, community leaders, and parents could make the choice to invest in the health and wellbeing of families by providing/attending MRE geared toward development of competences. The findings of this research infer that, by addressing family challenges, MRE could be instrumental in preventing and reducing crime. In addition, results reported here (i.e.

in implications section) underpin and support the notion that education will cost less than detention, procession, correction and repression of inmates, through incarceration and other remediating efforts (CNN Money, 2014; Hawkins, 2010; Jackman & Boyd, 2011; Jealous et al., 2011)

#### Research recommendations for universities and researchers

##### **Recommendation 5**

Investigating effectiveness of “blended learning” as a teaching technique is likely to indicate that even better result in dissemination and teaching culturally sensitive MRE program can be attained. Considering that the Y generation is accustomed to learning through computer-oriented teaching and information acquisition techniques, it would be an asset for investigators to know how to teach better and more effectively MRE/CRE. In this respect, “blended learning” refers to the technique were traditional classroom methods are combined with online teaching.

##### **Recommendation 6**

It is highly recommended that the role of presenter ethnicity and proximity to culture of the program participants be examined and its relation to the effectiveness of teaching and learning evaluated. These factors should ideally be investigated through experimental design with a control group. More specifically, the effect of presenter ethnicity can be assessed by exposing one group to MRE/CRE delivered by a presenter of the same ethnicity and culture vs. a group exposed to the same program delivered by a presenter from other ethnicity and culture.

### **Recommendation 7**

Future studies should replicate this research using even more rigorous methods. For example, it would be beneficial to employ a randomized and much greater sample. Similarly, by repeating this study on the other island in the region (Aruba, Bonaire, Sin Maarten Sint Eustatuis, and Saba), it could be ascertained whether the program has more widespread application. Other variables are also recommended to be assessed or investigated. These variables could include depressed couples' reactions on MRE, extended families or military families' reactions on MRE, and others.

### **Recommendation 8**

Future studies could explore plausible correlation between divorce and non-marital education in the Dutch Caribbean.

### **Recommendation 9**

MRE/CRE program lab with controlled experimental setup (e.g., spiritual retreat type), where couples have no access to Internet, could provide greater validity to the study findings. By ensuring that the couples are not allowed to search for information while completing the questionnaire, potential for providing socially acceptable answers will be eliminated. Another approach could also be to use an observational approach (i.e., observational lab), as this would allow a more stringent assessment of communication processes and dynamics.

**Recommendation 10**

Prior to exposure to an MRE/CRE program, the risk profile of the couple should be completed, conceptualizing the range of static indicators and dynamic factors. This would provide a solid baseline for measuring differences in scores post-intervention and would ensure better projection of potential predictions.

**Recommendation 11**

Future studies should explore how MRE/CRE programs and neuroscience can forge new directions in couple's education. The focus should be on the ways advances in neuroscience can contribute to marital health and wellbeing, by proposing new directions for developing and conducting marriage education programs. It is also recommended to investigate how application of brain research could be applied to MRE/CRE programs. Roberts (2006) shared a few preliminary suggestions and discussion starter tips that could provide new perspectives for such studies.

**Recommendation 12**

Researchers aiming to expand the current knowledge in the field can do so by exploring how technologically advanced modules could be incorporated into MRE, considering that the new generations (e.g. Generation Y- Millennials) are accustomed to using technology in their everyday life. New media development will continue and MRE must align with this progress in order to explore more appealing approaches that would allow reaching a much greater base of families and couples. In doing so, such initiatives will ensure that the coming generations are exposed to MRE/CRE and

are thus better equipped to deal with any family and relationship challenges that may come their way.

Practical recommendations for clergy,  
community leaders and churches

**Recommendation 13**

Churches could play a pivotal and paramount preventive role in reducing divorce rate by offering constant and in structural manner MRE programs to marital couples and couples who plan to get married. This could even be offered on annual bases. The aim could be that of preventing escalation of problems or prevent emergence of highly distress marriages due to lack of knowledge, skills or relationship competences.

**Recommendation 14**

Churches should establish premarital counselling and programs as requirement for marriage. Wedding planner are good in planning the marriage ceremony, however preparation for marriage live is often overlooked. General public thinks that intuition is enough for marriages to work. Churches should emphasize and establish premarital counselling as requirement for marriage, i.e. as an element that should precedes wedding plans.

**Recommendation 15**

Mental health professional, community leaders and churches should offer marital education as continual and structural activity and not as one establish premarital counselling and programs as one single or unique activity, couple need

update. Families will face new challenges and changes, consequently marital education with booster session are imperative activity for sustainability of relationship.

### **Recommendation 16**

While designing MRE content researchers and designer should consider an update content which discuss the implications of new findings regarding the role of neurochemicals in the love relationship dynamic (Heaton, 2002; Larson & Holman, 1994; Mcilhaney & Bush, 2008; Whyte, 1990). How dopamine, oxytocin, vasopressin, pheromones etc. influences human behavior. The new technologies such as MRI, fMRI, PET(Positron emission tomography) among other, reveal extremely important new findings which help understand the human behavior, impact of affair, the ex-effect and how the sex/bonding/breaking-up cycle tend to damage the built-in ability to develop significant and meaningful connection to other human being (e.g. long-term relationship). Additionally, couple need to understand the dynamics of resistance to do wrong, and how the chemicals called GABA are secreted to refrain and help people overcome certain tendency and actions when couples repeatedly resist temptations (Chalmer, 1999).

### **Conclusion**

Absence of family or relationship competences could be related to lack of marital satisfaction, lack of marital commitment, and finally marital meltdown. In order to mitigate the causes and consequences of divorce, Culturally Sensitive Marital and Relationship Education Program geared toward development of relationship and



family competences could be instrumental in providing couples with pertinent tools for relationship durability and longevity.

The *Profile of Successful Couples/Families* program yielded improvements in marital satisfaction, level of commitment, and level of mastery of competences for a wide range of couples, in terms of ages and years of marriage. These three variables are both interrelated and interdependent, they tend to improve proportionally. The current research reported improvements in all three variables, irrespective of the participants' ages and length of the relationship. This implies that, regardless of the phases of life development of the participants, and irrespective of the length of the relationship, the MRE had a positive and significant effect on the participants. Additionally, this research also reported improvements in all three variables independently of the baseline level and initial state of the couple that attended the program. Even though significant differences at the baseline level have allowed the participants to be separated into two distinct groups, namely distressed and adjusted group, this has not hindered/deterred either group from experiencing and reporting significant positive changes when exposed to this culturally sensitive MRE.

In sum, couples that took part in the *Profile of Successful Couples/Families*—a culturally sensitive MRE program geared toward development of competences—demonstrated an increase in marital satisfaction levels, commitment level, and mastery of 12 relationship competences. This suggests that culturally sensitive MRE could be considered paradigmatic and instrumental for improving marital satisfaction, quality, and durability. Additionally, the findings also suggest that families characterized by better durability and longevity potential may display and master the

twelve discussed and empirically established competences. They tend to fit a certain profile and possess the knowledge, attitude, and ability to (a) Take their families through all the stages that marriages undergo and help each family member to reach his/her maximum potential; (b) They possess love that translates itself into a behavior that nurtures the relationship; (c) They can successfully and happily weather all of the developmental stages that marriages undergo; (d) They have the capacity to manage and provide a nurturing environment and a family structure that supplies the needs of each member of the family; (e) They are competent in managing gender differences and complement each other, rather than compete with each other; (f) They are competent in managing personality and temperament differences, celebrating difference rather than see differences as menace or defects; (g) They create structure, schedule activities, and provide plans that lead to achievement of long-term and short-term goals. Additionally, they create a structure that prevents the emergence of quarrels caused by unmet needs; (h) They are competent in providing home environment of sphere that nurture family member and stimulate the emergence of the healthy family characteristics; (i) They competently manage their finances and resources, leading their family to achieve financial goals without financial stress and acute debt problems; (j) They frequently and consistently satisfy their partner sexually; (k) They possess parenting ability and competence, and parent productive and well-balanced children; and (l) They tend to be productive, church-going and religious people, who are connected to the society and serve indiscriminately. They are devoutly religious people. In sum, marital satisfaction, marital/couple commitment, and mastery of the discussed competences are

interrelated and not only nurture but may propel the relation into durability and longevity.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW PROTOCOL USED FOR UNDERPINNING OF THE SCIENTIFIC DATA FOR THIS RESEARCH**

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Literature Review Protocol Used for Underpinning of the Scientific Data for this Research**

A systemic literature review approach suggested by Stagner (2003) was followed as search strategy for identifying relevant studies regarding the impact of marriage and relationship programs. With the advances of technology and internet search and world wide access to documents, existing manuals, research articles the word “comprehensive” for literature review is extremely challenging. It is almost impossible to review all existing literature, besides as you finish reviewing appears/emerge other literature that were in printing process, or were added/updated by database and search engine. This require a determine strategy to screen, and scan for the more relevant literatures and the most pertinent literature for your topic. A systemic search has been followed for this research. The for variables in this research was thoroughly investigated and the search strategy included additionally, a review for (1) internet searches for published and unpublished research (2) database searches of published literature, (3) partial search for books and manuals and (4) contact to professional, institutions and clerks for existing materials. On data base and internet sites the following technique were followed as the variables related to this study were being investigated. When during consultation process more than 50 articles or record were found I would read/scan all, when between 100-500 article or document are available it will be narrow by adding “durability”, “longevity”, “commitment” “relationship skills” and countries of interes, etc. When the search process lead to more than 2000 available documents we will add terms such as

“stability”, “quality”, “gender” and other demographic aspects. Each variables were investigated and their relationship with the twelve competences in the narrow down process. Additionally, article that states important articles were search and evaluated and analysis of compatibility between conclusion and methodology followed were considered to see if author statement were the really the coherent with the states author intention and conclusion, in short critical look at articles. The articles were compared with conclusion in other country for camparison reason, i.e. one culture and the other. Databases consulted were among others: ERIC, EBSCO, PsychoInfo, Dissertation Abstracts International, etc. Other Research organization such as American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, Asutralian Instityure for Family Studies, Building Family Strengths for Parents Information Center, etc.

In sum, I have carefully develop review questions related to my topic and variables, follow the above mentioned search strategy for comprehensive view of all relevant findings, than I proceed to an indepts and critical examination of findings assessing quality of findings and relationship to theories and afterward synthesize findings.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **MODELS OF MRE/CRE CATEGORIZED IN FIFTEEN MAJOR MODELS**

## APPENDIX B

### Models of MRE/CRE Categorized in Fifteen Major Models

The most cited MRE programs models next/additional to the above discussed are:

1. The Couple Checkup Model based on PREPARE/ENRICH which is a customized model approach for couple. It aims to reach diverse couple group and empower couples to cope with their particular issues as well as general issue. The emphasis is on both prevention and remediation (Olson et al 2009).

2. The Cognitive-Behavioral Marriage model which aim at decreasing level of dysfunctional attitude of couples. The researchers reported that the results indicate decrease in level of dysfunctionality in participant (Kalkan and Ersanlim 2009)

3. The Marriage Mentorship at a Distance which use online conferencing as the medium of interaction. According to the authors this may be one of the most effective methods through which couples could be reach. (Doxsee, 2004).

4. The Systems Marriage Enrichment Program underpinned by the system concept of circular causality, the identification of predictable interaction pattern and adjustable or adaptive and homeostatic mechanism. This model discusses and propose a protocol of five phases with their pertinent goals and technique. (Elliot and Sauders, 1982).

5. The Healthy Marriage Program which suggest that low-income families are prone the face specific relationship issues that are not addressed in standard programs, such as collateral effects of prior sexual abuse, lower level of trust and commitment, lack of exposure to positive role model in marriage, etc. (Dion, 2005)

6. The MRE model focused on lower income couple revised in an meta-analytic study by Hawkins and Facrell (2010). They've found small to moderate effects in the 15 programs analyzed.

7. The Marriage and Fatherhood Program which presents a conceptual model discussing couple-relationship and father involvement interventions develop for both middle and low income married couple. The present a systematic evaluation of several program (12) and make use of outstanding surveyable tables discussing appropriateness of these programs. (Cowan, et al 2010).

8. Marriage and Relationship Education for youth, a model for military couple and yet another model for stepfamilies (Adler-Beader & Hawkins, 2010; Kotrla & Dyer, 2008) "Military MRE models" e.g. the Active Military Life Skills have also reported positive outcomes by improving marital satisfaction, conflict resolution skills , communication, etc.

9. The MRE for both married and unmarried step-couples. Demographic were also considered in this research and the results from repeated measures analysis of variance indicates that step-couples irrespective or regardless of race or marital status report benefit (Higginbotham and Skogrand, 2010)

10. Format comparison of several models have also been performed where effect of weekend and weekly MRE have been done. The results indicate that participants in the five-week group reveal more improvement and better marital adjustment than those who attended to weekend MRE. (Davis and And, (1982).



11. To complete the array of MRE Einhorn and team (Einhorn et al 2008) have chosen to fill in the gap of knowledge regarding absence of research and documentation of MRE effect on relationship quality where one partner is incarcerated. They have used an adapted version of PREP for inmates and reported positive outcome.

12. Professional supported self-directed CRE called CARE which is a systematic, self-directed CRE program designed in flexible delivery mode to be completed in a personal environment that could be at home. They are exposed to information by watching an introductory DVD with key relationship concepts, etc. and complete a structured guidebook. (Wilson & Halford, 2008)

13. Some international effort. Huang (2005) discusses the current Asian relationship education initiative and present interesting insights regarding adaptation of marriage education program. Pasley (1984) Discusses article of Sweden regarding marital education programs (Pasley & Ilhinger Tallman, 1984). Kirkland and team (Kirkland et al 2011) discusses and present the results of marriage education on Co-parenting and children social skills.

14. MRE models for older adults have also been develop and investigated. These address issues of sexuality, retirement and family life, widowhood, intergenerational relation and caregivers. Seven guidelines for development of family life education program for later years are facilitated. (Brubaker & Robert, 1993). Finally, a MRE model for pregnant and parenting adolescents has also been develop and assessed by Toews and Yazedjian (2009).

15. Faith based MRE model have also reported highly positive level of satisfaction post-exposure to the Marriage education program. (Hook et al 2011). These models are and have contribute significantly to better understanding of how marital and relationship education benefit couples. However, when exploring and assessing the prior research and the preceding documentation there is a research gap that need to be investigated. These research have all overlooked the focus on development of competence. None of the preceding programs are competence based or competence geared marital or relationship education program. Additionally there meager research conducted on cultural factors influencing marital and relationship education programs. This research expect to focus and attempt to make a novel contribution by help broader/amplify understanding regarding cultural factors and presenting the impact of competence based marital and relationship program.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **12 COMPETENCES THAT COMPOSE FCTM**

## APPENDIX C Table 1-12

### 12 Competences that Compose FCTM

Table 1

*Fundamental Elements Underpinning Competence 1: Leadership, Ability to Commit and Maintain the Relationship as it Undergoes the Development Stages*

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<b>Underpinning theories or rationale</b>	<p>This competence is based on two theories:</p> <p>(1) The Family Life Cycle or Development Course Framework, which postulates that families undergo several stages in their life span. It also identifies the most common challenges and various developmental tasks family members face during their life span and the developmental stages. In short, it discusses the changes families experience over time (Duvall, 1988; Knox &amp; Schacht, 2013).</p> <p>(2) The Rusbult Investment Model. Rusbult (1983) found that commitment is important ingredient for marital durability. She posited that commitment depends on three main factors—level of satisfaction, size of investment, and quality of alternatives (Farmer, 2006). According to Rusbult, commitment refers to the tendency to persist in a relationship.</p>
<b>Statement of the problem</b>	<p>Marital failure may be the result of misunderstanding, whereby the couple believes that that marriage should result in character development, which may lead to greater happiness. In fact, problems, challenges, and even “incompatibility” should be viewed as an opportunity to grow, complement one another, and develop qualities we lack, instead of being perceived as indicators that justify divorce. Couples with problems may be divorcing when actually marriage can be improved by focusing on areas that may lead to growth. Lack of knowledge regarding the possibility of U-shaped pattern of marital happiness in some marriages over the course of a long-term relationship may also contribute to marital meltdown. Commitment could be pivotal in helping couples understand the importance of staying together, as marriage shapes character, fosters development of one’s full potential, and increases relationship satisfaction. Development of competences and commitment should be investigated, as couples may need to work on reciprocity/interdependence and their contribution to marriage durability.</p>
<b>Partial empirical documentation</b>	<p>(1) According to empirical evidence, commitment depends on three main factors—level of satisfaction, size of investment, and quality of alternatives (Rusbult, 1983; Farmer, 2006). Rusbult referred to commitment as tendency to persist in a relationship. She further claimed that satisfaction levels can be determined by the extent to which a partner fulfils the other individual’s most important needs. In this respect, she recognized two important concepts—quality of alternatives (defined as the perceived desirability of the best available alternative to a relationship) and investment size (defined as willingness of the couple to invest in the relationship). In this context, investment size is the magnitude and importance of the resources that are attached to and invested in a relationship.</p> <p>(2) Conflict and incompatibility do not necessarily indicate unbridgeable problems; instead, they identify where both partners need shaping and development. Like navigation systems, they indicate directions, and pinpoint the time and places when couples have taken the wrong exit or turn (Francisca, 2012). Marriages undergo several stages and commitment may be the mediating element in contributing to the likelihood that couples would stay together and develop.</p>

## Conclusion

Incompatibility, marital problems, and conflicts are recognized as the mayor reasons for divorce. However, they should be viewed as opportunities for growth and development. Currently, couples facing problems tend to change partners, rather than using conflicts and challenges as a sign that they both need to work on developing their character instead. Commitment is what could make couples stay together and grow as their marriage and family undergo different stages in life. Need for development and challenges are inherent in growth. Wedding vows are worded in that way because of the common knowledge that challenges are part of life and require the couple to face them together. Overcoming difficulties is inherent part of marriage development and helps couples stay together as they grow and reach their maximum potential, resulting in greater happiness.

## Formulation of competence

**Formulation:** A couple possesses the leadership ability and capacity to commit and maintain a relationship as the marriage undergoes different stages. As both individuals transform and reach their maximum potential, their level of happiness and marital satisfaction increases. In short, both individuals know and strive to achieve the aim of marriage—character development and reaching maximum potential.

## Challenge & extension of theories

What makes couples commit may not be solely the three dependent variables discussed by Rusbult, but also family or relationship competence. Relationship competence (which includes *knowledge, skills, and attitude*) may influence commitment and marital satisfaction. If a couple does not possess relationship competence, it may make no sense to either partner to commit. Their argument is, if the relationship is not working, why commit? This prompts the question—when trained in MRE model geared toward development of competences, what results can be achieved? Does level of commitment and marital satisfaction increase? Moreover, does commitment assist in competence development and vice versa? **Current research findings** answer these questions in affirmative. More specifically, both level of commitment and marital satisfaction increase when couples are trained and acquire mastery of relationship and family competences.

## Hypothesis & variables

When a couple does not possess relationship competences, it makes no sense to commit to a highly conflictive and stressful relationship, were marital satisfaction is absent. Hypothesis: When a couple develops competences through PSF marital and relationship education program, (1) their level of commitment will increase; (2) their level of marital satisfaction will improve, and (3) their mastery of relationship competences will improve.

## Relationship of variables with this study

Independent variable (IV) for this research is an MRE program based on competence development. The dependent variables (DVs) are (1) Marital Satisfaction, (2) Level of Commitment, and (3) Improvement in Relationship and Family Competences.

MRE will help couples develop competences necessary to reach their maximum potential and happiness. Commitment and marital satisfaction will increase as couples are trained or exposed to MRE with the ultimate aim of developing character and reaching maximum potential. As both commitment and marital satisfaction increase, this may lead to marital durability and longevity.

Table 2

*Fundamental Elements Underpinning Competence 2: Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Management, and Love Management*

<b>Underpinning theories or rationale</b>	<p>The theoretical lens through which this competence is approached is based on:</p> <p>(1) Sternberg's (1988) theory, which is based on the concept of evolving love and is thus very useful for understanding love dynamic. The author claimed that love develops and comprises three elements/components—passion, friendship, and commitment.</p> <p>(2) Systemic Theory positing that each part/unit of a family system can affect the entire system through actions or lack thereof and vice versa. This is applicable to both emotional intelligence and love in a romantic relationship dynamic. Love has its reciprocal dimension, while emotional intelligence may also affect reciprocally and positively the relationship dynamic. In sum, mutual expression of love and commitment affects the couples reciprocally and is the only way love can survive and grow in a satisfactory and healthy way, whereby each individual will feel nurtured as part of the family system.</p> <p>(3) Emotional Intelligence theory and the model developed by Coleman, which postulate that emotional intelligence has four dimensions, namely self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Goleman, 2002; Bradberry &amp; Greaves, 2005; Georgiana, 2014).</p>
<b>Statement of the problem</b>	<p>Couples tend to base their relationships on feelings of love (i.e., romantic and erotic feeling of love). A commonality among couples is that, when feelings of love decrease, partners tend to conclude that the relationship is over. Consequently, they feel that they must pursue another mate. The feeling of love has its neuro-chemical aspect (e.g., initial presence of high levels of dopamine, oxytocin, and vasopressin in the brain, which are responsible for the sense of bonding and exhilaration). This will normalize in later stages of any relationship, but must not be confused with long-lasting love (Camber, 2005; Nicastro, 2008). Lack of knowledge regarding what love and emotional intelligence are, as well as inability to manage emotions, when combined with lack of understanding of love language and tools that can be applied to deal with romantic relationships, may lead to marital and relationship problems.</p>
<b>Partial empirical documentation</b>	<p>(1). Research on long-term marriage shows love to be related to marital longevity (Bachand &amp; Caron, 2001).</p> <p>(2) Romantic/erotic love tends to be biologically determined and is transcultural, according to the anthropological research conducted by Jankowail and Fisher (1992). Even though considered as the basis for marriage, other key ingredients for long-term marriages are also necessary (Grunebaum, 1997).</p> <p>(3) Love has also been addressed as a two-dimensional concept, comprising of passionate and companionate love (Sprecher &amp; Regan, 1998).</p> <p>(4) Love is not a single feeling; it is a combination of mutual respect, behavioural reliability, enjoyment of one another, sexual fidelity, psychological intimacy, sexual pleasure, and proper balance of individuality and couplehood (Levin, 2005).</p> <p>(5) One dimension of love management is ability to control emotions and impulses (Wolff, 2005). This is the key factor in a successful love relationship with a partner.</p> <p>(6) Love is more than a feeling (Camber, 2005; Nicastro, 2008). Absence of feelings must not determine continuity of relationship; rather, couples should focus on</p>

nurturing commitment, which is one dimension of love that could propel the relationship into durability (Clements & Swensen, 2000).

(7) Emotional Intelligence theory and the model developed by Coleman postulate that emotional intelligence has four dimensions, namely self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Goleman, 2002; Bradberry & Greaves, 2005; Georgiana, 2014)

(8) Five languages of love Model of Chapman (...),

(9) Love that can withstand the test of time was shown in extant research to be the pivotal quality of a sustainable relationship (Hill et al., 1976; Lund, 1985; Rubin, 1970, 1973; Berg & McQuin, 1986; Femle et al., 1990; Hendrick et al., 1988).

## **Conclusion**

Love is the underlying element that propels marriages into longevity. Love is more than a feeling, which is initially produced by dopamine and oxytocin (Camber, 2005; Nicastro, 2008). Marital relationship requires competent management of love and emotions in order to survive. Management of emotions and/or emotional intelligence is crucial for both marital success and satisfaction. Marital satisfaction has been linked in several studies with emotional intelligence (Batool & Khalid, 2012; Wachs & Cordova, 2007; Moshe & Iris, 2008; Smith, Heaven, & Ciarrochi, 2008). Emotional intelligence has been associated with romantic love and relationship satisfaction (Malouff, Schutte, & Thorsteinsson, 2014; Moshe & Iris, 2008).

## **Formulation of competence**

*The ability to nurture/ keep love alive, possessing emotional/ social intelligence, and capacity to generate and nurture both love feelings and actions during all stages of family life cycle.* The couple must possess emotional management capability, emotional intelligence, and the ability to express and receive love effectively. They must be able to understand and regulate their mood and emotions, as well as adapt and control their impulses, and translate love into commitment and fidelity. As a couple, they must be capable of expressing love effectively and functionally (i.e., in ways that synchronize with their individual partner's style/preferences) and nurture the relationship.

## **Challenge & extension of theories**

The interaction and the dynamic among units may not only improve through therapy, but also through MRE programs (specially culturally sensitive initiatives geared toward the development of competences). The three components of love (i.e., passion, friendship, and commitment) could be maintained and even improved through exposure to MRE programs that are culturally sensitive and oriented toward competence development. In other words, the general love concept can be enhanced through exposure to competence-oriented and culturally relevant MRE. This will result in increased emotional literacy in general, and love and emotional intelligence in particular.

## **Hypothesis & variables**

When exposed to a culturally sensitive MRE program, the couple may experience improvements in love components and/or dimensions, particularly the commitment component. MRE that is geared toward development of competences will increase commitment, as well as marital satisfaction and relation to individual competences. This, in turn, will improve the relationship love dynamic and ultimately its durability.

**Relationship of variables with this study**

The IV for this research is MRE program based on competence development. The DVs are (1) Marital Satisfaction, (2) Level of Commitment, and (3) Improvement in Relationship and Family Competences.

MRE will help couples develop their family and relationship competences. This implies increase in the level of love and emotional management capability/emotional intelligence. The outcome is increased marital satisfaction and level of commitment to their relationship. Finally, it is expected that the increase in these three variables may improve marriage quality and longevity.

Table 3

*Fundamental Elements Underpinning Competence 3: Effective Management of Life Cycle, Adaptability, and Foresight*

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<b>Underpinning theories or rationale</b>	This competence is based on the Family Life Cycle (FLC), also referred to as Developmental Course Theory, which is a conceptual theory originally proposed by Loomis, Hamilton, and Glick and revisited more recently by Hill and colleagues (Click, 1977). This conceptual tool facilitates the understanding of family development and transition. The family life course development framework postulates and emphasizes the life cycle stages that families undergo in the normal life span. It also identifies the various developmental tasks family members face during their life span, as well as discusses the changes families undergo over time (Taylor & Bagd, 2005; Knox & Schacht, 2013)
<b>Statement of the problem</b>	Marital failure is usually related to the lack of knowledge and proper tools to cope with different stages that family undergoes. Each phase has its own challenges and characteristics. Lack of knowledge regarding these phases tends to produce (metaphorically speaking) the same frustrations as having to enter a room full of obstacles with your eyes closed. Conversely, knowing the characteristics and challenges of each phase is as rewarding as entering a fully furnished, well-lit room with your eyes wide open. It can be likened to being prepared for each season of the year. In sum, one of the reasons couples experience marital problems is lack of awareness of the stages family life goes through and not possessing the tools to manage and master each stage.
<b>Partial empirical documentation</b>	<p>(1) Families, similar to individuals, have certain developmental tasks that must be accomplished to move from one stage of development to the next. Transitioning through stages is imperative for advancement and growth of all members, as well as the ability to enter the subsequent stages (Duvall, 1988; Ballard, 2012).</p> <p>(2) The developmental tasks arise due to the changing needs and demands of the family and must be addressed if the family is to continue to function in a way that supports the growth and development of all its members (Carter &amp; McGoldrick, 1989; Ballard, 2012).</p> <p>(3) The transition from one stage of development to the next in the family life cycle often creates certain level of stress for the family (Duvall, 1988; Ballard, 2012).</p> <p>(4) Even though the Family Life Cycle Theory offers important principles for understanding and cope with changes and provides tools for helping families as they undergo changes, it needs to be revised to be fully comprehensive (Erickson, 1998).</p>
<b>Conclusion</b>	To successfully undergo every phase of family life cycle, it is mandatory that the members are fully familiar with the challenges, demands, and characteristics of each stage. Lack of knowledge regarding these phases produces frustrations. However, knowing the characteristics, challenges, and specifics of each phase is exciting and rewarding.



<b>Formulation of competence</b>	Partners possess adaptability and foresight, demonstrate capacity to manage, and cope through stages and life cycle. They also know phases that marriages undergo and are able to foresee, adapt, and deal with both changes and demands of every phase. Finally, they have a plan that assists them in taking the family through various developmental stages.
<b>Challenge &amp; extension of theories</b>	This descriptive theory fails to discuss either marital satisfaction dynamics or commitment's association with durability or relationship. Evidence suggests that what makes family remain together is not only knowledge of stages marriages undergo, but marital satisfaction, relationship skills, competences, and commitment. This research contributes to the extant body of knowledge in this field by proposing that MRE is instrumental in helping families go through the life stages successfully and weather storms and challenges. Kapinus and Johnson (2003) proposed presence of a relationship among marital satisfaction, commitment, and FLC theory. However, thus far, the links that family and relationship competences may have with FLC have not been investigated.
<b>Hypothesis &amp; variables</b>	When couples are exposed to an MRE program geared toward development of competences, the participants will increase knowledge, better their skills, and improve their attitudes regarding FLC events and stages. This may consequently lead to the improvement in the three dependent variables under investigation in this work, namely marital satisfaction, commitment, and level of mastery of relationship competences. When these three variables are enhanced, durability and longevity of a relationship may be increased.
<b>Relationship of variables with this study</b>	The IV for this research is MRE program based on competence development. The DVs are (1) Marital Satisfaction, (2) Level of Commitment, and (3) Improvement in Relationship and Family Competences. When Family Life Cycle management competence increased, it tended to result in the improvement and increase in marital satisfaction and commitment levels. These findings imply that mastery of family life stages is linked to greater marital satisfaction and commitment.

