NURTURING HISPANIC COUPLES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

A project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Masters of Science in Counseling,
Marriage and Family Therapy

By
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ABSTRACT

NURTURING HISPANIC COUPLES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

By

Liliana Berumen

Masters of Science in Counseling,
Marriage and Family Therapy

This project explores the many different areas in which Hispanic couples with children struggle and need support with to continue nurturing their love for one another. After having children, Hispanic couples’ focus shifts to the children and the love that once bound father and mother together seems to be part of the past. Love is what binds the family together and if Hispanic couples do not nourish the couple subsystem, then all other subsystems might not function and could even become dysfunctional. Programs tailored specifically for the rapid growing Hispanic population will strive to provide Hispanic couples the psycho-educational tools needed to sustain a happy and satisfying marriage while performing the difficult task of parenting. This project proposes a psychoeducational process group for couples that utilizes an integrative approach including family systems interventions, relationship enhancement programs, and positive therapy. The group curriculum that is designed to meet the diversified needs of Hispanic couples includes procedures, handouts, process questions, and writing exercises to help couples become aware of issues that may arise as a consequence of intergenerational conflict and to recognize and utilize the psycho-educational tools learned.
Chapter 1

Introduction

The union between two people that love one another and the decision to begin a family can be the most wonderful time in a couple’s life. For some Hispanic couples, however, this does not seem to be the case. For these Hispanic couples, the transition between becoming parents and losing the union as the main focus of their relationship can be difficult. The struggle between balancing parenting and nurturing the relationship is not an easy task (Soderquist & Soderquist, 200). Work, children, and routine can get in the way of time for couples to ensure each spouse feels loved, appreciated and wanted. Patten (2015) states that forty two percent of couples say they spend too little time with their partners, including dual working couples. Parenting young children is a critical time for the couple during which the most support is needed so that the couple is able to deal with the new changes in their relationship and not lose focus on the “couple.”

According to Perez, Brown, Whiting and Harris (2013), the efficacy of counseling has been shown to be effective with Hispanic couples in a group setting in the Marriage and Relationship Education (MRE) courses. By implementing programs such as workshops that support the well-being of Hispanic couples with young children, interventions can provide crucial support and be immensely beneficial.

Statement of the Problem

“Arguably the simplest explanation for why a marriage dissolves is that one or both spouses become increasingly dissatisfied, diminishing the quality of couple interaction and prompting a separation or divorce in turn” (Schoebi, Karney & Bradbury, 2012, p. 729). In the United States only, couples that marry for the first time have approximately a fifty percent
chance of divorcing and of the fifty percent that remain married, many of those marriages are unhappy (American Psychological Association, 2004). Bramlett & Mosher (2002) indicate that maintaining a fulfilling marriage is challenging in all parts of society and that it appeared to be disproportionately challenging within low-income communities, where rates of divorce were nearly twice as high as in more affluent communities. When children are added to the equation, challenges to a marriage can increase twofold. The American Psychological Association (2016) explains how it may be difficult “between kids, careers and outside commitments,” to be able “to connect with your partner” (para. 5). The lack of connection between the couple may even lead to feelings of isolation. Gottman (1994) describes how a couple who started their relationship feeling so in love can feel despair “as they watch their marriage consumed by chaos, loneliness, mistrust, and hopelessness” (p. 135). According to Soderquist and Soderquist (2006), children undoubtedly can complicate a couple’s relationship with the change of dynamics that they bring to the home. Gottman (1994) continues by stating that knowing the specific patterns and interactions in a couple that may lead to divorce, may indeed help couples stay away from those patterns.

According to Posada de Valenzuela (2014), the U.S. Census Bureau has indicated that Hispanics are the fastest growing minority group in the United States, with a growth of four percent between the years 2000 and 2010, which is four times greater than the national growth rate (9.7%). Given this rapid growth, the author concludes that therapists will likely see an increasing amount of Hispanic couples in therapy and that some of these couples will have relationship concerns based on changes brought on by the process of having children. As research on this issue is predominantly done regarding Anglos and not on Hispanics, a need for programs tailored to the Hispanic community is needed (Posada de Valenzuela, 2014).
Purpose of Project

The purpose of this project is to provide Hispanic couples with the essential support, awareness and information needed to empower and keep their love strong during their transition to parenthood and the first years of becoming parents. As the Hispanic population grows at a fast pace, “the needs for the Hispanic population must be acknowledged, and therapeutic models must be created to support them” (Posada de Valenzuela, 2014, p. 92). The focus of this program is to provide strategies and activities to support parents with young children develop and build strong marital bonds. The program contains sessions comprised of activities that are informative, communicative and exploratory.

The program uses psychoeducation to prepare couples for the challenges ahead and to encourage couples to bring forth concerns in a safe environment. In the sessions, the couples develop and discover: their new role as parents, how parenting may affect their relationship as a couple, how to show support and affection towards one another, ways to continue nurturing the “couple”, and how to build a support system that will help them achieve their relationship goals. By providing Hispanic couples with young children the fundamental tools needed, these couples will gain a greater perspective of the new role they have entered into, be informed as to the different options they have in order to continue keeping the love alive, develop healthy behaviors and habits in their relationship, and create and achieve skills that will enable them to overcome the difficulties of parenthood and whatever challenges this may present.
Terminology

Bowen's Family Systems Theory: Conceptualizes “the family as an emotional unit, a network of interlocking relationships, best understood when analyzed within a multigenerational or historical framework” (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008, p. 175).

Couple: For the purpose of this project, couple is defined here as the relationship between a male and a female.

Couple Subsystem: “A self-contained system consisting of the male and the female in the relationship within a larger system. The couple subsystem is centered in the family’s stability with their strength and durability” (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008, p. 242).

Differentiation of self: Differentiation of self refers to the balance between the intellectual process and the feeling process. Bowen refers to a process in which an individual is able to separate the individual’s own thinking and values, especially around emotional family situations.

Emotional cutoff: When an individual breaks away any ties from the parental family due to unresolved emotional reasons (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008).

Familismo: It is a core value that refers to the traditional Latino culture. It can be defined as family interdependence, loyalty, and responsibility to care for one another in the immediate and extended family (Behnke, et al. 2008).

Genogram: “A schematic diagram of a family’s relationship system, in the form of a genetic tree and usually including at least three generations” (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008, p. 468).