Table 4

*Fundamental Elements Underpinning Competence 4: Family Management Literacy*

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<b>Underpinning theories or rationale</b>	<p>This competence is underpinned by three theories:</p> <p>(1) The Social Exchange Theory, which postulates that partners in a marital relationship will attempt to maximize their rewards. They would consider relationship most satisfying when rewards outweigh costs (Yogev &amp; Brett, 1985).</p> <p>(2) Social Equity Theory, which refines Social Exchange Theory by postulating that, when individuals/couples are in inequitable relationships and are under-rewarded, they will become distressed (Yogev &amp; Brett, 1985).</p> <p>(3) Systemic Theory, which perceives family as a set of interrelated and interdependent units. Thus, actions (or lack thereof) of each part/ unit of the family system affect the system and vice versa.</p>
<b>Statement of the problem</b>	<p>Couples that perceive (i.e., have subjective sense) domestic chore distribution as unjust, or experience equity in task distribution, will experience more conflict and less marital satisfaction. This affects marital durability and may ultimately result in marital meltdown. Additionally, work-family role misbalance has been source of family conflict for a long time. Family management thus must also include (besides proper household task distribution) shared child-rearing tasks and acceptable balance between work and home time.</p>
<b>Partial Empirical Documentation</b>	<p>(1) Mackey and O'Brien (1998) concluded that few models for marital or couple's negotiation of roles exist. They posited that, for the types of conflict that couples face currently, negotiation in conflictive processes were task and responsibility are integrated rather than differentiated is pivotal.</p> <p>(2) Household management problems emerge consistently among couples (Yogev &amp; Brett, 1985; Yogev, 1983; LeFlore &amp; Lockhart, 1986; Price-Bonhan &amp; Murphy, 1980; Ward, 1993; Sullivan, 2011; Risman, 2011; England, 2011; Schneider, 2012).</p> <p>(3) A perception of uneven domestic chores distribution is associated with lack of marital satisfaction among dual-earner couples in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, the US, China, and many other countries. Household chores distribution has been investigated internationally, with studies that have been conducted in India, Kenya, Cameroon, Nigeria, Egypt, Chad, and the UK all suggesting that household task distribution is a potential source of conflict that is transcultural/ universal (Price-Bohnam &amp; Murphy, 1980; Ward, 1993; Dancer, 1993; Digest, 2012; Simister, 2013).</p> <p>(4) Work-family role conflicts can be a source of marital dissatisfaction as well as job abandonment (Burke &amp; McKeen, 1988; Duxbury &amp; Higgens, 1991; Eagle et al., 1998). Adopting preventive approaches and good management of work-family balance is imperative for relationship durability and health, as well as beneficial for organizations wishing to retain talented workers (Eagle et al., 1998)</p>

<b>Conclusion</b>	Conflicts tend to recurrently emerge when a relationship lacks structure. Lack of egalitarian management may result in uneven or non-existent household task distribution planning, no established goals, inadequate child-rearing agreements, and lack of preventive approaches that could avoid work-family interrole conflicts. The outcome is usually conflict, especially in dual-earning families. Family management competence is thus critical in preventing conflict emergence and escalation. It will foster marital satisfaction and increase quality and durability of a marital relationship.
<b>Formulation of competence</b>	Family management is the ability to generate functional structures, which may include (1) capacity to establish and achieve planned goals; (2) even distribution of household tasks that optimizes internal functioning; and (3) scheduling activities and family meetings, sharing child-rearing responsibility, managing time efficiently, and balancing work and home responsibilities.
<b>Challenge &amp; extension of theories</b>	<p>Not all behaviours are rational calculated actions. Couple's relationship could be based on unconditional love.</p> <p>Whatever the case, when couples are exposed to culturally sensitive MRE and improve competences, marital satisfaction and commitment will increase, which may lead to greater marital durability. Whether motivated by unconditional love or benefits/rewards of a relationship, exposing couples to MRE is beneficial for the durability of their relationships.</p> <p>This concept is related the previously discussed Systemic Theory. In brief, couples may adapt their behaviours post-exposure to a culturally relevant MRE that is geared toward development of competences, and not only through individual or couple's therapy.</p>
<b>Hypothesis &amp; variables</b>	When couples are exposed to culturally sensitive MRE program with special focus on development of family and relationship competences, the participants will experience an increase family management ability and competences. This will consequently increase their level of commitment and marital satisfaction, as well as improve their mastery of relationship competences. Ultimately, when improvements are reported on the three variables, marital durability could increase.
<b>Relationship of variables with this study</b>	<p>The IV for this research is MRE program based on competence development. The DVs are (1) Marital Satisfaction, (2) Level of Commitment, and (3) Improvement in Relationship and Family Competence.</p> <p>Participation in an MRE program geared toward development of competences will ultimately foster development of Competence 4, which is linked to an increase in marital satisfaction and level of commitment. As a result, marital longevity may be enhanced.</p>

Table 5

*Fundamental Elements Underpinning Competence 5: Personality Difference Management and Competence in Handling Different Personalities*

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<b>Underpinning theories or rationale</b>	<p>This competence emerged from two major theories:</p> <p>(1) The Big Five Theory, which is widely known and accepted as empirically tested theory.</p> <p>(2) Temperament Theory, which is a formal or semi-anecdotal theory, proposing existence of four traditional temperament and personality tendencies, namely sanguine and choleric (such individuals tend to be more extrovert) and phlegmatic and melancholic (which tend to be more extrovert) (Merenda, 1987; Lester, 1990). Goldsmith, Thomas, Chess, as well as Buss and Plomin also made compelling theoretical proposals, even though in their works temperament was considered from four other perspectives. Nonetheless, these sources aided in better understanding of human temperament/personality differences and proposed a link between temperament and personality (Shinner, 2012).</p>
<b>Statement of the problem</b>	<p>Lack of knowledge regarding the reasons for a particular behaviour or a behaviour pattern could be a source of frequent conflicts. Without this knowledge, partners will compare negatively personality of their loved one with that of others, judge behaviour based on false perceptions or expectation, expect results and reactions based on their personal taste or experience, or even consider certain behaviours as signs of defects. Once couples understand the profile or four personality types, they are in a better position to cope with, and may even enjoy, their differences.</p>
<b>Partial Empirical Documentation</b>	<p>(1) Several personality factors have been identified as predictive of marital unhappiness and marital meltdown (Foster, 2008; Wilson &amp; Cousins, 2005; Knox &amp; Schacht, 2013), namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Controlling (Knox &amp; Schacht, 2013)</li> <li>(b) Narcissistic (Fox, 2008)</li> <li>(c) Hypersensitive (Knox &amp; Schacht, 2013)</li> <li>(d) Poor impulse control (Knox &amp; Schacht, 2013)</li> <li>(e) Inflated ego (Knox &amp; Schacht, 2013)</li> <li>(f) Perfectionist (Haring et al., 2003)</li> <li>(g) Insecurity (Crowell et al., 2002)</li> <li>(h) History of being controlled by others (e.g., parents or a third party) (Knox &amp; Schacht, 2013)</li> <li>(i) Substance abuse (Blair, 2010)</li> <li>(j) Neuroticism (Karney &amp; Bradbury, 1995,1997; Fisher &amp; McNulty, 2008; Kelly, 2010)</li> </ul>

In short, certain personality traits can be devastating for marriages (Kelly, 2010).

(2) Personality differences may not necessarily lead to marital meltdown. Research on couples in long-term relationships has indicated that couples need to view their differences as complementary, if they want their marriage to last (Francisca, 2011; Rettner, 2011).

(3) Relationship infidelity and promiscuity was also found to be associated with personality differences, namely low agreeableness, low conscientiousness, and high extraversion (Schmitt, 2004).

(4) Classical Four Temperament Theory posits that there are four key temperaments, namely sanguine, choleric, phlegmatic, and melancholic.

<b>Conclusion</b>	Lack of knowledge regarding the reason for a particular behaviour or a behaviour pattern could be a source of frequent conflicts. Once couples understand the profile or four personality types, they are in a better position to cope and enjoy their differences. They are also better equipped to understand the marital discourse or even appreciate their differences.
<b>Formulation of competence</b>	The couple understands and possesses the skills to deal successfully with different personalities. They are able to make consideration for the differences in personality when plans are being made and activities decided. They develop goals to be reached, taking differences in personality under consideration, seeing differences in personality not as a defect but rather an asset.
<b>Challenge &amp; extension of theories</b>	The Big Five Personality Theory has been extensively investigated and an association between marital satisfaction and personality traits has been found in many studies conducted in different countries (O'Rourke et al., 2011; Ghaemian & Gholami, 2010). Extension of this theory is beyond the scope of this study.
<b>Hypothesis &amp; variables</b>	When couples are exposed to a culturally sensitive MRE program with special focus on development of family and relationship competences, the participants will experience an increase in knowledge of personality differences that can cause issues, better their skills, and improve their attitude regarding personality and temperament differences. This will consequently improve/increase their level of commitment and marital satisfaction, and will improve their mastery of relationship competences. Ultimately, when improvements are reported on the three variables, marital durability can be expected.
<b>Relationship of variables with this study</b>	<p>The IV for this research is MRE program based on competence development. The DVs are (1) Marital Satisfaction, (2) Level of Commitment, and (3) Improvement in Relationship and Family Competences.</p> <p>Couple's participation in an MRE program geared toward development of competences will ultimately foster development of Competence 5, which is associated with an increase in marital satisfaction and level of commitment, and results in a better relationship competence. The increase in this three variables will ultimately result in marital durability.</p>

Table 6

*Fundamental Elements Underpinning Competence 6: Communicative Ability*

<b>Underpinning theories or rationale</b>	<p>This competence is based on three theories:</p> <p>(1) Family Systems Framework, which conceptualizes the family as a system and members of family as its constituent parts. According to this analogy, interaction among the system units is a medium for developing norms, proper functioning of the system, and developing boundaries (Knox &amp; Schacht, 2013; .....)</p> <p>(2) Conflict Theoretical Framework, where conflict is proposed as a neutral agent, necessary for change and growth of individuals, marriages, and families. It emphasizes conflict, rather than power imbalance, implying that all involved must possess negotiation ability (Knox &amp; Schacht, 2013).</p> <p>(3) The Nine-stage Model of Conflict Escalation developed by Glasl (1997), based on nine escalation steps that conflicts typically undergo. According to this premise, by understanding and effectively intercepting, or even preventing, this escalation ladder, problems could be solved or even avoided. Thus, the model serves as an effective preventive, diagnostic, as well as a negotiation tool for understanding and resolving conflicts.</p>
<b>Statement of the problem</b>	<p>Ineffective or insufficient communication is one of the leading relationship problems and is a precipitating factor in divorce transculturally (Stanley et al., 2004; Khurshid, 2012). Evidence suggests that lack of communication may be the source of all other problems in a relationship. It is both the vehicle and a potential source of problems (e.g., lack or inability to communicate effectively). However, when effective, it can be used to solve problems. Communication is akin to oxygen supply to the brain—it is indispensable for survival of any relationship.</p>
<b>Partial empirical documentation</b>	<p>(1) Communication is the vehicle that can take the couple to their destination—the fulfilling and happy life together they have dreamed of. It is the key or mediator factor of almost every area of marital or couple relationship, as it is instrumental in parenting and even sexual arena (Olson, 2000; Lovelife, 2007).</p> <p>(2) The manner in which couples manage conflicts in their relationship has been found to be a reliable predictor of marital satisfaction (Gottman, 1994, 1999, 2000; Klinetob &amp; Smith, 1996; Pasch &amp; Bradbury, 1998). Findings of several studies indicate that unadjusted and distressed relationships are characterized by high levels of negative (e.g., contempt) and low levels of positive (e.g., validation) affective expressions during conflict discussions (Karney &amp; Bradbury, 1995).</p> <p>(3) The most common reason for considering divorce, according to a pooling of a 100 mental health professionals consulted in the US, was communication, which was cited by 65% of respondents, while 43% noted conflict resolution inability (Huff Post Divorce, 2013).</p> <p>To prevent, manage, and solve marital conflicts in a competent way, it may be valuable for the couple to understand the premises of the Escalation Ladder Theory and possess capacity and skills to intercept the process in the early stages of conflict (Glasl, 1997; Jordan, 2000; Ten Hoedt &amp;</p>

Lingsma, 2008). Experts in this field have proposed numerous meaningful and empirically proven strategies for problem solving.

<b>Conclusion</b>	Even though communication could be considered a symptom of a problem, rather than its cause, it is recognized as one of the key factors precipitating divorce. However, once improved through marital education program or therapy, communication can maximize marital satisfaction and relationship durability. Couples that possess the effective communication competence will easily weather storms and challenges that marriage undergo in all stages of their life span and experience a high degree of relationship satisfaction.
<b>Formulation of competence</b>	Couple is able to generate high relationship quality and marital satisfaction through effective communication. Both partners possess the capacity, skills, and ability to communicate assertively, efficiently, tactfully, and openly. They also demonstrate capacity to negotiate and solve problems, and even prevent escalation of potential problems. The couple is able to competently manage and solve conflicts.
<b>Challenge &amp; extension of theories</b>	Testing both theories in a Dutch Caribbean population will strengthen their potential universality and applicability to other cultures, specifically the Dutch Caribbean culture.
<b>Hypothesis &amp; variables</b>	When exposed to the MRE, couples will experience improvements in their relationship and will increase levels of commitment, marital satisfaction, and mastery of relationship or family competences.
<b>Relationship of variables with this study</b>	<p>The IV for this research is an MRE program based on competence development. The DVs are (1) Marital Satisfaction, (2) Level of Commitment, and (3) Improvement in Relationship and Family Competences.</p> <p>Couple's participation in an MRE program geared toward development of competences will lead to the improvement of Competence 6 (i.e., communicative ability), which is linked to an increase in marital satisfaction, level of commitment, and mastery of relationship skills/competences in general. This could be conducive to marital durability and longevity.</p>

Table 7

*Fundamental Elements Underpinning Competence 7: Gender Management Competency*

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<b>Underpinning theories or rationale</b>	<p>Two major theories have been proposed in an attempt to explain the origin and dynamic of the perceptions and stereotypes pertinent to gender differences:</p> <p>(1) Evolutionary perspective posits that sex differences in relationship behaviours and attitudes result from reproductive attempts characteristic to both men and women, which guided their attitudes in their “ancestral past” (Eagly &amp; Wood, 1999; Sprecher, Fegan, &amp; McKinney, 1998; Kenrick &amp; Keefe, 1992).</p> <p>(2) The Social Role Theory that suggests that gender differences stem from the social expectation roles fostered by society and act in conjunction with these stereotypes (Eagly, 1987; Eagly &amp; Woody, 1999; West &amp; Zimmerman, 1987).</p> <p>Additionally, human dynamic has a biological component and an environmental component.</p> <p>(3) Creationism or Intelligent Design Theory, which is rooted in the premise that man and woman were created intentionally different to complement each other and make human life sustainable (Genesis 1 &amp; 2).</p>
<b>Statement of the problem</b>	<p>Couples experience problems in communication, home management, sexuality, and other areas of marital relationship in structural manner due to gender differences in perception. Gender differences tend to foster tension and competition in couples, instead of promoting teamwork and exploitation of differences. When couples do not see differences as assets and gifts entrusted to each one of them, they will compete and emphasize differences as inherent sources of problems, instead of opportunities for greater connection and synergy.</p>
<b>Partial empirical documentation</b>	<p>(1) The most clear-cut differences in sexuality between males and females are found in the areas of anatomy and physiology. These are followed by differences in biological responsiveness and arousal, as well as behaviour and attitude towards intimacy and intercourse (Fisher, 2012).</p> <p>(2) Empirical evidence indicates that we are unique physically, mentally, emotionally, sexually, in the way we were socialized, in our preferences, the way we relate to others intuitively, in our functions or roles, and in the way we stereotype others (Zaidi, 2010; Ciccotti, 2008; Child, 2009). These differences can sometimes be a source misunderstanding, misperception, and equivocal expectations, and are even initiators of quarrels.</p> <p>(3) Role division and work-family interrole conflicts seem to emerge in most countries and cultures, necessitating development of skills and family management competences that would allow couples to whether through challenges (Knodel et al., 2005; Eagle, 1998; Forste &amp; Fox, 2012). The need for equal participation in household tasks in dual-earner families seems to still be universal, even though good progress has been reported (Forste &amp; Fox, 2012). Couple’s mental health, well-being/adjustment, and happiness depends on adaptation and ability to make changes as the family undergoes changes (Phina, 2009; Forste &amp; Fox, 2012).</p>



<b>Conclusion</b>	Gender differences have been the leading source of marital problems for decades. As long as one sex tends to look at its counterpart from a competitive rather than complementary perspective, marital challenges and conflicts will emerge at the structural level. Ability to accept, cope with, and exploit differences, which should be seen as assets rather than defects, may be the key to marital satisfaction, marital sustainability, and relationship longevity. Complementary perspective or view of gender differences has the potential to mitigate work-family interrole and decision-making conflicts, as well as many others.
<b>Formulation of competence</b>	The couple is capable of managing gender differences, and possesses the ability to cope with and handle them constructively. Both partners understand the complementary aspect of men and women and are willing and able to deal with gender differences. They actively manage, make plans, and create opportunities for the needs of both genders to be satisfied in a family. Above all, the couple is able to connect instead of competing.
<b>Challenge &amp; extension of theories</b>	Theory extension is beyond the scope of this study. Thus, it is not possible to answer questions pertaining to issues specifically attributed to gender differences. For example, does knowledge of gender differences increase gender management ability and thus marital satisfaction and level of commitment? Gender differences are a well-established and documented concept. However, it is presently uncertain whether the “emotional” gap between two genders closes with the increase in relationship competences. In other words, it is unclear whether gender management competence post-exposure to MRE improves and, in turn, increases satisfaction and commitment levels.
<b>Hypothesis &amp; variables</b>	When exposed to the MRE, couples will experience improvement and increase in levels of commitment, marital satisfaction, and mastery of relationship or family competences.
<b>Relationship of variables with this study</b>	<p>The IV for this research is an MRE program based on competence development. The DVs are (1) Marital Satisfaction, (2) Level of Commitment, and (3) Improvement in Relationship and Family Competences.</p> <p>Couple’s participation in an MRE program geared toward development of competences will lead to improvements in Competence 7 (i.e., effective gender differences management), which may be linked to an increase in marital satisfaction, level of commitment, and mastery of relationship skills/competences in general. This, in turn, could enhance marital longevity and overall happiness.</p>

Table 8

*Fundamental Elements Underpinning Competence 8: Ability to Create a Structure and a Way of Functioning that Generate Emergence of Healthy Family Characteristics*

<b>Underpinning theories or rationale</b>	<p>This competence is based on three theories, namely:</p> <p>(1) Family Systems Theory, proposed by Bowen (.....), which views families as living organisms that should have clear boundaries, rules, and expectations. As previously noted, families are likened to systems comprised of units that are interrelated and interdependent. According to this premise, attaining balance is important for proper functioning of family as a system. As family is also a part of larger systems in the community, changes in one affect the other.</p> <p>(2) Structure-function Theory, which implies that family has several important functions within society. Moreover, within the family, individual members also have certain functions. Healthy families contribute to a healthy society and vice versa.</p> <p>(3) Social Learning Theory, based on a premise that people learn by observing behaviours and attitudes of others. This implies that both healthy and unhealthy family behaviours are learned and passed to the next generation through emulation.</p>
<b>Statement of the problem</b>	<p>Lack of knowledge and ability to foster and generate characteristics of a healthy family deprive potential couples and families from achieving their goal of becoming a happy and healthy unit (Lin, 1994). Individuals that grew up in an unhealthy family could be deprived from tools necessary for fostering healthy family and tend to perpetuate the cycle. As a result, parents pass on all the common characteristic of a distressed family on their children, as well as the broader society. By learning the characteristics of a healthy relationship/ marriage, couples could better determine their aims, and be able to assess their relationship in order to identify areas that need to be improved, allowing them to experience healthy, happy, and durable relationship or marriage.</p>
<b>Partial Empirical Documentation</b>	<p>(1) Lack of knowledge and information regarding characteristics of a healthy family deprives potential couples and families from achieving their goal of becoming a happy and healthy unit (Lin, 1994).</p> <p>(2) According to scientific research, healthy family possesses the following characteristics: (1) Communication – they communicate with assertiveness and confidence with each other, expresses their feelings, and are open with one other; (2) They have structure; (3) They validate and expresses appreciation toward each other; (4) They possess commitment, i.e., they have high sense of commitment to each other and determination to solve problems together; (5) They are resilient and have capacity to adapt; (6) They have clear role-task distribution and share power equally; (7) They spend time together and have fun; (8) They are connected to the broader society; (9) They have strong family value system; (10) They have spirituality or religious conviction; and (11) They have unconditional acceptance.</p>

<b>Conclusion</b>	As a consequence of high divorce rates, individuals whose parents divorced when they were growing up tend to become acquainted with negative behavioural patterns and emulate those in their relationships. Lack of knowledge regarding marital relationship determinants correlates with divorce rates. Knowledge regarding healthy family characteristics is a compass that helps families reach their goal of living “happily ever after”; it acts as navigation plan for couples and helps them stay on track.
<b>Formulation of competence</b>	The couple knows and is able to manage family in a healthy manner, while considering the characteristics of a healthy family. Both partners are able to nurture the family in order to generate the healthy characteristics of a well adjusted family. In short, they are able to <i>create a structure and a way of functioning that stimulate emergence of healthy family characteristics.</i>
<b>Challenge &amp; extension of theories</b>	Even though it may neither extend the theory nor challenge it, the present study may yield findings that shed light on certain universal characteristics of healthy families. Owing to its focus on Dutch Caribbean families, the study may reveal if MRE underpinned by the three aforementioned theories has the potential to achieve positive impact in relationship durability in the Dutch Caribbean population. This will strengthen the potential universality of the theory and indicate that MRE works transculturally or at least in the Dutch Caribbean context.
<b>Hypothesis &amp; variables</b>	When exposed to the MRE, couples will experience improvement and increase in levels of commitment, marital satisfaction, and mastery of relationship or family competences.
<b>Relationship of variables with this study</b>	<p>The IV for this research is an MRE program based on competence development. The DVs are (1) Marital Satisfaction, (2) Level of Commitment, and (3) Improvement in Relationship and Family Competences.</p> <p>Couples that participate in an MRE program geared toward development of competences will experience improvements in Competence 8, i.e., they will increase their ability to generate and create functional structure that will generate the characteristics of healthy families and couples. This exposure to MRE will increase marital satisfaction, level of commitment, and mastery of relationship skills/competences in general. Consequently, it can be expected that marital durability will increase and divorce rates decline in the long term.</p>

Table 9

*Fundamental Elements Underpinning Competence 9: Resource and Financial Management Competency*

<b>Underpinning Theories or rationale</b>	<p>This competence is based on two theories:</p> <p>(1) The Bucket Theory, positing that financial management should be seen from the perspective of five buckets, each representing a particular category of financial needs or priorities of families (akin to Maslow’s pyramid of needs, discussed below). Thus, the first bucket represents basic needs, namely food, shelter, clothing, and transportation. The second bucket represents financial security and may also include emergency funds and savings plan. The third bucket stands for insurance needs, which may include life, health, and property protection. Quality of life is depicted by the fourth bucket, while the fifth one represents investments. The theory proposes that, metaphorically, financial management is akin to water flowing from one bucket to another, indicating that the resources a family has need to be balanced and prioritized. This analogy implies that, in order to build a sound financial base for a family, previous buckets must be filled first before any resources can be diverted to the subsequent ones (Hernando, 2010).</p> <p>(2) The humanistic theoretical perspective is also considered as a basis for this competence. The famous motivational theory, developed by Maslow in 1943, also known as the hierarchy of needs (as noted above) postulates that people are motivated to achieve certain needs, which have certain hierarchy, whereby those more basic ones must be met first. These needs can be divided into basic (or deficiency) needs (e.g., physiological, safety, love, and esteem) and growth needs (self-actualization, as the ultimate aim of any individual). This model affirms that five motivational needs, often depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid, exist and are the basis of human motivational behaviours (McLeod, 2007; Knox &amp; Schacht, 2013). When applied to financial management, Maslow’s work implies that humans will tend to seek to satisfy the basic needs first, before progressing to those that are at the higher level.</p>
<b>Statement of the problem</b>	<p>According to extant research, financial problems rank in the top three most frequent causes of divorce. In a study conducted by CCCS (2003), more than 93% of participating couples reported financial problems as the key factor in the stress they experienced. In various countries, more than 75% marital problems are related to finances. In Korea, for instance, 78% divorces are related to financial difficulties and disagreements (MMEFC, 2011). Financial problems tend to cause emotional tension, which acts as a precursor of problems in other areas. For example, emotional abuse, child abuse, relationship problems, poor performance at work, inability to concentrate, and many other issues stem from, or are related to, emotional tension caused by financial problems. Lack of patience for acquiring material possessions and inability to postpone immediate gratification are further reasons behind financial problems. In addition, inability to adjust taste and lifestyle to income is often cited as a cause of relationship and family problems.</p>
<b>Partial empirical documentation</b>	<p>(1) Financial challenges, low income, and lack of skills are among principal reasons for marital stress and conflicts. Financial troubles are cited as one of the main reasons behind the decision to divorce (Doherty, 2007; Bozzo, 2012; Washburn &amp; Christensen, 2009).</p>

(2) Financial management, financial harmony, and competent management of resources are distinctive characteristics of successful marriages (Washburn & Christensen, 2009).

(3) Marital dissatisfaction is often caused by financial problems or inability to manage finances. Financial problems, or lack of financial management, play a significant role in marital satisfaction and can cause marital meltdown, potentially resulting in divorce (Dew & Huston, 2012)

(4) Lack of capacity to adapt to new situations and inability to accept that financial situations change and so must the spending patterns are among the main causes of financial problems. Inability to accept that positive results cannot be obtained without planning is another contributor to marital distress (Anderson, 2011; Beard, 2015).

(5) Couples should team up and work together when having to address financial matters, rather maintaining and managing financial affairs separately (Finance & Newlyweds, 1993).

**Conclusion**

What most couples need is a paradigm shift and guidance in order to achieve their maximum financial potential. This extends well beyond merely creating a budget and includes basic principles of financial management. The key elements that couples must learn in order to achieve their financial potential include increasing their assets (income, property, etc.), changing their spending patterns, and making long- and short-term financial plans.

**Formulation of competence**

The couple demonstrates successful financial and resources management by displaying ability to make and stay within the family budget. Both partners are able to augment or increase assets, make plans, and establish both short- and long-term financial goals and achieve them. They are also able and willing to adjust their desires to match their income, and to postpone actions related to immediate gratification in order to reach long-term goals.

**Challenge & extension of theories**

Testing the impact of an MRE focused on financial management competences underpinned by both theories in a Dutch Caribbean population. The aim is to ascertain whether these theories are universally applicable and, in particular, whether the MRE can yield results in other cultures, specifically the Dutch Caribbean culture.

**Hypothesis & variables**

When exposed to the MRE, couples will experience improvement and increase in levels of commitment, marital satisfaction, and mastery of relationship or family competences.

**Relationship of variables with this study**

The IV for this research is an MRE program based on competence development. The DVs are (1) Marital Satisfaction, (2) Level of Commitment, and (3) Improvement in Relationship and Family Competences.

Couples that partake in an MRE program geared toward development of competences will experience improvement of Competence 9, which is focused on financial and resource management. The study explores or tests the research hypothesis in order to examine possible link between this MRE and an increase in marital satisfaction, level of commitment, and mastery of relationship skills/competences in general. A further goal is to explore potential contribution of this MRE to marital longevity.

Table 10

*Fundamental Elements Underpinning Competence 10: Sexuality Management Competency*

<b>Underpinning theories or rationale</b>	<p>This competence is underpinned by four theories:</p> <p>(1) The General Sexual Development Theory, developed by Powel and Cassidy (2007), who posited that sexual development takes predictable course. This theory suggests that education should be developmentally appropriate and synchronized or adapted to the stage of development of the individual or a couple, because instruction is instrumental for decision-making and responsibility. The authors further proposed that individuals must accept themselves as sexual beings and value both their bodies and feelings.</p> <p>(2) Social Exchange Theory, which has already been explained. In sum, it posits that conflict and marital meltdown stem from a perceived lack of satisfaction, whereby partners feel that rewards do not outweigh the costs (Yogev &amp; Brett, 1985).</p> <p>(3) Social Equity Theory that, as was previously noted, refines Social Exchange Theory of Inequitable Relationships, indicating that, when individuals feel under-rewarded in the relationship, they will become distressed (Yogev &amp; Brett, 1985).</p> <p>(4) Symbolic Interaction Framework, which posits that human behaviour can be understood solely through the significance and meaning assigned to specific behaviours. In this framework, both marriages and families are perceived as symbolic worlds through which the various members give meaning to each other's behaviours. Once situations are defined by individuals, family members tend to behave toward one another in a way that is consistent with the expected and defined behaviour (Know &amp; Schacht, 2013; White &amp; Klein, 2002 Blumer, 1969).</p>
<b>Statement of the problem</b>	<p>Divorce and marital meltdown have been related to sexual dissatisfaction and were found to be an important predictor of marital dissolution. However, sexual satisfaction has various determinants that, if not addressed, will function as impediments to both sexual and marital satisfaction in general. Sexual illiteracy could be one of the major causes of both sexual and marital dissatisfaction (as sexual satisfaction acts as a mediating variable), which may lead to divorce. Along with other determinants, couples should acquire knowledge regarding sexual satisfaction determinants, if they want to mitigate dissatisfaction and prevent marital meltdown.</p>
<b>Partial empirical documentation</b>	<p>(1) Extant research has reported that sexual dissatisfaction was the major contributor and cause of marital conflict. For example, in the study conducted by Gheshalaghi et al. (2014), 80% of participants indicated that marital conflict was related to sexual dissatisfaction, with divorce being the outcome in 61.4% of these cases.</p> <p>(2) According to Parish and colleagues (2007), there are five main determinants of sexual satisfaction, namely: (1) sexual practices or physical technical aspect; (2) socio-emotional aspects or relational aspects; (3) knowledge, values, and attitudes regarding sexual matters; (4) general physical vitality and health condition; and (5) environmental impediments of sexual satisfaction (Parish et al., 2007; Young et al., 1998).</p>

(3) Carvalhera and Leal (2007) conducted their study in Spain, reporting that interpersonal factors (e.g., feeling desired by the partner, receiving attention from the partner, and being able to satisfy the partner) emerge as most important determinants of sexual satisfaction, especially for women. Surprisingly, consistency of orgasms does not appear to be a significant factor in female sexual satisfaction.

(4) Sexual satisfaction is dependent on more than one factor; hence, it cannot be compartmentalized to sexual interactions only. According to Young (1998), it is also associated with non-sexual aspects of the overall marital relationship.

(5) Knowledge and experience pertaining to the sexual act remain pivotal and continue to emerge as undisputable important element for sexual satisfaction (Ashdown et al., 2011, Davidson, 1984; Barrientos & Paez, 2006).

(6) Pornography, internet dating, and infidelity/ affairs are new tendencies that are ruining marriages. Internet is considered as the major contribution of science to humanity. However, when not used properly, it can cause considerable harm. Couples thus need to be competent in media and impulse management to avoid pitfalls of social networking and other uses of technology that may jeopardise their marriage.

**Conclusion**

Sexual satisfaction could have a positive effect on marital satisfaction, and thus increase marital stability and longevity. Conversely, sexual dissatisfaction could result in marital meltdown and even divorce. Consequently, an attempt to make couple sexually literate could be a functional and valuable approach to improving marital satisfaction and thus marital durability. Such initiatives should start with basic elements couples should know, such as how to reach and help the other reach orgasm, progressing to other aspects of intimate relationships, including relationship quality. All these should be included in an MRE aiming to contribute to marital durability.

**Formulation of competence**

Both partners possesses capacity to satisfy the other consistently and maintain relationship quality as well as exciting sexual life. The couple should also possess intimacy in a broader sense.

**Challenge & extension of theories**

Testing the impact of an MRE focused on sexuality management competence as one of the aspects of the training model, which is underpinned by the three theories discussed above in a Dutch Caribbean population. Even though some of these theories do not discuss sexual aspects as such, their postulates could be applicable to sexual context. This could be assessed in the study sample in order to determine whether the underlying concepts and theoretical assumptions have universal relevance.

**Hypothesis & variables**

When exposed to the MRE, couples will experience improvement and increase in levels of commitment, marital satisfaction, and mastery of relationship or family competences.

**Relationship of variables with this study**

The IV for this research is MRE program based on competence development. The DVs are (1) Marital Satisfaction, (2) Level of Commitment, and (3) Improvement in Relationship and Family Competences.

Couples that take part in an MRE program geared toward development of competences will experience improvement of Competence 10 focusing on sexuality management competency as one of the 12 competences of this

training model. Exploring or testing the relevant hypothesis can reveal possible links between this MRE and an increase in marital satisfaction, level of commitment, and mastery of relationship skills/competences in general. As a result, potential contribution of this MRE to marital durability and longevity can also be validated.



Table 11

*Fundamental Elements Underpinning Competence 11: Parenting Competency*

<b>Underpinning Theories or rationale</b>	<p>This competence is based on three theoretical frameworks, namely:</p> <p>(1) Family Systems Framework that, as previously noted, conceptualizes the family as a system, comprising of family members perceived as units.</p> <p>(2) Behavioural and Social Learning Theory, which postulates, as discussed earlier, that behaviour is learned through classical and operant conditioning, whereby we learn from observing others.</p> <p>(3) Humanistic Theory, which discusses the needs children have and postulates that these should be satisfied in order to see expected and balanced behaviours.</p>
<b>Statement of the problem</b>	<p>Research on this issue is inconclusive, as some studies report that parenting results in a decline in marital satisfaction, while others indicate otherwise. Nonetheless, it is widely acknowledged that arrival of children changes the family system and dynamics. Hence, if this change is not managed competently, it may cause marital problems in the long term and even lead to divorce. However, when well prepared for and managed properly, arrival of children will contribute to marital satisfaction and allow for transgenerational sharing of values and happiness.</p> <p>Children tend to develop behavioural problems when their needs are not met and when parents do not behave in line with the expectations they have of their offspring. Some studies indicate that both authoritarian and laissez-faire approach to parenting may be responsible for problems with children, resulting in marital dissatisfaction.</p>
<b>Partial empirical documentation</b>	<p>(1) Transition to first-time parenthood tends to be among the most difficult adjustments that couples experience (LeMaster, 1957). Challenges parenting brings include changes in the daily life routine, increased stress on the financial resources (Russell, 1974), reduction in couple's interaction and quality time together, forced reorganization of family system (Heinicke, 2002), reduced frequency of parental sex, home "confinement," and less time for leisure.</p> <p>(2) In a study on two-parent families, researchers found that, in addition to the reduction in testosterone levels about three weeks prior to birth of a child (designed by nature to keep fathers at home) (Brezindine, 2010), when fathers engage in parenting, this improves their psychological wellbeing (Schindler, 2010).</p> <p>(3) Marital satisfaction tends to decrease, contact with friends diminishes, and leisure time decreases when a child is born (Perry-Jenkins, 2008; Goldberg et al., 2010; Gameiro et al., 2010). Life pattern changes can cause marital dissatisfaction if the couple is unprepared for changes that come along with the birth of a child.</p> <p>(4) Commitment and contact with other family members tends to increase, as young parents often need help and support (Stanley &amp; Markman, 1992; Gameiro et al., 2010).</p> <p>(5) Competent parenting depends on the couple's parenting style, which can be authoritative (Walcheski &amp; Bredehoft, 2010), and focus on meeting the basic needs of the child, such as physical, mental, emotional, social,</p>

and spiritual (Knox & Schacht, 2013), while establishing limits and proper discipline.

<b>Conclusion</b>	Parenting is among the most important aims of entering into marriage and forming families. Transmission of norms and values and continuing the family line are essential aspects of parenthood. Survival and permanence of human species existence depends on quality of parenting. Knowledge, skills, and motivation are factors that influence parenting results. A well-designed MRE could play an important role in providing couples with the parenting tools, and thus help them achieve this goal.
<b>Formulation of competence</b>	The couple possesses capacity to satisfy the needs of children and foster symmetric development. Both partners are committed to parenting and foster development of children with capacity to self-govern positively and be autonomous, competent, self-sufficient, and highly productive individuals. They also possess sense of self-awareness and strive toward a joint life mission.
<b>Challenge &amp; extension of theories</b>	Testing the impact of an MRE that focused on parenting competency, which is based on the theories discussed above, among others. A further goal is to assess the MRE program's applicability to other cultures, namely the Dutch Caribbean culture.
<b>Hypothesis &amp; variables</b>	When exposed to the MRE, couples will experience improvement and increase in levels of commitment, marital satisfaction, and mastery of relationship or family competences.
<b>Relationship of variables with this study</b>	<p>The IV for this research is an MRE program based on competence development. The DVs are (1) Marital Satisfaction, (2) Level of Commitment, and (3) Improvement in Relationship and Family Competences.</p> <p>Couples that partake in an MRE program geared toward development of competences will experience improvement of Competence 11, focused on parenting skills and aptitudes. Exploring or testing the relevant hypothesis can reveal possible links between this MRE and an increase in marital satisfaction, level of commitment, and mastery of relationship skills/competences in general. As a result, potential contribution of this MRE to marital durability and longevity can also be validated.</p>

Table 12

*Fundamental Elements Underpinning Competence 12: Religious and Spiritual Competency.*

<b>Underpinning theories or rationale</b>	<p>This competence is based on two theoretical frameworks:</p> <p>(1) Relational Spiritual Framework, developed by Mahoney (2010), which postulates that religiousness is related to a couple's wellbeing through relational virtues, such as forgiveness, commitment, and sacrifice. Development of these virtues tends to increase marital satisfaction, as well as improve social connections (Mahoney, 2010; Day &amp; Acock, 2013).</p> <p>(2) Watson Theory, which coincides with anecdotal proposal of E. White, who posited that humans have four dimensions, namely physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. Symmetric growth in those four areas/dimensions will bring wellness and balance.</p>
<b>Statement of the problem</b>	<p>Relevancy of religion and spirituality, as consequential for marital satisfaction, relationship quality, and positive wellbeing, has been ignored by scholars for a long time. Initial results regarding the benefits of religion and spirituality for family wellbeing, and relationship quality and durability were contradictory and thus failed to clarify the role religion plays in this phenomenon (Dobash &amp; Dobash, 1983; Booth et al., 1995; Wolfinger &amp; Wilcox, 2008; Ellison et al., 2010; Day &amp; Acock, 2013). However, more recent research findings indicate presence of a positive association among spirituality, religious life, and marital quality (Wolfinger &amp; Wilcox, 2008; Ellison et al., 2010; Day &amp; Acock, 2013; Amato et al., 2007; Marks et al., 2010; DeMaris, 2010; Phillips &amp; Wilmoth, 2010; Green &amp; Elliot, 2010). Many Christians quote the scripture affirmation "If the Lord doesn't build the home, those who build will be building in vain" in an attempt to establish relevance of religion and spirituality for both duration and quality of relationships.</p>
<b>Partial empirical documentation</b>	<p>(1) Religiousness and spirituality have been positively associated with couple's wellbeing and relationship quality/marital satisfaction.</p> <p>(2) Researchers also examined religion and its influence on family relations, positing that the patriarchal and male dominance promotion may harm relationship, instead of promoting gender equality. However, extant findings also indicate that, when equality is promoted, along with homogamy and monogamy, religion can have profound positive and salutary effect on marriage quality and longevity (Day &amp; Acock, 2013).</p> <p>(3) Religious activity can be a source of strength, inspiration, and transformation for family members, as they whether storms and confront crises (Mahoney, 2010)</p> <p>(4) Several researchers indicated that the relevance and contribution of religion is established by: (1) Promotion of generic norms, such as forgiveness, commitment, and golden rule among others; (2) Social support or social network, which may include support of family, friends, and others in religious community; (3) Beliefs, doctrine, and faith pragmatic processes and ideals; (4) Provision of sense of purpose, vision, and meaning; and (5) Homogenous/homogamy group affiliation and belief system that tends to reduce or prevent conflictive values, practices, and assumptions (Ellison et al., 2013).</p>

<b>Conclusion</b>	According to Curtis and Ellison (2002), couples who participate regularly in religious activities (e.g., attend church) report greater marital happiness and satisfaction and may be less likely to divorce compared to their less religious counterparts. Religious activity can be a source of strength, inspiration, and transformation for family members, as they weather storms and confront crises (Mahoney, 2010).
<b>Formulation of competence</b>	The couple demonstrates ability to live a functional, productive, and well-balanced life as result of religious practices and spirituality. Both partners are able to live a healthy, functional, inspirational, and highly productive life, and are connected to the broader society by networking with others.
<b>Challenge &amp; extension of theories</b>	Testing the impact of an MRE focused on religious and spiritual competency is important in the evaluation of its applicability and universality. The goal is to assess whether the MRE is an effective tool and plays an instrumental role in strengthening commitment and marital satisfaction in other cultures, especially the Dutch Caribbean culture.
<b>Hypothesis &amp; variables</b>	When exposed to the MRE, couples will experience improvement and increase in levels of commitment, marital satisfaction, and mastery of relationship or family competences.
<b>Relationship of variables with this study</b>	<p>The IV for this research is MRE program based on competence development. The DVs are (1) Marital Satisfaction, (2) Level of Commitment, and (3) Improvement in Relationship and Family Competences.</p> <p>Couples that take part in an MRE program geared toward development of competences will experience improvement in Competence 12, which is focused on religious and spiritual development. The aim is to assess the construct viability or test the hypothesis for a possible link between this MRE and an increase in marital satisfaction, level of commitment, and mastery of relationship skills/competences in general. A further aim is to explore potential contribution of this MRE to marital durability and longevity.</p>

**APPENDIX D**

**EXTRACT**

## APPENDIX D

### EXTRACT

**Key elements that a culturally adapted version should have... (according to counselling experience, interview with successful marriages, literature review, questionnaire to divorces, and interview to psychologist, clerics and relationship therapist).**

PROPOSAL FOR CONTENT OF PREMARITAL/MARITAL EDUCATION MANUAL
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For the implementation of an experimental design, the author has designed a marital education program, which were used to instruct the experimental group. This marital/premarital education:

- Focused on development of family and relationship competence, it fosters development of skills, interaction activities and other dynamics, as well as video clip presentation of wrong and correct approach to problem solving. It summarized the key points of an extensive literature review, offered recommendations on useful literature on relevant topics, and provided group sessions and seminars. Personal counselling sessions and trajectory guidance / observation for first two years, were part of the comprehensive marital educational guidance. This program considers post wedding guidance and/or counselling(for premarital participants) as an important aspect of marital education, as research shows that first five years are critical and decisive the success of marital union. However for thesis purposes only the first 2 years were considered, assessed and reported. The most important contribution take place in the first 2 years.
- Draw upon counselling experience and/or observation gained during 20 years, literature review, ministerial experience and assumptions based on observation of clients during counselling sessions.
- Will take approximately 21 hours of marriage workshop and/or training.
- Provide a Premarital checklist & Marital relationship condition assessment. This with the new validated tool (i.e. Inventory of Pivotal Family Competences) This instrument of inventory can be used for both assessment and diagnose purposes and to make couples aware of skills and minimum knowledge they must possess when they decide to get married. This will help them reflect and evaluate, and possibly enhance, their chances for latter success in their marital life.
- Development of practical manual, covering topics discussed in the following chapters:

## Chapter one:

**Update: Aim of marriage** The compass of a marriage...what you need to know.

### **COMPETENCE: LEADERSHIP & CAPACITY TO COMMIT AND MAINTAIN A RELATIONSHIP-COMMITMENT / AIM OF MARRIAGE**

*Know and achieve the aim of marriage – character development and reach maximum potential.*

At present, it is not uncommon for couples to proceed to the marital boat, without knowing what the meaning or aim of marriage is (e.g. when 453 couples were asked what the goal of marriage is, almost 92% cannot provide an answer). Consequently, according to the international statistics, 35 - 50% of marriages currently end in divorce. Thus, the first chapter of this paper discusses the top ten reasons why marriages fail, most common myths and realities regarding marriage, what is the goal/aim of marriage, ten important factors for marital success, phases/stages marriages undergo (Davis, 2001; Kuhlman and Patricia, 2003), and advantages of marriage (Wilcox, 2007).

- **Key point:** The primary goal of marriage is character development and reaching maximum potential of both the man and the woman. (Park & Peterson, 2006; Peterson, et al, 2007) Happiness and optimal character development are correlated. Happy people typically have well developed character, whereas unhappy ones tend to have character deficiency; this based on my systematic observation of clients and 20 years as minister.
- **Key point:** Conventionally, incompatibility in personality and character are considered sufficient grounds for divorce. In my view, incompatibility should instead be seen as an invitation for further development – couples should learn basic communication skills, how to negotiate, etc.(Gottman, 1999). In brief, incompatibility should be considered an opportunity to develop qualities your character is lacking. It indicates that, “there is a problem...you need to develop on (x) area.” Couples need to change their own character, rather than their partner. If couples recurrently change partners every time they discover incompatibility, they will keep divorcing for the rest of their lives.
- **Key point:** Positive view on conflict and marital clashes is important for character development of a couple. Marital clashes should be perceived from other perspective – for example, as an indicator that “marriage is giving the right effect.” In other words, clashes reveal or indicate areas where “couples need to work on and grow” -- professionally said: growth areas—(Oslo, 2000). Therefore, instead of ending a relationship, or perceiving conflict and clashes as indicators or reasons for ending a marriage, they should rather be seen as opportunity for development, chance to turn to one another and grow both as a couple and as individuals(Gottman & Gottman, 2006). This view and approach to marriage offers couples opportunity to develop and reach their maximum potential, as it is shown that happiness relates to well developed character.
- **Key point:** Couple who are unaware of what the aim of marriage is will not be able to achieve it. They will be like an unguided boat, bus, train, or a plane, or a navigation system with no address. They could make the mistake to step out, just when marriage is giving the right effect. Conflict and incompatibility do not necessarily indicate unbridgeable problem, instead they identify where both partners need shaping and

development. Like a navigation system, they indicate direction, pinpoint the time, and place when you have taken the wrong exit or turn.

- **Key point:** All standard aspects, such as background and contextual factors (e.g. family of origin, current context, etc), unrealistic expectations, discussion of common determinants of divorce, dimensions of marriage, God's plan for marriage, questions you need to ask before getting married, etc. will be discussed.
- **Key point:** Commitment withstood the test of both time and research as important quality for stability and for a sustainable relationship/marriage. (Johnson, 1985; Kelley, 1983; Rusbult, 1983; Hendrick et al, 1988)

***Paradoxical thought: Happiness should not be the most important goal pursued as we marry; rather our maximum potential and character development should be strived for. This encompass happiness (or inherently brings happiness) and enable the couple to achieve all other goals.***

## Chapter two:

### **Update: Love and passion how to keep them both**

Profiles for a durable and resilient love.

### **COMPETENCE: EMOTIONAL MANAGEMENT, POSSESS STABILITY AND EMOTIONAL/SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE –ABLE TO EXPRESS AND RECIEVE LOVE**

*Understand what true love is – love and capable of expressing love effectively (ways that synchronize with partners style-language) and functionally*

Couple need to understand emotional intelligence is: Emotional intelligence is the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves and for managing emotions effectively in others and ourselves. (Wolff, 2005). Understanding what emotional intelligence is make way to understand and see love as a behaviour, when I say I love you it translate itself in a behaviour that is consistent with love.

Another truth, but also a cliché, is, “Love should be the basis for marriage.” However, what if love is wrongly defined or misunderstood? You will marry under false notion. For a long time, media have given conflicting definition regarding love; and as long as the basic elements of marriage are misunderstood, the whole marriage will soon or later collapses. Couples frequently ask me why they no longer feel the way they did at the beginning? What has happened to their intense, exited, explosive feelings? This chapter discusses: Seven facts couples need to be acquainted with regarding love, phases love goes through, 10 truths couple must comprehend regarding love before proceeding to marry, 15 characteristics of real love that passes (i.e. is resilient to) the test of time and their investigation, 250 ways to keep love alive, and the basic components of love (Less & Parrot, 2006) and the classical five categories of love (Chapman, 2005).



- **Key point:** The existence of myriad of definitions of love confuses readers and abstract definitions do not help current couples. Best definition ever for love, which is resilient to time and investigations is 1 Cor. 13. The definition given here indicates the 15 characteristics present when real love emerges. Characteristics it supports in individuals and a couple include being: (1) patient, (2) kind, (3) not envious or jealous, (4) not boastful, (5) not rude, (6) not easily angered, (7) not self seeking (8) keep no records of wrong, etc. These 15 characteristics provide a framework or profile for real love. Love can be tested on these criteria and distinguished from infatuation. These characteristics add clarity to definition of love and concreteness to replace abstractness of many definitions.
- **Key point:** Emphasis should be placed on love as a principle, not a feeling. Emotions, though important, swing and are influenced by circumstances. However, by definitions, love is resilient and permanent, it continues there despite circumstances, it prevails and defies circumstances.
- **Key point:** Scientific research shows that presence of certain chemical elements is responsible for some of the emotional aspects of love (Camber, 2005; Nicastro, 2008). For example, dopamine is related to intense feelings of first love. The aim of neuro-chemical elements is to create bonding. Later, as the level of neuro-chemical elements decreases (i.e. revert to normal), couples can function normally and rather than remain “in clouds” forever (Nicastro, 2008). When these levels are normalized, many couples get confused and ask, “Why am I not feeling what I use to feel?” This chapter discusses the neuro-chemical aspect of love and its implications for a relationship.
- **Key point:** An important question that modern couples face today as the epidemic of marital failure spreads and maintains high divorce rates is: Can monogamy ever meet the modern mandate “till death do part”? The answer is yes! However, then the next question needs to be answered: How? According to experts (Argov, 2009), success can be achieved by: introducing novelty in our relationship whilst still maintaining equilibrium; by introducing mystery to the familiar; understanding that “love” and desire are not mutually exclusive, but they don’t always take place at the same time; by understanding that there’s a powerful tendency in long term relationships to favour the predictable over unpredictable. Yet eroticism thrives on the unpredictable, so include unpredictability; by understanding that open-up is a life process, you will discover new things in your partner as he/she open-up without feeling ashamed. Education and tradition make us hide real feelings and/or desires, thus stimulate your partner to open-up and put your new glasses on. It is also important to mention that as we grow we change and renew, so we will continue having new ground for discovery and this is part of the excitement. By understanding role of media in the era we are living in, we can distinguish facts from fiction and maintain our feet on the ground. Finally, we can have a happy marriage by continuing to do what we use to do in the courtship phase.
- **Key point:** Contribution, insight and results of studies and research will permeate this chapter.

- **Key point:** Love withstood the test of both time and research as pivotal quality for sustainable relationship. (Hill, et al, 1976; Lund, 1985; Rubin, 1970; Rubin, 1973; Berg & McQuin, 1986; Finkle et al., 1990; Hendrick et al., 1988.

***Paradoxical thought: It is not continuing feeling that must determine if we should continue doing what we once did when we were in love or in courtship phase/ honeymoon phase. Rather, “continue doing what we once did contribute to continue feeling, continue discovering”...this will perpetuate passion in marriage.***

### Chapter three:

#### **Update: Family life cycle**

What couples need to know regarding phases that Families undergo.

#### **COMPETENCE: ADAPTABILITY AND FORESIGHT ABLE TO MANAGE AND COPE THROUGH STAGES AND LIFE CYCLE**

*Know phases that marriage undergo – able to foresee, adapt, and deal with both the changes and demands of every phase.*

Family life cycle is concept used in the in 1939, 1947 by Loomis, Hamilton, Glick and more recently (70's) Hill, Rogers, Duvall, Spinier, Cole, etc. (Click, 1977). It is a conceptual tool for understanding family development and transition. This chapter discusses seven phases that each family undergoes. In most of cases, these phases are inevitable and offer chances and opportunities we need for development, happiness and success in life. To successfully undergo every phase, it is mandatory to be familiar with the challenges of each phase – its demands and the characteristics – but also the pleasures each phase brings to our lives. Lack of knowledge regarding these phases produces the same frustrations similar to having to enter a room full of obstacles with your eyes closed. However, knowing the characteristics, challenges and specifics of each phase is as exciting and rewarding as entering a fully furnished, well-lit room with your eyes wide open. In my sessions, have I noticed a “relationship” between *not knowing the common challenges/ knowing the characteristics-demands of each phase and frustration couple experience* (i.e. the less acquainted a couple is with the phases, the more frustrated they tend to be). The phases discussed in this chapter are: (1) Recently married couple/family; (2) Family with small children; (3) Family with school aged children; (4) Family with teenagers; (5) Family experiencing an empty nest; (6) Family in the retiring phase; and finally (7) Family in advanced age/senile. Each phase is introduced, defined, and marked by typical distinguishing characteristics and is subsequently thoroughly discussed. Typical challenges and problems of each phase are discussed together with potential solutions or proper approaches to meeting and overcoming the challenges.

- **Key point:** In certain parts of the world, where all four seasons of the year are present, is it imperative to prepare for each upcoming one. You must have the proper clothing for winter, summer, fall and spring. Furthermore, each season can be very exciting, but has its challenges too. The same is true for the life phases, the better-prepared and more knowledgeable couples are for each coming phase in the cycle, the better they might do and the happier they will be. It is not that the challenges are not present, or that they may not have to face challenges. The challenges are present and they still have to face them, but they are prepared and well equipped to meet and conquer them. It is like entering the well-lit, furnished room with eyes wide open!
- **Key point:** Let's consider, for example, a simple issue in the second phase of the family cycle – family with small children. This phase starts when couple decides to have a baby. This sound very simple, uncomplicated and certainly not threatening. However, nothing could be more wrong than that assumption. This phase requires, for example, knowledge and preparation for the baby that will soon join the family unit. The cost of having a baby is estimated at 8.000 euro in the first year, or 18% of couple's annual income. It is important to know this and prepare before you make decisions. Couples should also make arrangements to share the parenting role, and discuss many issues of child rearing before having a baby; otherwise, they experience frustration and conflict once the baby is born. Another phase is "family with teenager." Did you know that PFC pre-frontal cortex of teenagers is not fully developed, so they may act antisocially and do illogical things without considering the consequences? As PFC is the part of the brain that manages *cause and effect perception*, its immaturity makes teenagers incapable of acting any other way. Thus, in this phase, you must have patience and approach parenting teenagers with great care. Put your winter coat on and enjoy skating and other typical exciting winter activities!
- **Key point:** Just as cars have gearbox and the gears are shifted according to the number of the revolutions of the engine, the same is true for families, as they undergo phases or reach new phases. They need to change gear. Thus, adjustment is key factor as we undergo phases.
- **Key point:** Update insights are given regarding each phases.
- **Key point:** (Click, 1977) Tamashiro 1978,

***Paradoxical thought: Happiness in marriage is not something we see from afar and work hard to achieve, rather it is present every day. Every day is a gift, which comes with high doses of opportunity for happiness that couples do not use, because they are focused on the future and think that happiness should be pursued, rather than experienced in the present moment. They perceive today just as the opportunity to work hard to achieve it sometimes in the future. Happiness is today, enjoy your everyday doses.***

## Chapter four:

**Update: Family Management** How to create structure that will proactively eliminate emergence of most problems.

### **COMPETENCE: FAMILY MANAGEMENT -- MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING**

*Able to manage family issues and achieve planned and established goals – able to create functional structure and optimize the internal functioning – inter-functioning in the family.*

Current families face other obstacles and different challenges, compared with families in previous epoch. Divorce rate increased because families today face new challenges, but still armed with outdated tools or weapons. It is like an Indian army facing the US army with their arrows and bows. They do not have a chance against modern technology. As marriages face today's challenges unequipped and unprepared, no wonder divorce rates are high. This chapter discusses the difference between families of yesterday and today's families. Aspects, such as management principles for today's family and mandatory "know how" for couples (i.e. family should be management literate) will be addressed. Another aspect of paramount importance is planning and establishing structure. Creation of structure eliminates structural issues and proactively solves most common problems current families face (Peel, 2007). It prevents emergence of marital problem and stops them from escalating into major conflicts. In brief, structure significantly decreases occurrence of conflictive episodes in marriage and relationships. Finally, this chapter discusses role and task distribution that creates opportunities for development, instead of conflict.

- **Key point:** Despite the fact that modern families face more demanding challenges compared to families in the past, they are not offered new tools that would help them deal with their problems. Most couples and family members seek education that would enable progress in their career and professional life, but few seek deeper understanding or updates regarding family matters. They rely on old and outdated tools from the past and expect wonders in their new families. Family in our time needs an "update" regarding family matters and management, to maximize possibility of success as they face current challenges.
- **Key point:** Counselling sections show that many recurrent problems stem from lack of structure and planning. Once a couple is guided and helped to create that much needed structure, problems tend to disappear. Most frequently heard accusations are: "You don't have time for me or my parents"; "You don't take time for maintenance of the house"; "I told you to take care of the broken door and still you have not done it"; "You don't have time for leisure"; "You never take me out"; "You don't help kids with their homework"; or "You don't help me with housekeeping." Yet, all these issues can easily be solved by creating structure and by planning. Once a weekly schedule is created, which includes time for every aspect of a normal family life, the problem will be structurally solved. Hence, it does not escalate into a conflict.
- **Key point:** Creation of structure minimizes chances for problems and maximizes cooperation, teamwork, sense of belonging and achievement.

- **Key point:** Ten management concepts will be presented and discussed, to help couple become management literate.
- **Key Point:** It is extremely important to do, some family know that planning is important but the doing part lack (Schurman, 2008)

***Paradoxical thought: When cutting trees, your success depends not on how hard you try, but rather on the sharpness of your axe. If you are working hard with a dull axe, you will even hurt yourself trying; however, if you work with an extremely sharp axe you will notice the difference and achieve far more. Creating structure and planning is similar to sharpening your axe. Don't kill yourself running in circles and arguing or blaming each other. Sit down and sharpen your axe!***

## Chapter Five:

### **Update: Personality Differences**

How do these two affects our relationship?

### **COMPETENCE: UNDERSTAND AND POSSESS THE SKILLS TO DEAL/HANDLE SUCCESSFULLY WITH DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES**

*Able to understand and deal with different personalities – able to make consideration with differences in personality as plans are being made and activities are being decided. Put goals to be reached, taking differences in personality under consideration –seeing differences in personality not as defect but rather an asset.*

Personality differences can be source of problems and conflicts in a structural and more spiritual way. To maximize the possibility for a healthy and pleasant relationship, it is imperative for couples to be knowledgeable regarding personality and temperament issues (Hock, 1998). Being aware of these aspects of oneself and the other person is akin to looking for a direction with a map or following the navigation system vs. relying solely on intuition. Obviously, your chances are greater with a map or a navigation system. The road remains the same, even the obstacles remain the same, but when facing an obstacle, you will check your map again or adjust you navigation system and find a new road that leads to your destination. When you are knowledgeable and familiar with personality differences in your relationship, you are in better position and better equipped to understand, handle and manage any situation, thus reaching your destination – happy and harmonious marriage. You will know people's natural tendencies, anticipate their reactions, have insight regarding their way of seeing or feeling things, know how they might react, what they may expect and how to approach them. When you know the differences in personality between yourself and your partner, you will see these differences as "assets," instead of defects! You will consider differences as the way you two complement each other, instead of thinking, "I am better than you." The false notion that "I am OK, you are the defective one," or "you are the

one that need to be fixed,” this soothes cause of so many conflict episodes! This chapter presents: definition of personality and temperament, two perspective of the theory, how to discover the temperament and/or personality of your partner, a profile of the four types of personality-temperament, and advantages of each personality type (virtues and weaknesses of each personality type). A test to identify your personality-temperament type, and finally how to deal with each personality type, will also be given.

- **Key point:** Lack of knowledge regarding the reason for a particular behaviour or a behaviour pattern could be a source of frequent conflicts. However, as soon as couples are familiar with behaviour patterns or personality type of their partners, they are better equipped to understand the marital discourse or even appreciate their differences. Without knowledge, couple will compare negatively one personality with that of others, judge behaviour based on false perception or expectation, expect results and reactions based on their personal taste or experience, or even consider certain behaviours as signs of defects. Once couples understand the profile or four personality types, they are in a better position to cope and enjoy their differences. They will even celebrate them. In sum, couples will start to see things from complementary perspective instead of defective perspective i.e. “you need to be fixed!”
- **Key point:** Four personality / temperament types will be profiled in this paper. Once couples are familiar with these personality types, they will be in a better position to satisfy their needs and make family programs that fit the personality types of their family members. Extramarital affairs and many other problems emerge when needs are not satisfied.
- **Key point:** There are no bad temperament or personality types, as each one has weaknesses and strengths. This must be kept in mind to avoid comparison between people and avoid the misconceptions that one partner or their viewpoint is better. All people have virtues, weaknesses and different temperaments. The difference between temperaments is meant to bring balance in a home, rather than cause problems and issues.
- **Key point:** Research shows that relationships where partners are of opposite sex tend to do better than same sex couples do. We are destined to complete and complement one another in every aspect.
- **Key point:** It is important to indicate that our personality develops and changes over the years, especially by 30 onward. Considering what is known under psychologist as the big five personality characteristics (i.e. conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness and extroversion); couples should keep in mind that grow will take place. For example: agreeableness increased the most during a person’s 30s; this trait is defined as being warm, generous and helpful and has been linked to relationships and to prosocial behaviour. Men and women tend to grow to each other after 30.

***Paradoxical thought: The differences in our personalities are not defects that must be either accepted or modified; rather they could be assets that we bring to enrich our relationship. They could even be stimulants for development of the***

***other. Let our differences bring us together and explore our richness, instead of detaching or separating us from one another.***

## **Chapter Six:**

**Update: Communication & Conflict Management** How to deal with the most frequent cause of divorce.

### **COMPETENCE: SKILL AND ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY**

*Can communicate effectively, assertively, tactfully and openly; able to solve problems and avoid escalation. Able to negotiate and consequently prevent escalation of problems.*

Communication remains in the top “causes” of problems and subsequent divorce almost everywhere Stanley, et al (2004; Khurshid, 2012). Even though we consider communication a symptom, instead of cause of problems, still it is important to facilitate couples with resources and information to deal with potential problems that communication might bring. This chapter discusses most common myths regarding communication and outlines the most important facts every couple needs to know in order to recognize important phases that they undergo as they proceed from friendship phase to a potential couple (married couple). To maximize and enhance quality of communication in the relationship, this chapter discusses common barriers to productive communication between couples, how and why conflicts emerge, ten most common mistakes couples make and how to deal with conflicts. Finally, special attention is dedicated to prevention of conflicts, 100 ways to communicate efficiently-successfully are discussed and other relevant aspects of communication are presented (Olson, 2000; Markman et. al 2001).

- **Key point:** Communication problem is not the cause of problems, but rather a symptom of the problem, i.e. way the problem manifests itself. The reason why marriages have problems is that couples believe the common “myth” that states: “If we didn’t need ‘know how’ to start our relationship, we don’t need course or ‘know how’ for our marriage to be successful.” This is a gigantic mistake. At the beginning, a relationship is less demanding and does not require much skill; however, later in the relationship, we enter a more demanding phase, which requires skills and knowledge to avoid being part of the international statistic of 50% of all marriages that end up in divorce. Here is where this chapter is extremely valuable.
- **Key point:** Communication is the vehicle to take the couple to their destination – the relationship and happiness they have dreamed of.
- **Key point:** “If we love each other that should be enough.” This is incorrect, it should rather be, “If we love each other, we will increase or maximize the chances for success in our relationship by getting the right tools that will ensure that our relationship is successful, durable and resilient.