Hispanics: Refers to Central and South America, Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Chile, Argentina and Colombia.
Machismo: Commonly referred to as an excessive display of manliness (Perez et al., 2013).

Marriage and Relationship Education (MRE): “Programs that are curriculum-guided approaches designed to give couples skills and information needed to develop and maintain successful relationships” (Perez et al., 2013, p. 377).

Mindfulness: A state of active and open attention on the present moment. Observing one’s thoughts and feelings from a distance, without judging them as good or bad is being mindful (Psychology Today, 2016).

Multigenerational transmission process: A process that occurs over several generations, “in which poorly differentiated persons marry similarly differentiated mates,” (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008) resulting in offspring suffering from mental disorders.

Negotiation: About putting “fairness” into relationships (Soderquist & Soderquist, 2006, p. 57).

Nuclear family emotional system: An unstable and enmeshed family’s way of dealing with stress that could lead to “marital conflict, dysfunction in a spouse, or psychological impairment of a child” (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008, p. 470). This pattern could be repeated by copying the patterns of past generations and that will most likely be repeated in future generations (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008, p. 470).

Parental Subsystem: Part of the family subsystems developed by Minuchin.

Personalismo: A collectivistic worldview with a large emotional investment in the family” (Posada de Valenzuela, 2014, p. 98), also explained as a “positive interpersonal interaction”, which is to help “maintain mutual dependency and closeness for a lifetime” (Posada de Valenzuela, 2014, p. 98).
*Respeto*: Translates to respect, wherein the parents are the authority and the children must obey their parents (Chang & Liou, 2009).

*Structural Family Theory*: A therapeutic approach directed at changing or realigning the family organization or structure in order to alter dysfunctional transactions and clarify subsystems boundaries*” (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008, p. 472).

*Subsystem*: The family system is thought to be comprised of different interdependent subsystems, including the marital subsystem and the parenting subsystem (Benson & Haith, 2009).

*Triangle*: A three-person system, consisting of a two-person emotional system recruiting a third person into the system to lower anxiety and have stability (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008).

**Summary**

This project focuses on couples embarking on their role as new parents and on their relationship in the early years of parenthood. It is designed to support Hispanic couples and provide them with the tools needed to be able to continue nurturing their relationship during the early phase of parenthood. In order to isolate a target population for the purpose of developing this project, heterosexual, low income, Hispanic couples have been chosen due to the additional financial and cultural challenges faced by this population as well as the lack of programs specifically targeted to this population.

The next chapter will provide an overview of the family systems theoretical model to explain the importance of nurturing the couple when young children are involved. The next chapter will also explore research regarding the impact of child rearing on relationships, additional stressors concerning the target population such as income and culture, and what the
evidence base has to say about the efficacy of intervention, specifically group intervention. The purpose of the literature review is to develop a solid understanding of the importance of continuing to nurture and care for the love of the couple while dealing with the challenges of parenthood, and to assert the need for programs that provide strategies and activities to further develop and build strong relationships.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

According to the American Psychological Association (2004), research indicates that current divorce rates are at an alarming high fifty percent chance of marriages ending up in divorce. Robertson (2016) states that marriage is associated with more positive outcomes than negative, while divorce is associated with more negative outcomes than positive outcomes for men, women, and their children. Divorce does not only affect adults, but it also affects children. “Many children in divorced families encounter more negative life changes than positive changes because of their parents’ separation” (Robertson, 2016, p. 1). Psychpage (2013) indicates that there are two main reasons and times for divorce. According to Psychpage (2013), couples divorce within the first 5 to 7 years due to high conflict and between ten to twelve years, due to the loss of intimacy and connection. Perez et al. (2013) indicates that marital interventions in a group setting can increase marital satisfaction in Hispanic couples. Hispanic couples can gain important knowledge from one another and feel that communal closeness that would enable them to be able to open up their feelings. The efficacy of counseling has been shown to be effective with Hispanic couples in a group setting in the Marriage and Relationship Education (MRE) courses (Perez et al. 2013).

The Family Systems Theoretical Model

Bowen’s family theory. Bowen’s family systems theory conceptualizes “the family as an emotional unit, a network of interlocking relationships, best understood when analyzed within a multigenerational or historical framework” (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008, p. 175). Bowen believed that conflict transcended generations when not resolved and could be reflected on an individual when forming their own family.
According to Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008), emotional cut off is an example of these forces shaping family functioning. This occurs when an individual breaks away any ties from the parental family due to unresolved emotional reasons (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008). Emotional cutoff can resemble unresolved conflict with the family of origin members. “Emotional cutoff reflects a problem (underlying fusion between generations), solves a problem (reducing anxiety associated with making contact), and creates a problem (isolating people who might benefit from closer contact)” (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008, p. 188).

Another example is differentiation of self. Bowen believed that differentiation of self was an important aspect of this theory. Differentiation of self refers to the balance between the intellectual process and the feeling process. Bowen refers to a process in which an individual is able to separate the individual’s own thinking and values, especially around emotional family situations. “Put more positively, the well-differentiated person is able to balance thinking and feeling (and thus adhere to personal convictions while expressing individually initiated emotions) and at the same time to retain objectivity and flexibility (and thus remain independent of his or her family’s emotional pressures)” (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008, p. 179).

According to Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008), Bowen’s multigenerational transmission process explains how “severe dysfunction is conceptualized as the result of chronic anxiety transmitted over several generations” (p. 189). When the two individuals forming a life together have the least differentiation levels from their own family of origin, at least one of their children will have even lower levels of differentiation than their parents. And when this child grows up to adulthood and eventually marries, will pass it along to the next generation (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008). Being aware of this multigenerational pattern may help couples change this if it applies to them.
According to Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008), Bowen describes triangles as a three person system. “According to Bowen, a two person emotional system, under stress, will recruit a third person into the system to lower the intensity and anxiety and gain stability” (2008, p. 472). When the two person emotional system is under stress, they resort to a third person to relieve some of that stress, but when the tension has decreased between the two person relationship, the two person relationship returns to the peaceful two person relationship plus the outsider. When the stress cannot be contained by a third person triad any longer, multiple triangles within the family may develop to reduce increasing stress within each triangle, causing the system to become a “series of interlocking triangles” (Goldenberg & Goldenberg 2008, p. 184).

Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008) describe the nuclear family emotional system as “an unstable, fused family’s way of coping with stress, typically resulting in marital conflict, dysfunction in a spouse, or psychological impairment of a child; their pattern is likely to mimic the patterns of past generations and to be repeated in future generations” (p. 470). In some cases, the dysfunction of one spouse may cause overadequate-underadequate reciprocity, in which one spouse functions more than the other spouse. This may cause the overly functioned spouse to be more vulnerable to physical or emotional dysfunction and in some cases, marital conflict. The researchers believe that the only effective way to change this pattern is to start from the family of origin. Once interactions with the family of origin have been changed, current family problems will be able to get resolved (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008).

Bowen “developed a graphic way of investigating the genesis of the presenting problem by diagramming the family over at least three generations” (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008, p. 192). Bowen wanted families to be able to see their family patterns in an illustrated family map, called the “Genogram.”
Family of origin and patterns. Being aware of the transgenerational patterns is helpful in understanding the attitudes and actions in within the couple and the family structure. For some couples, it is hard to fathom how childhood experiences can affect their relationships. The last thing on a couple’s minds in the heat of an argument is not whether or not they are replicating their parent’s way of dealing with conflict. “One of the assumptions of intergenerational family therapy is that how a person thinks and talks about family-of-origin experiences has important implications for current family relationships” (Wampler, Shi, Nelson & Kimball, 2003, p. 497). “How today’s family members form attachments, manage intimacy, deal with power, resolve conflict, and so on, may mirror to a greater or lesser extent earlier family patterns” (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008, p. 175).

Family patterns are passed down and repeated as explained by Bowen’s interlocking concepts; emotional cutoff, differentiation of self, multigenerational transmission process, triangles, and nuclear family emotional system. According to Goldenberg and Goldenberg, (2008), Bowen contends that when conflict is not resolved and emotional cutoff is established, this pattern will transcend generations. “Bowen insisted that adults must resolve their emotional attachments to their families of origin” (2008, p. 188). Differentiation of self is passed down from generation to generation when individuals are not able to sufficiently be “involved to partake in and enjoy the pleasures of this landmark family event, but also be sufficiently separated so as not to be drawn into the family emotional event” (2008, p. 180). Multigenerational transmission process is passed down through anxiety that keeps repeating through each generation. Triangles are repeated over generations and are very harmful to families if couples are not aware of what is going on in their family. The nuclear family emotional system is passed down from generation to generation by families continuing to mimic
the patterns of past generations. Bowen believed that the only effective way to change the pattern of the nuclear family emotional system was to start with the family of origin (Goldenberg and Goldenberg, 2008).

Structural Family Theory. Minuchin’s structural family theory is “a therapeutic approach directed at changing or realigning the family organization or structure in order to alter dysfunctional transactions and clarify subsystems boundaries” (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008, p. 472). It describes the role that the family plays in the wellbeing of couples. “Like most systems theorists, the structuralists are interested in how the components of a system interact, how balance or homeostasis is achieved, how family feedback mechanisms operate, how dysfunctional communication patterns develop, and so forth” (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008, p. 240). “Thus the family system is thought to be comprised of different interdependent subsystems, including the marital subsystem and the parenting subsystem, and these subsystems are embedded with larger systems, such as the broader community” (Benson & Haith, 2009, p. 221). The most important subsystems are spousal, parental, and sibling subsystems. Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008) state that: Minuchin believed that families need some form of structure within the family context to help them organize the way family members interact with each other. “It provides a framework for understanding those consistent, repetitive, and enduring patterns that reveal how a particular family organizes itself in order to maintain its stability and, under a changing set of environmental conditions, to seek adaptive behaviors” (2008, p. 240). The family must be able to adapt to change, while not losing its organization within the family. The couple subsystem, however, is the subsystem that is centered to the family’s stability with their strength and durability” (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008, p. 242).
**Couple subsystem.** Goldenberg & Goldenberg (2008) believe that the way the couple is able to negotiate differences and accommodate one another’s needs is helpful in assessing whether the couple will be able to adapt to changing situations and continue having stability. “While the arrival of children forces the couple to transform their system to now become a parental subsystem grappling with new responsibilities, complementarity of roles remain essential, as the couple negotiates differences in parenting attitudes and styles” (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008, p. 243). In addition, John (1996) reported spillover between the couple and child-related tension, suggesting that what happens in one family subsystem could impact another family subsystem (as cited in Rinaldi & Howe, 2003). The importance of sustaining balance in all family subsystems becomes imperative so as to not interrupt the organizational structure of each subsystem (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008).

**Parental Subsystem.** The parental subsystem is part of the family subsystems developed by Minuchin, who believed that by organizing each system and maintaining stability, each system will function and everyone will know their roles (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008). The parental subsystem is comprised of two parents in which parenting roles and how to deal with issues are negotiated and discussed. When there is discord between the couple subsystem, all subsystems may be affected (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008). Jones-Leonard (1985) states that when the couple subsystem is in distress, “altered perceptions for the child may result in dysfunctional parent-child interactions” (as cited in Rinaldi & Howe, 2003, p. 444).

Family structuralists “view symptoms in a family member as emerging from, and as maintained by, a family structure unable to adapt to changing environmental or developmental demands,” therefore, family structuralists “consider that they have reached their therapeutic goal when the family has restructured itself and thus freed its members to relate to one another in
nonpathological patterns (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008, p. 248). Structuralists offer the family the direction and encouragement needed to examine and eliminate the strict structures that are no longer working for the family. Families can therefore make the changes necessary in the family structure as the circumstances and different developmental stages change (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008). Minuchin believes that in the case of a marital relationship, the behavior of one partner is oppressed by the other and that the therapist’s goal is to separate the couple “from their automatic yoked reactions, and in the process help each partner discover his or her individuality, power and responsibility” (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008, p. 248).

**Impact of Child Rearing on Relationships**

Soderquist and Soderquist (2006) posit that “one of the most difficult tests in a marriage involves the change in dynamics when children enter the scene” (p. 194). They add that “having children can totally complicate a couple’s relationship” (2006, p. 195). The researchers continue to state that with the welcoming of a new baby in the family, the father may become jealous of the baby getting all of mom’s attention and that the father can become disappointed after planning an outing and mom only wanting to stay home to care for her sick baby (Soderquist & Soderquist 2006).