- **Key point:** It is imperative for couples to know the predictor factors for success and failure in a marital relationship. This is crucial if they are to avoid making the common mistakes, and instead expect successful results or happiness. In my counselling sessions, I noticed that couples make the same mistakes as those that end up in divorce. However, for some reason, they think that somehow their relationship will not end like the other. When it finally it does, it is only because no modification or intervention was attempted. Family science can predict with 80-90% accuracy the potential for success or failure in a relationship (Gottman, 2007).
- **Key point:** Ten important elements that influence or play important role in the emergence of conflicts are: (1) Need not satisfy, (2) Perception, (3) Difference in personality, (4) Lack of validation, (5) Inability to anticipate, (6) Emotional tension, (7) Lack of ability/skill regarding conflict management, (8) Misunderstanding regarding dialogue (its purpose is not to convince the other), (9) Locus of control and (10) Lack of mutual respect. These and other important elements are discussed here.
- **Key point:** Ten steps to solve problems are offered in this paper. They are simple steps and key elements couples must consider to make their marriage a success.
- **Key point:** Lack of understanding regarding what is behind a particular behaviour could cause frequent conflicts. Once couple understands motives and reasons for another exhibiting specific behavioural pattern, they can modify their perception and augment their understanding. This will put them in a better position to evaluate their own and their partner's behaviour from a more objective perspective and they will thus act completely differently. There are many reasons for conflicts – a particular temperament, personality trait, family of origin, education, goals in life, perception – but none should create insurmountable problems.

***Paradoxical thought: Although considered by researchers as one of the top causes for divorce, it is not communication that is the cause for problems that subsequently lead to divorce, but rather lack of premarital education that could teach the proper skills to couples. Lack of knowhow and skill are a symptom (the way the problem manifests) but not the cause; premarital education, when underestimated and neglected act as precursor of problems.***

## Chapter Seven:

**Update: Differences between man & woman**

Celebrating the differences and considering them as assets we bring to our relationship.

**COMPETENCE: MANAGING GENDER DIFFERENCES – ABLE TO DEAL AND HANDLE WITH GENDER DIFFERENCES**



*Understand the complementary aspect of men and women – able to deal with gender differences, manage, make plans and create possibilities for the needs of both gender to be satisfied in a family.*

Differences between men and women have been topic of debate for a long time. Despite the fact that in certain areas our differences have been questioned, there is a census that genders are different in many ways. Research shows that we are different physically, mentally, emotionally, sexually, in the way we were socialized, (i.e. how we were brought up), in our preferences, the way we relate to others, intuitively, in our functions or roles and in the way we stereotype others (Zaidi, 2010; Ciccotti, 2008; Child, 2009 &). These differences have implications and sometimes are the source misunderstanding, misperception, equivocal expectations and are even initiators of quarrels. Couples tend to interpret differences as defects, whilst they are intended to be “assets” that we bring to enrich our relationship. This chapter discusses the most common differences that tend to affect our relationship as man and women. They are supported by scientific reports and must be seen as assets. Thus, in brief, the following will present how our differences structurally translate into our relationship. An attempt is made to bridge the gap between sexes and help decode some most common differences.

- **Key point:** According to leading expert Dr Gottman, 69% of couples’ problems are unsolvable problems or, using the technical term, they can be referred to as perpetual problems. They stem from personality, sexes and other differences we have as human beings. Here is where importance of communication and ability to negotiate is imperative. Thus, the only way to bridge the gap is communication and negotiations. Considering that our differences are not defects, but rather assets that must be accepted and coped with.
- **Key point:** Man and woman are different physically, mentally, emotionally, in their customs and socialization, the way they relate to others, in their preferences, intuition and sexuality. These differences do not suggest superiority or inferiority, but complementarity and interdependence.
- **Key point:** Differences must not turn us away from each other, but rather bring us together. These differences are tools we have been offered to connect to each other. They should never be seen as defective!
- **Key point:** Research indicates that when man and women team up (on intellectual and practical issues) they do better than when same sex teams or groups work together. When men and women team up for problems solving they do better than when only one sex team up.
- **Key point:** We are purposely or deliberately designed to be inherently different in order to perpetuate the existence of human race. The core reason for our difference is to complement. Helping couples understand our differences structurally prevent or decrease emergence of problems and misunderstanding up to 60%.
- **Key point:** Man and woman are not only different but are also similar. This because we belong to the human race and this must not be ignored as we discuss

the topic of differences. Our similarities remind us that we belong to each other and fit for each other.

- **Key point:** This chapter replaces the phrase: “it is the economy, stupid,” for this one (of course respectfully): “It is not our differences, it is communication/negotiation stupid”.

***Paradoxical thought: Differences between man and woman could be manifold; however, this doesn't mean anything other than a multitude of opportunities to connect, interact and collaborate. Like, with positive connecting to negative. Our differences must turn us to each other instead of against each other. Celebration and sense of awe must be the most common feeling we share as couples.***

## Chapter Eight:

**Update: Characteristics of a healthy family** The compass every couple must have to reach their destination

### **COMPETENCE: KNOW AND MANAGE FAMILY IN A HEALTHY WAY CONSIDERING THE CHARACTERISTICS OF HEALTHY FAMILIES**

*Can create a structure and a way of functioning that stimulate emergence of healthy family characteristics.*

Lack of knowledge and information regarding characteristics of a healthy family deprives potential couples and families from achieving their goal of becoming a happy and healthy unit(Lin, 1994). Knowledge regarding healthy family characteristics is a compass that helps families reach their goal of living “happily ever after”; it acts as navigation plan for couples and helps them keep on track. This chapter discusses results of investigations regarding both healthy patterns that distinguish healthy families and negative behavioural patterns that produce dysfunctional and unhappy families. According to scientific research, healthy family presents the following characteristics: (1) Communication – they communicate with assertiveness and confidence with each other, expresses their feelings and are open to each other; (2) They have structure; (3)They validate and expresses appreciation toward each other; (4) They possess commitment, i.e. they have high sense of commitment to each other and determination to solve problems together; (5) They are resilient and have capacity to adapt; (6) They have clear role-task distribution and equal power share; (7) They spend time together and have fun; (8) They connected to society; (9) They have strong family value system; (10) They have spirituality or religious conviction; (11) They have unconditional acceptance.

- **Key point:** As consequence of high rate of divorce, individuals who grew up with divorced parents tend to become acquainted with negative behavioural pattern and emulate what they have seen. As a consequence, the problem perpetuates

into their adulthood and affects all their future relationships. Shortly, it creates a negative vicious cycle. This makes it imperative for couples to be acquainted with characteristics of a healthy family before getting married. Lack of knowledge regarding knowhow in marital relationship correlates with divorce rate.

- **Key point:** There are certain specific reasons why couples must know the characteristics of healthy families, including: (1) When they know these characteristics they know what to aim for; (2) They can distinguish the truths and facts from the common preconceptions, by focusing and learning from the legitimate sources; (3) For assessment purposes, as they would know immediately why they are unhappy and not experiencing the realization of their dreams and identify what is wrong and missing from their family unit; (4) They would be able to intercept and modify a wrong tendency of mistaken route in early stages.
- **Key point:** Healthy families have more successful communicative interaction and thus the communication achieves the intended goal. Furthermore, they are open, respectful, praise each other, encourage each other and make emotional deposits on each other's account. Teamwork is common among such families. They confront the same type of problems that families that divorce confront, but with the difference that they are successful in working together on recognizing and solving their problems. In sum, healthy families have higher sense of commitment than regular families, who end up in divorce, even though they face the same problems.
- **Key point:** Their roots are in solid (spiritual) ground; consequently they get the right nutrients that maintain their family tree strong and healthy. Despite circumstances, they remain happy because of their grounded roots.

***Paradoxical thought: It is not by focusing and analysing myriad of false bills that make you able to distinguish the good bill from the false, because false bills comes in endless form, however by studying and being expose to the good bill make you capable to pick the wrong one. The same with families, it is by knowing and being expose to the healthy characteristic that increase capacity to emulate healthy families and to reach happiness. In sum, the families need to be happy, healthy and collaborative in order to succeed. It is knowing and being exposed to the healthy characteristics that increases the capacity of healthy families to reach happiness.***

Chapter nine:

**Update: How to manage your finances**

Going beyond making budget;  
Achieving your financial dreams.

**COMPETENCE: SUCCESSFUL FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

*Can make and stay on a budget; are able to augment (increase) assets, make plan or establish both short and long term goals and achieve them.*

According to research, financial problems rank in the top three most frequent causes for divorce. More than 75% marital problems are related to finances. Financial problems tend to cause emotional tension, which acts as a precursor of problems in other areas. Problems, such as emotional abuse, child abuse, relationship problems, poor performance at work, inability to concentrate, and many other issues stem from, or are related to, emotional tension caused by financial problems. This chapter discusses how to prevent financial problems and the ten values/elements that all couples must know in order to be financially literate. Currently, when non-experts hear about financial management they think immediately about making budgets. However, financial problems can still occur, despite careful budgeting. You can even have problems even when you remain within the limits of your budget. Thus, mentality change, proper management of self-esteem issues and change in perception is extremely important. These can help you avoid pitfalls and are as important as making budget and keeping to it. What most couples need is a paradigm shift and guidance in order to achieve their maximum financial potential and not just know how to make budget. Couples should also learn basic principles of financial management. Key elements that couples must learn in order to achieve their financial potential are increasing their assets (income, property, etc.), changing their spending patterns, making long and short term financial plans, etc. These must overlap or run in parallel with the above mentioned recommendations in order to bring durable/permanent or sustainable changes. More than 60 recommendations will be discussed in this chapter. New insights will be provided, based on research in the financial field.

- **Key point:** Making budgets and keeping to the limits of your budget are nothing more than partial solutions to problems. Change in way of thinking and perception must also accompany the above mentioned steps in order to achieve successful financial management. Self-esteem issues play an important role in financial problems and correlate with lack of success in financial management. If self-esteem issues are not dealt with, the problems will perpetuate and their root causes will never be addressed. Only understanding, preventing and dealing with the originators of our financial problems will bring forth the lasting solutions...
- **Key point:** This chapter will help couples understand how to make budget; how to stay within your budget; the importance of using talents, abilities and skills the couple possess will help increase income or lower the expenses; how to establish short term and long term goals, how to economize and to reach your maximum financial potential.
- **Key point:** Lack of patience when acquiring household items and other material possessions, the perception of "I must have this, and I must have it now", I must buy or acquire goods without analysing critically if I really need them, the desire for prestige, latest trends and other elements, can all cause gigantic economical problems of financial problems. These problems are not solvable in one or two months.

Sometimes it takes years to be free from debts. This must be taken into consideration by couples embarking for the first time on financial planning.

- **Key point:** Another element that causes financial problems is lack of capacity to adapt to new situations, inability to accept that financial situations change and so must the spending patterns. The feeling of “we have always ....” causes critical financial problems.
- **Key point:** Without clear long-term financial goals, you will struggle with the same financial limitations for years. Couples must be willing to set long-term goals and make sacrifices to reach their maximum potential; otherwise, they will live from pay check to pay check. Thus, they have to consider questions, such as, "What kind of life do I want to be living in 30 years?" and plan and invest accordingly. The approach can include further studies, savings or investments, or any other means that would ensure that they reach this goal. When this plan is not followed through, after 30 years, the couple will still be in the same position they were yesterday. To avoid frustration, it is important to set realistic, well-defined goals, such as increasing income to a certain level, or gaining specific qualification by certain deadline, changing a job or a career, etc.

***Paradoxical thought: It is not your financial status/power that determines if you are happy; rather your happiness will influence your financial status or situation. Generally, unhappy people pursue money, thinking that money may compensate for their lack of happiness. Consequently, they buy luxurious cars, clothes and other material goods, expecting to gain recognition and achieve happiness as a result. Media, literature and popular opinion have been suggesting or associating possession of material goods with happiness. This causes people to pursue material acquisitions, believing they will feel better or happier. Unfortunately, by doing this, they end up in tremendous financial problems.***

## Chapter ten:

### **Update: Sexuality.**

A solution to the sexual paradox

#### **COMPETENCE: CAPACITY TO SATISFY YOUR PARTNER SEXUALLY CONSISTENTLY**

*Can satisfy your partner sexually and maintain a passionate and exited sexual life.  
Have intimacy under control.*

This chapter discusses the most influential elements that prevent a couple from achieving their sexual potential. There are seven key obstacles that deprive a couple of an exciting, pleasant and satisfying sexual relationship. These are: sexual myths, being unacquainted with male and female anatomy, lack of communication, lack of knowledge of sexual differences between man and woman, being misinformed regarding phases of sexual relationship, being unfamiliar with erogenous male and female zones, inability to manage or negotiate sexual frequency, etc. An attempt to

make couple sexually literate will be pursued by discussing several aspects of sexuality, starting with basic elements couples should know, such as how to reach and help other reach an orgasm, stimulating and inhibiting factors in achieving pleasure, the logic behind sexual positions and other aspects of sexual education. In addition, insight will be facilitated regarding how to protect your relationship from affairs, etc. Finally we include several test to measure your knowledge regarding sexuality, how to spar you or your partner from affair and other relevant issues.

- **Key point:** A serious obstacle for mutual sexual satisfaction is the existence of myths. Myths exist because of lack of information regarding sexuality. Twelve myths will be dissipated in this chapter, including: “All women have vaginal orgasm i.e. there is something wrong with you if you don’t”; “couples reach orgasm simultaneously...this is the norm”; “big penis is synonymous with pleasure”; “man should initiate sexual relationship”; “multiple orgasm is common in men and is an indication of virility”, etc.
- **Key point:** About 84% of sexual problems are related to lack of communication. Contrary to popular belief, lack of communication is the most influential contributor to unsatisfactory sexual relationship.
- **Key point:** Lack of knowledge regarding anatomy and physiology could play mayor role in impeding sexual satisfaction. Not knowing function of certain organs, correct steps that couple must undertake in seeking and delivering pleasure, being unacquainted with erogenous zone will all be stumbling blocks. It is like trying to use an electronic device or equipment without reading or consulting the manual.
- **Key point:** Knowledgeable with respect to differences between men and women are indispensable when trying to synchronize with each other and reach sexual satisfaction. Man and woman are different biologically both in responsiveness and in timing of sensual response. Sometimes we tend to have different expectations and this all must be discussed in order for couple to enjoy their sexuality.

***Paradoxical thought:It is not passion that keeps the relationship durable; rather intimacy possess the ingredients to guarantee durable relationship, and one of the ingredients intimacy must have is passion. However, when passion is sought as sole element it will not be obtainable within one relationship, which will make people conclude that they must have several different sexual partners. This cycle will recur until they realize that passion only comes with intimacy with one partner. Exploit your relationship with your partner and you will have it all.***

## Chapter ten:

**Update: When the unthinkable and unexpected happens...the affair**

Infidelity is currently one of the most common causes of relationship breakdown. According to some sources, it is even ranked as the number one cause for divorce.

Research indicate that only 24% of family or couples are going to remain faithful to each other and remain together “till death takes them apart” as they have promised when getting married. The rest will divorce. Studies in about 150 different cultures indicate infidelity as most common reason for divorce.(Betzig, 1989) To make matters worse, despite these alarming statistics, couples are still getting married without premarital education or counselling, perpetuating or even increasing the number of divorces (or potential for failure in relationships). This chapter will define what is considered as an affair, dissipate common myths regarding affairs, explain most common reasons for infidelity, reveal signs or indicators of affairs discuss the complexity of affairs and reveal how to prevent an affair occurring in a relationship. Ample recommendations and insights are also given regarding how to recover from an affair (i.e. steps to take in order to overcome problems that lead to and followed an affair).

***Paradoxical thought: Affair doesn't happen because of what you do, it happens because of what you didn't do.***

For additional information regarding cultural aspect address, consult Appendix T

**APPENDIX E**

**IMPLEMENTING PLAN OF MRE – EVENT  
PLANNING TEMPLATE**



**APPENDIX E**

**Implementing Plan of MRE - Event planning template**

<b>Name of event – what</b>	<b>SMART FAMILY CONVENTION: PROFILE OF SUCCESSFUL COUPLES/FAMILIES</b>				
<b>Date of event</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> &amp; 2<sup>nd</sup> Session/October 2013</b>				
	<b>Days</b>	Thursday	Friday	Friday	Saturday
	<b>Theme / Topic</b>	The Aim of Marriage/Phases that marriages undergo	Love and Management of emotions	Family Management	Family Life Cycle
	<b>Duration</b>	2 h	2h	1h	1 ½ h
	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> &amp; 3<sup>rd</sup> Session of MRE</b>				
	<b>Days</b>	Saturday	Saturday	Saturday	Saturday
	<b>Theme / Topic</b>	Management of Personality Differences	Communication and Conflict Management 1	Communication and Conflict Management 2	Management of Gender differences
	<b>Duration</b>	2 h	1 ½ h	1 ½ h	2h
	<b>Days</b>	Sunday	Sunday	Sunday	Sunday

	<b>Theme / Topic</b>	Healthy Family Characteristics	Family Finance Management	Affaire Prevention	Sexuality and Intimacy 1
	<b>Duration</b>	1 h	1h	1 ½ h	1 ½ h
	<b>Days</b>	Sunday	Sunday		
	<b>Theme / Topic</b>	Effective Parenting	Religion, Values and Traditions		
	<b>Duration</b>	1h	1h		
<b>Time of event</b>	7:00 – 9:30 PM				
<b>Location of event</b>	World Trade Centre Curacao, Willemstad – Otrabanda				
<b>Event coordinator</b>	Mirugia Leocadia (Manager BBH)				
<b>Target audience – who</b> <i>Who is this promotion targeted at?</i> <i>What does the audience need to know?</i> <i>What will hold their interest?</i>	<p>The audience targeted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Married Couples</li> <li>(2) Distress Couples</li> <li>(3) Couple that cohabit</li> </ul> <p>For promotional purposes --the audience need to know that during this convention the presenter will answer and discuss:</p>				

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) What is the profile of current highly successful couples? Successful couple's profile and mandatory competences for success.</li> <li>(2) From couples dependent on intuition to couple with research based know how. A 92% of divorced couple have not been exposed to pre-marital or any marital education course.</li> <li>(3) How to make your marriage/relationship, the relationship you have always dreamed off? From minor or major dissapointment to the relationship you have dreamed off...knowing what went wrong.</li> <li>(4) When you don't want to have a divorce, how to vaccinate you relationship against divorce. There is a correlation between couple that doesn't attend to marital or premarital education in curacao and divorce rate.</li> <li>(5) Experiencing a relationship make over, when in a relationship or marital distress.</li> <li>(6) Able to master pivotal competencies for a successful relationship/marriage</li> <li>(7) Able to know, understand and manage competently: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Phases that marriage and relationship undergo, in short, Family life cycle</li> <li>b. Gender difference</li> <li>c. Love, neuro-chemical aspects of love and emotions in a couple relationship</li> <li>d. Characteristics of a healthy family</li> <li>e. Family management concepts</li> <li>f. Aim of marriage/relationship</li> <li>g. Communication and conflicts</li> <li>h. Personality and temperament differences</li> <li>i. Finances</li> <li>j. Sexuality</li> </ol> </li> <li>(8) How to avoid clasical mistakes couple make?</li> <li>(9) Ten sientific steps to solve conflict</li> <li>(10) Understanding the conflict ladder and how to intercept the escalation.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Message – what</b> <i>What do you want to say to the target audience?</i></p>	<p>The audience need to know:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The contend of all workshop is researched based</li> <li>(2) Participants will receive a participant's manual</li> <li>(3) Participants will be assessed</li> </ol>

<p><i>What do you want them to know/do?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(4) Pivotal and extremely import questions will be answered</li> <li>(5) Participants will be exposed to group dynamics that will help internatize and master important concept and competence</li> <li>(6) Questions and answer sections will follow each presentations</li> <li>(7) Demostrative and educative videoclip will be presented</li> <li>(8) During one and half year they will be receiving follow-up?</li> <li>(9) Every day homework will given to help digest, affirm, internalize and to eventually provoke attitudinal changes. To assess the participants level of understanding and preliminary mastery of competence.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Objectives</b></p>	<p>At the end of this convention the participants will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) <i>Understand and possess the know-how to achieve the aim of marriage – character development and reach maximum potential.</i></li> <li>(2) <i>Understand what true love is – have the tools to love and be capable of expressing love effectively (ways that synchronize with partners style-language) and functionally. Understand the phases love and marriage undergo</i></li> <li>(3) <i>Know phases that marriage undergo – able to foresee, adapt, and deal with both the changes and demands of every phase.</i></li> <li>(4) <i>Be able to manage family issues and achieve planned and established goals – able to create functional structure and optimize the internal functioning – inter-functioning in the family.</i></li> <li>(5) <i>Be able to understand and deal with different personalities – able to make consideration with differences in personality as plans are being made and activities are being decided. Put goals to be reached, taking differences in personality under consideration – seeing differences in personality not as defect but rather an asset.</i></li> <li>(6) <i>Be able to communicate effectively, assertively, tactfully and openly; able to solve problems and avoid escalation. Able to negotiate and consequently prevent escalation of problems.</i></li> <li>(7) <i>Able to understand the complementary aspect of men and women – able to deal with gender differences, manage, make plans and create possibilities for the needs of both gender to be satisfied in a family.</i></li> <li>(8) <i>Able to create a structure and a way of functioning that stimulate emergence of healthy family characteristics.</i></li> <li>(9) <i>Can make and stay on a budget; are able to augment (increase) assets, make plan or establish both short and long term goals and achieve them.</i></li> </ul>

	<p>(10) <i>Able to satisfy their partner sexually and maintain a passionate and exited sexual life. Master or have intimacy under control.</i></p> <p>(11) <i>Master the basic competences needed for a successful family</i></p>
<b>Description of event – what</b>	Smart Couple Convention which include 10 seminars. Each seminar discusses a particular topic. The title is Profile of successful couples and families.
<b>Risk assessment – what</b> Identify possible risks and develop strategies to minimise risks.	Couple with children may have some difficulty to attend because of lack of adult supervision for their children. Organizer should provide children program so parents can attend without distraction.
<b>Evaluation criteria established</b> <i>What were our aims/objectives?</i> <i>Did we achieve what we set out to do?</i> <i>What were the intended/unintended outcomes?</i> <i>How do we measure effectiveness?</i> <i>What tools do we use to measure our success?</i>	<p>Does participants demonstrate a significant difference in level of mastering the basic competences for a successful couple?</p> <p>Does participants demonstrate improvement on level of commitment?</p> <p>Does participants demonstrate improvement in the level of satisfaction?</p> <p>Does participants show indicative of achievement of the above mention objective?</p> <p>When couples are assess/tested after being exposed is there a significant difference and improve in their responses?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dyadic Adjustment Scale</li> <li>• Rusbult Investment Model</li> <li>• Inventory of Pivotal Competences for marital success</li> </ul>

### Early event planning template

Early event planning	Person responsible	Action	Date to be completed
<b>Budget</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Source identified <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsorship	M. Leocadia	Get budget approved	

<input type="checkbox"/> Break even point established <input type="checkbox"/> Have you accounted for the GST?		Get other sponsors	
<b>Protocol</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Protocol issues (relating to Commonwealth/State funding) <input type="checkbox"/> Anything that needs to be approved by the Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Minister's office notified <input type="checkbox"/> DECS Strategic Communications notified <input type="checkbox"/> Education News notified	J. Cabrera	All protocol issues and invitations	
<b>Invitations</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Mailing list generated/updated <input type="checkbox"/> Invitation composed <input type="checkbox"/> Invitation checked <input type="checkbox"/> Printer <input type="checkbox"/> RSVPs (responsible person briefed) <input type="checkbox"/> Invitation list compiled/promotion list <input type="checkbox"/> Names on list and titles/addresses checked for accuracy <input type="checkbox"/> Special guests/speakers alerted to make time in diaries <input type="checkbox"/> Invitations sent	J. Cabrera		
<b>Catering</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Cost per head or upfront <input type="checkbox"/> Upmarket or casual <input type="checkbox"/> Beverages – orange juice, mineral water, tea and coffee (instant or percolated) <input type="checkbox"/> Food – fruit platters, bagels, danish, bagettes, sandwiches, biscuits and cakes <input type="checkbox"/> Hot or cold <input type="checkbox"/> Self service or waiting staff <input type="checkbox"/> Internal or external catering <input type="checkbox"/> Power required <input type="checkbox"/> Equipment required <input type="checkbox"/> Tables, tablecloths, cups and saucers <input type="checkbox"/> Plates, napkins, knives and forks (disposable/non-disposable) <input type="checkbox"/> Can the theme of the event be followed through in catering? <input type="checkbox"/> Special dietary requirements of guests	Mirugia Isenia	Together with team will coordinate catering and other aspects.	

<input type="checkbox"/> Menu			
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<b>Early event planning</b>	<b>Person responsible</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Date to be completed</b>
<b>Advertising</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Press, radio TV, school newsletter <input type="checkbox"/> Education News <input type="checkbox"/> Media release – DECS Strategic Communications	M. Leocadia	Together with promotion or media team will advertise	
<b>Talent</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Book and brief <input type="checkbox"/> Rehearsals	Mimi Leocadia	Planning team	
<b>Program/running sheet/speeches</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Program finalised <input type="checkbox"/> Running sheet written <input type="checkbox"/> Program/running sheet sent to speakers <input type="checkbox"/> Speakers fully briefed <input type="checkbox"/> Speeches written <input type="checkbox"/> Let caterers know program - when to serve drinks/food	M. Leocadia and team		
<b>Value added for guests</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of publication, CD-ROM <input type="checkbox"/> Gifts <input type="checkbox"/> Programs <input type="checkbox"/> Catalogues <input type="checkbox"/> Special offers/discounts <input type="checkbox"/> Competitions <input type="checkbox"/> Prizes	Staff host and hostess	Rudsela Priscila and team	
<b>Security</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Security alerted <input type="checkbox"/> Occupational health, welfare and safety concerns addressed <input type="checkbox"/> Provision of first aid			
<b>Audio/visual requirements</b> <input type="checkbox"/> PA system <input type="checkbox"/> CD or tape player	J. Cabrera and team		

<input type="checkbox"/> Lapel or handheld microphone <input type="checkbox"/> Lighting <input type="checkbox"/> Extra electrical requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Lectern			
<b>Staffing</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Extra required <input type="checkbox"/> Staff to meet and greet guests			
<b>Ambience</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Floral arrangements, pedestal – can the theme of the event be followed in flowers? <input type="checkbox"/> Background music	M. Isenia and team		

Early event planning	Person responsible	Action	Date to be completed
<b>Guest comfort</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Wheelchair access <input type="checkbox"/> Toilet facilities	J. Cabrera & Mirugia Isenia		
<b>Hospitality</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Welcome signage at entrance <input type="checkbox"/> Ushers briefed <input type="checkbox"/> Cloak room <input type="checkbox"/> Red carpet	Staff		
<b>Housekeeping</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Cleaning before and after <input type="checkbox"/> On standby during the event	Staff		
<b>On the day</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Time for set up by whom <input type="checkbox"/> Time for dismantle by whom <input type="checkbox"/> Dais, stage <input type="checkbox"/> Tables, chairs layout <input type="checkbox"/> Chair covers <input type="checkbox"/> Floor plan <input type="checkbox"/> VIP seating <input type="checkbox"/> Book courier/transport <input type="checkbox"/> Name tags <input type="checkbox"/> Clear location directions <input type="checkbox"/> Registration desk	Staff and M. Isenia		
<b>After the event</b>	M. Leocadia		



<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Person responsible <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Debrief <input type="checkbox"/> Comments on all aspects (negative and positive) <input type="checkbox"/> Guest feedback <input type="checkbox"/> Guidelines for improvement next time <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation against criteria <input type="checkbox"/> Celebration <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Thankyou's			
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<b>Promotion features – what</b> <i>What do you want to say to the target audience?</i> <i>What do you want them to know/do?</i>	<p>The audience need to know:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The contend of all workshop is researched based</li> <li>(2) Participants will receive a participant's manual</li> <li>(3) Participants will be assessed</li> <li>(4) Pivotal and extremely import questions will be answered</li> <li>(5) Participants will be exposed to group dynamics that will help internatize and master important concept and competence</li> <li>(6) Questions and answer sections will follow each presentations</li> <li>(7) Demonstrative and educative videoclip will be presented</li> <li>(8) During one and half year they will be receiving follow-up?</li> <li>(9) Every day homework will given to help digest, affirm, internalize and to eventually provoke attitudinal changes. To assess the participants level of understanding and preliminary mastery of competence.</li> </ol>
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>At the end of this convention the participants will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) <i>Understand and possess the know-how to achieve the aim of marriage – character development and reach maximum potential.</i></li> <li>(2) <i>Understand what true love is – have the tools to love and be capable of expressing love effectively (ways that synchronize with partners style-language) and functionally. Understand the phases love and marriage undergo</i></li> <li>(3) <i>Know phases that marriage undergo – able to foresee, adapt, and deal with both the changes and demands of every phase.</i></li> <li>(4) <i>Be able to manage family issues and achieve planned and established goals – able to create functional</i></li> </ol>

	<p><i>structure and optimize the internal functioning – inter-functioning in the family.</i></p> <p><i>(5) Be able to understand and deal with different personalities – able to make consideration with differences in personality as plans are being made and activities are being decided. Put goals to be reached, taking differences in personality under consideration – seeing differences in personality not as defect but rather an asset.</i></p> <p><i>(6) Be able to communicate effectively, assertively, tactfully and openly; able to solve problems and avoid escalation. Able to negotiate and consequently prevent escalation of problems.</i></p> <p><i>(7) Able to understand the complementary aspect of men and women – able to deal with gender differences, manage, make plans and create possibilities for the needs of both gender to be satisfied in a family.</i></p> <p><i>(8) Able to create a structure and a way of functioning that stimulate emergence of healthy family characteristics.</i></p> <p><i>(9) Can make and stay on a budget; are able to augment (increase) assets, make plan or establish both short and long term goals and achieve them.</i></p> <p><i>(10) Able to satisfy their partner sexually and maintain a passionate and exited sexual life. Master or have intimacy under control.</i></p> <p><i>(11) Master the basic competences needed for a successful family</i></p>
<p><b>Description of event – what</b></p>	<p>Smart Couple Convention which include 10 seminars. Each seminar discusses a particular topic. The title is Profile of successful couples and families.</p>
<p><b>Risk assessment – what</b> Identify possible risks and develop strategies to minimise risks.</p>	<p>Couple with children may have some difficulty to attend because of lack of adult supervision for their children. Organizer should provide children program so parents can attend without distraction.</p>
<p><b>Evaluation criteria established</b> <i>What were our aims/objectives?</i></p>	<p>Does participants demonstrate a significant difference in level of mastering the basic competences for a successful couple?</p> <p>Does participants demonstrate improvement on level of commitment?</p> <p>Does participants demonstrate improvement in the level of satisfaction?</p>

<p><i>Did we achieve what we set out to do?</i></p> <p><i>What were the intended/unintended outcomes?</i></p> <p><i>How do we measure effectiveness?</i></p> <p><i>What tools do we use to measure our success?</i></p>	<p>Does participants show indicative of achievement of the above mention objective?</p> <p>When couples are assess/tested after being exposed is there a significant difference and improve in their responses?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dyadic Adjustment Scale</li> <li>• Rusbult Investment Model</li> <li>• Inventory of Pivotal Competences for marital success</li> </ul>
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## Early event planning template

Early event planning	Person responsible	Action	Date to be completed
<p><b>Budget</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Source identified</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Sponsorship</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Break even point established</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Have you accounted for the GST?</p>	M. Leocadia	<p>Get budget approved</p> <p>Get other sponsors</p>	
<p><b>Protocol</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Protocol issues (relating to Commonwealth/State funding)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Anything that needs to be approved by the Manager</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Minister's office notified</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> DECS Strategic Communications notified</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Education News notified</p>	J. Cabrera	All protocol issues and invitations	
<p><b>Invitations</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Mailing list generated/updated</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Invitation composed</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Invitation checked</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Printer</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> RSVPs (responsible person briefed)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Invitation list compiled/promotion list</p>	J. Cabrera		

<input type="checkbox"/> Names on list and titles/addresses checked for accuracy <input type="checkbox"/> Special guests/speakers alerted to make time in diaries <input type="checkbox"/> Invitations sent			
<b>Catering</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Cost per head or upfront <input type="checkbox"/> Upmarket or casual <input type="checkbox"/> Beverages – orange juice, mineral water, tea and coffee (instant or percolated) <input type="checkbox"/> Food – fruit platters, bagels, danish, bagettes, sandwiches, biscuits and cakes <input type="checkbox"/> Hot or cold <input type="checkbox"/> Self service or waiting staff <input type="checkbox"/> Internal or external catering <input type="checkbox"/> Power required <input type="checkbox"/> Equipment required <input type="checkbox"/> Tables, tablecloths, cups and saucers <input type="checkbox"/> Plates, napkins, knives and forks (disposable/non-disposable) <input type="checkbox"/> Can the theme of the event be followed through in catering? <input type="checkbox"/> Special dietary requirements of guests <input type="checkbox"/> Menu	Mirugia Ilenia	Together with team will coordinate catering and other aspects.	

Early event planning	Person responsible	Action	Date to be completed
<b>Advertising</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Press, radio TV, school newsletter <input type="checkbox"/> Education News <input type="checkbox"/> Media release – DECS Strategic Communications	M. Leocadia	Together with promotion or media team will advertise	
<b>Talent</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Book and brief <input type="checkbox"/> Rehearsals	Mimi Leocadia	Planning team	
<b>Program/running sheet/speeches</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Program finalised <input type="checkbox"/> Running sheet written	M. Leocadia and team		

<input type="checkbox"/> Program/running sheet sent to speakers <input type="checkbox"/> Speakers fully briefed <input type="checkbox"/> Speeches written <input type="checkbox"/> Let caterers know program - when to serve drinks/food			
<b>Value added for guests</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of publication, CD-ROM <input type="checkbox"/> Gifts <input type="checkbox"/> Programs <input type="checkbox"/> Catalogues <input type="checkbox"/> Special offers/discounts <input type="checkbox"/> Competitions <input type="checkbox"/> Prizes	Staff host and hostess	Rudsela Priscila and team	
<b>Security</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Security alerted <input type="checkbox"/> Occupational health, welfare and safety concerns addressed <input type="checkbox"/> Provision of first aid			
<b>Audio/visual requirements</b> <input type="checkbox"/> PA system <input type="checkbox"/> CD or tape player <input type="checkbox"/> Lapel or handheld microphone <input type="checkbox"/> Lighting <input type="checkbox"/> Extra electrical requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Lectern	J. Cabrera and team		
<b>Staffing</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Extra required <input type="checkbox"/> Staff to meet and greet guests			
<b>Ambience</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Floral arrangements, pedestal – can the theme of the event be followed in flowers? <input type="checkbox"/> Background music	M. Isenia and team		

Early event planning	Person responsible	Action	Date to be completed
<b>Guest comfort</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Wheelchair access <input type="checkbox"/> Toilet facilities	J. Cabrera & Mirugia Isenia		

<b>Hospitality</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Welcome signage at entrance</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ushers briefed</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Cloak room</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Red carpet</li> </ul>	Staff		
<b>Housekeeping</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Cleaning before and after</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> On standby during the event</li> </ul>	Staff		
<b>On the day</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Time for set up by whom</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Time for dismantle by whom</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Dais, stage</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Tables, chairs layout</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Chair covers</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Floor plan</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> VIP seating</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Book courier/transport</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Name tags</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Clear location directions</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Registration desk</li> </ul>	Staff and M. Isenia		
<b>After the event</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Person responsible</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Debrief</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Comments on all aspects (negative and positive)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Guest feedback</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Guidelines for improvement next time</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation against criteria</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Celebration</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Thankyou's</li> </ul>	M. Leocadia		

**APPENDIX F**

**INSTRUMENTS**

## Appendix F (1 – 3)

*Instruments 1-3 Dyadic Adjustment Scale, Rusbult Investment Model and Inventory of Pivotal Family Competences*

### ***Rusbult Investment Model***

#### **15 Item Commitment Measure**

**\*Note that this scale can be modified for either marital relationships or dating relationships by substituting relationship for marriage.**

#### **Reference:**

- This is an elaborated version of the commitment measure cited in:  
Rusbult, C. E., Martz, J. M., & Agnew, C. R. (1998). The investment model scale: Measuring commitment level, satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, and investment size. *Personal Relationships*, 5, 357–391.
  - This 15-item measure was used in:  
Rusbult, C. E., Kumashiro, M., Kubacka, K. E., & Finkel, E. J. (2009). “The part of me that you bring out”: Ideal similarity and the Michelangelo phenomenon. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96, 61-82.
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### **My Goals for the Future of our Relationship**

#### **Instructions:**

To what extent does each of the following statements describe your feelings regarding your relationship? Please use the following scale to record an answer for each statement listed below.

Response Scale:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Do Not Agree			Agree			Agree		
At All			Somewhat			Completely		



## Response

- 1) I will do everything I can to make our relationship last for the rest of our lives.
- 2) I feel completely attached to my partner and our relationship.
- 3) I often talk to my partner about what things will be like when we are very old.
- 4) I feel really awful when things are not going well in our relationship.
- 5) I am completely committed to maintaining our relationship.
- 6) I frequently imagine life with my partner in the distant future.
- 7) When I make plans about future events in life, I carefully consider the impact of my decisions on our relationship.
- 8) I spend a lot of time thinking about the future of our relationship.
- 9) I feel really terrible when things are not going well for my partner.
- 10) I want our relationship to last forever.
- 11) There is no chance at all that I would ever become romantically involved with another person.
- 12) I am oriented toward the long-term future of our relationship (for example, I imagine life with my partner decades from now).
- 13) My partner is more important to me than anyone else in life – more important than my parents, friends, etc.
- 14) I intend to do everything humanly possible to make our relationship persist.
- 15) If our relationship were ever to end, I would feel that my life was destroyed.

## Key:

*Total: Take the average of all 15 items*

## Subscales:

*Intent to persist: Items 1, 5, 10, 11, and 14*

*Attachment: Items 2, 4, 9, 13, and 15*

*Long-term orientation: Items 3, 6, 7, 8, 12*

**APPENDIX G**

**PERMISSION FOR USE**

## APPENDIX G

### Permission for use:

From: [agnew@purdue.edu](mailto:agnew@purdue.edu)  
To: [francherrel@hotmail.com](mailto:francherrel@hotmail.com)  
Subject: Re: Request for Help!  
Date: Tue, 17 Sep 2013 13:13:32 +0000

Thanks for your note, Cherrel.

You are welcome to use the Investment Model Scale in your research. No special permission is needed to use it in research.

I am also attaching a new paper, currently in press at *Personal Relationships*, which validates a Spanish version of the Investment Model Scale. It might prove useful in your research.

My best to you,

Chris Agnew

Christopher R. Agnew, Ph.D.  
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Department of Psychological Sciences  
Purdue University  
703 Third Street  
West Lafayette, IN 47907-2081 USA

email: [agnew@purdue.edu](mailto:agnew@purdue.edu)  
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## **APPENDIX H**

### **DYADIC ADJUSTMENT SCALE**

## APPENDIX H

### DYADIC ADJUSTMENT SCALE

Most persons have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list.

	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occa- sionally Disagree	Fre- quently Disagree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
1. Handling family finances	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Matters of recreation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Religious matters	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Demonstrations of affection	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Sex relations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Conventionality (correct or proper behavior)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Philosophy of life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Ways of dealing with parents or in-laws	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Aims, goals, and things believed important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Amount of time spent together	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Making major decisions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. Household tasks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Leisure time interests and activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. Career decisions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	All the time	Most of the time	More often than not	Occa- sionally	Rarely	Never
16. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. How often do you or your mate leave the house after a fight?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. Do you confide in your mate?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. Do you ever regret that you married? ( <i>or lived together</i> )	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21. How often do you and your partner quarrel?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22. How often do you and your mate "get on each other's nerves?"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Every Day	Almost Every Day	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
23. Do you kiss your mate?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	All of them	Most of them	Some of them	Very few of them	None of them
24. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How often would you say the following events occur between you and your mate?

	Never	Less than once a month	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Once a day	More often
25. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
26. Laugh together	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
27. Calmly discuss something	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
28. Work together on a project	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

These are some things about which couples sometimes agree and sometime disagree. Indicate if either item below caused differences of opinions or were problems in your relationship during the past few weeks. (Check yes or no)

	Yes	No
29. <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> Being too tired for sex.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
30. <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> Not showing love.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

31. The circles on the following line represent different degrees of happiness in your relationship. The middle point, "happy," represents the degree of happiness of most relationships. Please fill in the circle which best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Extremely Unhappy	Fairly Unhappy	A Little Unhappy	Happy	Very Happy	Extremely Happy	Perfect

32. Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the future of your relationship?
- I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and *would go to almost any length* to see that it does.
  - I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and *will do all I can* to see that it does.
  - I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and *will do my fair share* to see that it does.
  - It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but *I can't do much more than I am doing now* to help it succeed.
  - It would be nice if it succeeded, but I *refuse to do any more than I am doing now* to keep the relationship going.
  - My relationship can never succeed, and *there is no more that I can do* to keep the relationship going.

## Dyadic Adjustment Scale

### DYADIC ADJUSTMENT SCALE (DAS) PAPIAMENTU

Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Edat: \_\_\_\_\_ Sekso: \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. \_\_\_\_\_

Pais: \_\_\_\_\_ Estudio: \_\_\_\_\_ Adres: \_\_\_\_\_

Mayoria persona tin desakuerto den nan relashon. Por favor indiká den enkuesta aki e grado di desakuerto òf akuerdo ku boso komo pareha tin den kada unu di afirmashon òf itemnan menshoná na kontinuashon. Hasi esaki ku un krus den e blòki.

	Semper di Akuèrdo 5	Kasi semper di akuerdo 4	Okashonalmente desakuerto 3	Frekuente-mente desakuerto 2	Kasi semper desakuerto 1	Semper desakuerto 0
1. Maneho di asuntunan finansiero den famia						
2. Asuntunan rekreativo i soshal						
3. Asuntunan religioso						
4. Demostrashon di afekto						
5. Amistatnan						
6. Seksualidat, esta relashon seksual						
7. Komportashon segun regla (Konservadó)						
8. Filosofia di bida						
9. Manera di dil i relashoná ku suegronan						
10. Metanan i kosnan ku boso ta konsiderá importante						
11. Kantidat di tempu ku boso ta pasa huntu						

12. Tumamentu di desishon enkuanto kosnan importante						
13. Tareanan doméstiko (esta kosnan di hasi na kas)						
14. Tempu liber i tempu pa aktivitatnan liber						
15. Desishonnan tokante bo profeshon						

	Tur ora	Kasi tur ora	Tòch Bastante biaha	Okashonalmente	Masha poko	Nunka
	5	4	3	2	1	0
16. Ku ki frekuensha boso a yega di diskutí òf konsiderá divorsio, separashon òf terminamentu di boso relashon komo un alternativa?						
17. Kuantu biaha sea abo òf bo partner a yega di bandoná kas despues di un pleitu?						
18. Den tèrmino general, kuantu biaha bo ta pensa òf haña ku kosnan ta bai bon entre abo i bo partner?						
19. Bo ta konfia den bo partner?						
20. Bo a yega di arepentí ku bo a kasa (òf bai biba huntú)?						
21. Ku ki frekuensha abo i bo partner ta pleita ku otro?						
22. Ku ki frekuensha abo òf bo partner ta traha riba otro su nervio?						



	Tur dia 4	Kasi tur dia 3	Okashonal-mente 2	Masha poko 1	Nunka 0
23. Bo ta sunchi bo partner					

	Tur dia 4	Kasi tur dia 3	Okashonal-mente 2	Masha poko 1	Nunka 0
24. Boso tin interesnan komun òf ta hasi kosnan huntu pafó di kas?					

Menshoná ku ki frekuensha e siguiente kosnan ta pasa òf tuma lugá entre abo i bo partner

	Nunka 0	Ménos ku biaha pa luna 1	Unu òf dos biaha pa luna 2	Unu òf dos biaha pa siman 3	Un biaha pa dia 4	Tur ora 0
25. Tin un kombersashon interesante, stimulante i dushi						
26. Boso ta hari huntu						
27. Diskutí òf kòmbersá/dialogá trankil riba algu						
28. Traha huntu riba un proyekto						

Esaki ta algun di e kosnan ku parehanan sa tin desakuerto tokante dje. Por favor indiká den e dos preguntanan na kontinuashon si boso tabatin desakuerto riba esakinan den e último dos simannan.

	SI (0)	NO (1)
29. Boso tabata muchu kansa pa tene relashon seksual		
30. No a demostrá afekto		

31. Na kontinuashon indiká den tèrmino general kon felis bo tas inti bo den bo relashon. Tuma nota ku felis ta blòki òf espasio mei mei. Marka un krus den e blòki ku ta representá e grado di felisidat ku bo ta sinti den bo relashon.

Ekstremadamente infelis	Bastante infelis	Un tiki infelis	Felis	Hopi felis	Ekstremadamente felis	Perfekto
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

32. Na kontinuashon marka un krus dilanti e frase òf afirmashon ku ta deskribí kon bo ta sinti pa loke ta trata e futuro di boso relashon.

	Mi ke desesperadamente pa mi relashon tin éksito i mi ta dispuesto na hasi tur, pero tur kos ku ta na mi alkanse pa logra esaki.
	Mi ta deseá hopi pa mi relashon por tin éksito i lo mi hasi tur loke tan a mi alkanse pa logra esaki
	Mi ta deseá hopi pa mi relashon por tin éksito i lo mi hasi loke mester ser hasi pa por logra esaki
	Mi ta haña ku lo ta great si mi relashon por tin éksito, pero mi tin ku atmití ku mi no por hasi mas di loke mi ta hasi pa logra esaki.
	Lo ta great si mi relashon tin éksito, pero mi no ta dispuesto na hasi mas di loke mi ta hasi aktualmente pa nos relashon sigui
	Mi relashon lo no tin éksito nunca, i no tin nada ku mi por hasi pa e relashon aki por sigui.

## **APPENDIX I**

### **NEW INSTRUMENT VALIDATE INVENTORY OF PIVOTAL COMPETENCES FOR LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP**

APPENDIX I

New Instrument validated “Inventory of Pivotal Competences for long-term relationship

# INVENTORY OF BASIC AND PIVOTAL COMPETENCIES FOR LONG LASTING RELATIONSHIP



Divorces are becoming more prevalent in almost every society, bringing a tsunami of social consequences, and justifying the need for more research in order to remediate this indomitable social malady. The assumption is that this problem can be mitigated when couples are exposed to Marital and Relationship Education Programs prior to, or after marriage. Most conventional predictors of divorce, such as poor communication, financial challenges, etc., could be considered as symptoms of the problem, rather than the cause, which could be lack of education that addresses most of these classical predictors.

This inventory aims to provide important and relevant information to help develop the basic competence couples need in order to have a sustainable or long-lasting relationship. It focuses on discovering if couples, who attend a Culturally Sensitive and Competence Oriented Marital and Relationship Education Program (MRE), subsequently improve their marital satisfaction levels and increase their commitment level. Marital Education has been previously investigated mostly in the US; however, culture and worldview (cosmopolitanism) may play an important role in the results or outcome of a research. In order to generalize their findings, studies must be conducted outside the US, and be adapted to language, culture, particular issues and problems of other countries before we can assume that MRE can achieve more widespread success.

Please complete this inventory by indicating your level of agreement with the statement. The Inventory of Basic and Pivotal Competencies for Long Lasting Relationship can be completed in 15 minutes.

*Thank you very much for participating in this research project.*





# INVENTORY OF BASIC AND PIVOTAL COMPETENCIES FOR LONG LASTING RELATIONSHIP

This survey was elaborated in order to be applied on couples. The answers will be used only for investigation purposes and all personal data will be confidential.

*Thanks for your collaboration!*

**PART 1:** Demographic information. Please complete this first section.

Name /Pseudonym:  No.

Gender: 1. Male  2. Female  Age:  Date of birth:

Marital Status: 1. Married  2. Cohabiting  3. Single  3. Widow

4. Divorce  Time together

Education: Elementary  High School  BA/BSc  MA/M.Sc

PH.D.  Otro

**PART 2:** Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement with the following statements. Please indicate with a check mark your answer.

1. Strongly disagree.
2. Disagree.
3. Somewhat disagree.
4. Neither agree or disagree.
5. Somewhat agree.
6. Agree.
7. Strongly agree.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
1. We have short and long term goals							
2. We are aware of what the aim of marriage is.							
3. I dedicate more attention to the development of my character and personal growth than try to change or look at the character defects of my partner.							
4. I am aware of the fact that marriage undergoes several phases							
5. I am prepare for each coming phases that my marriage / relationship will undergo							
6. I am aware of my partner's expectation (i. e. desires) related to marriage							
7. I do everything within my power to satisfy and comply with the expectations that my partner has regarding marriage							
8. My marriage is what I've dreamed of							
9. I do everything I can for us to stay married and grow together (seek information, attend seminars, read a book, and invest by doing my effort).							
10. The aim of marriage is to foster symmetric growth, foster character development which consequently leads to happiness and intimacy							
11. To get the right partner and develop competences and skills for marriage is the secret for a sustainable							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Love is not only a feeling but an conscientious choice (it has its intellectual and choice dimension)							
13. I know the language and/or the way my partner prefers me to express love to him/her							
14. I constantly focus on making my partner happy							
15. I continue to do the majority of the loving things I used to do when we were in the courtship period after we got married							

16. I make time at least once a week, minimum one hour, to specifically dedicate time to my partner and/or to our relationship							
17. I know what I should do in order to keep the passion-excitement alive in our relationship							
18. I notice immediately when something is bothering my spouse and try immediately to solve or alleviate the problem/situation							
19. I can recognize, control and manage my emotions/feelings							
20. I can recognize and help my partner deal with her emotions							
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
21. I know the phases that families undergo (goes through)							
22. I am prepared for the phases that families go through							
23. I know exactly in which phase my family is							
24. I know what to expect of every phase, what are the typical problems and adjustment that need to be made, etc.							
25. I have a tentative plan for the stages or phases that my family will undergo.							
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
26. I know what management is and am able to manage things in my family competently							
27. We have clearly defined roles, tasks are well defined and assigned...everybody in our family knows exactly what they must do and what responsibilities they have.							
28. We have a family meeting every week, where we discuss, make plans, and deal with family issues.							
29. We work and have in our family an itinerary and agenda with most important family activities							



30. Due to our effective planning we manage to have time for every important thing that must be done							
31. We have a clear “overview” of what should be done in our family and we achieve our goal of doing them all							
32. I can make a management plan and perform it with success. I can make a plan and make it happen							
33. I have a clear idea about how my time is being used. I know exactly where my time goes							
34. We are constantly under stress because of the many things that need to be done							
35. We have a family evaluation meeting, where we evaluate and speak about the way things are being managed in our family.							
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
36. I know my partner's personality very well.							
37. We make plans taking differences in personality of every member of the family under consideration.							
38. We do not compare negatively/unfavourably member of our family with each other.							
39. Everybody possesses virtue and weakness in their personality...positive character traits and negative character or personality traits.							
40. I know my partner and my family members' weaknesses and virtues.							
41. I have a good bond and go well with all the members of my family.							
42. I accept my partner's personality.							
43. I do not treat my partner as defective just because she/he has another type of personality.							

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
44. We cannot speak to each other without it ending up in an argument.							
45. I can speak openly and say exactly what I want to my partner. I don't have to hide my feelings at all; rather I am encouraged to be open.							
46. We always reach an agreement despite our differences of opinion.							
47. I know what may augment emotional tension and hinder good communication between us.							
48. I have empathy capacity; in other words, I can put myself into the shoes of someone else and see things from his/her perspective (point of view).							
49. I have the ability/capacity to "short circuit" or "intercept" an issue that is being discussed and make "repair" attempts in order to clear the air and better the sphere during a conversation. In short, prevent things from escalating.							
50. I know the reasons why conflict emerges.							
51. I can keep my ego out of the question or out of the way as we communicate.							
52. We always have conflict accompanied with a lot of tension in our relationship.							
53. We have functional methods to solve problems and conflict.							
54. We make decisions together ...no one in our family dictates or take all the decisions alone. There is a balance in power							
55. If I am angry I can express this freely and don't have to hide my feelings.							
56. Communication between us is really good. I feel good about the way we communicate.							

57. Difference of opinion is something normal among us; you will not be penalized and ridiculed because you have a different opinion.							
58-a. I know the ten steps to solve a problem							
58-b. The differences between partners cause us to argue adamantly and constantly							
59. We are happy and have a good relationship even though we have our differences							
60. We actually celebrate our differences and see these as “assets” (positive aspect that each one of us brings to our relationship), We don't see differences as defects.							
61. My partner and I complement/complete each other, she/he has exactly what I miss (or lack)							
62. I have knowledge regarding the areas in which men and women are different							
63. In the way I approach and deal with my partner I always take into consideration the fact that we are different and independent beings							
64. I can respect and accept the areas in which we are different and do not pretend or suggest that my partner is defective							
65. What I miss my partner have, she/he is really my other half.							
66. I have trouble when I think of continuing in live without my partner, we are such a good team..							
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
67. I know the characteristics of a healthy family.							
68. We have the majority of the characteristics of a healthy family.							
69. We have structure in our marriage, in other words we have an organized and established way of doing things; everybody knows exactly what they are supposed to do.							

70. We express appreciation for each other and validate others' feeling.							
71. We are able to adapt ourselves to new situations.							
72. We take time on daily basis or weekly basis for each other.							
73. We are connected with the community and provide help – we are not considered an island.							
74. We have customs and rituals which are typical of our family – distinctive marks of our family.							
75. We share and instil values in our children.							
76. We accept and love each other unconditionally (you don't have to perform in order to be loved in our family).							
77. If or when we have problems, we know our limitation and know when to search or call for professional help.							
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
78. We have short and long term financial goals.							
79. In our family meeting we plan everything that has to do with finances.							
80. We make a budget.							
81. We maintain ourselves on our budget and do not buy impulsively.							
82. We can distinguish between that which is desirable and that which is necessary.							
83. I know the different ways to economize/save.							
84. We work on increasing our income and do not focus only on making and staying in our budget.							
85. We have an emergency fund.							
86. We evaluate carefully our motivation before proceeding to make a purchase; we do this by asking key questions such as: “do I really need this? Can I manage without it? Do I have the money to buy it?”							

87. We have a detailed view/sight on our expenses (there is no leak in our budget) – in other words, money goes and we do not know where it is going or being spent on.							
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
88. I can speak openly and freely about sex with my partner – without any inhibition.							
89. I know the phases that sexual relationship undergo / pass through and can competently manage through all of them.							
90. I know the erogenous zone of my partner.							
91. We do not have problems managing sexual frequency, we manage, compromise very well when sexual frequency is a concern.							
92. I know what excites and what inhibits my partner.							
93. We do not have hesitation of any sort regarding sexual positions.							
94. My partner reaches orgasm on a normal basis, or at least when he/she wants to.							
95. I can openly tell my partner what I like and what I want him/her to do with me.							
96. I have the basic knowledge regarding men's and women's anatomy where sexuality is concern.							
97. I have the basic knowledge regarding men and women's sexual anatomy.							
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
98. I know what the basic need of children are.							
99. I am capable to satisfy the physical, mental, emotional. Social and spiritual needs of a child.							
100. I know and am capable of using different methods and ways to discipline a child.							
101. I try to “catch” my children doing something positive in order to reinforce their positive behavior.							

102. I play with my children because I am aware of the fact that playing is important for a child's healthy development.							
103. I try to discover and foster/stimulate the development of my children's talents/.							
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
104. I am accustomed to have personal devotion (i.e. moments of meditation) on a daily basis.							
105. I attend to church regularly.							
106. I can make biblical stories and concept relevant for today. I can apply them to our daily life and make the connection between biblical time and our time, so that my whole family can see the relevancy of the bible teaching.							
107. Our religion does not prevent us of making friends (we can have friends who do not pertain to our religion).							
108. We work and act as volunteers in foundation, by doing this we stay connected with our society—we serve.							

### What score would you give to your relationship on a scale of 1 to 10?

Considering the condition of your marriage or relationship right now, please indicate on the scale below what score would you give to your relationship.



*Cherrel J. Francisca*  
www.familyrelationfirst.org

**APPENDIX J**

**STATISTIC ANALYSIS PLAN**

## Appendix J

### Statistic Analysis Plan

#### Preface

The high incidence of divorce in the Netherlands & Dutch Caribbean may be attributed to, or caused by, absence of marital/premarital education, rather than being solely due to the commonly accepted determinants—e.g., lack of communication, short courtship period, financial problems, and personality differences, amongst others. This research attempts to explore the anticipated increase of marital satisfaction, level of commitment and development of competencies, when couples are exposed to a comprehensive culturally-sensitive marital and relationship education program focused on development of competency.

#### Purpose of the research

The major objective of this research is to:

- (1) Provide and test a new culturally sensitive marital education program that has a strong emphasis on development of competencies that will improve marital satisfaction.
- (2) Investigate the impact and measure the effects of a new culturally sensitive marital education program, named *Profile for Successful Couples*, which is designed by the author.
- (3) The third aim of this research is to provide an empirically tested checklist with critical competencies that healthy, highly-satisfied, and successful families tend to possess, and which also contribute to the sustainability and longevity of marriage. In so doing, the researcher for this study will provide an updated profile of successful families today (i.e., critical qualities families should have in order to be healthy, successful, highly-satisfied, and sustainable long-term). In short, provide a “checklist concept” to improve marital outcomes based on marital competencies.

#### Research questions

The research the questions for this study are:

- (1) Does the Profile for Successful Couples impact marital satisfaction positively and significantly in the Netherlands and the Netherlands Antilles?



- (2) Does the Profile for Successful Couples stimulate significant development of competences and skills to increase relationship satisfaction?
- (3) What impact does aculturally sensitive marital education program have on marital satisfaction and increase of level of commitment of the couples?
- (4) Do demographic variables such as gender, marital status, and education significantly impact the level of commitment, satisfaction and development of competencies measured after exposure to MRE?

## **Hypothesis**

The hypotheses guiding this research are:

- (1) Couples who participate in the *Profile for Successful Couple's* program will demonstrate increased satisfaction levels on the *Dyadic Adjustment Scale* post-intervention.
- (2) Couples who participate in the *Profile for Successful Couple's* program will demonstrate significant positive increase of relational competency skills as measured by the *Inventory of Pivotal Competences for long lasting Relationship*.
- (3) Couple who participate in the *Profile for Successful Couple's* program will demonstrate a significant increase of commitment scores on the *Rusbult Commitment Scale* than prior the intervention

The level of significance that will be used to accept or reject the null hypotheses is set to 0.5.

## **Variables of this Research**

The Independent variables are:

- (1) Marital education program

The dependent variables are:

- (1) Marital satisfaction
- (2) Competences and skills for a satisfactory relationship.
- (3) Commitment level

## **Sample**

The sample will consist of couples from The Netherlands and the Netherlands Antilles. The inclusion criteria for the study participants are: (1) being a first time married

couple or couple who cohabitate; (2) being married between two to seven years; (3) willingness to participate in the Profile for Successful Couples program. (4) Proficient in the Dutch and Papiamentu language. (5) Couple that score less than 91 on the DAS will form a special group of interest.

No specific requirements in terms of level of education, social status, and other socio-demographic characteristics were chosen in order to give every participant the same opportunity. It is anticipated that the participants in this study will represent an economically and culturally diverse population of men and women. These couples will be recruited at the SMART Family Convention seminar and will self-select into the *Profile for Successful Couples* program.

### **Instrument for the recollection of data**

Three questionnaires will be used in this research project.

(1) **Dyadic Adjustment Scale**

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) is the first questionnaire to be employed in this study. The aim of this instrument is to measure satisfaction level of couple and categorize couple prior and after the intervention (experiment).

(2) **Investment Model Scale**

The Investment Model Scale, which will measure commitment level, satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, and investment size. The aim of this instrument is to measure the level of commitment of couples before and after the intervention.

(3) **Inventory of Pivotal Competences for long lasting/Sustainable Relationship**

The third instrument that will be used is designed to specifically assess the presence and development of competences. The aim of this instrument is to measure level of mastering of competences in couples prior to, and after the intervention.

This is a quasi-experimental study to investigate the impact of the *Profile for Successful Couples*.

### **Procedure**

All instruments will be administered to couples who will be participating ( N = 50 per group) in order to measure their level of relationship satisfaction prior to be exposed to the *Profile for Successful Couple's* program and subsequently after being exposed to *Profile for Successful Couple's* program. The questionnaires will be used as an instrument to pre-test and post-test participants. Later, this is after 6 months and then at one year we will be testing the couple again in order to assess durability of potential effect.

The MRE program to be used in this case the *Profile for Successful Couples* is designed based on cultural characteristics of the participants, as well as the latest developments in family-oriented research. The *Profile for Successful Couple's* program will be facilitated by the author and the team of licensed mental health providers/social worker, and pastors with master's degree level in order to avoid "experimenter effect," which is usually present when an over-enthusiastic author is the sole presenter. The

team will be given a detailed presentation plan which will include: the promotion plan, set up details, preliminary remarks, icebreakers and energizing activities, PowerPoint presentations, presenter's guide, outline of the whole program, including aim of each section, suggested content, group dynamic and couples interaction activities, video clips and link to website with additional resources for trainers.( i.e. [www.familyrelationfirst.org](http://www.familyrelationfirst.org)) and the participant's manual.

### Study design and plan

This research design and plan follow and comprises:

- (1) Experimental design – an adaptation of the Solomon Five-Group Design(Fink, 2003). Non randomized sample will be used.
- (2) Longitudinal study with three follow-up assessments. The assessments will be administered after the sample or experimental group were exposed to the *Profile for Successful Couples* program, then repeated at six months, one year, and 18 months post-intervention.
- (3) Three experimental groups and two control groups
- (4) Three experimental groups and one control group will be pre-tested and post tested. The other control group will be post tested at the end of the experimental period.

The Solomon Five-Group Design				
	Group	Pre-obs.	Indep. Var.	Post-obs.
(S)	E	O1	X	O2
(S)	E2	O1	X	O2
(S)	E3	--	X	O2
(S)	C1	O1	--	O2
(S)	C2	--	--	O1

\* **S** - sample; **E** -experimental; **O** observation or pre-tested and post tested; **Indep. Var** -independent variable or experiment; **C** -control group. The dependant variable will be Marital Satisfaction.

### **Data Analysis Plan.**

- (4) The first data analysis will take place at the end of the exposure to MRE program.
- (5) The second data analysis will be performed six month later – as a follow-up assessment
- (6) The third data analysis will take place a year later
- (7) The forth data analysis will take place one and a half year post the exposure to MRE program

### **Statistic**

For the hypothesis testing a planned comparison following a significant analysis of variance was conducted. The complex contrast or planned contrast for One-Way ANOVA deems appropriate due to the fact that: (1) the study has one independent variable and three independent variable (2) the three dependent variables under study are metric, (3) there are various (i.e. three) groups comparison simultaneously, and (4) it increases the statistical power of the comparison of the study because it reduce type I error (5) it is more sensitive to detect differences (6) there are two comparison of results at different time, for example pre-test results and post test results (7) This analysis deems robust and pertinent. Additionally for the comparison of difference between pre-and posttest per competences a paired t-test will be conducted.