**Child discipline.** Child discipline can bring conflict into the relationship if the couple is not able negotiate the way in which both would like to co-parent. One parent might want to set clear rules while the other might be more casual about rules (Sodequist & Soderquist, 2006). It is important that both parents agree on child discipline to avoid triangulation in the couple subsystem. If the child notices that the parents are in disagreement, the child could form an alliance with the parent that favors the child, triangulating the other parent (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008). Triangulation is when a child and a parent form their own alliance against
the other parent. The researchers continue stating that this is when dysfunction in the family can occur creating chaos in the overall family functioning (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008).

Soderquist and Soderquist (2006) state that “much of our behavior is based on our own childhood experiences” (p. 200), and that it helps to think about what effect one’s own childhood has on his or her behavior as a parent. Being aware of how childhood experiences play a role in a person’s parenting style, can help parents determine whether the chosen parenting style is the one both parents want to continue implementing.

Hispanic couples have to deal with the question of whether they will continue to raise their children in the way they were raised or conform to a different approach to parenting. Hispanic parents believe that children are expected to follow their instructions without questions and to be respectful (Chang & Liou, 2009).

Dinkmeyer, McKay, and Dinkmeyer (1997) have outlined three styles of parenting; giving orders, giving in, and giving choices. In assessing what type of parenting style parents will opt for, it would be helpful to consider what Newark (2008) believes to be children’s five critical needs important to their emotional health: need to feel respected, important, accepted, included, and secure. The difference between supportive parenting and non-supportive parenting makes a difference in the way the relationship can flow and can make couples’ marital satisfaction increase and peaceful.

**Communication.** According to the American Psychological Association (APA) (2016), communication is one of the most important factors to consider in having a healthy relationship. The APA also notes that opting for particular fighting styles could be damaging to the marital relationship. The “couples that use destructive behavior during arguments – such as yelling, resorting to personal criticisms or withdrawing from the discussion – are more likely to break up
than are couples that fight constructively” (American Psychological Association, 2016, para. 4). Montesi, Fauber, Gordon & Heimberg (2010) posit that researchers were able to find that effective partner communication is a vital factor in overall relationship satisfaction. Montesi et al. (2010) also noted that according to Litzinger and Gordon, often couples who are distressed have poor communication skills, which can undermine their overall ability to communicate, and thus result in an increase in relationship dissatisfaction. In addition, couples that are unhappy report a less effective way of communicating, more avoidance in trying to communicate, and a more conflicted way of communication (Christensen & Shenk, 1991).

From the many benefits that come with couples learning communication skills are to be able to converse with ease, being able to resolve any issue avoiding conflict, and even enjoying from a more satisfying sexual life. Byers and Demmons (1999) contend that improved sexual communication can often be associated with an increase in satisfaction between couples. Not only is effective sexual communication in couples related to sexual satisfaction, it is also related to overall satisfaction within relationships (Montesi et al., 2010).

Lack of communication not only affects the couple, but the children as well. According to Kelly (2000), it does not matter whether parents are divorced or not, but whether or not a high level of marital conflict was experienced during childhood. The researcher has also indicated that children that report experiencing a higher level of marital conflict in childhood are more prone to depression and other psychological disorders as young adults compared to children that report lower levels of family conflict during childhood (Kelly, 2000).

Parenting decisions often create conflicts that keep repeating and couples may find themselves repeating versions of the same fight over and over again. (The American Psychological Association, 2016). Healthychildren.org (2015) suggests to include these skills of
conflict resolution when talking with their partner: listening, clarifying points of difference, taking each other’s feelings seriously, generating alternative solutions together and negotiating. Soderquist and Soderquist (2006) suggest that “equal couples look for solutions instead of wasting time blaming one another” (p. 193). The American Psychological Association (2016) suggests using constructive strategies for resolving disagreements, such as easing up the tension by making each other laugh and listening to each other’s points of view.

Mindfulness, defined as the self-regulation of attention (Jones, Welton, Oliver, Thoburn, 2011), is another great tool that could be utilized by couples to reach a cool down period to be able to communicate more efficiently and therefore understand each other’s needs much better. “Further analysis revealed that mindfulness during conflict helped romantic partners not take things so personally, regulate their emotional reactions more quickly, and empathize with their partner more deeply” (Graham, 2016, para. 7).

Psychology Today (2016) points out that being in a state of active and open attention on the present moment, while observing one’s thoughts and feelings from a distance, without judging them as good or bad could be beneficial for the couple when engaged in conflict or attempting to communicate effectively. The researchers concluded that mindfulness was helpful for couples to “remain more engaged during constructive conflict,” and to “disengage more quickly from conflicts that become destructive” (Graham, 2016, para. 7). Jones et al. (2011) observes that “including mindfulness exercises in couples counseling may help increase interpersonal attunement within couples, which may in turn increase relationship satisfaction” (p. 360). Graham (2016) offers a three-step process that she developed for helping couples “practice mindfulness to cool down from conflict,” without even having to use the word mindfulness: pay attention, be accepting and engage with their partner (para. 8).
1) “Attentional mindfulness” which can be described to couples as paying attention is “how well each partner can intentionally tune into his or her thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations during the conflict, without getting too wrapped up in those thoughts or emotions” (Graham, 2016, para. 9).

2) After following the first step, Graham (2016) can guide each partner in “attitudinal mindfulness” which she refers to couples as being accepting. This step is about “being open, interested, curious, accepting of their own experience” (para. 11).

3) The last step Graham (2016) developed in this process is to engage with the couple one is working with, which is to “listen to their partner’s concerns, fears, and desires” Graham (2016) believes that this way each partner “can re-engage rather than defend against or attack their partner” (para. 14).