### **Concluding remarks**

This research project is the first study to the best of the author's knowledge, that uses an instrument design by the author, and that provides a culturally appropriate program designed specifically for the populations mentioned previously. It marks the beginning of a research career.

## **APPENDIX K**

### **PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT-RESEARCH ON IMPACT OF CULTURAL SENSITIVE MRE DUTCH CARRIBEAN (CURACAO)**

## Appendix K

### Participant's Consent -- Research on Impact of Cultural Sensitive MRE Dutch Caribbean (Curacao)

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Dear participants,

In the first place thank you very much for your participation and contribution to this ground breaking and important research project. This research is being conducted by Cherrel Francisca, family relations and psychology students at Psychology Department of the Montemorelos University. The study in which you are asked to participate is designed to assess the impact of a *cultural sensitive marital and relationship education program geared toward development of relationship competences*. You will complete a inventory or self reported questionnaire and two additional test. The first test is a marital satisfaction test, the second a commitment test and the third relationship competences test. After you have finished answering all the questions of the different test, you will be debriefed. The filling out of the three questionnaires will not take more than one hour. The participation in the seminaire will take about 20 hours of instruction and participation in several learning dynamics. There are no known risks involved in being in this study, beyond those of everyday life. The information you provide during the experiment is completely anonymous; at no time will your name be associated with the responses you give. If you have any questions about what you will be doing in the study or about the study itself, feel free to ask them now or at any other time during your participation. If you have any questions after the study please contact Cherrel Francisca at [francherrel@hotmail.com](mailto:francherrel@hotmail.com)

Again thank you very much for your participation and contribution

Cordially

**Cherrel J. Francisca**

Ph.D. Family Life Education

Psychology Faculty, Montemorelos University

## **APPENDIX L**

### **INITIAL RESEARCH IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

## APPENDIX L

### INITIAL RESEARCH IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Date/Time	Sept. – Dec 2013	Jan. – June 2014	July.-Dec. 2014	Dec.-May 2015	June –July 2015
Activity	Final design of Data collection instrument	Treatment/ MRE program	Announcement follow-up/second measurement	Announcement follow-up evaluation/third measurement	Final writing of report after scrutiny of advisor
Activity	Testing of instrument	First post test	Second measurement after 6 month	Third Measurement after 6 month, total 1 ½ year	Presentation of report
Activity	Adaptation and/or redesign	Entering/Input of data	Entering data	Data entering	Presentation of report and defence of thesis
Activity	Recruit potential collaborators for research project implementation	Data cleaning /Preliminary analysis of data	Data cleaning/ Preliminary analysis and	Data cleaning and preliminary analysis	Re-write, include observation of thesis evaluation committee
Activity	Training for collaborators	Preliminary interpretation of data	Interpretation of data	Interpretation of data	Final redaction and publication
Activity	Establish date and preparation/coding	Result and Conclusion	Result and conclusion first 6 month	Discussion of results and conclusions	Dissemination plan and date
Activity	Activity /Collection of data/ pre-test and interpretation/ Random assignment of groups	First Incubation period	Second Incubation period	Writing of final report	



## **APPENDIX M**

### **TABLE OF COMPETENCES**

## Appendix M

### TABLE OF COMPETENCES

<b>COMPETENCE 1</b>	<b>LEADERSHIP &amp; CAPACITY TO BOTH COMMIT AND MAINTAIN A RELATIONSHIP. THIS IMPLY THAT COUPLE SHOULD KNOW AND ACHIEVE THE AIM OF MARRIAGE</b>
Description	<i>Know and achieve the aim of marriage –foster character development and help family member to reach maximum potential. In sum, be committed and capable to take a family member through all stages of family development to reach the aim of marriage.</i>
<b>COMPETENCE 2</b>	<b>EMOTIONAL MANAGEMENT, POSSESS STABILITY AND EMOTIONAL/SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE – ABILITY TO EXPRESS AND RECEIVE LOVE</b>
Description	<i>Have or develop the capacity to recognize his/her own feelings and those of others, to motivate him/her to manage her/his emotions effectively. Understand what true love is—love and be capable of expressing love effectively (ways that synchronize with partners style-language) and functionally</i>
<b>COMPETENCE 3</b>	<b>ADAPTABILITY AND FORESIGHT - ABILITY TO MANAGE AND COPE THROUGH STAGES AND LIFE CYCLE</b>
Description	<i>Know phases that marriages undergo and be able to foresee, adapt, and deal with both the changes and demands of every phase.</i>
<b>COMPETENCE 4</b>	<b>FAMILY MANAGEMENT—MANAGEMENT, PLANNING, AND SCHEDULING</b>
Description	<i>Able to manage family issues and achieve planned and established goals—able and willing to create functional structure and optimize the internal functioning— inter-functioning in the family. Assign roles and master family performance.</i>
<b>COMPETENCE 5</b>	<b>UNDERSTAND AND POSSESS THE SKILLS TO DEAL/HANDLE SUCCESSFULLY WITH DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES</b>
Description	<i>Able to understand and deal with different personalities— able and willing to give consideration to differences in personality, as plans are being made and activities are being decided. Determine goals to be reached, taking differences in personality under consideration—seeing differences in personality not as a defect, but rather an asset.</i>

<b>COMPETENCE 6</b>	<b>CAPACITY, SKILLS AND ABILITIES TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY</b>
Description	<i>Can communicate effectively, assertively, tactfully and openly; able and willing to solve problems and avoid escalation. Able to negotiate and consequently prevent escalation of problems. Able to competently manage and solve conflicts.</i>
<b>COMPETENCE 7</b>	<b>MANAGING GENDER DIFFERENCES—ABILITY TO DEAL WITH AND HANDLE GENDER DIFFERENCES</b>
Description	<i>Understand the complementary aspect of men and women—able and willing to deal with gender differences, manage, make plans, and create possibilities for the needs of both genders to be satisfied in a family. Able to connect.</i>
<b>COMPETENCE 8</b>	<b>ABLE TO MANAGE FAMILY IN A HEALTHY WAY, CONSIDERING THE CHARACTERISTICS OF HEALTHY FAMILIES</b>
Description	<i>Know the characteristics of healthy families. Able and willing to create a structure and a way of functioning that stimulate emergence of healthy family characteristics.</i>
<b>COMPETENCE 9</b>	<b>SUCCESSFUL FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>
Description	<i>Able to make and stay on a budget; able to augment (increase) assets, make plans or establish both short- and long-term goals and achieve them. Able and willing to adjust desires to match income, able to postpone actions related to immediate gratification in order to reach long-term goals.</i>
<b>COMPETENCE 10</b>	<b>CAPACITY TO CONSISTENTLY SATISFY PARTNER SEXUALLY</b>
Description	<i>Able to satisfy the partner sexually and maintain a passionate and exciting sexual life. Have intimacy under control, i.e., master his/her sexuality.</i>
<b>COMPETENCE 11</b>	<b>CAPACITY TO SATISFY THE NEEDS OF THE CHILDREN AND FOSTER SYMMETRIC DEVELOPMENT</b>
Description	<i>Foster the development of children with the capacity to govern themselves positively, i.e., as autonomous, competent, self-sufficient and highly productive individuals.</i>
<b>COMPETENCE 12</b>	<b>ABILITY TO LIVE A FUNCTIONAL AND PRODUCTIVE RELIGIOUS LIFE</b>

Description	<i>Able to live a healthy, functional, inspirational and highly productive religious life. Be connected to society and able to inspire and influence others for good.</i>
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## **APPENDIX N**

### **CULTURAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NETHERLANDS AND OTHER COUNTRIES**

## Appendix N

### Cultural differences between Netherlands and Other countries

1. Equality is not an option; it is a right and must be achieved in all aspects of one's life. Women are equal to men and both genders must accept this. Equality is part of the lifestyle and should be promoted in every facet of the society. Egalitarian approach is a must in a relationship. Men and women are different but equal. Complete intolerance for "macho culture" must be dropped.
  - Practical implication: Dutch women cannot conceive that men would order them around and men would not try to do so. They would not wish to take all decisions, or lead alone, in order to feel that they are "in charge". One partner may take a coordinator role, but never seek a status of a leader, in order to assert "I am superior or better equipped."
2. Open communication is essential at every level. Honesty is extremely appreciated in interwoven in everything...even though apparent liberal society...the point is however be honest about what you feel and what you do. Communicate assertively and openly; do not hide feelings and act secretly. Dutch people could be brutally honest, which may be perceived as offensively direct in other cultures.
  - Practical implication: What may hurt one's feelings in some cultures, or be considered indiscreet, could be considered as honesty and be highly appreciated in other cultures.
3. Negotiation is a part of the society and a way of living. Dutch people are well known for their "polder model"—a cultural custom to negotiate about everything until an agreement is reached, no matter how much time it takes. Dutch thought pattern always starts from the premise that we should talk and negotiate to reach to a compromise.
  - Unilateral decision is unconceivable and unacceptable in the Dutch society; it could never be an option.
4. Freedom. A common slogan "nothing must, but everything may ...if you would like" addressed this issue. As imposing member of non-imposing society, you are not obliged to do anything, but you may do it, if you feel like it.
  - Role cannot be imposed. A woman does not need to do nothing unless she wants to /neither do man. She should not be "boxed in" by preconceived gender roles, such as "women always do the dishes", etc. Roles are negotiated and decided on based on character strength and disposition/natural inclination.
5. Sex is open. Inhibition does not permeate the society. Sex is openly spoken about and the conventional / traditional thoughts about sex have been updated to reflect modern times.

Even though some of these concepts and ideas are being practiced in other societies and cultures, the level of acceptance of these concepts is particularly high and permeates the Dutch society. The level of failure in marital relations in the Netherlands

is higher than in most countries in the world, in particular if Dutch nationals marry “not natives”. It appears that culture plays an important role in the failure of relationships between Dutch individuals and foreigners.

Statistics indicate that mixed marriages are particularly unstable in the Netherlands, whereby 50% of marriages between Dutch and non-Dutch individuals end in divorce within the first 10 years, while only 30% of other types of marriages dissolve in the same period(<http://mens-en-samenleving.infonu.nl/man-en-vrouw/96496-de-meest-voorkomende-redenen-voor-een-echtscheiding.html>)

According to CBS (2002), and Researcher Janssen the risk for divorce in mixed marriages is higher in the Netherlands (<http://www.cbs.nl/NR/rdonlyres/6E309C4A-8CE8-462F-AFBC-18BAF7CFC1D1/0/index1323.pdf>), suggesting that culture plays a more important role in marital success than previously thought.

Janssen, J. P. G. (2002). Do opposites attract divorce? Dimensions of mixed marriage and the risk of divorce in the Netherlands. Dissertatie, Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen.

**APPENDIX O**

**AUTHORIZATION FOR INVESTMENT MODEL**



## APPENDIX O

### AUTHORIZATION FOR INVESTMENT MODEL

Thanks for your note, Cherrel.

You are welcome to use the Investment Model Scale in your research. No special permission is needed to use it in research.

I am also attaching a new paper, currently in press at *Personal Relationships*, which validates a Spanish version of the Investment Model Scale. It might prove useful in your research.

My best to you,

Chris Agnew

Christopher R. Agnew, Ph.D.  
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phone: 765-494-6061  
fax: 765-496-1264  
<http://www.purdue.edu/hhs/psy/>

On Sep 16, 2013, at 5:56 AM, Cherrel Francisca <[francherrel@hotmail.com](mailto:francherrel@hotmail.com)> wrote:

Dear professor Christopher Agnew

My name is Cherrel Francisca and I live in the Netherland. Currently I am pursuing a Ph.D at Montemorelos University in Mexico in Family Education. At the moment I am working on my dissertation and I would like to request your permission to use the Rusbult Investment Model Scale as an instrument in my research.

For my Doctoral thesis I will be focusing on a new Marital Education Programme and I would like to know the impact of this Marital and Relationship Education programme on couple who might have some marital problems, couple who are adjusted, couple who live in the Netherlands and couples who live in the Curacao (former Netherlands Antilles). The New Marital and Relationship Education Programme has been developed by myself. All couples who will be participating will be assessed both prior and after being exposed to the New Marital and Relationship Education Programme - this to discover their level and potential increase in level of commitment. In short, the questionnaire will be used as an instrument to pre-test and post-test participants. Later, this is after 6 months and a year we will be testing the couple again in order to assess durability of potential effect. Please let me know what procedure should I follow, to whom should I direct my request, what are the cost, etc. I will gladly send you more information regarding my research and proposal.

Thank you very much

Cordially

Cherrel J. Francisca

P.S. If you agree and grant me permission to use the RusbultInvestement Model, I will be needing an official letter from you authorizing me to use this instrument.

**APPENDIX P**

**AUTHORIZATION FOR THE USE OF DAS  
(DYADIC ADJUSTMENT SCALE)**

## APPENDIX P

### AUTHORIZATION FOR THE USE OF DAS (DYADIC ADJUSTMENT SCALE)



*Publishers and Distributors of Professional Assessment Materials*

[www.mhs.com](http://www.mhs.com)

June 26, 2015

To Whom it May Concern,

This letter is to confirm that Cherrel Francisca has been granted permission by Multi-Health Systems Inc. (MHS) to use the Papiamentu version of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale™ (DAS™).

Cherrel Francisca has also met our Qualifications, which are in accordance with the ethical and professional standards of the American Psychological Association and the Standards for Education and Psychological Testing, to administer this instrument.

Thank you,

Betty Mangos  
Multi Health Systems, Inc.

#### MHS

In Canada: 3770 Victoria Park Ave., Toronto, ON M2H 3M6; (800) 268-6011 or 416-492-2627

In US: P.O. Box 950, North Tonawanda, NY 14120-0950; (800) 456-3003  
International +1-416-492-2627

Fax +1-416-492-3343; Toll Free in Canada and the U.S. (888) 540-4484

VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT <http://www.mhs.com>

## **APPENDIX Q**

### **HYPOTHESES TESTING OUTPUT**

## APPENDIX Q Hypotheses testing output

### Hypothesis 1

#### Oneway

Descriptives									
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Mini	Max
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
DAS_DC Consenso diádico	1 EA1	102	3.4842	.48934	.04845	3.3880	3.5803	2.15	4.31
	2 ED1	52	2.3491	.35902	.04979	2.2492	2.4491	1.69	3.15
	11 EA2	102	4.1689	.30425	.03013	4.1092	4.2287	3.38	4.92
	21 ED2	52	3.3521	.32074	.04448	3.2628	3.4414	2.46	3.92
	31 CT2	64	4.1238	.39879	.04985	4.0242	4.2234	3.31	4.85
	Total	372	3.6048	.71914	.03729	3.5315	3.6782	1.69	4.92
DAS_AE Afectividad emocional	1 EA1	102	2.0858	.39567	.03918	2.0081	2.1635	1.00	3.00
	2 ED1	52	1.8894	.40346	.05595	1.7771	2.0017	1.00	2.75
	11 EA2	102	2.7181	.20414	.02021	2.6780	2.7582	2.25	3.00
	21 ED2	52	2.4904	.24735	.03430	2.4215	2.5592	2.00	3.00
	31 CT2	64	2.5664	.33994	.04249	2.4815	2.6513	1.75	3.00
	Total	372	2.3710	.44829	.02324	2.3253	2.4167	1.00	3.00
DAS_DS Satisfacción diádica	1 EA1	102	3.4588	.48734	.04825	3.3631	3.5545	2.30	4.70
	2 ED1	52	2.1423	.45303	.06282	2.0162	2.2684	.80	3.00
	11 EA2	102	4.2706	.28444	.02816	4.2147	4.3265	3.60	5.00
	21 ED2	52	3.7327	.26548	.03682	3.6588	3.8066	2.60	4.20
	31 CT2	64	4.1281	.36186	.04523	4.0377	4.2185	3.30	4.70
	Total	372	3.6508	.78851	.04088	3.5704	3.7312	.80	5.00
DAS_DH Cohesión diádica	1 EA1	102	3.0549	.86387	.08554	2.8852	3.2246	.40	4.80
	2 ED1	52	1.6808	.36997	.05131	1.5778	1.7838	.80	2.40
	11 EA2	102	3.9941	.38840	.03846	3.9178	4.0704	3.20	4.80
	21 ED2	52	2.7500	.33810	.04689	2.6559	2.8441	1.80	3.40
	31 CT2	64	3.5563	.74958	.09370	3.3690	3.7435	2.20	4.80
	Total	372	3.1640	.96219	.04989	3.0659	3.2621	.40	4.80
TotalDAS Ajuste Diádico (satisfacción marital)	1 EA1	102	103.50	14.354	1.421	100.68	106.32	68	129
	2 ED1	52	64.83	8.728	1.210	62.40	67.26	41	80
	11 EA2	102	127.75	6.463	.640	126.48	129.01	113	140
	21 ED2	52	100.71	7.371	1.022	98.66	102.76	76	114
	31 CT2	64	122.94	10.046	1.256	120.43	125.45	101	139
	Total	372	107.70	22.856	1.185	105.37	110.03	41	140

Test of Homogeneity of Variances				
	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
DAS_DC Consenso diádico	8.922	4	367	.000
DAS_AE Afectividad emocional	11.402	4	367	.000
DAS_DS Satisfacción diádica	9.661	4	367	.000
DAS_DH Cohesión diádica	19.354	4	367	.000

TotalDAS Ajuste Diadico (satisfacción marital)	21.815	4	367	.000
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ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
DAS_DC Consenso diádico	Between Groups	136.496	4	34.124	226.165	.000
	Within Groups	55.373	367	.151		
	Total	191.870	371			
DAS_AE Afectividad emocional	Between Groups	35.833	4	8.958	84.904	.000
	Within Groups	38.723	367	.106		
	Total	74.556	371			
DAS_DS Satisfacción diádica	Between Groups	176.200	4	44.050	296.796	.000
	Within Groups	54.470	367	.148		
	Total	230.670	371			
DAS_DH Cohesión diádica	Between Groups	204.660	4	51.165	135.268	.000
	Within Groups	138.817	367	.378		
	Total	343.477	371			
TotalDAS Ajuste Diadico (satisfacción marital)	Between Groups	155763.937	4	38940.984	375.665	.000
	Within Groups	38042.738	367	103.659		
	Total	193806.675	371			

Contrast Coefficients					
Contrast	Group				
	1 EA1	2 ED1	11 EA2	21 ED2	31 CT2
1	1	0	-1	0	0
2	0	1	0	-1	0
3	0	0	1	0	-1
4	0	0	0	1	-1

Contrast Tests							
		Contrast	Value of Contrast	Std. Error	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
DAS_DC Consenso diádico	Does not assume equal variances	1	-.6848	.05705	-12.002	168.938	.000
		2	-1.0030	.06676	-15.023	100.731	.000
		3	.0451	.05824	.775	108.402	.440
		4	-.7717	.06681	-11.551	113.992	.000
DAS_AE Afectividad emocional	Does not assume equal variances	1	-.6324	.04408	-14.344	151.212	.000
		2	-.6010	.06563	-9.157	84.592	.000
		3	.1517	.04706	3.225	91.804	.002
		4	-.0760	.05461	-1.392	112.727	.167
DAS_DS Satisfacción diádica	Does not assume equal variances	1	-.8118	.05587	-14.529	162.660	.000
		2	-1.5904	.07282	-21.841	82.333	.000
		3	.1425	.05328	2.674	110.920	.009
		4	-.3954	.05832	-6.780	112.908	.000
DAS_DH Cohesión diádica	Does not assume equal variances	1	-.9392	.09378	-10.015	140.231	.000
		2	-1.0692	.06950	-15.384	101.184	.000
		3	.4379	.10128	4.323	84.518	.000
		4	-.8063	.10477	-7.695	91.420	.000
		1	-24.25	1.559	-15.555	140.341	.000

TotalDAS Ajuste Diadico (satisfacción marital)	Does not assume equal variances	2	-35.88	1.584	-22.651	99.217	.000
		3	4.81	1.409	3.411	95.941	.001
		4	-22.23	1.619	-13.727	112.910	.000

### Univariate Analysis of Variance

Between-Subjects Factors		
	Value Label	N
Group	1 Experimental: Adjusted	204
	2 Experimental: Distress	104
	3 Control 1: Posttest with intervention	64
Time	1.00 Pretest	154
	2.00 Posttest 1	218

### Descriptive Statistics

Dependent Variable: TotalDAS Marital satisfaction

Group	Time	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
1 Experimental: Adjusted	1.00 Pretest	103.50	14.354	102
	2.00 Posttest 1	127.75	6.463	102
	Total	115.62	16.461	204
2 Experimental: Distress	1.00 Pretest	64.83	8.728	52
	2.00 Posttest 1	100.71	7.371	52
	Total	82.77	19.740	104
3 Control 1: Posttest with intervention	2.00 Posttest 1	122.94	10.046	64
	Total	122.94	10.046	64
	1.00 Pretest	90.44	22.318	154
Total	2.00 Posttest 1	119.89	13.468	218
	Total	107.70	22.856	372

### Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances<sup>a</sup>

Dependent Variable: TotalDAS Marital satisfaction

F	df1	df2	Sig.
21.815	4	367	.000

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Group + Time + Group \* Time

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects								
Dependent Variable: TotalDAS Marital satisfaction								
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power <sup>b</sup>
Model	4470398.262 <sup>a</sup>	5	894079.652	8625.227	.000	.992	43126.133	1.000
Group	74854.820	2	37427.410	361.064	.000	.663	722.128	1.000
Time	62263.147	1	62263.147	600.655	.000	.621	600.655	1.000
Group * Time	2333.043	1	2333.043	22.507	.000	.058	22.507	.922
Error	38042.738	367	103.659					



Total	4508441.000	372						
a. R Squared = .992 (Adjusted R Squared = .991)								
b. Computed using alpha = .001								

### Custom Hypothesis Tests

Contrast Results (K Matrix)		
Time Repeated Contrast	Dependent Variable	
	TotalDAS Marital satisfaction	
	Contrast Estimate	-30.065
	Hypothesized Value	0
	Difference (Estimate - Hypothesized)	-30.065
Level 1 vs. Level 2	Std. Error	1.227
	Sig.	.000
	99.9% Confidence Interval for Difference	Lower Bound Upper Bound
		-34.134 -25.996

Test Results								
Dependent Variable: TotalDAS Marital satisfaction								
Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power <sup>a</sup>
Contrast	62263.147	1	62263.147	600.655	.000	.621	600.655	1.000
Error	38042.738	367	103.659					

a. Computed using alpha = .001

### Estimated Marginal Means

1. Group				
Dependent Variable: TotalDAS Marital satisfaction				
Group	Mean	Std. Error	99.9% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1 Experimental: Adjusted	115.623	.713	113.258	117.987
2 Experimental: Distress	82.769	.998	79.457	86.081
3 Control 1: Posttest with intervention	122.938 <sup>a</sup>	1.273	118.716	127.159

a. Based on modified population marginal mean.

2. Time				
Dependent Variable: TotalDAS Marital satisfaction				
Time	Mean	Std. Error	99.9% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1.00 Pretest	84.163 <sup>a</sup>	.867	81.286	87.041
2.00 Posttest 1	117.131	.717	114.752	119.510

a. Based on modified population marginal mean.

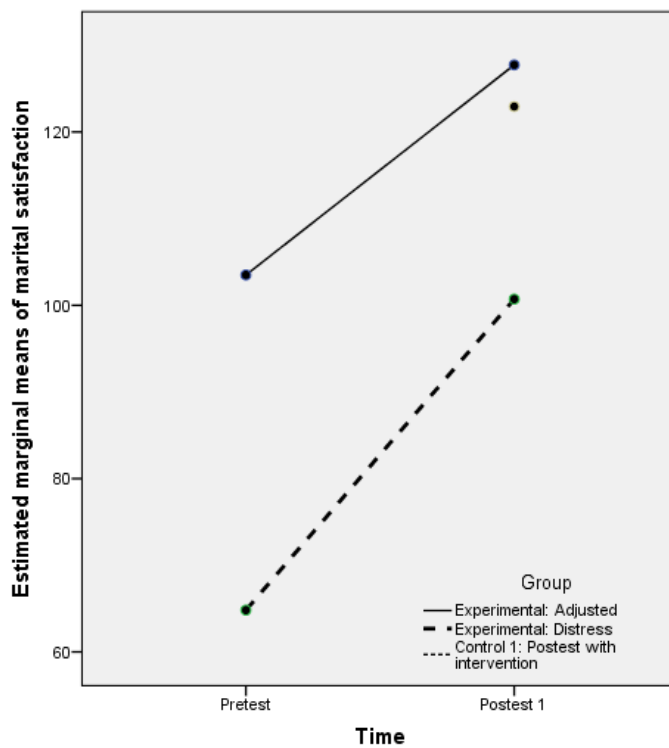
### 3. Group \* Time

Dependent Variable: TotalDAS Marital satisfaction

Group	Time	Mean	Std. Error	99.9% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1 Experimental: Adjusted	1.00 Pretest	103.500	1.008	100.156	106.844
	2.00 Postest 1	127.745	1.008	124.401	131.089
2 Experimental: Distress	1.00 Pretest	64.827	1.412	60.143	69.510
	2.00 Postest 1	100.712	1.412	96.028	105.395
3 Control 1: Postest with intervention	1.00 Pretest	. <sup>a</sup>	.	.	.
	2.00 Postest 1	122.938	1.273	118.716	127.159

a. This level combination of factors is not observed, thus the corresponding population marginal mean is not estimable.

### Profile Plots



## Univariate Analysis of Variance

### Between-Subjects Factors

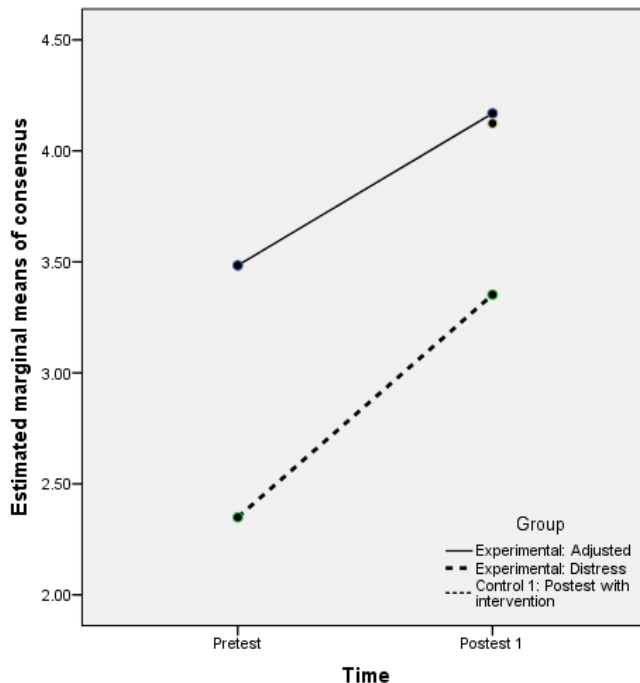
		Value Label	N
Group	1	Experimental: Adjusted	204
	2	Experimental: Distress	104
	3	Control 1: Posttest with intervention	64
Time	1.00	Pretest	154
	2.00	Posttest 1	218

### Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: DAS_DC Consensus								
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power <sup>b</sup>
Corrected Model	136.496 <sup>a</sup>	4	34.124	226.165	.000	.711	904.662	1.000
Intercept	3827.406	1	3827.406	25367.016	.000	.986	25367.016	1.000
Group	67.475	2	33.738	223.605	.000	.549	447.209	1.000
Time	49.052	1	49.052	325.103	.000	.470	325.103	1.000
Group * Time	1.744	1	1.744	11.556	.001	.031	11.556	.924
Error	55.373	367	.151					
Total	5025.959	372						
Corrected Total	191.870	371						

a. R Squared = .711 (Adjusted R Squared = .708)  
b. Computed using alpha = .05

### Profile Plots



## Univariate Analysis of Variance

### Between-Subjects Factors

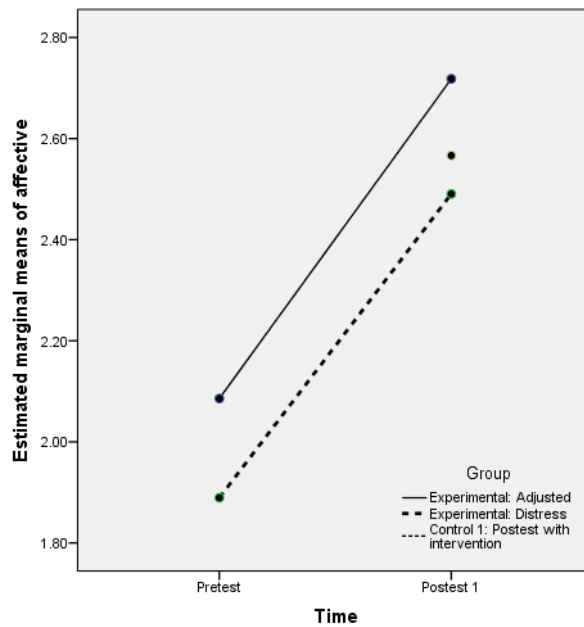
		Value Label	N
Group	1	Experimental: Adjusted	204
	2	Experimental: Distress	104
	3	Control 1: Posttest with intervention	64
Time	1.00	Pretest	154
	2.00	Posttest 1	218

### Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: DAS_AE Affective								
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power <sup>b</sup>
Corrected Model	35.833 <sup>a</sup>	4	8.958	84.904	.000	.481	339.614	1.000
Intercept	1701.840	1	1701.840	16129.319	.000	.978	16129.319	1.000
Group	3.330	2	1.665	15.779	.000	.079	31.558	.999
Time	26.194	1	26.194	248.255	.000	.403	248.255	1.000
Group * Time	.017	1	.017	.161	.689	.000	.161	.069
Error	38.723	367	.106					
Total	2165.750	372						
Corrected Total	74.556	371						

a. R Squared = .481 (Adjusted R Squared = .475)  
b. Computed using alpha = .05

### Profile Plots



## Univariate Analysis of Variance

### Between-Subjects Factors

		Value Label	N
Group	1	Experimental: Adjusted	204
	2	Experimental: Distress	104
	3	Control 1: Posttest with intervention	64
Time	1.00	Pretest	154
	2.00	Posttest 1	218

### Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

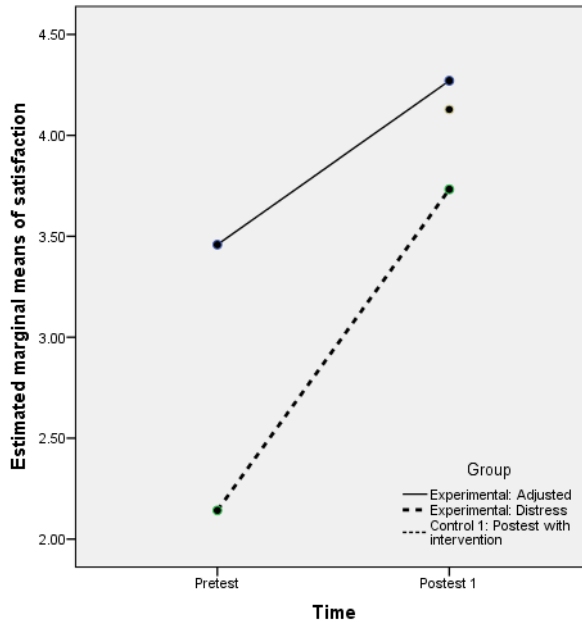
Dependent Variable: DAS\_DS Satisfaction

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power <sup>b</sup>
Corrected Model	176.200 <sup>a</sup>	4	44.050	296.796	.000	.764	1187.186	1.000
Intercept	3864.905	1	3864.905	26040.610	.000	.986	26040.610	1.000
Group	59.245	2	29.623	199.589	.000	.521	399.177	1.000
Time	99.369	1	99.369	669.522	.000	.646	669.522	1.000
Group * Time	10.440	1	10.440	70.342	.000	.161	70.342	1.000
Error	54.470	367	.148					
Total	5188.830	372						
Corrected Total	230.670	371						

a. R Squared = .764 (Adjusted R Squared = .761)

b. Computed using alpha = .05

### Profile Plots



### Univariate Analysis of Variance

### Between-Subjects Factors

		Value Label	N
Group	1	Experimental: Adjusted	204
	2	Experimental: Distress	104
	3	Control 1: Posttest with intervention	64
Time	1.00	Pretest	154
	2.00	Posttest 1	218

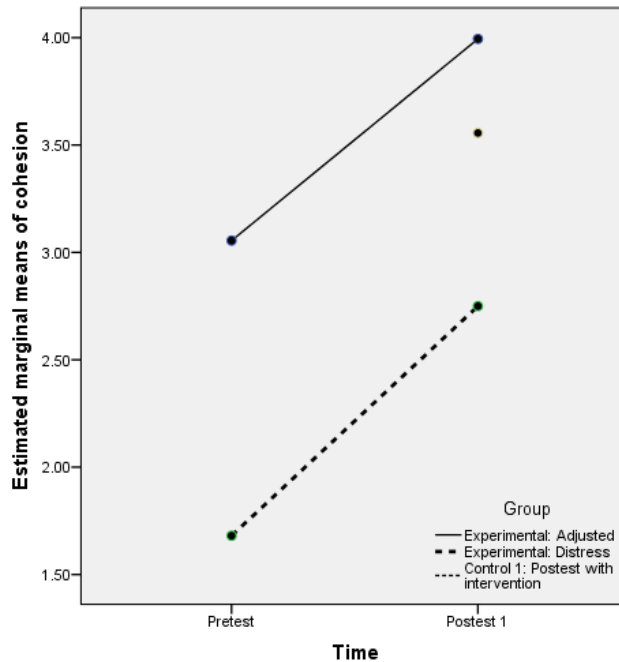
### Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: DAS_DH Cohesion								
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power <sup>b</sup>
Corrected Model	204.660 <sup>a</sup>	4	51.165	135.268	.000	.596	541.073	1.000
Intercept	2788.647	1	2788.647	7372.522	.000	.953	7372.522	1.000
Group	118.088	2	59.044	156.099	.000	.460	312.197	1.000
Time	69.466	1	69.466	183.652	.000	.334	183.652	1.000
Group * Time	.291	1	.291	.770	.381	.002	.770	.141
Error	138.817	367	.378					
Total	4067.480	372						
Corrected Total	343.477	371						

a. R Squared = .596 (Adjusted R Squared = .591)

b. Computed using alpha = .05

### Profile Plots



**Hypothesis 2  
Oneway**

<b>Descriptives</b>									
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
TotalCOMP Pivotal competences for long lasting relationship	1 EA1	102	558.04	57.014	5.645	546.84	569.24	410	672
	2 ED1	52	313.79	16.928	2.348	309.08	318.50	289	354
	4 CC1	48	420.69	42.918	6.195	408.23	433.15	328	514
	11 EA2	102	638.25	40.442	4.004	630.31	646.20	491	734
	12 EA3	68	652.01	41.965	5.089	641.86	662.17	558	781
	21 ED2	52	635.88	27.001	3.744	628.37	643.40	549	683
	22 ED3	30	616.60	47.641	8.698	598.81	634.39	529	672
	31 CT2	64	631.94	43.872	5.484	620.98	642.90	531	716
	41 CC2	48	422.69	41.545	5.997	410.62	434.75	332	513
	52 CO2	44	429.18	101.064	15.236	398.46	459.91	307	685
Total	610	547.62	121.790	4.931	537.94	557.31	289	781	
LEMR Liderazgo a través de las Etapas del Matrimonio	1 EA1	102	5.3556	.67875	.06721	5.2223	5.4889	3.64	6.64
	2 ED1	52	3.1416	.32971	.04572	3.0498	3.2334	2.55	3.73
	4 CC1	48	4.2216	.81569	.11773	3.9847	4.4584	2.82	5.82
	11 EA2	102	6.2433	.47370	.04690	6.1503	6.3364	4.36	7.00
	12 EA3	68	6.3168	.36380	.04412	6.2288	6.4049	5.45	7.00
	21 ED2	52	6.0594	.45433	.06300	5.9330	6.1859	5.00	7.00
	22 ED3	30	6.1061	.42846	.07823	5.9461	6.2660	5.36	6.91
	31 CT2	64	6.0909	.54833	.06854	5.9539	6.2279	4.36	7.00
	41 CC2	48	4.2008	.76635	.11061	3.9782	4.4233	2.73	5.73
	52 CO2	44	4.2789	.97645	.14720	3.9821	4.5758	2.73	6.55
Total	610	5.3387	1.19537	.04840	5.2437	5.4338	2.55	7.00	
MEIEA Inteligencia Emocional y Amor	1 EA1	102	5.1721	.67949	.06728	5.0386	5.3056	2.89	6.44
	2 ED1	52	3.2949	.54738	.07591	3.1425	3.4473	2.56	4.33
	4 CC1	48	3.8889	.79067	.11412	3.6593	4.1185	2.33	5.67
	11 EA2	102	6.0196	.51107	.05060	5.9192	6.1200	4.56	7.00
	12 EA3	68	6.0261	.39860	.04834	5.9297	6.1226	5.11	7.00
	21 ED2	52	5.9893	.38254	.05305	5.8828	6.0958	5.33	7.00
	22 ED3	30	5.9259	.59752	.10909	5.7028	6.1490	4.56	6.78
	31 CT2	64	5.9896	.59217	.07402	5.8417	6.1375	4.44	7.00
	41 CC2	48	3.9097	.74963	.10820	3.6921	4.1274	2.33	5.67
	52 CO2	44	4.0000	.99583	.15013	3.6972	4.3028	2.56	6.00
Total	610	5.1566	1.18403	.04794	5.0625	5.2508	2.33	7.00	
MECV Ciclo de Vida	1 EA1	102	4.5647	.97875	.09691	4.3725	4.7570	1.80	6.40
	2 ED1	52	2.3000	.64169	.08899	2.1214	2.4786	1.60	3.40
	4 CC1	48	3.0958	.84248	.12160	2.8512	3.3405	2.00	5.40
	11 EA2	102	5.6941	.73644	.07292	5.5495	5.8388	3.20	7.00
	12 EA3	68	5.7824	.71382	.08656	5.6096	5.9551	4.00	7.00
	21 ED2	52	5.8192	.59838	.08298	5.6526	5.9858	4.40	7.00
	22 ED3	30	5.4733	.83457	.15237	5.1617	5.7850	3.60	6.40
	31 CT2	64	5.4531	.75529	.09441	5.2645	5.6418	3.60	7.00
	41 CC2	48	3.1500	.81214	.11722	2.9142	3.3858	2.00	5.40
	52 CO2	44	3.3818	1.24027	.18698	3.0047	3.7589	1.80	6.40
Total	610	4.6289	1.47503	.05972	4.5116	4.7461	1.60	7.00	

MPF Manejo y Planificación Familiar	1 EA1	102	4.1784	.81698	.08089	4.0180	4.3389	2.40	5.70
	2 ED1	52	1.9635	.13288	.01843	1.9265	2.0005	1.70	2.30
	4 CC1	48	3.0750	.70666	.10200	2.8698	3.2802	2.20	5.40
	11 EA2	102	5.1980	.78020	.07725	5.0448	5.3513	2.90	6.70
	12 EA3	68	5.3603	.76160	.09236	5.1759	5.5446	3.50	7.00
	21 ED2	52	5.4865	.57906	.08030	5.3253	5.6477	4.20	6.40
	22 ED3	30	5.3300	.83590	.15261	5.0179	5.6421	3.00	6.40
	31 CT2	64	5.1844	.73013	.09127	5.0020	5.3668	3.30	6.20
	41 CC2	48	3.0896	.68206	.09845	2.8915	3.2876	2.20	5.50
	52 CO2	44	3.1455	1.01213	.15258	2.8377	3.4532	1.90	5.90
Total	610	4.3185	1.36155	.05513	4.2103	4.4268	1.70	7.00	
MDP Manejo de Diferencias de Personalidad	1 EA1	102	5.2990	.69031	.06835	5.1634	5.4346	3.13	6.63
	2 ED1	52	3.1875	.20034	.02778	3.1317	3.2433	2.75	3.75
	4 CC1	48	4.0807	.63607	.09181	3.8960	4.2654	2.88	5.25
	11 EA2	102	5.9865	.58443	.05787	5.8717	6.1013	4.00	7.00
	12 EA3	68	6.2518	.41175	.04993	6.1522	6.3515	5.38	7.00
	21 ED2	52	5.9183	.39674	.05502	5.8078	6.0287	4.88	6.50
	22 ED3	30	5.7708	.44659	.08154	5.6041	5.9376	4.63	6.38
	31 CT2	64	5.9375	.59844	.07481	5.7880	6.0870	4.50	6.88
	41 CC2	48	4.1328	.60605	.08748	3.9568	4.3088	2.88	5.25
	52 CO2	44	4.0313	1.11449	.16802	3.6924	4.3701	2.75	6.38
Total	610	5.2041	1.15920	.04693	5.1119	5.2963	2.75	7.00	
CPMC Comunicación efectiva	1 EA1	102	5.1737	.68235	.06756	5.0396	5.3077	3.14	6.64
	2 ED1	52	3.0591	.24118	.03345	2.9919	3.1262	2.71	3.57
	4 CC1	48	4.0461	.63709	.09196	3.8611	4.2311	2.57	5.07
	11 EA2	102	5.8494	.47539	.04707	5.7561	5.9428	4.71	6.86
	12 EA3	68	6.0242	.55625	.06746	5.8895	6.1588	4.71	7.00
	21 ED2	52	5.8668	.33354	.04625	5.7739	5.9596	5.21	6.57
	22 ED3	30	5.6167	.52972	.09671	5.4189	5.8145	4.64	6.43
	31 CT2	64	5.7790	.61310	.07664	5.6259	5.9322	4.36	6.86
	41 CC2	48	4.0923	.60573	.08743	3.9164	4.2681	2.71	5.21
	52 CO2	44	3.8685	1.02519	.15455	3.5568	4.1802	2.57	6.43
Total	610	5.0776	1.13291	.04587	4.9876	5.1677	2.57	7.00	
MDG Administración de diferencias de género	1 EA1	102	5.2495	.84986	.08415	5.0825	5.4164	1.89	7.00
	2 ED1	52	2.4038	.21785	.03021	2.3432	2.4645	2.00	2.89
	4 CC1	48	3.9676	.54576	.07877	3.8091	4.1261	3.00	5.00
	11 EA2	102	5.9978	.60232	.05964	5.8795	6.1161	4.11	7.00
	12 EA3	68	6.1944	.56440	.06844	6.0578	6.3311	5.00	7.00
	21 ED2	52	5.9081	.48143	.06676	5.7741	6.0421	4.22	6.67
	22 ED3	30	5.9556	.39213	.07159	5.8091	6.1020	5.11	6.56
	31 CT2	64	5.8819	.67655	.08457	5.7129	6.0509	4.44	7.00
	41 CC2	48	4.0185	.48532	.07005	3.8776	4.1594	3.22	5.00
	52 CO2	44	3.9773	1.07822	.16255	3.6495	4.3051	2.22	6.33
Total	610	5.1051	1.32283	.05356	4.9999	5.2103	1.89	7.00	
MCFS Salud familiar	1 EA1	102	5.1025	.82487	.08167	4.9405	5.2645	2.00	6.73
	2 ED1	52	2.1958	.14887	.02064	2.1544	2.2373	1.82	2.45
	4 CC1	48	3.5417	.55153	.07961	3.3815	3.7018	2.64	4.55
	11 EA2	102	5.7638	.54624	.05409	5.6565	5.8711	4.00	6.91
	12 EA3	68	6.0267	.54388	.06596	5.8951	6.1584	4.82	7.00
	21 ED2	52	5.7133	.43927	.06092	5.5910	5.8356	4.45	6.45
	22 ED3	30	5.7909	.38728	.07071	5.6463	5.9355	4.91	6.36
	31 CT2	64	5.6179	.63794	.07974	5.4585	5.7773	4.18	6.73
41 CC2	48	3.5568	.54983	.07936	3.3972	3.7165	2.55	4.45	



	52 CO2	44	3.5909	1.14212	.17218	3.2437	3.9381	2.18	5.91
	Total	610	4.8548	1.36315	.05519	4.7465	4.9632	1.82	7.00
MFR Administración financiera	1 EA1	102	4.8794	.79831	.07904	4.7226	5.0362	2.60	6.50
	2 ED1	52	2.0019	.22535	.03125	1.9392	2.0647	1.70	2.50
	4 CC1	48	2.9187	.64335	.09286	2.7319	3.1056	1.80	4.40
	11 EA2	102	5.5245	.72664	.07195	5.3818	5.6672	2.40	6.80
	12 EA3	68	5.7029	.73036	.08857	5.5262	5.8797	3.90	7.00
	21 ED2	52	5.7538	.39826	.05523	5.6430	5.8647	4.80	6.40
	22 ED3	30	5.4633	.74855	.13667	5.1838	5.7428	3.60	6.20
	31 CT2	64	5.5656	.53637	.06705	5.4316	5.6996	4.60	7.00
	41 CC2	48	2.9167	.64753	.09346	2.7286	3.1047	1.80	4.40
	52 CO2	44	3.2227	1.48118	.22330	2.7724	3.6730	1.80	7.00
	Total	610	4.5808	1.49825	.06066	4.4617	4.7000	1.70	7.00
MSSP Satisfacción sexual de la pareja	1 EA1	102	5.4824	.75129	.07439	5.3348	5.6299	3.10	6.90
	2 ED1	52	4.0519	.42495	.05893	3.9336	4.1702	3.60	6.10
	4 CC1	48	4.8500	.67446	.09735	4.6542	5.0458	3.60	6.00
	11 EA2	102	6.0814	.60913	.06031	5.9617	6.2010	4.00	7.00
	12 EA3	68	6.2676	.40277	.04884	6.1702	6.3651	5.50	6.90
	21 ED2	52	5.9846	.29992	.04159	5.9011	6.0681	5.50	6.60
	22 ED3	30	6.1233	.45613	.08328	5.9530	6.2937	5.40	7.00
	31 CT2	64	6.1969	.55377	.06922	6.0585	6.3352	4.30	7.00
	41 CC2	48	4.8729	.65028	.09386	4.6841	5.0617	3.80	6.00
	52 CO2	44	4.8682	.79935	.12051	4.6252	5.1112	3.90	6.50
	Total	610	5.5554	.91210	.03693	5.4829	5.6279	3.10	7.00
PRSNB Educación de los hijos	1 EA1	102	5.3824	.83072	.08225	5.2192	5.5455	3.67	7.00
	2 ED1	52	3.7051	.27139	.03764	3.6296	3.7807	3.33	4.17
	4 CC1	48	4.3611	.81891	.11820	4.1233	4.5989	2.67	6.00
	11 EA2	102	5.9216	.72732	.07202	5.7787	6.0644	4.00	7.00
	12 EA3	68	5.9828	.53107	.06440	5.8543	6.1114	5.00	7.00
	21 ED2	52	5.6699	.54482	.07555	5.5182	5.8216	4.83	6.83
	22 ED3	30	6.1222	.43092	.07868	5.9613	6.2831	5.50	7.00
	31 CT2	64	5.9766	.67838	.08480	5.8071	6.1460	4.00	7.00
	41 CC2	48	4.3646	.80970	.11687	4.1295	4.5997	2.83	6.00
	52 CO2	44	4.7500	.88302	.13312	4.4815	5.0185	3.50	6.67
	Total	610	5.3137	1.03266	.04181	5.2315	5.3958	2.67	7.00
MRF Religión	1 EA1	102	5.6438	.73721	.07299	5.4990	5.7886	3.67	7.00
	2 ED1	52	3.5929	.45304	.06283	3.4668	3.7191	2.17	4.00
	4 CC1	48	4.2014	.57526	.08303	4.0344	4.3684	2.67	5.00
	11 EA2	102	6.0327	.69338	.06865	5.8965	6.1689	3.67	7.00
	12 EA3	68	6.3088	.48550	.05888	6.1913	6.4263	5.33	7.00
	21 ED2	52	5.7436	.35465	.04918	5.6449	5.8423	4.83	6.50
	22 ED3	30	6.0167	.62568	.11423	5.7830	6.2503	4.67	7.00
	31 CT2	64	5.8828	.63390	.07924	5.7245	6.0412	4.00	7.00
	41 CC2	48	4.1528	.55950	.08076	3.9903	4.3152	2.67	4.83
	52 CO2	44	4.4394	.98378	.14831	4.1403	4.7385	2.67	6.83
	Total	610	5.3423	1.09649	.04440	5.2552	5.4295	2.17	7.00

### Test of Homogeneity of Variances

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
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TotalCOMP Pivotal competences for long lasting relationship	17.572	9	600	.000
LEMUR Liderazgo a través de las Etapas del Matrimonio	14.819	9	600	.000
MEIEA Inteligencia Emocional y Amor	8.435	9	600	.000
MECV Ciclo de Vida	5.255	9	600	.000
MPF Manejo y Planificación Familiar	7.463	9	600	.000
MDP Manejo de Diferencias de Personalidad	18.213	9	600	.000
CPMC Comunicación efectiva	13.211	9	600	.000
MDG Administración de diferencias de género	11.654	9	600	.000
MCFS Salud familiar	16.840	9	600	.000
MFR Administración financiera	17.273	9	600	.000
MSSP Satisfacción sexual de la pareja	8.551	9	600	.000
PRSNB Educación de los hijos	8.137	9	600	.000
MRF Religión	5.452	9	600	.000

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
TotalCOMP Pivotal competences for long lasting relationship	Between Groups	7575904.976	9	841767.220	346.584	.000
	Within Groups	1457254.302	600	2428.757		
	Total	9033159.279	609			
LEMUR Liderazgo a través de las Etapas del Matrimonio	Between Groups	651.938	9	72.438	199.122	.000
	Within Groups	218.271	600	.364		
	Total	870.209	609			
MEIEA Inteligencia Emocional y Amor	Between Groups	616.488	9	68.499	173.207	.000
	Within Groups	237.284	600	.395		
	Total	853.772	609			
MECV Ciclo de Vida	Between Groups	913.441	9	101.493	147.960	.000
	Within Groups	411.572	600	.686		
	Total	1325.012	609			
MPF Manejo y Planificación Familiar	Between Groups	799.993	9	88.888	162.112	.000
	Within Groups	328.987	600	.548		
	Total	1128.981	609			
MDP Manejo de Diferencias de Personalidad	Between Groups	596.245	9	66.249	178.976	.000
	Within Groups	222.095	600	.370		
	Total	818.340	609			
CPMC Comunicación efectiva	Between Groups	569.090	9	63.232	178.492	.000
	Within Groups	212.555	600	.354		
	Total	781.645	609			
MDG Administración de diferencias de género	Between Groups	812.141	9	90.238	213.557	.000
	Within Groups	253.528	600	.423		
	Total	1065.669	609			

MCFS Salud familiar	Between Groups	887.392	9	98.599	242.224	.000
	Within Groups	244.234	600	.407		
	Total	1131.626	609			
MFR Administración financiera	Between Groups	1035.061	9	115.007	207.853	.000
	Within Groups	331.985	600	.553		
	Total	1367.046	609			
MSSP Satisfacción sexual de la pareja	Between Groups	293.415	9	32.602	91.735	.000
	Within Groups	213.232	600	.355		
	Total	506.647	609			
PRSNB Educación de los hijos	Between Groups	358.273	9	39.808	82.034	.000
	Within Groups	291.157	600	.485		
	Total	649.431	609			
MRF Religión	Between Groups	487.526	9	54.170	132.837	.000
	Within Groups	244.674	600	.408		
	Total	732.200	609			

#### Contrast Coefficients

Contrast	Group									
	1 EA1	2 ED1	4 CC1	11 EA2	12 EA3	21 ED2	22 ED3	31 CT2	41 CC2	52 CO2
1	1	0	0	-1	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	0	1	-1	0	0	0	0	0
3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	-1	0	0
4	1	0	-1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	-1	0
6	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	-1
7	0	1	0	0	0	-1	0	0	0	0
8	0	0	0	0	0	1	-1	0	0	0
9	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	-1	0
10	0	1	-1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

#### Contrast Tests

		Contrast	Value of Contrast	Std. Error	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
TotalCOMP Pivotal competences for long lasting relationship	Does not assume equal variances	1	-80.22	6.921	-11.590	182.104	.000
		2	-13.76	6.476	-2.125	140.039	.035
		3	6.32	6.790	.930	125.784	.354
		4	137.35	8.381	16.388	119.218	.000
		5	215.57	7.211	29.896	89.940	.000
		6	222.83	16.063	13.872	52.709	.000
		7	-322.10	4.419	-72.883	85.727	.000
		8	19.28	9.470	2.036	39.964	.048
		9	213.20	7.070	30.157	79.638	.000
		10	-106.90	6.625	-16.137	60.322	.000

LEMR Liderazgo a través de las Etapas del Matrimonio	Does not assume equal variances	1	-0.8877	.08195	-10.832	180.523	.000
		2	-.0735	.06439	-1.142	164.577	.255
		3	.1524	.08305	1.835	119.476	.069
		4	1.1340	.13557	8.365	78.730	.000
		5	2.0426	.12015	17.001	64.451	.000
		6	2.0379	.15367	13.261	50.808	.000
		7	-2.9178	.07785	-37.482	93.054	.000
		8	-.0466	.10044	-.464	63.607	.644
		9	1.8587	.12730	14.601	75.154	.000
		10	-1.0800	.12630	-8.551	60.968	.000
MEIEA Inteligencia Emocional y Amor	Does not assume equal variances	1	-.8475	.08419	-10.067	187.569	.000
		2	-.0065	.06998	-.093	163.812	.926
		3	.0300	.08967	.335	119.383	.738
		4	1.2832	.13248	9.686	80.805	.000
		5	2.1099	.11945	17.664	68.289	.000
		6	2.0261	.15772	12.847	52.019	.000
		7	-2.6944	.09261	-29.095	91.222	.000
		8	.0634	.12131	.523	42.970	.604
		9	2.0796	.12050	17.257	68.656	.000
		10	-.5940	.13706	-4.334	82.843	.000
MECV Ciclo de Vida	Does not assume equal variances	1	-1.1294	.12128	-9.312	187.603	.000
		2	-.0882	.11318	-.780	146.790	.437
		3	.2410	.11929	2.020	131.411	.045
		4	1.4689	.15549	9.446	105.801	.000
		5	2.5441	.13805	18.429	84.521	.000
		6	2.4005	.20604	11.651	61.592	.000
		7	-3.5192	.12167	-28.924	101.506	.000
		8	.3459	.17350	1.994	46.430	.052
		9	2.6692	.14362	18.585	86.003	.000
		10	-.7958	.15068	-5.282	87.652	.000
MPF Manejo y Planificación Familiar	Does not assume equal variances	1	-1.0196	.11185	-9.116	201.573	.000
		2	-.1623	.12041	-1.348	146.104	.180
		3	.0137	.11957	.114	140.596	.909
		4	1.1034	.13018	8.476	105.328	.000
		5	2.1085	.12514	16.849	104.298	.000
		6	2.2148	.17836	12.418	73.913	.000
		7	-3.5231	.08239	-42.762	56.357	.000
		8	.1565	.17245	.908	45.306	.369
		9	2.3970	.12704	18.867	92.579	.000
		10	-1.1115	.10365	-10.724	50.069	.000
MDP Manejo de Diferencias de Personalidad	Does not assume equal variances	1	-.6875	.08956	-7.677	196.647	.000
		2	-.2653	.07643	-3.471	167.453	.001
		3	.0490	.09458	.518	131.571	.605
		4	1.2183	.11446	10.644	99.340	.000
		5	1.8537	.10488	17.674	89.188	.000
		6	2.2206	.17528	12.669	50.677	.000
		7	-2.7308	.06163	-44.306	75.420	.000
		8	.1474	.09836	1.499	54.944	.140
		9	1.7855	.10334	17.278	80.003	.000
		10	-.8932	.09592	-9.312	55.572	.000
CPMC Comunicación efectiva	Does not assume	1	-.6758	.08234	-8.207	180.353	.000
		2	-.1747	.08225	-2.124	128.002	.036
		3	.0704	.08994	.783	109.756	.435

	equal variances	4	1.1275	.11411	9.881	98.133	.000
		5	1.7572	.09929	17.697	75.254	.000
		6	2.1557	.16863	12.783	59.556	.000
		7	-2.8077	.05708	-49.189	92.882	.000
		8	.2501	.10721	2.333	42.519	.024
		9	1.7745	.09891	17.940	71.807	.000
		10	-.9871	.09785	-10.088	59.301	.000
MDG Administra- ción de diferencias de género	Does not assume equal variances	1	-.7484	.10314	-7.256	182.021	.000
		2	-.1966	.09078	-2.166	150.002	.032
		3	.1159	.10348	1.120	122.366	.265
		4	1.2819	.11527	11.121	134.168	.000
		5	1.9793	.09200	21.515	112.358	.000
		6	2.2172	.17637	12.571	58.421	.000
		7	-3.5043	.07328	-47.821	71.046	.000
		8	-.0474	.09789	-.485	70.885	.629
		9	1.8896	.09677	19.527	97.231	.000
		10	-1.5637	.08437	-18.535	60.634	.000
MCFS Salud familiar	Does not assume equal variances	1	-.6613	.09796	-6.751	175.295	.000
		2	-.2629	.08530	-3.082	144.162	.002
		3	.1459	.09635	1.514	118.636	.133
		4	1.5608	.11405	13.685	130.656	.000
		5	2.2070	.09604	22.980	91.603	.000
		6	2.4358	.18438	13.211	55.774	.000
		7	-3.5175	.06432	-54.687	62.563	.000
		8	-.0776	.09333	-.832	67.028	.409
		9	2.1565	.10004	21.555	89.930	.000
		10	-1.3459	.08224	-16.365	53.312	.000
MFR Administra- ción finan- ciera	Does not assume equal variances	1	-.6451	.10689	-6.035	200.239	.000
		2	-.1784	.11411	-1.564	143.228	.120
		3	-.0411	.09834	-.418	159.614	.676
		4	1.9607	.12195	16.078	112.340	.000
		5	2.6078	.11795	22.110	102.465	.000
		6	2.4802	.24022	10.325	56.694	.000
		7	-3.7519	.06346	-59.125	80.620	.000
		8	.2905	.14740	1.971	38.659	.056
		9	2.8372	.10856	26.134	76.912	.000
		10	-.9168	.09798	-9.358	57.568	.000
MSSP Satisfacción sexual de la pareja	Does not assume equal variances	1	-.5990	.09577	-6.255	193.720	.000
		2	-.1863	.07761	-2.400	167.995	.017
		3	-.1155	.09181	-1.258	143.410	.210
		4	.6324	.12252	5.161	101.766	.000
		5	1.2085	.11157	10.832	86.930	.000
		6	1.3995	.13003	10.763	57.296	.000
		7	-1.9327	.07213	-26.795	91.708	.000
		8	-.1387	.09309	-1.490	43.725	.143
		9	1.1117	.10266	10.829	64.962	.000
		10	-.7981	.11380	-7.013	78.093	.000
PRSNB Educación de los hijos	Does not assume equal variances	1	-.5392	.10932	-4.932	198.533	.000
		2	-.0613	.09661	-.634	166.558	.527
		3	-.0550	.11125	-.494	140.923	.622
		4	1.0212	.14400	7.092	93.355	.000
		5	1.5570	.13728	11.342	83.842	.000
		6	1.2328	.14788	8.337	63.260	.000

		7	-1.9647	.08441	-23.277	74.842	.000
		8	-.4524	.10908	-4.147	72.224	.000
		9	1.3053	.13917	9.379	81.393	.000
		10	-.6560	.12405	-5.288	56.478	.000
MRF Religión	Does not assume equal variances	1	-.3889	.10021	-3.881	201.246	.000
		2	-.2761	.09044	-3.053	167.565	.003
		3	.1499	.10484	1.429	142.870	.155
		4	1.4424	.11055	13.047	115.592	.000
		5	1.8799	.10600	17.736	112.211	.000
		6	1.8694	.15957	11.716	56.717	.000
		7	-2.1506	.07979	-26.955	96.442	.000
		8	-.2731	.12437	-2.196	39.966	.034
		9	1.5908	.09455	16.824	78.390	.000
		10	-.6084	.10412	-5.844	89.259	.000

### Univariate Analysis of Variance

Between-Subjects Factors			
		Value Label	N
Group	1	Experimental: Adjusted	272
	2	Experimental: Distress	134
	3	Control 1: Posttest with intervention	64
	4	Control 2: Pre & posttest	96
	5	Control 3: Only second posttest	44
Time	1.00	Pretest	202
	2.00	Posttest 1	267
	3.00	Posttest 2	141