Negotiation. “Negotiating is about putting ‘fairness’ into relationships” (Soderquist & Soderquist, 2006, p. 57). Effective negotiation requires to be able to be open, curious about one’s own partner issues and emotional risk (Bader & Pearson, 2007). Soderquist and Soderquist (2006) state that “each partner must wiggle around, must make changes until a balance is found that is comfortable for both” (p. 57). “You can negotiate what action someone will take and when they will do it, or you can negotiate a solution to a problem of disagreement” (Bader & Pearson, 2007, para. 6). An example of when negotiation would benefit the couple would be in dual earner couples. Soderquist and Soderquist (2006) assert that dual earner couples need to negotiate the household chores in order to find balance in their lives and relationship so that both partners can feel comfortable and happy. To achieve this, Soderquist and Soderquist (2006) adds that “it takes negotiation and agreement” (p. 57).
According to Jacob and Jacob (2016), Gottman believes that conflict is inevitable, but it’s the way that we handle conflict that it is important. “Dr. Gottman says, ‘Although we tend to equate a low level of conflict with happiness, a lasting relationship results from a couple’s ability to manage the conflicts that are inevitable in any relationship’” (Jacob & Jacob, 2016, para. 16). Gottman and Silver (1999) states that “the key is how you argue – whether your style escalates tension or leads to a feeling of resolution” (p. 173). When couples face conflict, negotiation skills play a major role in the way these issues get resolved. “Gaining the skills, and developing the ability to successfully navigate conflict becomes critical in creating happiness and harmony in your marriage” (Jacob & Jacob, 2016, para. 19). Gottman and Silver (1999) has developed four strategies for a happier relationship; calm oneself, speak nondefensively, validation, and overlearning (p. 175).

**Challenges on Couple Time.** The numerous challenges couples with young children face when it comes to having couple time; either going out on dates or engaging in sexual activity, are endless. Fatigue, routine, having no time or lack of privacy are just some of the reasons couples have given as to why they don’t go out on dates or engage in sexual activity as much as they would like to (Soderquist & Soderquist, 2006). Hispanic women report that their days are busy fulfilling their caregiver duties all day long with their children (Chang & Liou, 2009). This is such a problem in Norway that Charter (2013) pointed out in an article published by *The Times of London* that “couples with children have been urged to go on regular ‘date nights’ by a Norwegian government minister in an attempt to reduce the divorce rate in a country where almost half of marriages end up in failure” (para. 1). Soderquist and Soderquist (2006) state that research has shown that “sex life often goes downhill for couples with young children” (p. 191).
Muise, Giang and Impett (2014) state that sexuality is a key factor in shaping happiness and satisfaction in romantic relationships. Indeed, Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, and Michaels (1994) state that men and women report increased satisfaction with their sex lives when they have sex more often. Yet, couples with young children seem to struggle with being able to engage in sexual activity. Spending energy in conflict could lead to more exhaustion, making it less likely for a sexual encounter. Soderquist and Soderquist (2006) suggest that focusing on solutions, rather than engaging in conflict will more likely get couples in the mood for sex, even if it is late. Their advice to couples with young children is to be clever and creative just like when couples’ were dating (Soderquist & Soderquist, 2006). To add to the importance of sexual activity, affection and cuddling after sex has proven to have the strongest impact on couples with children. Muise, Giang & Impett (2014) have concluded that:

Duration of after sex affection also seemed to be particularly important for couples who have children. The associations between the duration of after sex affection and sexual and relationship satisfaction were strongest for participants with children. Previous research has found that couples who have children report less frequent sex (e.g., Call et al., 1995), so it is possible that additional bonding time after sex is even more important for couples who may face challenges finding time for intimate connection (p. 1396).

This demonstrates how marital satisfaction in couples with young children may benefit from going out on dates, intimacy as well as sexual activity. The American Psychological Association (2016) suggests planning regular date nights to try to keep things interesting and to try to break away from the same routine by trying different things. In addition, couples might find helpful to schedule sex by putting it on the calendar, and although not spontaneous, would
be a way to ensure that couples’ physical and emotional needs are met (American Psychological Association, 2016).

**Additional Stressors**

**Low income families.** Financial difficulty can put a significant weight on Hispanic couples struggling to put food on their table. Financial strain could then lead to tension, stress and lack of stability in a couple’s relationship. In addition, Falconier and Epstein (2011) suggest that financial stress leads to marital distress.

Having a successful marriage is challenging enough without additional stressors like finances. According to Bramlett and Mosher (2002), it appears to be more challenging within low income communities to be able to maintain more satisfying marriages. The divorce rate is twice as high for low-income communities compared to affluent communities (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002).

It is important to understand that in order for low-income couples to focus on the romantic part of their relationship, they must attend to what they view as most important first, such as keeping food on their table for their families. According to Jackson et al. (2016), “Maslow’s ‘hierarchy of needs’ is the classic expression of this idea, predicting that before individuals can devote attention toward higher-order needs such as intimacy and emotional fulfillment, they must address basic needs, such as money, food and housing” (p. 3).

Although not much research has been done with Hispanic couples, the research that has been done with other ethnic groups in the United States has shown that financial stress is related to decrease positive parenting behaviors and an increase in negative parenting behaviors (Behnke, et al., 2008).
Although relationship and marriage education will not solve the multitude of problems of poor families, it will make a positive difference in their lives (Ooms & Wilson, 2004). The researchers conclude that “for those low-income couples who are already engaged or married, programs to strengthen their relationship may help them deal better with the many challenges of economic hardship and other problems they are likely to face and help them stay together (p. 446).

**Cultural challenges in the Hispanic community.** According to Posada de Valenzuela, (2014), an “important value in Hispanic culture is personalismo, which reflects a collectivistic worldview with a large emotional investment in the family” (p. 98). Personalismo is explained as a “positive interpersonal interaction”, which is to help “maintain mutual dependency and closeness for a lifetime” (2014, p. 98). There is a lot of emphasis put in close relationships and warmth as well in personalismo (Posada de Valenzuela, 2014).

Familismo is a core value that refers to the traditional Latino culture. It can be defined by family interdependence, loyalty, and responsibility to care for one another in the immediate and extended family (Behnke, et al., 2008). To many Latinos, familismo means putting the family’s needs before one’s personal needs (Behnke, et al. 2008). Chang & Liou (2009) found in a study that Hispanic mothers are the primary caregivers of children, especially in their early years, and that fathers are not too present in this practice. In a study conducted of 16 couples, Chang and Liou (2009) concluded that all 16 reported that the mother was the primary caregiver and provided the affection to the children. Motherhood is associated with raising the status of Latina women in their culture, but this also “implies that a woman must devote herself to her children during her lifetime” (Chang & Liou, 2009, p. 10).
According to Landale, Oropesa and Bradatan (2006), “it is possible that the process of assimilation reduces familism and encourages the individualism that some have argued is at the heart of recent changes in family behavior” (p. 139). However, Hispanics do exhibit higher levels of familism relative to non-Hispanics on a variety of ways. Higher levels of familism are exhibited through structural/demographic indicators (Landale et al. 2006).

Another value that is put in the Hispanic culture is respeto, which translates to respect. In the Hispanic culture, parents are the authority. Posada de Valenzuela (2004) adds that “among its many functions, this value helps to maintain a hierarchical structure with the parent at the top, to define boundaries in relationships, as well as to provide a standard by which to respond to interpersonal discord” (p. 98). Hispanic children are expected to follow parents’ instructions without questions and to be respectful (Chang & Liou, 2009). Minuchin’s structural therapy agrees that “hierarchical relationships in which the parents customarily exercise authority may be redefined and made more flexible in some cases and reinforced in others” (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008, p. 248).

The Evidence Base and the Group Therapy Approach

Group therapy for couples/workshops. “Psychological research shows that researched-based marital education programs are effective in helping couples stay together and making unhappy marriages more satisfying” American Psychological Association (2004, para. 2). “Marriage counseling of couples in groups is based upon principles and techniques of both group counseling and marriage counseling, and in rationale and methodology combines the two” (Kilgo, 1975, p. 337). Kilgo (1975) continues stating that “it can be a useful and constructive form of marital therapy” (p. 337). Being part of a group allows a couple to observe and possibly model parts of other couples marital interactions (Budman & Clifford, 1979).
In a workshop called Couples Coping Enhancement Training (CCET), “the goal of the training was to help both partners acquire new adaptive behaviors and to strengthen existing ones” (Bodenmann & Shantinath, 2004, p. 479) through many educational tools. This program is eighteen hours and consists of modules varying from 1.5 to 5 hours in duration. Couples in this program learn from “short lectures with video examples, diagnostic assessments, quizzes for determining the couple’s mastery of the training material, demonstrations of effective and ineffective approaches to problem analysis, video and live demonstrations by the course leader that model effective communication skills and dyadic coping, and supervision and feedback on the couples’ behaviors in role plays and exercises that are supervised according to a ratio of one trainer per two couples” (2004, p. 479-480). There has been over 600 couples to date that have participated in the program and 85% of these couples have rated the training as good to very good. “Studies support the notion that the CCET can strengthen marital competencies in the longer run and improve marital quality even among couples who have been together for a relatively long time and are experiencing marital dissatisfaction when entering the program” (p. 483). The effectiveness of the workshop was demonstrated when assessed at six months and one year follow ups (Bodenmann, Shantinath, 2004, p. 483).

In another study that consists of couples in their late 20’s to early 40’s, married approximately 7-14 years, Budman and Clifford (1979) indicated that the workshop was effective after having a number of six month follow-ups. Some other couples see themselves doing even better six months later. The groups consists of a maximum of six couples and a minimum of four couples with one female and one male leader. Group “leaders help to encourage interactions within and between couples” (1979, p. 424). This approach helps couples feel more comfortable with one another and be more open about sharing their true feelings,
especially men. By men seeing other men opening up and sharing their own feelings, it allows for permission for other men to share their feelings as well. The group environment encourages couples to open up in many different ways (Budman & Clifford, 1979). An effective outcome for the couples participating in the workshop was described as having been achieved when assessed a few times every six months.

A need to better understand the applicability of Marriage and Relationship Education (MRE) among diverse populations exists; however, according to Perez et al. (2013), research that currently exists does suggest that MRE courses are effective, even with diverse populations as Hispanics. These researchers suggest that it is important to consider certain aspects for therapy with Hispanics to be more effective. Conducting the workshop with a Hispanic Spanish speaking therapist that understands the Hispanic couples’ values, customs and way of life would be more effective (Perez et al., 2013).

According to Perez et al. (2013), Hispanic couples seem to respond effectively to MRE courses that address communication, conflict management, problem solving skills, sexual intimacy, family of origin patterns and negotiation. In their eight couple study, the researchers suggested that Hispanic couples benefitted differently from the groups, but all couples seemed to have gained something from the groups. Many men claimed to have learned less machismo driven behaviors from the groups, be more in tune with their emotions, and how to deal with anger. Women reported that the groups had helped them communicate better, and be more aware of their spouse and their own emotions. Women seemed to achieve awareness of both: their own emotional experience and their spouse’s emotional experience. Being in a group setting helped couples to gain hope for positive outcomes by listening to other couples, as well as learning ways in which they can address their own problems. “The act of sharing and being with
others in a similar situation was very important and for many was motivating and inspiring” (Perez et al., 2013 p. 384).

Group therapy has been proven to be effective with the Hispanic population. According to Hunter and Weaver (2004), research indicates that group therapy was a success when used with Hispanic teenagers in a school setting. Group therapy has also been proven to be effective with couples. Recent studies show that workshops for couples have a positive effect on couples (Muro, Holliman & Wade, 2016). Not only is the research clear when it comes to therapy in a group setting for couples, but also for Hispanic couples. “Most notably, in a pilot of the present study, 37 Hispanic couples attending a GTLYW (Getting The Love You Want) workshop were pre-tested and post-tested and showed a statistically significant change in relationship adjustment” (Muro, Holliman & Wade, 2016, p. 37).

Summary

According to the American Psychological Association (2004), divorce is a problem with fifty percent of couples ending up in divorce, and from the marriages that remain together, many of those couples being unhappy. When children are added to the combo, it becomes more important for couples to attempt all possible means to remain together as they have now formed a family, but also becomes more difficult. This is a time period when these couples need the most support and could benefit from psycho-educational tools to help them develop a healthy, peaceful and loving relationship with their partner.

With the Hispanic population increasing at a rapid pace (Posada de Valenzuela, 2014), the need for marital programs that meet the diverse needs of Hispanic couples is crucial. Programs tailored specifically to the Hispanic community will provide Hispanic couples the psycho-educational tools needed to have a successful and satisfying marriage. Discussing topics
such as intergenerational conflict, family subsystems, and the impact that child rearing has on couples can help Hispanic couples become more aware of the issues that may affect their relationship and the function of their family, while providing tools to assist them to communicate better, be able to negotiate and how to keep the romance alive.