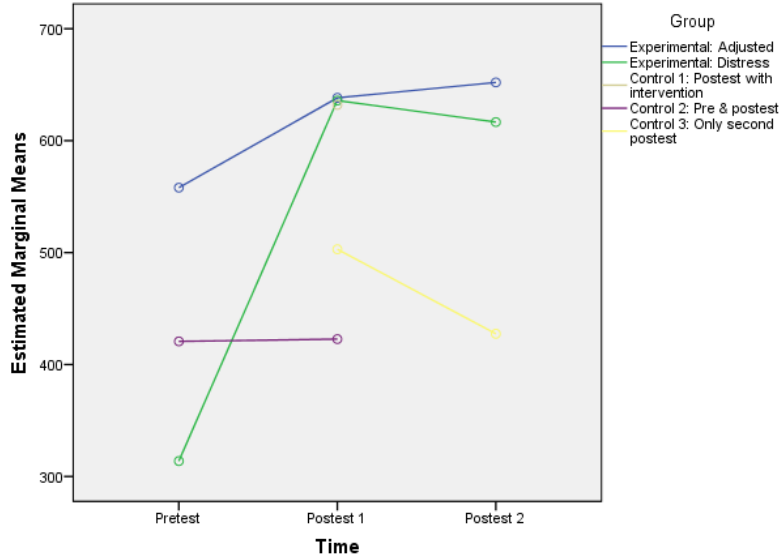
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects								
Dependent Variable: TotalCOMP Pivotal competences for long lasting relationship								
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power <sup>b</sup>
Corrected Model	7581480.824 <sup>a</sup>	10	758148.082	312.831	.000	.839	3128.315	1.000
Intercept	36883819.086	1	36883819.086	15219.216	.000	.962	15219.216	1.000
Group	2686235.840	4	671558.960	277.103	.000	.649	1108.410	1.000
Time	2244033.884	2	1122016.942	462.973	.000	.607	925.946	1.000
Group * Time	1607464.034	4	401866.009	165.820	.000	.525	663.281	1.000
Error	1451678.454	599	2423.503					
Total	19196606.000	610						
Corrected Total	9033159.279	609						

a. R Squared = .839 (Adjusted R Squared = .837)

b. Computed using alpha = .05

### Profile Plots

Estimated Marginal Means of Pivotal competences for long lasting relationship



Non-estimable means are not plotted

### Hypothesis 3 Oneway

Descriptives									
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
RIM_IP Intención de persistir	1 EA1	102	6.4392	.88241	.08737	6.2659	6.6125	4.00	8.00
	2 ED1	52	3.1923	.62115	.08614	3.0194	3.3652	2.00	4.80
	11 EA2	102	7.6961	.26511	.02625	7.6440	7.7482	7.00	8.00
	21 ED2	52	6.3115	.88065	.12212	6.0664	6.5567	3.40	7.60
	31 CT2	64	7.7406	.36285	.04536	7.6500	7.8313	6.40	8.00
	Total	372	6.5360	1.61559	.08376	6.3713	6.7007	2.00	8.00
RIM_AC Acoplamiento	1 EA1	102	6.4529	.86788	.08593	6.2825	6.6234	3.80	8.00
	2 ED1	52	3.4269	.51492	.07141	3.2836	3.5703	2.60	4.80
	11 EA2	102	7.2804	.37786	.03741	7.2062	7.3546	6.40	8.00
	21 ED2	52	5.4808	.60489	.08388	5.3124	5.6492	3.80	6.60
	31 CT2	64	7.4188	.57096	.07137	7.2761	7.5614	5.40	8.00
	Total	372	6.2871	1.45722	.07555	6.1385	6.4357	2.60	8.00
	1 EA1	102	6.0686	.87811	.08695	5.8961	6.2411	4.00	8.00

RIM_OL Orientación a Largo Plazo	2 ED1	52	3.1500	.57786	.08013	2.9891	3.3109	2.00	4.40
	11 EA2	102	7.5941	.36201	.03584	7.5230	7.6652	6.40	8.00
	21 ED2	52	5.4269	.78618	.10902	5.2080	5.6458	3.40	6.60
	31 CT2	64	7.0375	.54263	.06783	6.9020	7.1730	6.20	8.00
	Total	372	6.1559	1.57233	.08152	5.9956	6.3162	2.00	8.00
TotalRIM Compromiso	1 EA1	102	94.80	12.366	1.224	92.38	97.23	59	120
	2 ED1	52	48.85	7.867	1.091	46.66	51.04	35	70
	11 EA2	102	112.85	3.676	.364	112.13	113.57	103	120
	21 ED2	52	86.10	10.177	1.411	83.26	88.93	53	101
	31 CT2	64	110.98	4.845	.606	109.77	112.19	98	120
	Total	372	94.90	22.659	1.175	92.59	97.21	35	120

### Test of Homogeneity of Variances

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
RIM_IP Intención de persistir	23.168	4	367	.000
RIM_AC Acoplamiento	14.926	4	367	.000
RIM_OL Orientación a Largo Plazo	13.990	4	367	.000
TotalRIM Compromiso	26.815	4	367	.000

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
RIM_IP Intención de persistir	Between Groups	815.091	4	203.773	487.940	.000
	Within Groups	153.266	367	.418		
	Total	968.357	371			
RIM_AC Acoplamiento	Between Groups	644.603	4	161.151	412.960	.000
	Within Groups	143.215	367	.390		
	Total	787.818	371			
RIM_OL Orientación a Largo Plazo	Between Groups	758.979	4	189.745	440.128	.000
	Within Groups	158.218	367	.431		
	Total	917.197	371			
TotalRIM Compromiso	Between Groups	163753.766	4	40938.441	562.140	.000
	Within Groups	26727.145	367	72.826		
	Total	190480.911	371			

### Contrast Coefficients

Contrast	Group				
	1 EA1	2 ED1	11 EA2	21 ED2	31 CT2
1	1	0	-1	0	0
2	0	1	0	-1	0
3	0	0	1	0	-1
4	0	0	0	1	-1

Contrast Tests							
		Contrast	Value of Contrast	Std. Error	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
RIM_IP Intención de persistir	Does not assume equal variances	1	-1.2569	.09123	-13.777	119.085	.000
		2	-3.1192	.14945	-20.872	91.676	.000
		3	-.0445	.05240	-.850	104.929	.397
		4	-1.4291	.13027	-10.970	65.037	.000



RIM_AC Acoplamiento	Does not assume equal variances	1	-8.275	.09372	-8.829	137.963	.000
		2	-2.0538	.11016	-18.644	99.464	.000
		3	-.1384	.08058	-1.717	97.778	.089
		4	-1.9380	.11014	-17.596	106.418	.000
RIM_OL Orientación a Largo Plazo	Does not assume equal variances	1	-1.5255	.09405	-16.221	134.368	.000
		2	-2.2769	.13531	-16.828	93.656	.000
		3	.5566	.07672	7.255	98.319	.000
		4	-1.6106	.12840	-12.543	87.508	.000
TotalRIM Compromiso	Does not assume equal variances	1	-18.05	1.277	-14.130	118.712	.000
		2	-37.25	1.784	-20.881	95.914	.000
		3	1.87	.707	2.644	107.942	.009
		4	-24.89	1.536	-16.205	69.602	.000

## Univariate Analysis of Variance

### Between-Subjects Factors

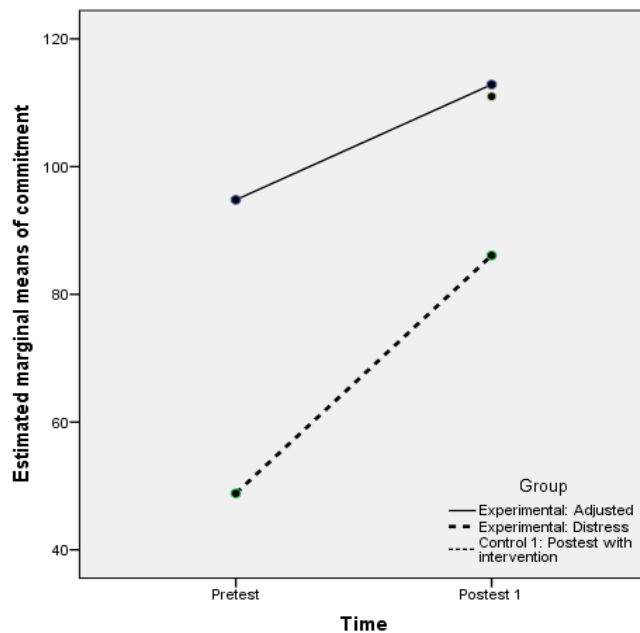
		Value Label	N
Group	1	Experimental: Adjusted	204
	2	Experimental: Distress	104
	3	Control 1: Posttest with intervention	64
Time	1.00	Pretest	154
	2.00	Posttest 1	218

### Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: TotalRIM Commitment								
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power <sup>b</sup>
Corrected Model	163753.766 <sup>a</sup>	4	40938.441	562.140	.000	.860	2248.562	1.000
Intercept	2565704.885	1	2565704.885	35230.612	.000	.990	35230.612	1.000
Group	92450.792	2	46225.396	634.737	.000	.776	1269.475	1.000
Time	52660.825	1	52660.825	723.105	.000	.663	723.105	1.000
Group * Time	6348.916	1	6348.916	87.179	.000	.192	87.179	1.000
Error	26727.145	367	72.826					
Total	3540375.000	372						
Corrected Total	190480.911	371						

a. R Squared = .860 (Adjusted R Squared = .858)  
b. Computed using alpha = .05

### Profile Plots



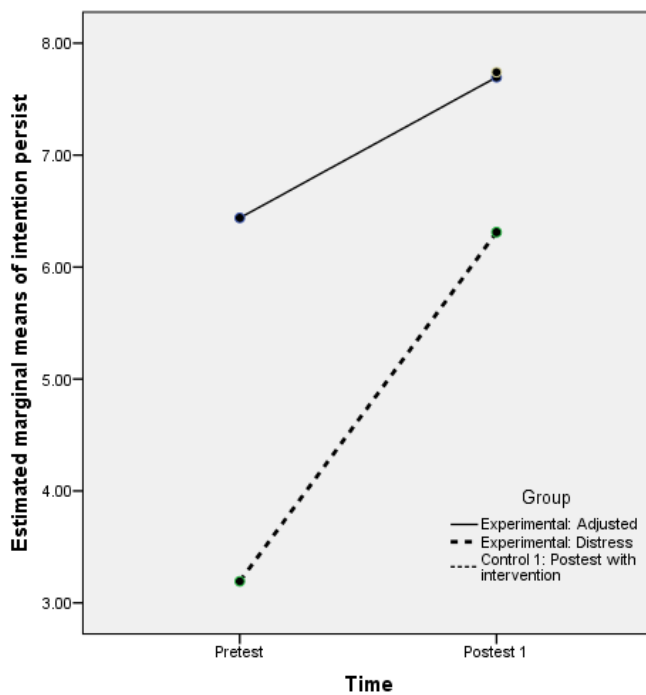
### Univariate Analysis of Variance Between-Subjects Factors

	Value	Label	N
Group	1	Experimental: Adjusted	204
	2	Experimental: Distress	104
	3	Control 1: Posttest with intervention	64
Time	1.00	Pretest	154
	2.00	Posttest 1	218

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects								
Dependent Variable: RIM_IP Intention persist								
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power <sup>b</sup>
Corrected Model	815.091 <sup>a</sup>	4	203.773	487.940	.000	.842	1951.761	1.000
Intercept	12204.319	1	12204.319	29223.616	.000	.988	29223.616	1.000
Group	375.179	2	187.590	449.189	.000	.710	898.378	1.000
Time	329.781	1	329.781	789.671	.000	.683	789.671	1.000
Group * Time	59.729	1	59.729	143.022	.000	.280	143.022	1.000
Error	153.266	367	.418					
Total	16860.040	372						
Corrected Total	968.357	371						

a. R Squared = .842 (Adjusted R Squared = .840)  
b. Computed using alpha = .05

### Profile Plots



### Univariate Analysis of Variance Between-Subjects Factors

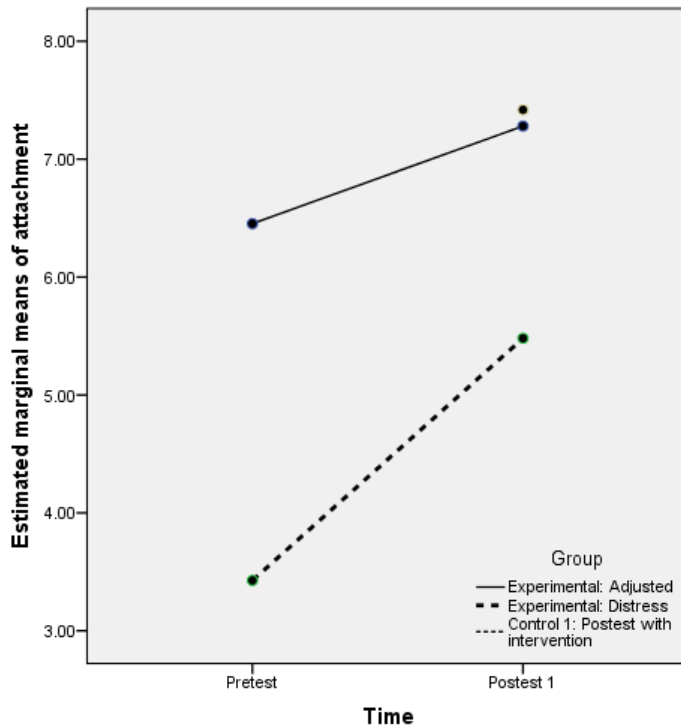
		Value Label	N
Group	1	Experimental: Adjusted	204
	2	Experimental: Distress	104
	3	Control 1: Posttest with intervention	64
Time	1.00	Pretest	154
	2.00	Posttest 1	218

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects								
Dependent Variable: RIM_AC Attachment								
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power <sup>b</sup>
Corrected Model	644.603 <sup>a</sup>	4	161.151	412.960	.000	.818	1651.841	1.000
Intercept	11413.270	1	11413.270	29247.328	.000	.988	29247.328	1.000
Group	419.591	2	209.795	537.616	.000	.746	1075.232	1.000
Time	142.965	1	142.965	366.357	.000	.500	366.357	1.000
Group * Time	25.901	1	25.901	66.373	.000	.153	66.373	1.000
Error	143.215	367	.390					
Total	15492.080	372						
Corrected Total	787.818	371						

a. R Squared = .818 (Adjusted R Squared = .816)

b. Computed using alpha = .05

### Profile Plots



## Univariate Analysis of Variance

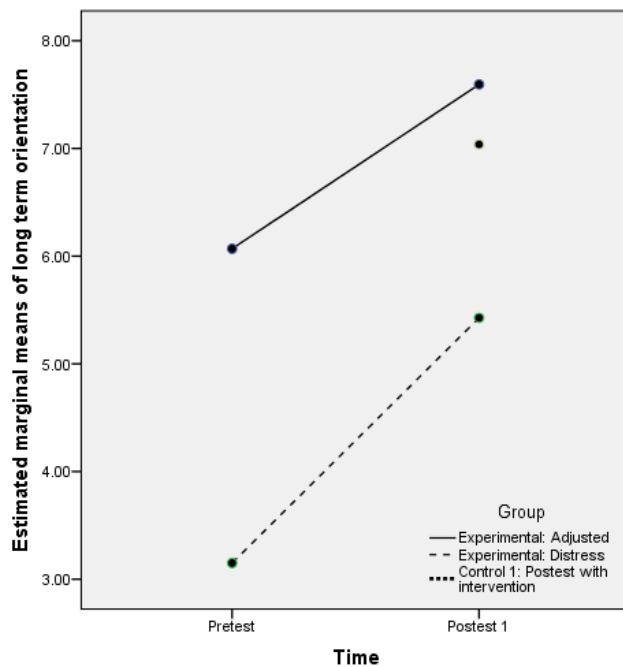
### Between-Subjects Factors

		Value Label	N
Group	1	Experimental: Adjusted	204
	2	Experimental: Distress	104
	3	Control 1: Posttest with intervention	64
Time	1.00	Pretest	154
	2.00	Posttest 1	218

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects								
Dependent Variable: RIM_OL Long term orientation								
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power <sup>b</sup>
Corrected Model	758.979 <sup>a</sup>	4	189.745	440.128	.000	.827	1760.511	1.000
Intercept	10619.363	1	10619.363	24632.448	.000	.985	24632.448	1.000
Group	446.005	2	223.002	517.272	.000	.738	1034.543	1.000
Time	248.984	1	248.984	577.538	.000	.611	577.538	1.000
Group * Time	9.724	1	9.724	22.555	.000	.058	22.555	.997
Error	158.218	367	.431					
Total	15014.240	372						
Corrected Total	917.197	371						

a. R Squared = .827 (Adjusted R Squared = .826)  
b. Computed using alpha = .05

### Profile Plots



## **APPENDIX R**

### **OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE NULL HYPOTHESIS**

## APPENDIX R

Table

### *Operationalization of the null hypothesis*

Null Hypothesis	Variables	Measurement	Statistical method
When exposed to a culturally sensitive MRE program geared towards the development of competences, there will be no significant differences in the marital satisfaction levels of couples when compared to those prior to attending the MRE education program.	Marital satisfaction level of couples	Metric	Planned contrast for One-Way ANOVA. Level of significance .05
	Group	Nominal 1) Adjusted experimental group 2) Distress experimental group 3) Posttest only control group (with intervention)	
When couples are exposed to a culturally sensitive MRE program geared toward the development of competences, they will not demonstrate significant development of Couple and Family relationship competences.	Couple and Family relationship competences	Metric	Planned Contrast for One – Way ANOVA. Level of significance established .05 Paired t-test
	Group	Nominal 1) Adjusted experimental group 2) Distress experimental group 3) Posttest only control group (with intervention) 4) Pre and posttest control group (without intervention) 5) Follow-up after 2 years group	
When couples attend a culturally sensitive MRE program geared toward the development of competences, they will experience no significant increases in their level of commitment.	Commitment	Metric	Planned contrast for One-Way ANOVA. Level of significance accepted .05
	Group	Nominal 1) Adjusted experimental group 2) Distress experimental group 3) Posttest only control group (with intervention)	

## **APPENDIX S**

### **DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF INSTRUMENT**



## DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF INSTRUMENT

Validation of an instrument is an extensive and complex topic. Exhaustive report and detailed explanation of the process of development and validation of the instrument is beyond the scope dissertation. However, a summary of the development of Inventory of Pivotal Competences for Long-lasting Relationship (IPCLLR) is provided below to substantiate the notion that the creation of the new instrument have sufficed the major requirement for creation of a new and validated scale.

The IPCLLR was developed in three phases:

- (1) Construct and item generation phase
- (2) Construct validity phase and
- (3) Confirmation of factor structure phase.

### **Phase 1: Construct and item generation**

**First step** consisted in content domain specification which consistent of literature review, qualitative interview with family experts, psychologist, mental health professionals and sample of population of interest (Devellis, 2003; Slavec and Drnovsek, 2012). This have conducted to the proposal of twelve construct and subsequently twelve family and relationship competence competences.

### ***Operational definition***

Family competences comprise knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills that work towards enhancing family functioning. They enhance opportunities for development

and health of individual family members, and are based on egalitarian family norms, as the foundation of strong family ecology (Shanmugavelayutham, 2012)

**The second step** was items pool generation.

### **Phase 2: Construct Validity**

**The third step** consisted of face validity and content validity (by expert judges and relevant audience).

**Fourth and fifth step** consisted in pilot testing the scale for reliability and internal consistency using Cronbach alpha, etc. Two pilot test were conducted, one with the first draft and second with the improved version.

**Sixth step - a, construct validity** (using a sample to performed pre-test, than exposed the sample to an intervention – consisting of learning of the construct and finally a post-test to assess difference). Additionally the group exposed to intervention was compared with control group (not exposed).

**Sixth step - b, criterion validity – predictive** ...mastery of competence vs marital satisfaction. Mastery of competences predict marital satisfaction. Both self-report score as well as correlation with existing test (i.e. DAS) confirm it.

### **Phase 3: Confirmation of Factor Structure**

Finally the **seventh step**, data collected analysis and assessment using Structural Equation Model and Confirmatory Factor Analysis. For the validation, a four-stage factor analysis procedure was employed. This four stage procedure is an iterative revision and analysis process performed in graduate manner until the whole

instrument fits the proposed model. This due to the amount of items of the Inventory. These seven step substantiate the notion that the IPCLLR it complies with both the minimum requirements and as well as the criteria's to be considered a validated instrument.

The SEM was used to test the overall fit of the conceptual/theoretical model (that underpinned the instrument) proposed. It was used to particularly explore a potential relationship among the three variable, general factor loading and assess the fitness of structure or model.

- a. The SEM analysis went through the pertinent steps of (i) model specification, (ii) data collection, (iii) model estimation and (iv) model evaluation (Lei and Wu, 2007)
- b. The chi-squared goodness of fit test model has not reached the required criterion level ( $p > .05$ ), according to the criteria established in the pertinent literature (Ruiz, Pardo & San Martín, 2010). However, four additional criteria for acceptance of a model (also recommended by authors, namely Normed Chi-Square, GFI, CFI & RMSEA were met...and acceptance was achieved.
- c. Model Fit was assessed by 4 GOF Indices (Goodness of Fit Indices)
  - i. Normed Chi-square=1.72. The criterion for acceptance = less than 2 (Ullman, 2001).
  - ii. RMSEA=.06 (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation is acceptable when  $\leq .06$  (Hu & Bentler, 1998)
  - iii. CFI=.97 Comparative Fit Index is acceptable when it exceeds 93 (Byrne, 1994)

iv. GFI=.87 (Goodness of Fit Index Statistic is acceptable when close to .90 (Hooper, et al 2008; Byrne, 1994)

## **APPENDIX T**

**Illustrative table of 10 minor cultural differences and their implications**

### **Illustrative table of 10 minor but recurring cultural differences and their implications**

The term “minor cultural differences” is intentionally used to avoid overemphasis on differences that may overshadow similarities. A brief exploratory analysis of cultural differences revealed that what the residents of the Dutch Caribbean Islands have in common with those living in Europe/the Netherlands and the US may have preponderance over their differences. The Dutch Caribbean culture has been particularly influenced by European countries (i.e. the Netherlands) and the US. Being a part of the Netherlands Kingdom and close geographical proximity to US make Dutch Caribbean Islands susceptible to external influences. The mixture of more than 50 different races provides vibrant enrichment of culture. However, trivialization of cultural differences could decrease effectiveness of programs and impede acceptance of useful proposals. Minimization/derogation of the cultural differences could also provoke resistance to any useful ideas. To increase potential effectiveness of any program, program designers should consider language and other cultural aspects. Finally, Internet and social media have had a particular influence on any country culture, creating the 21<sup>st</sup> century “culture” and a Y generation that tends to share a global culture. However, at the core level, we are all similar, have universal needs and face comparable challenges. For example, we all have emotional needs, such as love, and crave intimacy and physical contact, which is conveyed through sexual desire, etc. Next a brief discussion of some of the cultural differences and how they were addressed.

Cultural Differences	Implications	Pragmatic Consideration
A cross between individualism and collectivism	High social control, i.e., “what society and others think is important” is highly relevant	What others think is naturally taken into consideration and having a good relationship with others is part of the culture. “Sharing concerns” attitude is emphasized and favored over “right on privacy” attitude. <b>How it was addressed:</b> Sensitive presentation of the need for change and the discussion of other cultural practices being proposed as a possibility, rather than “the alternative.”
Culture is highly oriented toward extended family	Contact with extended family is encouraged and maintained	Due to short distances “meeting with family members regularly” is a common practice. Contact and interactions with family are regular and inclusion of extended family in one’s life is part of a healthy family. <b>How it was addressed:</b> Discussing family management competence, which included time management and scheduling.
More oriented toward filial piety than the mainstream and native Dutch/US	Attention, engagement and care for parents is a must and, if not provided, it will cause feelings of guilt and stress	Parents are supported emotionally and in part financially until they die (this is seen as a duty, even though some government support is provided). <b>How it was addressed:</b> While discussing healthy family characteristics and financial management, this issue was specifically addressed.
Evident need for work on gender equity relative to Europe and the US	There is less equalitarian division of spousal roles, despite both genders holding careers in many cases	The involvement of women in decision-making processes is <i>sometimes</i> limited to topics pertaining to home and household affairs. <b>How it was addressed:</b> Presenting complementary role of gender differences and scientific findings.
Traditional gender roles are not necessarily perceived as archaic, but rather as complementary whereby men provide and women nurture (women are still primarily in charge of childrearing and domestic household chores despite holding a career)	The classical and traditional gender role division is common among a large part of the population	Desensitization approach while discussing certain issue is pivotal. A “slow and progressive” approach is recommended while attempting to teach egalitarian gender roles. <b>How it was addressed:</b>

		Complementary gender role as a growth area was discussed as in need for improvement, alongside decision making.
Marital conflicts tend to be approached indirectly, rather than taking a more confrontational approach, typical of most European societies and parts of the US	Assertiveness tends to be perceived as “challenging” the other or arrogance	This does not simply imply “say what you think” or “don’t beat around the bush”, but rather tactful formulation of phrases presented in a considered way, as this will minimize potential escalation of problems. In this respect, Dutch Caribbean culture is contrasted to that in parts of the US, where assertive attitude is strongly encouraged, taught and appreciated. <b>How it was addressed:</b> Escalation ladder theory was employed, along with the experiences from other countries, which were presented as alternatives that that might enrich couple’s repertoire.
One notable difference between the Dutch Caribbean and the US culture is the need to seek parental approval for a relationship	Even though not publicly demanded, underlying parental approval is important	Permission to marry is still sought from parents, and failure to do so is seen as disrespectful, adversely affecting the relationship in the short term.
Racially and ethnically blind	There is no classification in terms of “Caucasian” vs. blacks. The behaviors of the native whites is similar to that of the rest of the population, i.e., racial mixture is normal	All individuals are addressed in the same way, as the mixture of more than 50 races on the islands has made racial differences largely irrelevant in this context. <b>How it was addressed:</b> No approach was necessary.
Difficulty and restraint regarding openly discussing of sexual topics	More reserved than Europeans on sexual matters	While discussing or presenting sexual topics, group interaction should be progressively introduced, rather than taken for granted, as attitude that intimacy is “normal” and everybody should talk about it is inappropriate in this context.
Obviously language		Couples would participate actively when addressed in their local language. <b>How it was addressed:</b> Manual and any other material was presented in their local language.



**Important note:** The MRE in question (i.e. Profile for successful families) besides addressing cultural different issues, also focuses on universal families needs. This makes this MRE program of transcendental importance for couple pertaining to other culture as well.

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- Research Method for Ph.D. Students, University of Montemorelos
- Crisis Intervention, University of Montemorelos
- Conflict Management and Intermediation “cultura de paz” – DIF (Desarrollo Integral de la Familia – Mexico)
- Activity Management for Family “noche en familia” – DIF (Desarrollo Integral de la Familia – Mexico)
- Sexuality issues 2014, University of Montemorelos
- Family Counselling 2015, University of Montemorelos
- Diplomado in Family Counselling, 2015

**EXPERIENCE:**

- Netherlands Union Conference.  
Amersfoortseweg 18  
  
3712 BC. Huise ter Heide. The Netherlands
- Netherlands Antilles Conference, Head Administrative Office of all Adventist entities (Schools, Hospital, Churches and Bookstore). Address: Skalaweg 7, P.O. Box 300, Willemstad, Curacao, Netherlands Antilles.

**Functions:**

***Associate Director and Consultant Church Growth – Netherlands Union***

Coordination of church plant and evangelistic endeavors under Antillean and other groups, national church plant meeting, coaching meeting, think tank of the Union, support of next level training activities, board or advisory board of church plant support, organization of local great commission festival, member of MT (management team) meetings, supervision of church boards (twice a year), district pastoral meeting, organization and support of church plant exchange, supportive role by church and youth camp, local baptism, local initiative and board member, and pastor of the most successful community church of the Netherlands, “Alivio Delft” church and foundation. For training and topics, see Appendix 3.

### ***President and Founder of Foundation for Family Awareness – The Netherlands***

The Family Education and Awareness Centre was established by Cherrel Francisca. Cherrel Francisca is a professional family counselor, relationship coach, motivational speaker, trainer and consultant.

[www.familyrelationfirst.org](http://www.familyrelationfirst.org)

The Family Education and Awareness Centre is engaged in equipping, advising, and empowering families to reach their maximum potential and to successfully face the challenges of our time. The most important task of the Family Education and Awareness Centre is to provide support and update information to families.

### ***Professional family educator, coach and consultant i.e. relationship coaching***

Systemic approach, 23 years of experience counseling couples and families. Relationship and family coaching. Spiritual life coaching and creator of New Marital and Relationship Training Model geared toward development of relationship competences.

For more information regarding seminars and for training and/or topics, see Appendix 2.

### ***Consultant***

Advising clients of the foundation, church members, project leaders and local students, member of think tank of the Union, management team and intermediation.

### ***Director of the Youth Department – Netherlands Antilles Conference***

Management of youth department and coordination of events. General organization of training for youth leaders, youth clubs, leadership training, technical support during international events and decoration of outstanding performance by young people. Active participation in making policy and strategy for youth management, teaching and youth coaching. Supervision of youth clubs, strategic planning, event organizer (i.e. youth congress, youth explosion, etc) in the Netherlands Antilles. Training for community and denominational leaders. For topic and seminars given (experience in giving workshops and seminars) see Appendix 1.

### ***Director of Education Department – Netherlands Antilles Conference***

Update course for teachers, strategic planning for school, leadership training, coaching, parents' commission workshops, active role in policy making and strategic planning of school, member of school board and think tank, etc.

### ***Staff Head Chief – Netherlands Antilles Conference***

Human resource management, personnel training and upgrade, motivational training, classical responsibility, such as vacation arrangement, financial arrangement, advice and intermediation during personnel conflict and/or administrative conflicts, general intermediation work, etc.

### ***Executive Secretary – Netherlands Antilles Conference***

Report writing and meeting minutes, meeting preparation, management of internal statistics, membership administration, management of confidential documents of the organization, in charge of legal document and affairs of the organization, support of the president, replacing the president during his absence, representing the organization and defending policies and decisions of the executive board, signing papers on behave



of the organization, “classical work,” such as signing checks for workers and other affairs, reporting to superiors regarding current affairs and advances, making sure the world policies are followed, facilitating information to employees regarding decisions of the administration, intermediate when there is problem between administration and employees, active role in policy making and strategic planning, etc.

### ***Vice President – Netherlands Antilles Conference***

#### **RELEVANT PUBLICATIONS:**

- Author of first two books in Papiamentu (Local Language of The Netherlands Antilles):
  1. “Basic Needs of Children (Parenting Children of 0 - 12 years),” 287 pages. Book specially recommended by the governor of the Netherlands Antilles and general judge of the Caribbean.
  2. “How to Deal with Your Teenager - Parenting Teenagers Successfully”
  3. “All You Need to Know When You Are a Teenager” (2006)
  4. “Profile for An Extraordinary Relationship, Vol. 1” (2011)
  5. “Profile for An Extraordinary Relationship, Vol. 2” (2011)
  6. Column writer in National Newspaper 1995-1997 in Curacao
  7. Producer of first family TV program in the Antilles, “Family Awareness,” “Konsiëntisashon TV11,” 1996-1997.
  8. Several booklets
    - How to Be Successful In Your Studies
    - How to Deal with Peer Pressure
    - Courtship In This Time 21<sup>st</sup> Century
    - Manner and Ethics for Young People
    - Family Management In Our Time

#### **CURRENT FUNCTIONS:**

- Coordinator of Home and Family Department at Curacao and Bonaire Conference of SDA former Netherlands Antilles Conference of the SDA.
- Senior pastor
- Founder of Family Relationfirst [www.familyrelationfirst.org](http://www.familyrelationfirst.org)

## **PERSONAL SKILLS:**

Languages:

- Dutch
- English
- Spanish
- Papiamentu

## **RESEARCH/OTHER EXPERIENCES:**

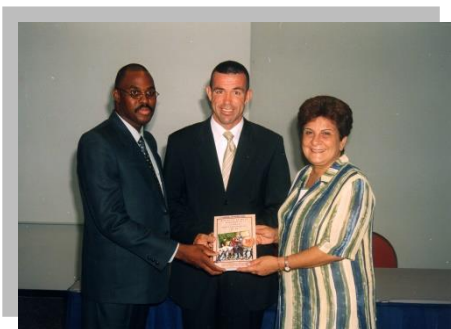
- Together with 6 other experts, made the final proposal of the national curriculum of Netherlands Antilles for both elementary and junior high schools.

## **SPECIAL AWARDS OR RECOGNITIONS:**

- National Government Recognition for contribution to field of writing, educational and religious contribution received in The Netherlands on December 2010 from the prime minister of Curacao.
- Minister of education recommended second book to the public.



Prime Minister of Curacao 2010



Minister of Education The Netherlands Antilles on 2001. Recommendation second book to the Public with Representative of the Governor.