While much research has not been conducted with counseling Hispanic couples in a group setting, the little research that has been done in programs for Hispanic couples has been proven to be effective (Perez, et al. 2013). Programs led by a Hispanic Spanish speaking therapist familiar with the group’s customs, traditions and beliefs, which the Spanish group can relate to and feel safe discussing personal issues with have been proven to be the most effective.
Chapter 3

Methods and Procedures

Introduction

The purpose of this project is to create a program that is tailored for Hispanic couples. The project will consist of a program in a group therapy setting that will be based on empirically supported literature. Hispanic couples will be provided psycho-education in a group setting so that couples may support each other and provide insight as to each couple’s possible issues. Hispanic couples will be provided psycho-education with the goal of having them leave the program with the necessary tools needed to achieve a happy and strong marriage after having children.

Development of Project

There are many programs tailored for couples in a group setting, however, not many exist that are specifically tailored to Hispanic couples. Therapists have to add to the equation the fact that Hispanic couples are not that easy to open up to a stranger, but might do so with someone they believe understands their struggles.

Intended Audience

This program is intended for Hispanic couples interested in enhancing their marital satisfaction after having become three instead of two and learning the tools needed to help them deal with the issues that involve becoming parents to young children.

Couples must commit to attending one hour each week for a duration of eight weeks to the program.
Qualifications of Providers

The group program for this project will be taught by licensed mental health therapists and/or marriage and family therapists who are interested in working with Hispanic couples.

Environment and Equipment

This group program may be conducted at a non-profit counseling agency, counseling clinic and/or local church. Whichever means is used, it must be able to provide privacy for all couples and preserve confidentiality. The room must have enough space to hold five couples comfortably.

Project Outline

This program is structured through weekly one hour sessions for a period of eight weeks. Each session will cover a new topic relating to the issues that Hispanic couples deal with when the dynamics change from two to three. The psychoeducation portions of this program have been derived from the literature and include:

- Family dynamics
- Parenting Styles
- Conflict is inevitable
- The need for couple time
- Identifying resources

Group Curriculum Overview

Format and Steps for starting and implementing the program Keeping the Spark Alive.

Therapists must first find couples who need the program. In order to find out which couples need the program, the flyer (Appendix A) with information on the program will be available at non-profit counseling agencies, counseling clinics and/or local churches. Interested
couples will need to complete a short Questionnaire form (Appendix B). Once the therapist leading the group receive all short Questionnaire forms from the interested couples in the program, the therapist can begin evaluating the information in the short Questionnaire forms to determine the type of need the couples are coming in to the program with.

During the first session of the program, the therapist should administer the Marital Satisfaction Scale Inventory (Appendix C). Creating a welcoming environment that feels safe and comfortable for all couples is a priority in ensuring efficacy in this program. Couples will also introduce themselves and engage in an ice breaker game to establish trust and comfort in the group. A short presentation of the program will be introduced by the therapist leading the group towards the end of the first session.

After the eight sessions are completed, the therapist needs to have the couples retake the Marital Satisfaction Scale Inventory. Once the therapist has the results, the therapist will be able to compare the pre and post test results to help the therapist evaluate the program.

Towards the end of the last session, the therapist will hand out to each couple a Completion Certificate as a reward for completing the program and as a reminder to utilize the tools learned in the program.

Week 1) Session one-Getting to Know Each Other

- **Part 1**: Introduction
  
  Group leader(s) and participants
  
  Review and sign consent form and intake sheet
  
  Take Marital Satisfaction Scale Inventory
  
  Icebreakers

- **Part 2**: Psycho-education - Introduction to the program
• **Part 3:** Questions

*Week 2) Session two-Generational Patterns*

• **Part 1:** Introduction

Discuss thoughts from last week’s session.

• **Part 2:** Psycho-education – Discuss Bowen’s intergenerational model

• **Part 3:** Group process – Explore ways in which intergenerational patterns has or may affect the couple’s relationship, and how being aware of intergenerational patterns may be helpful to the couple. Have couples work on their family genogram to better understand the intergenerational patterns.

Questions

*Week 3) Session three-No longer Two*

• **Part 1:** Introduction

Discuss thoughts from last week’s session.

• **Part 2:** Psycho-education – Discuss Minuchin’s structural therapy

• **Part 3:** Group process – Have couples discuss how becoming a parental subsystem affected or impacted their couple subsystem

Questions

*Week 4) Session four-Parenting*

• **Part 1:** Introduction

Discuss thoughts from last week’s session.

• **Part 2:** Psycho-education – Discuss parenting styles and provide parenting tools
• **Part 3:** Group process – Have couples discuss what parenting issues have come up for them and how have they resolved them. How has parenting issues affected their marital subsystem

Questions

*Week 5* Session **five - Communication**

• **Part 1:** Introduction

Discuss thoughts from last week’s session.

• **Part 2:** Psycho-education – Communication intergenerational patterns, communication tools

• **Part 3:** Group process – Explore how being unaware of intergenerational communication may affect the couple, role play of “I” messages

Questions

*Week 6* Session **six - Conflict is Inevitable**

• **Part 1:** Introduction

Discuss thoughts from last week’s session.

• **Part 2:** Psycho-education – Discuss Gottman and Silver (1999) “the key is how you argue – whether your style escalates tension or leads to a feeling of resolution” (p. 173), unawareness in intergenerational conflict, conflict resolution tools ie. understanding each other’s way of dealing with conflict (space until both are ready to discuss), respecting other person’s boundaries, utilizing communication skills
• **Part 3:** Group process – provide a conflict scenario and have couples discuss how it would be managed given the conflict resolution tools

  Questions

*Week 7) Session seven-Regaining Romance*

• **Part 1:** Introduction

  Discuss thoughts from last week’s session.

• **Part 2:** Psycho-education – Discuss – all subsystems may be affected when there is discord between the couple subsystem (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008). Explore how neglecting the “couple” can affect the couple subsystem, ruin the couple’s love. Discuss the importance of romance, nourishing the love for one another and sexual intimacy in relation to marital satisfaction.

• **Part 3:** Group process – Have couples discuss what they do or would like to do to gain romance in their relationship, ie, go out on dates, movie night at home, etc. Create a group list of ideas shared. Have couples explore the use of extended family and their community to help with babysitting.

  Questions

*Week 8) Session eight-Wrapping it Up and Building a Support System*

• **Part 1:** Introduction

  Discuss thoughts from last week’s session.

• **Part 2:** Psycho-education – Review of learned material from all sessions, provide resources

• **Part 3:** Questions

  Retake Marital Satisfaction Scale Inventory
CHAPTER 4

Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary of Project

The purpose of this project was to create a group tailored to the needs of Hispanic couples with children in a supportive community environment. Chapter one introduces the problem. Given that the Hispanic population is increasing at a rapid speed, Hispanic couples could benefit from a program designed specifically for this group, considering their values, customs and beliefs. Chapter two provides the literature review which discusses the issues that arise when Hispanic couples have young children. While there is not a lot of research conducted with the Hispanic community in relation to counseling for couples in a group setting, the research that does currently exist, proves to be effective when using the correct measures, such as the appropriate therapist and using the appropriate language.

Recommendations for Implementation

This program is intended to be the first step for many Hispanic couples attempting to increase marital satisfaction with their partners while performing the difficult task of parenting. In addition, this program will function as a tool for many Hispanic couples to become more aware of how family intergenerational conflict may play a role in their marital relationship, as well as in their family functioning. This program is intended to empower couples to lead a satisfactory marital life, as well as a peaceful and functional family, and to learn to seek community resources when needed.

It is recommended that this curriculum is led by a Hispanic Spanish speaking therapist familiar with the group’s customs, traditions and beliefs, which the Spanish group can relate to and feel safe discussing personal issues with.
Trainees and interns may also lead the group, but must be under the guidance of a supervisor with the proper qualifications. This project will provide therapists with a group curriculum that specifically addresses the needs of Hispanic couples with young children.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This project’s central goal is to reach out to Hispanic couples with young children that would benefit from the psycho-educational tools offered in this program. The research findings are mostly based on European-Americans, with some of the literature review being more specific to the Hispanic population and low income communities. It would be good to expand further examination to different social classes within the Hispanic communities to understand how treatment programs would benefit them better depending of each group’s needs. There is not much research available that differentiates the needs of low income Hispanic couples and middle class Hispanic couples.

Another area for further research would be to explore whether the needs of the different groups of Hispanics vary depending on the region they come from. Although a label was given to Hispanics, this label includes a wide spectrum of different groups of Hispanics within this label that hold their own values, beliefs, customs, ideas and language. It would be good to explore whether the needs of all the different groups within the Hispanic population would vary to be able to attend to their own cultural needs.

Finally, further research is needed to define the qualifications of the therapists conducting programs for the Hispanic community, considering each Hispanic group individual’s cultural needs. Although there are many similarities between the different groups within the Hispanic community, there are differences that the therapists should be aware of when leading programs
for couples in the Hispanic community to ensure that the interventions used are the best suitable for this group.

Limitations

This project focuses on low income Hispanic couples. The project, therefore, does not focus on research or data specific to diversified couples, though much of the content of the literature review and the workshops themselves may still be applicable to these populations.

However, a limitation to this project is that it is not comprehensive because it focuses on heterosexual couples, rather than all diversified couples. It would be beneficial for all diversified couples to have a similar program as well.

Another limitation to this project is that it is focuses only on couples with young children. It would be beneficial for parents with older children to have access to a similar program as well. Parents with older children face different type of challenges as well that would benefit from such a program.

An additional limitation would be that couples transitioning to parenthood and in the early years of parenthood may be facing other transitions or negative events in their life as well. Although switching roles from just being a couple to being parents is reason enough for seeking support, there may be other transitions and or life changes that may occur throughout this new life phase, such as the loss of a parent or employment and career change. Therefore, such a program by itself might not be too productive or beneficial without the use of some individual and/or group therapeutic interventions.

Another limitation is that the program is only eight weeks long, and while it is expected that lasting effects will occur with couples attending the program, it would be difficult to document such changes by use of questionnaires or surveys. It would be a good idea to use
intensive interviews and follow the couples longitudinally to see whether effects of participating in the program were long lasting.

Another limitation to this project is time. Although much time and effort was put into the writing of this paper, the time was limited due to deadline requirements.
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Appendix

Keeping the Spark Alive

A workshop designed for Hispanic couples with young children that provides the necessary tools to continue the love spark alive.
Keeping the Spark Alive

Couples Workshop

A Relationship Education Workshop for Couples

Couples are invited to attend a fun, enriching and empowering eight week workshop to enhance their marital bond.

COME AND JOIN US IN A LIFE TRANSFORMATION WORKSHOP

Center for Individual and Family Counseling
5445 Laurel Canyon Blvd, North Hollywood, CA 91607

Saturdays 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.
02/04/16 – 03/25/16

For more information, call Liliana

(818) 555-LOVE 818) 555-5683

If you are Hispanic and have little children, this workshop is just for you!

Rediscover the passion and fall in love all over again!
Appendix B

Couple’s Workshop Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Maybe</th>
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<tr>
<td>Do you think you would feel comfortable attending a couple’s workshop?</td>
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<td>Are you willing to open up and share personal thoughts in the workshop?</td>
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<td>Do you want to work on enhancing your marital relationship?</td>
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<td>Do you think you would benefit from attending a couple’s workshop?</td>
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<td>Are you willing to do “homework” assignments to work in your relationship if the workshop counselor asks you to?</td>
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<td>Are you willing to allow a workshop counselor help you learn effective tools to help you communicate better?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you feel happy with your marriage?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you feel divorced individuals are happier?</td>
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Describe what you would like to gain from attending this couple’s workshop?

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________
Appendix C

Marital Satisfaction Scale Inventory (MSSI)

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<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>I don’t know</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Is negotiation not that important in a couple’s relationship?</td>
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<td>2. Does mindfulness help couples communicate better?</td>
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<td>3. Does intergenerational conflict affect the couple’s relationship?</td>
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<td>4. Is going out on dates not that important in a couple’s relationship after having children?</td>
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<td>5. Is conflict avoidable and couples should try to not fight?</td>
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<td>6. Is it important for the couple to continue nourishing their love after having children?</td>
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<td>7. Does parenting usually not create conflict in a couple’s relationship?</td>
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<td>8. Is the couple subsystem as important as the parental subsystem?</td>
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<td>9. Do family of origin issues not affect the couple’s relationship?</td>
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<td>10. Are there different parenting styles?</td>
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<td>11. Are there ineffective and effective ways to communicate?</td>
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<td>12. Is group counseling effective for couples?</td>
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<td>13. Does family of origin issues affect the couple’s parenting?</td>
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<td>14. Do dates increase marital satisfaction?</td>
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